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SPIRITUAL BYPASS AND ENTANGLEMENT IN YOGALAND (योगस्तान): HOW NEOLIBERALISM, SOFT HINDUTVA AND BANAL NATIONALISM FACILITATE YOGA FUNDAMENTALISM²

Abstract

Global yoga has become exceptionally popular. The emic description of this global yoga network is often called *Yogaland*. This paper maps out some of the key topographical features of this metaphysical, social imaginary –*scape*, and situates the physical body of the global yoga practitioner within a complex entanglement of intersecting social, political, economic and theological ‘worlds’. This paper first explores how the concept of spiritual bypass effects a particular averted gaze towards problematic issues within *Yogaland*. This leads to the second part of the paper that discusses the fundamental nature of entanglement, which often involves being entangled in worlds the individual would not want, mean to be, or perhaps even be aware, exist. Therefore, this paper identifies ways in which global yoga participants are socialised through their neo-liberal subjectivities to unwittingly support, in an often banal way, a Hindu supremacist ideology; which, in turn, can lead to a type of ‘yoga fundamentalism’.

Keywords: Global Yoga, Spiritual Bypass, Entanglement, Yogaland, Hindu Supremacy, Yoga Fundamentalism

Introduction

I continue with untangling the tacit threads that link the seemingly incommensurable social worlds of global yoga with that of Hindu supremacists,³ other-

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2 I would like to thank McComas Taylor, Jesse Rumsey-Merlan, Borayin Larios, Karl-Stéphan Bouthillette, Jeffrey D. Long, John Davies, Peter Cohen, Elizabeth de Michelis and Kenji Takahashi for reading the article and offering comments.

3 See: Patrick McCartney, Politics beyond the yoga mat: Yoga fundamentalism and the ‘Vedic Way of Life’, *Global Ethnographic*, <http://oicd.net/ge/index.php/politics-beyond-yoga-mat-yoga-fundamentalism-vedic-way-life/> (accessed 03.07.2018); Patrick McCartney, Yoga practitioners and the unspoken global aspirations of Indian ethno-nationalism, *Political Theology Today*, <http://>

wise known as, *Hindutva*. While *Hindutva* literally means 'Hindu-ness'; it is often translated as 'Hindu first'. How, then, do we untangle our own 'yoga bodies' and subjectivities from the possibility of sharing in, and tacitly supporting, a Hindu supremacist world view? This paper explores the sanitising of *Hindutva* politics through the transnational wellness industry and the dynamic environment of diasporic Hinduism and international Hindu movements.⁴ In this way, it has come to represent an expansionist, chauvinistic, and supremacist political theology, which has nationalised religion into a '*Hindutva* Supremacism', as opposed to 'Indian nationalism'.

It should go without saying that not all Hindus are Hindu supremacists. Just like not all Christians are fundamentalists, and not all Muslims are salafists. However, even though Ahmad⁵ suggests, there are several shades of *Hindutva*. In contrast, as Kumar⁶ explains, there is, apart from violence, no clear cut distinction between 'tolerant' Hinduism and 'jihadi' *Hindutva*. This critique is not Hindu-phobic; rather, it is a critique of the way in which the political philosophy of *Hindutva* is indelibly mapped onto the marketing of global yoga through a shared, utopian aspiration to create a better world. Frykenberg⁷ provides a lucid historical analysis of the development of *Hindutva* ideology. Indebted to Nanda⁸, it is better to see *Hindutva* as a pragmatic form of 'New Religious Politics' (NRP)⁹ that is a 'socially conservative, populist movement' that aims to 'gain political power in order to provide a new moral basis for the nation-state derived from suitably reinterpreted religious sources'¹⁰. While they can be dogmatically religious in a literal sense, and refuse to separate religion and politics, the term 'religious nationalism' is more appropriate than 'fundamentalism' to describe the 'prescriptions for their nation's political and social destiny'¹¹.

www.politicaltheology.com/blog/yoga-practitioners-and-the-unspoken-global-aspirations-of-indian-ethno-nationalism-patrick-mccartney/ (accessed 05.09.2017); Patrick McCartney, Is the global prestige of Sanskrit aiding and abetting Hindu nationalists and supremacists?, *Political Theology Today*, <http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/is-the-global-prestige-of-sanskrit-aiding-and-abetting-hindu-nationalists-and-supremacists-patrick-mccartney/> (accessed 05.09.2017).

- 4 Pralay Kanungo, Public Hinduism and *Hindutva*, in: *Hinduism in the modern world* edited by Brian A. Hatcher, Routledge, New York, 2015, p. 253.
- 5 Tufail Ahmad, Shades of *Hindutva*: Examining challenges from within and without. *New Age Islam*, <http://www.newageislam.com/current-affairs/shades-of-hindutva%E2%80%93examining-challenges-from-within-and-without/d/106144> (accessed 09.09.2017).
- 6 Nagothu Naresh Kumar, Dissecting *Hindutva*: A conversation with Jyotirmaya Sharma, <http://toynbeeprize.org/interviews/dissecting-hindutva-a-conversation-with-professor-jyotirmaya-sharma/> (accessed 09.09.2017).
- 7 Robert E. Frykenberg, *Hindutva* as a political religion: An historical perspective, in: *The sacred in twentieth-century politics: Essays in honour of Professor Stanley G. Payne* edited by Roger Griffin, Robert Mallett and John Tortorice, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, 2008, pp. 178–220.
- 8 Meera Nanda, *The god market: How globalisation is making India more Hindu*, Random House, Delhi, 2009.
- 9 Nikki Keddie, The new religious politics: Where, when and why do "fundamentalisms" appear?, *Comparative Study of Society and History*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1998, p. 697.
- 10 Meera Nanda, *Prophets facing backwards: Postmodern critiques of science and Hindu nationalism*. Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 2003, p. 12.
- 11 Mark Jurgensmeyer, *The new cold war?: Religious nationalism confronts the secular state*, University of California Press, Berkeley,

Whether we choose to acknowledge it, or not; the global yoga phenomenon is inexplicably entangled with a Hindu supremacist movement. This occurs through the shared use of the Sanskrit language, or rather, the Sanskrit episteme; which is combined with a multitude of appeals to mystery, tradition, authority, and purity that propose a monolithic entity, as opposed to a nuanced, poly-vocal one; which is generally encapsulated through reference to 'social cohesion'¹² to create a singular definition of Hinduism via a 'Hindutva universalism'.¹³ According to Mallett,¹⁴ *Hindutva* proposes a political theology that attempts to present itself as a sacralised secular entity that inspires faith, devotion, and patriotism, which is ultimately employed to buttress social solidarity and morality.

Yoga and politics blend through 'soft' or 'banal' nationalism. This potentially leads to tacit support of a *Hindutva* supremacist ideology. Bardi¹⁵ provides a good example of how 'soft *Hindutva*' is used by yoga gurus, like the *hugging saint*, Amma; while Gooptu¹⁶ explains how, 'Spirituality informs the ethics and morality of public action, spanning the local micro-level to the national seat of government, and embraces issues of social activism, party politics, state power, citizenship, and nationalism'.

Before addressing the primary question, we will first discuss how the phenomenon known as *spiritual bypassing* enables tacit, banal support. Briefly, spiritual bypassing refers to using spiritual practices and beliefs to avoid dealing with our painful feelings or situations. Spiritual bypassing plays a key role in the cultivation of an averted gaze away from many things considered or perceived to be 'negative' or 'distracting' by citizens during their spiritual journey through *Yogaland*. Godrej's¹⁷ assertion that, in the pursuit and consumption of global yoga in its most popular, posturally-preferred form, consumers become 'amenable to arrogations of power' that breed disinterest in questioning the broader, structural inequalities. This directly enables enculturation into, and support for, a Hindu supremacist ideology and expansionist agenda. As Sherrell and Simmer-Brown¹⁸ explain, power and privilege are involved in troubling dynamics within

1993, p. 6.

- 12 Girdari Lal Bhan, Identity and integration: Hindu perspective, <http://hssuk.org/identity-and-integration-hindu-perspective/> (accessed 03.07.2018).
- 13 Stephen Vertovec, *Hindu diaspora: Comparative patterns*, Routledge, London, 2000, pp. 162-63; John Zavos, Situating Hindu nationalism in the UK: Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the development of British Hindu identity, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 2010, pp. 2-3.
- 14 Robert Mallett, Fascism as the expression of a spiritual revolution in Italy, in: *The sacred in twentieth-century politics: Essays in honour of Professor Stanley G. Payne*, Payne edited by Roger Griffin, Robert Mallett and John Tortorice, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, p. 89.
- 15 Ariel Sophia Bardi, The soft nationalism of Amma, India's hugging saint, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-soft-nationalism-of-amma-indias-hugging-saint/#/> (accessed 09.09.2017).
- 16 Nandini Gooptu, New spirituality, politics of self-empowerment, citizenship, and democracy in contemporary India, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2016, p. 936.
- 17 Farah Godrej, The neoliberal yogi and the politics of yoga, *Political Theory*, Vol. 45, No. 6, 2015, p. 15.
- 18 Carla Sherrell and Judith Simmer-Brown, Spiritual bypassing in the contemporary mindfulness movement, *ICEA Journal*, Vol. 1,

the commodification of spirituality; which privileges blissful states of mind and avoidance of pain over engaging in social activism.¹⁹

Spiritually Bypassing Yogaland

Let us begin with describing *Yogaland*; which is the emic, and sometimes euphemistic,²⁰ term used by many yoga practitioners and teachers to describe the global yoga community. Increasingly, *Yogaland*'s boundaries expand beyond physical localities, and particularly, the borders of nation states, to fuel the utopian possibility of a post-national alternative. Take, as an example, McCartney²¹, whose cyber-ethnographic research within the 29,000+ member *Yoga Teachers* group on Facebook demonstrates the distributed interconnectedness of yoga-inflected worlds through social media.

The internet allows people of various subgroups to connect, regardless of physical location. So too, there is an ever increasing number of global yoga festivals that are linked together into a circuit of yoga-related revelry. *Wanderlust* is a perfect example of a globalised, syndicated yoga festival; which occurs in several locations around the world. Yoga becomes the context for 'conscious living' and 'guilt-free partying'. As the *Wanderlust* website explains, 'Wanderlust is a leader in the yoga lifestyle space – encompassing events, centres, and media'²² that focuses on cultivating a yoga 'practice to inspire connection'²³.

Yet, how does one actually travel to *Yogaland*? Is it on a flying yoga mat, or through the sequenced, sweaty flow of postures? For many, if not most, *Yogaland* exists in a closer, more local and quotidian experience of 'community' nestled around parochial consumers of different brands of yoga. From the physical locality of a local yoga studio, *Yogaland* becomes a metaphor; or rather, a psychological entity that exists in the minds of those who describe their yoga *tribe* as being a part of something greater than the sum of its parts. Although the idea of yoga-related tribes is not entirely new, as Paliawadana shows,²⁴ early Aryan tribes viewed life as one typified by the dichotomy between *yoga* (*derivatives of roots √yudh-, √yuj- and √yā*, which are used to refer to war, movement, etc.) and *kṣema* (*(√kṣi-*, which signifies resting, 'staying over' and intervals of settled

No. 1, 2017, pp. 75–94.

19 Crucially, it is within the politically-correct domain of regressive leftist identitarian activism, inspired by critical race theory, later-wave feminism and cultural Marxism, that strategic syncretism occurs to enable unlikely allies to form between social justice activists and Hindutva operatives; particularly in online social networking sites. This is the focus of a forthcoming paper, the working title is: *Yoga-Ksema: Global yoga, Hindu nationalists, and grooming earnest social justice allies*.

20 Consider: Sarah-Jane Steele, *Yogaland* pitch video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo3KhxNQ1u8&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop> (accessed 09.09.2017).

21 Patrick McCartney, *Politics beyond the yoga mat: Yoga fundamentalism and the 'Vedic way of life'*, Global Ethnographic, <http://oicd.net/ge/index.php/politics-beyond-yoga-mat-yoga-fundamentalism-vedic-way-life/> (accessed 03.07.2018).

22 *Wanderlust* Festivals, <https://wanderlust.com/festivals/> (accessed 09.09.2017).

23 Adriene Mishler, *Practice to inspire connection*, <https://tv.wanderlust.com/programs/practice-to-inspire-connection> (09.09.2017).

24 Mahinda Paliawadana, *Yoga and ksema: The significance of their usage in the Rgveda, Vidyodaya*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1968, p. 185.

life). Whitaker²⁵ explains that 'early Vedic life oscillated between times of seasonal movement (*yōga*, "harnessing")—for warfare, cattle raids, and shifts to new pastures—and times of settled peace (*kṣéma*)'.

As Lauren²⁶ and Tribe Yoga²⁷ reveal, the 21st-century 'yoga tribe' typically focuses on consumption of yoga-inflected lifestyles within a spiritual tourism paradigm. A noticeable example is the well-known yoga 'master' teacher, Sianna Sherman, whose article in *Yoga Journal* explains that the 'hope for humanity rests with our "collective heart tribe"'²⁸. Although the article is mostly an editorial plugging her on-demand, online 'Goddess Yoga' course; which can only be described as Tantra-lite, participation will apparently 'transform your practice—on and off the mat', and will help you 'find your inner goddess and deepen your yoga practice'²⁹. Another example is the *Becoming Light: Tantra Yoga Retreat*, where one will, 'Learn an ancient tantric practice to "deep-clean" your energy body, chakras and perceptual fields'; and 'Rest, recharge and re-attune to Mother Nature's beauty & natural rhythms, connect with like-minded spiritual practitioners on the path, and relish in the simple joy of being alive!'; and 'Return home from this retreat feeling like a new person—full, fresh, embodied & empowered... restored'³⁰.

Principally, *Yogaland* exists in the social imaginary landscape. It is a utopian-inspired meta-space where life is celebrated, and various yoga-inflected lifestyles are promoted as the antithesis to, or, a distraction from, the perceived disenchantment that many people feel is a direct consequence of the hyper-routinisation of the neoliberal-inspired, late-modern, post-secular modernity. The irony is that the multibillion-dollar global yoga³¹ industry is modelled on neo-liberal ideology, which the Indian state blends with the guru-devotee relationship in the pursuit of certain ends.³²

Godrej³³ asks a very pertinent question related to the ways in which global yoga's commensal relationship with neo-liberal governmentality might only

25 Jarrod Whitaker, *Strong arms and drinking strength: Masculinity, violence, and the body in ancient India*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, p. 9.

26 Lauren, *Your vibe attracts your tribe: A cool ass yoga experience*, <http://thesisterprojectblog.com/2015/11/11/your-vibe-attracts-your-tribe-a-cool-ass-yoga-experience/> (accessed 09.09.2017).

27 Tribe Yoga, *Welcome to tribe*, <http://thesisterprojectblog.com/2015/11/11/your-vibe-attracts-your-tribe-a-cool-ass-yoga-experience/> (accessed 09.09.2017).

28 Sianna Sherman, *Goddess yoga project: Shed light on your dark side*, <https://www.yogajournal.com/yoga-101/goddess-yoga-project-shed-light-shadow-side> (accessed 12.09.2017).

29 AimHealthyU, *Goddess yoga with Sianna Sherman*, <https://www.aimhealthyu.com/courses/goddess-yoga-with-sianna-sherman-reg> (accessed 12.09.2017).

30 Amanda Ings, *Becoming light*, <https://events.amandaings.com/retreat> (accessed 04.07.2018).

31 If we consider the global wellness tourism market is valued at usd650 billion and has a CAGR of 6.8 %, <https://www.apnews.com/846ce40a6ef64fa4b2f10fcb802283c3> (accessed 03.03.2019).

32 Jarrod Copeman and Aya Ikegame, *The guru in South Asia: New interdisciplinary perspectives*, Routledge, London, 2012; Nandini Gooptu, *New spirituality, politics of self-empowerment, citizenship, and democracy in contemporary India*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2016, pp. 934-974.

33 Farah Godrej, *The neoliberal yogi and the politics of yoga*, *Political Theory*, Vol. 45, No. 6, 2015, p. 15.

result in the production of 'good' neo-liberal subjects. Godrej proposes a novel reading of primary yoga texts that might have the potential to subvert neo-liberal hegemony. Personally, I am less optimistic of this reading of yoga to 'critically unmask—rather than unreflectively converge with—biopolitical disciplinary projects'³⁴. However, Godrej's³⁵ well-structured argument 'against a deterministic and totalling conception of neoliberal subjectivity' is certainly worth considering. This is because it provides a path around the flatlands that consist of an essentialised revival of ascetic metaphysics. Instead, Godrej invites the reader to explore potential ways to restore multi-vocal and layered accretions and conceptions of 'authenticity'; which possibly combine social activism with counter-hegemonic potential.

However, it seems more complicated than that. As there are several overlapping and intersecting hegemonic spheres of influence that first need accounting. I do not believe that this socially emancipatory potential is necessarily present in the different principalities of global *Yogaland*. First, there is the neo-liberal system that dominates global trade. This is followed by the domestic socio-political quadrants within each country; which is exacerbated by the specifically local, post-colonial processes of decolonisation. It seems a rather tall task for global yoga, regardless of how much 'habitual self-reflection'³⁶ one is occupied with to provide the emancipations that are promised. Even with prescriptions in yoga's exalted, seminal texts, to increase introspection (*svādhyāya*); there is an overwhelming preference by many yoga practitioners not to explore the 'darker side of the soul'; which is exacerbated by the general lack of psychotherapeutic modalities within the 'traditional' yoga system. Yoga will help one relax and generally feel good. But, that does not guarantee there will be much in the way of cognitive benefits, at least if one adopts a classical reading of texts. Gard *et al.*³⁷ provide a good overview of the research supporting yoga's role in psychological health; which focuses on the idea of 'self-regulation'; and 'refers to efforts of monitoring, willpower, and motivation to manage or alter one's incipient responses so as to pursue or maintain explicit goals or standards'. This is very much what Godrej refers to as a potential of yoga to operate in counter-hegemonic and emancipatory ways.

The very pursuit of a sub-cultural, counter-hegemonic alternative perceived as an alternative to neoliberalism appeals to yoga practitioners who consume variants based on sleek marketing. The irony is that this is all made available through the same capitalist infrastructure that is generally despised. Furthermore, many yoga studio owners and teachers seek to obfuscate this capitalist

34 Ibid, p. 18.

35 Ibid, p. 23.

36 Consider *pratyak-cetanā* from Patañjali's *Yoga Sutra* 1.29.

37 Tim Gard *et al.*, Potential self-regulatory mechanisms of yoga for psychological health, *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, Vol. 8, 2014, pp. 1-20.

framework and their participation in it as *petit bourgeois* business owners; and, instead, replace it with a deflected spiritualised narrative. The testimonies of countless yoga teachers who left their previous careers to follow, what is often referred to as a *higher* calling, normally after what is described as a *spiritual or physical crisis*, is legion. One only needs to read any biography section of a yoga teacher's website.³⁸ As this example demonstrates, the yoga teacher left their public relations job: 'I worked in a publicity agency for a long time and I got very tired of that kind of living. I wanted to change and get more connected with myself, my body and other people, so I decided to become a yoga teacher. Many people think that doing yoga is just making beautiful postures, but being in yoga is about being respectful of other people and caring for them'³⁹.

One common phrase used at the beginning and/or end of many yoga classes relates to the intention, at least, to 'hermetically seal' the yoga studio through perhaps chanting the seminal mantra ॐ (*om*). This sonic sealer supposedly keeps out potential physical, psychic, emotional, or even supernatural contagions. In this way, *Yogaland's* boundaries are mapped out through a hybrid connection with (meta)physical space and in/out movements of breath and imagined schemas; which extends not only the practitioner's mind and heart toward an often non-dual ontology, but also to generate the feeling of one, global yoga body⁴⁰. There is an inherent tendency within *Yogaland* to dismiss anything that is perceived as negative, challenging, perverse or otherwise transgressive or contradictory—in any way—to the promoted ideal of an 'authentic yogic identity', and categorise it as essentially *unyogic*. The narrative that one repeatedly comes across is that one should simply focus on the supposed good side of human nature, while any form of expressing emotions—such as anger—should be controlled, or, better yet, eliminated. A representation of this attitude is found in the popular new age interpretation of *namaste*, which is a trendy, if not, anticipated, way to start and end a yoga class. The folk etymology of this phrase is something like, 'the light within me honours the light within you'. However, a closer linguistic analysis demonstrates the falsity of this translation; as it simply means, pragmatically-speaking, 'hello'. There is no mention of 'light'. Instead, this noun phrase is: *namah-bend + te-to you*.⁴¹

The present discussion here will be considered heretical by 'yoga fundamen-

38 How yoga teachers brand themselves in relation to the transformative power of their new, chosen lifestyle is an important indicator of the potential benefit when creating distinction and demand. The teacher's journey is just as much a religious product within the context of sacralisation and de-sacralisation during moments of consumption. See Marie-Catherine Paquier, The monastic product's biography, a sacralization wave, *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, Vol. 16, No 1, 2019, pp. 76-108.

39 DoYouYoga, She quit her PR job to become a yoga teacher: Here's why, <https://www.doyouyoga.com/she-quit-her-pr-job-to-become-a-yoga-teacher-heres-why-video-17440/> (accessed 09.09.2017).

40 Kyle Takaki, Embodied knowing: The tacit dimension in Johnson and Lakoff, and Merleau-Ponty, *Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2009, pp. 26-39.

41 This is an entertaining podcast on the philology and politics behind *namaste*: Helen Zaltzman, Allusionist 55: *Namaste*, <https://www.theallusionist.org/allusionist/namaste> (accessed 09.09.2017).

talists'. What is considered 'unyogic' is typically to be avoided and shunned, while people who present such perceptibly non-normative behaviour are to be necessarily *othered*,⁴² as it is seen as a polluting outside influence that could potentially sully one's yoga practice and spiritual journey. The essentialist claim is that yoga is seen as offering a protective shield that can block out any perceived negativity, and help one to understand the supposed inherent unity of the self, spirit and broader community. This is not always the case, as Sherman (above), shows in her promotion of her 'Goddess Yoga Project'; that will 'shed light on your dark side'. However, as a representative example, one yoga student I met during fieldwork explains that they do not listen to the news for 'spiritual reasons'. In contrast, Warrior⁴³ expresses how her own, impersonal, academic study of the hugging saint, Amma, mentioned above, did not lead to her becoming a devotee; but led to the perception by the guru's devotees that she was not spiritually mature 'to appreciate the bounty of the Mata's grace', which would mean Warrior was not able to 'secure the protection of a guru'. This type of in-group thinking is common amongst the followers of charismatic authority figures, like gurus, who seek meaning and a magical sense of transcendence through the charismatic connection.⁴⁴

Spiritual bypassing refers to an individual's avoidance of, or disinterestedness towards, working on what Jung called, the 'shadow'. Even though there is a trademarked brand of yoga, Shadow Yoga⁴⁵. Also, a practice known as *chāyopāsana* 'shadow gazing', was popularised by Swami Satyananda⁴⁶. And, there is a very good dialogue between the ideas of Jung and Patañjali by Whitney⁴⁷. Modern postural yoga, and the classical iterations, are not psychodynamic therapies in and of themselves. Based on a meta-analysis, Khalsa *et. al.*⁴⁸ provide an overview of contemplative practices, like mindfulness practices and meditation, and how they can help improve the efficacy of cognitive behavioural therapy. Focusing on general anxiety disorder, yoga's efficacy is said to be based on psycho-physiological invoking of the relaxation response, which reduces the cognitive (ruminative and mind wandering) activity of the brain's default mode network (DMN). As Whitney explains, the classical yoga text of Patañjali emphasises a direct experience of 'truth' that is distinct from intellectual speculation

42 Michel Foucault, Of other spaces: Utopias and heterotopias, *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, October, 1984, pp. 1-9.

43 Maya Warrior, *Hindu selves in a modern world: Guru faith in the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission*, Routledge Curzon, New York, 2005, p. 22.

44 Max Weber, *Max Weber on charisma and institution building*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968; Charles Lindholm, Charisma, crowd psychology and altered states of consciousness, *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1992, pp. 287-310; Charles Lindholm, Authenticity, anthropology and the sacred, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 2, 2003, pp. 331-338.

45 Shadow Yoga, www.shadowyoga.com (accessed 09.09.2017).

46 Muktibodhananda Saraswati, Swara yoga: Part 6: The elements of swara yoga, <http://www.yogamag.net/archives/1982/fjune82/swara6.shtml> (accessed 13.09.2017).

47 Leanne Whitney, *Consciousness in Jung and Patañjali*, Routledge, New York, 2018, p. 17.

48 Manjit K. Khalsa, *et. al.*, Yoga-enhanced cognitive behavioral therapy (Y-CBT) for anxiety management: A pilot study, *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2015, pp. 364-371.

and discursive reasoning; which focuses on discriminating pure consciousness from the modifications of the mind. Yet, regardless of the cognitive steps inherent in Patañjali's pithy statements, these 'therapies' have an other-worldly aim of *kaivalya* (isolation); which is neither beneficial in a counter-hegemonic way, neither is it necessarily beneficial in a cognitive way, at least not without being retrofitted.

Even though most yoga teachers are not trained psychotherapists or counsellors, they find themselves in the tricky position of being asked to offer what is, ostensibly, medical advice. This could be related to diet and nutrition, or psycho-spiritual matters. In recent times, this has resulted in an increase in training related to *trauma-sensitive yoga*.⁴⁹ However, trauma-sensitive yoga is not the yoga practiced by most yoga enthusiasts or teachers, and this form of yoga-inflected therapy is not generally found in yoga teacher training manuals. McCartney⁵⁰ has created a comprehensive, yet incomplete, map of global trauma-sensitive yoga providers. It shows that this modality is predominantly a global north and Western phenomenon that demonstrates three main clusters in: North America, Western/Northern Europe, and Australia. This suggests that the perceived value of both yoga and the cultural importance/relevance of dealing with trauma by various countries, differs.

Another aspect of spiritual bypassing found in *Yogaland*, which is more pertinent to this paper, relates to the interpersonal and socio-political realms. One key dispositional trait amongst citizens of *Yogaland* is a general aversion to any discussion of politics. A central reason for this is that there is an inherent narrative which proposes that yoga and politics do not, or should not, mix. Yet, in and of itself, any assertion of an apolitical position is a political statement. Moreover, the birth of modern yoga during the colonial period was a direct, counter-hegemonic, political action to create strong, virile, masculine, yoga bodies that could help with the independence movement, and which would act as an antithesis to the colonial opinion that Indian men were too effeminate.⁵¹

The *biomoral narrative* combines with what Copeman and Ikegame⁵² describe as a Foucauldian-inspired, neo-liberal, political force of 'guru governmentality' arrogation that justifies, divinely, the 'true' interests of the nation. While Berger⁵³ discusses how Ayurveda's biomorality is based on an ahistorical, amorphous notion of ancientness; which is presented as a viable paradigm for mo-

49 David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper, *Overcoming trauma through yoga: Reclaiming your body*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, 2011.

50 Patrick McCartney, Trauma-sensitive yoga global network, <https://www.yogascapesinjapan.com/yoga-maps.html> (accessed 04.07.2018).

51 Joseph S. Alter, Nature cure and Ayurveda: Nationalism, viscosity, and bio-ecology in India, *Body & Society*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2014, pp. 3-28; Elliot Goldberg, *The path of modern yoga: The history of an embodied spiritual practice*, Inner Traditions, Toronto, 2016.

52 Jarrod Copeman & Aya Ikegame, Guru logics, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2012, pp. 289-336.

53 Rachel Berger, From the biomoral to the biopolitical: Ayurveda's political histories, *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2013, pp. 48-64.

ernity, we can understand modern, global yoga in the same way. The following proposition from the Government of India's AYUSH Ministry explains the potential moral and spiritual benefits possible, if everyone simply practiced yoga:

Yoga is an evolutionary process in the development of human consciousness. Evolution of total consciousness does not necessarily begin in any particular man rather it begins only if one chooses it to begin. The vices like use of alcohol and drugs, working exhaustively, indulging too much in sex and other stimulation is to seek oblivion, a return to unconsciousness. Indian yogis begin from the point where western psychology end. If Freud's [sic] psychology is the psychology of disease and Maslow's psychology is the psychology of the healthy man then Indian psychology is the psychology of enlightenment. In Yoga, it is not a question of psychology of man rather it is a question of higher consciousness. It is not also the question of mental health, rather, it is question of spiritual growth.⁵⁴

This type of rhetoric is implicit within a nation building project; which has a deeply, albeit, bodily fascist undertone. Pleasure, according to Pronger⁵⁵, is almost metaphysical. This, we can appreciate, is central to the pleasure of losing (or finding) oneself in the movement of *the yoga flow* or the metaphysical, mystical body of the yoga tribe, or nation-state. As Foucault explains in the preface of Deleuze and Guattari,⁵⁶ bodily fascism is a result of internalising desire; which in this sense encompasses the 'fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us'.

One wonders whether it is possible for the yoga practitioner to operate outside of a fascist-neoliberal paradigm. This is evidenced in a socially asymmetric sense by perceptibly *unyogic* people who are considered too fat and lazy, or who smoke, etc.; and, are, according to the biomoral narrative within and beyond *Yogaland*, not considered legitimate members of an ideal society.⁵⁷ A perfect example of this is found in inspirational videos of people losing excessive amounts of body weight through yoga.⁵⁸ As Godrej⁵⁹ discusses, postural yoga, at least facilitates the self-discipline and rationality to create the 'perfect subject-citizen' who is possibly able to resist 'unhealthy' temptations. At least, it can create an environment where acceptance into particular yoga tribes will be determined by whether one can uphold certain values, like Jivanmukti Yoga's penchant for

54 Ministry of AYUSH, Yoga as evolutionary process, <http://ayush.gov.in/about-the-systems/yoga/salient-features-yoga/yoga-evolutionary-process> (accessed 09.09.2017).

55 Brian Pronger, *Body fascism: Salvation in the technology of physical fitness*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2012.

56 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983, p. viii.

57 Patrick McCartney, Utopian symmetries: Reflections on future worlds and transglobal yoga, *The Journal of the International Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Symmetry*, Vol. 1, 2016, pp. 86-89.

58 Ayankeng, Man lost 133kg in 15 months by doing yoga, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPU01Wh46MQ> (accessed 11.09.2017).

59 Godrej, 2015, p.13.

veganism.⁶⁰

Biomoral politics effect other consequences beyond the individual's body. Such as, the ways in which yoga is involved in the commodification of identity at a state level.⁶¹ Linked to spiritual bypassing, the apolitical attitude of many of *Yogaland's* citizens is capitalised by the Indian state and its fascist/ethno-nationalist/supremacist aspirations of the BJP (Indian People's Party) government; which is an unapologetic Hindu supremacist regime.⁶² The Indian state, while late to the game, attempts to leverage more of yoga's cultural capital to legitimise its soft power operations abroad. It is through the very production of desire, pleasure, and the serious pursuit of leisure, which sits at the core of the global wellness industry's logic, that citizens of *Yogaland* are made more malleable, docile, and uncritical; yet, also, unwitting participants in this global agenda. As Bernays⁶³ demonstrates, the engineering of consent amongst groups is just as possible in times of peace, as it is in times of war. And, what is more emblematic of peace than yoga? Take, for example, the International Day of Yoga slogan, 'Yoga for Harmony & Peace'.

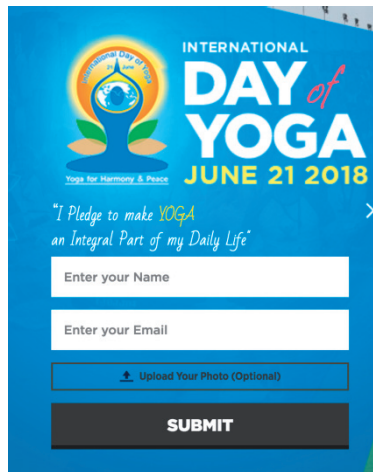


Figure 1. International Day of Yoga Logo and Pledge⁶⁴

60 Emma Henry, Jivanmukti: Where yoga and veganism meet, <http://www.veganfoodandliving.com/jivamukti-yoga-veganism-meet/> (accessed 05.07.2018).

61 Renu Modi and Ian Taylor, The Indian diaspora in Africa: The commodification of the Hindu Rashtra, *Globalizations*, Vol. 14, No. 6, 2017, pp. 911-929.

62 Since ancient regimes existed, governments, ruling bodies, and rulers have relied on the idea and symbolic capital of gods to provide legitimacy. The same occurs within *Yogaland*, today. Therefore, with the overlapping themes that explore how religions and politics function in relation to the global popularity and instrumentalisation of yoga, I situate this paper within the discipline known as the Politology of Religion, see: Miroljub Jevtic, Political Science and Religion, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, pp. 59-69.

63 Edward L. Bernays, The engineering of consent. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 250, 1947, pp. 113-120.

64 Ministry of AYUSH, International Day of Yoga, <http://yoga.ayush.gov.in/> (accessed 10.07.2018).

Furthermore, the pledge 'to make YOGA an Integral Part of my Daily Life' is deeply problematic; as the *integral* adjective is actually a cipher for the deeper, sanitised architecture of *Hindutva* ideology.⁶⁵ This specific example shows the subtle ways in which global yoga is used by the Indian state to normalise and legitimise its ethno-nationalist activities;⁶⁶ which include the explicit aspiration of undermining the democratic and secular Constitution of India to create a Hindu theocratic state; and ultimately terminates with the pan-global aspiration to create a Hindu version of an ISIS caliphate. Both of these events are predicted to occur between 2020 and 2030.⁶⁷ योगस्तान (*Yogastān*) is a euphemistically synonymous term I coined for both *Yogaland* and the ethno-nationalist Hindu *rāṣṭra* (nation).⁶⁸ However, this statist aspiration is short sighted. Rather, the pragmatic ideologues have worked to infuse directly the ideology into the dominant narratives of the global yoga industry; which in turn is stimulated by the soft power aspirations of the Indian state that then use the chimera of the Hindu nation (that is, the 'unbroken India' (*akhaṇḍa bhārata*) as a way to disguise the now preferred option of creating a 'cultural India' that can be understood through the idea of a *Bhārata Mahāsaṅgha* (Great Union of India). This, in effect, could consist of a federation of like-minded nations; or, even an informal, yet post-national, cultural zeitgeist that positions India as the 'global guru (*viśva guru*)' through the symbolic and cultural capital of yoga.⁶⁹

During my ethnographic enquiries, I am often met with comments that suggest I either do not know what I am talking about, or that my knowledge of yoga is exceptionally poor. A common occurrence involves an apparent 'back to basics' lesson that includes appeals to authority and tradition with regard to the romanticised notions of what yoga is supposedly about. The argument put forward is that these appeals fall quite neatly into the schema involved with internalising desire; which is involved in constructing an identity that enables conformity to the normative expressions of a group; which are undeniably part of the bodily fascist, neo-liberal, biomoral regime of power; and, which sits at the core of the global popularity and consumption of yoga-inflected lifestyles. For

65 Patrick McCartney, The unintended consequences of the International Day of Yoga, <https://www.dailyo.in/variety/international-yoga-day-soft-power-hindutva-narendra-modi-deen-dayal-upadhyaya-hedgewar/story/1/25021.html> (accessed 05.07.2018). For a deeper overview of this particular topic, see Patrick McCartney, The shadowlands of yogatopia: Unlikely alliances, strategic syncretism and de-post-colonizing urobolic yogatopia(s), *Asian Ethnology*, 2019, Vol. 77. No. 2.

66 Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the idea of Hindu nationalism*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2011.

67 Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, Establish the Hindu Nation as expected by the guru principle, <https://hinduexistence.org/2015/08/01/establish-the-hindu-nation-as-expected-by-the-guru-principle/> (accessed 06.09.2016); Press Trust India, India will be a Hindu nation by 2020, world by 2030: VHP leader Ashok Singhal, http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/by-2020-india-will-be-hindu-nation-world-by-2030-ashok-singhal/#.VjSzZ_RjIM4.twitter (accessed 20.07.2015).

68 Patrick McCartney, Sanskrit and utopian aspirations, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ap00H4ksN-0&t=29s> (accessed 04.05.2017).

69 Bhanu Dhamija, Dream of Greater India: Forget Akhand Bharat or Hindu Rashtra, Bharat Mahasangh of like-minded nations is a more feasible goal, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-edit-page/dream-of-greater-india-forget-akhand-bharat-or-hindu-rashtra-bharat-mahasangh-of-like-minded-nations-is-a-more-feasible-goal/> (accessed 03.03.2019).

instance, one exchange led to a global yogi telling me that the definition of yoga is encapsulated in the moral-ethical *yamas* and *niyamas*,⁷⁰ which are found in the yoga treatise of Patañjali.

However, this appeal to scriptural authority, in some ways, demonstrates a yogically-fundamentalist attitude; as there was simply no individual articulation made by my interlocutor apart from quoting scripture. This unquestionable faith in dogma to explain all of social reality that is explained by reference to one indubitable entity or principle is one of the defining features of fundamentalism present amongst global yogis. Moreover, as Khalikova⁷¹ explains, through the rhetoric of the popular guru, Baba Ramdev, whose Patañjali yoga and Ayurveda empire is worth billions of dollars, we can appreciate how he weaves a 'neo-liberal quest for health with nationalist sentiments and consumerist desires' that strengthen the individual's body and the metaphysical body of the nation-state. Thus, non-Indians/Hindus are not immune from the nationalistic fervour inherent within guru rhetoric. Often, the 'hard *Hindutva*' is essentialised and softened for banal consumption through, as Aramuvadan⁷² explains, the transcoding of Romanticism via appeals to identity, community and history; which operate through reconstituted cultural memory, as opposed to documentable influence. Neoliberalism is an indelible partner of the Indian state's Hindu supremacist agenda. Which, similar to the rhetoric of global yoga, obfuscates the harder end of ideology through romantic appeals to holism and deep ecology that are present,⁷³ also, in the literature of Nazi Germany. Take, for example, the 'Romantic' mind-body-spirit-earth themes that were part of an ethic to create 'god men' through naturopathic and homeopathic modalities combined with yoga. Not to mention, the ideal that Nazi physicians like Karl Kötschau promoted; which centre around the machine metaphor. *Machinenmenschen* (machine people) were not externally controlled; but, rather, self-controlled people who developed their own powers through connections to Nature; who did not rely on medical technology, and who were capable of surviving without artificial environments.

Hargreaves⁷⁴ *Typology of Modern Yoga* complicates de Michelis⁷⁵ previous typology. It consists of modern soteriological yoga and modern postural yoga (Figure 2). Within the domain of soteriologically-focused modern yoga, there are

70 Hillari Dowdle, Path to happiness: 9 interpretations of the Yamas + Niyamas, <https://www.yogajournal.com/yoga-101/path-happiness> (accessed 11.09.2017). See: Jack Sidnell, Ethical practice and techniques of the self at a yoga school in southern India, *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 2017, pp. 13-17, for an interesting ethnographic perspective.

71 Venera R. Khalikova, The Ayurveda of Baba Ramdev: Biomoral consumerism, national duty and the biopolitics of "homegrown" medicine in India, *South Asia*: Vol. 40, No. 1 2017, pp. 105-122.

72 Srinivas Aravamudan, *Guru English: South Asian religion in a cosmopolitan language*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006, p. 63.

73 Patrick McCartney, The Shadowlands of Yogatopia: Unlikely Alliances, Strategic Syncretism and De-postcolonizing Yogatopia(s), *Asian Ethnology*, forthcoming.

74 Jacqueline Hargreaves, Typology of Modern Yoga, <http://theluminescent.blogspot.com/2016/11/typology-of-modern-yoga.html> (accessed 09.09.2018).

75 Elizabeth de Michelis, *A history of modern yoga: Patanjali and western esotericism*, Bloomsbury, London, 2005.

certain 'spiritual' dispositions that crossover into the more secular, posturally-focused domains.

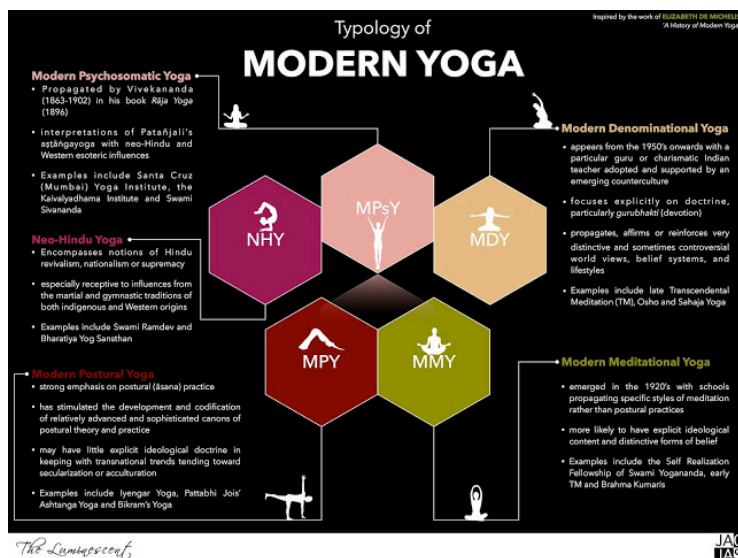


Figure 2. Typology of Modern Yoga

Singer⁷⁶ suggests that religious and cultural performances form the ultimate units of observation. Building upon Rostas⁷⁷, Steiner⁷⁸ explains how performativity deploys consciously formulated strategies implying creative resourcefulness: 'Performativity is a measure of the effort (or energy) put into action... on the whole, it is the performativity that gives an enactment its zest, that makes ritual and/or performance interesting to watch'. While Balzani⁷⁹ refers to the affective quality of religious performances and their role in cultivating particular emotions, Bailey explains that this particular model of cultural performance:

contemplates conduct that is profoundly disintellectual. As modelled, the performance is not, even when it purports to be, an invitation to be rational, to doubt, to ask questions even-handedly. It is an enticement directly to feeling, to unquestioning belief; an implantation of values and in that respect a form of 'diseducation' it is designed to make people not think, not question, not calcu-

76 Milton Singer, *When a great tradition modernizes: An anthropological approach to Indian civilization*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1972.

77 Susanna Rostas, From ritualization to performativity, in: *Ritual, performance, media* edited by Felicia Hughes-Freeland, Routledge, London, 2003, pp. 85-103.

78 Karin Steiner, How to attain heaven: The Vajapeya sacrificial ritual, in: *The power of performance: Actors, audiences and observers of cultural performances in India* edited by Heidrun Brückner, Elisabeth Schömbucher and Phillip B. Zarrilli, Manohar, Delhi, 2007, pp. 91.

79 Marzia Balzani, 2007, Spectacle and power in the organization of kingly ritual: The case of Jodhpur, Rajasthan, in: *The power of performance: Actors, audiences and observers of cultural performances in India* Heidrun Brückner, Elisabeth Schömbucher and Phillip B. Zarrilli, 2007, Manohar, New Delhi, p. 27.

late, only to feel and ultimately to act on the 'truth' that is presented to them is that.⁸⁰

The potentially liberating consequence of knowledge, then, is mediated by an individual's ability to access and embody the pre-packaged 'legitimate yogic dispositions' available within *Yogaland*. If an individual seeks acceptance then they must earn the trust of a guru, and their community of faith, through demonstrating a sustained appreciation, and non-critical stance, towards the guru's didactic exposition (*pravacana*).

Bearing this in mind, it leads me to an anarchist critique of *Yogaland*. While anarchism focuses on ending the tyranny of oppression of the working class, and rests upon on what Peter Kropotkin describes as: Liberty, Equality and Solidarity. We find that yoga has, in some ways, less social emancipatory potential than it otherwise promises. Not only this, but many recent yoga graduates of various teacher training programs are lured into exploitative situations where they either work for free, or under duress, due to the emotional and human labour they are required to perform to gain admission, recognition and acceptance. Yoga studio owners, just like gurus with their devotees, quite often aim not to pay their new yoga teachers; or instead, they offer them the opportunity to 'gain experience' through volunteering. The flip side to this exploitation of inexperienced yoga teachers is that educated teachers may find it hard to get a job, or are forced into receiving less pay because studio owners want to keep the running costs down.⁸¹

This arrogant exploitation normally falls under the legitimization strategy of *sevā* ('divine' service) or *karma yoga*; which is a type of yoga that positions the doer as not attached to the outcomes of actions. While Godrej⁸² frames *karma yoga* as a Gandhian-inspired 'ascetic activism'; the darker side of this utopian potential is that *karma yoga* is often a euphemism for exploitive labour practices, which is rife within *Yogaland*. It relies upon emotional blackmail to effect an outcome based on proving one's loyalty, in order to gain access into, and ascension within, various social networks.⁸³ This ties in with the concept of pathological altruism; which is an extreme form of compassion that can result in individuals having difficulty passing judgment of right versus wrong, and ignoring, bypassing, or forgiving all transgressions and failures by in-group members.⁸⁴

Emotional capital is not something that Pierre Bourdieu ever discussed. However, it is a useful species of capital to help understand the transference of

80 Frederick G. Bailey, Cultural performance, authenticity, and second nature, in: *The politics of cultural performance* edited by David Parkin, Lionel Caplan and Humphrey Fisher, Berghahn Books, Oxford, 1996, p. 5.

81 Amy Ippoliti, Amy Ippoliti on finding happiness through seva, <https://www.yogajournal.com/lifestyle/amy-ippoliti-on-finding-happiness-through-seva> (accessed 12.09.2017).

82 Godrej, 2015, p. 20.

83 Patrick McCartney, Śāntamūrti: The legitimate disposition(s) of the 'Temple of Peace' social network, *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture*, Vol. 8, pp. 65-104; Patrick McCartney, Suggesting śantarasa in Shanti Mandir's satsanga: Ritual, performativity and ethnography in Yogaland. *Ethnologia Actualis*, 2017, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 81-122.

84 Barbara Oakley, et. al. (eds.) *Pathological altruism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012.

affect. It is another way of understanding the concept of emotional intelligence, or the feelings and beliefs that enable an organisation's employees or members of a community, to form successful relationships for the 'greater good'.⁸⁵ It is considered to be a type of 'booster' capital that fills the gaps and allows for social connections to be made due to its energising capacity.⁸⁶ Jackson and Burke⁸⁷ refer to Reay in a discussion of the gendered and classed nature of emotional capital. Reay⁸⁸ argues that investments towards lifelong learning; which is a particularly neoliberal pursuit, as found in the popularity of investing in a yoga teacher-training course, give higher returns in environments where economic capital can thrive. This translates to domains where economic security and high social status exist together. Therefore, yoga's ostensibly middle-class world is energised by the social connections people make within these commodified yoga tribes, where emotional well-being is made available.

Sport and fascism have a long history in the ideas of nation building.⁸⁹ The way in which yoga is situated within a *bourgeois* context to create stronger, healthier bodies—as part of a biomoral creed, *i.e.* if you do yoga then you are a better person—and if enough people do it, then the nation and world will enter a veritable golden age of enlightenment and eco-sensitivity, fits into this very paradigm of a nationalist ethos. Whether one agrees or not, there is something eerily uncomfortable at the level of global yoga. While Mangan focuses on muscular masculinity as a moral metaphor in a similar way to Alter⁹⁰; it is interesting to consider the implications of gender within the global yoga industry, which is predominated by women. Ikeda⁹¹ demonstrates how women's bodies, in the form of robust physical maternity, have been continuously developed since the introduction of women's physical education in Japan. This has routinely been employed by the Japanese state after the 1895 Sino-Japanese War in an effort to strengthen the nation. Even though the yogic body might potentially⁹² act as a site of resistance, this also admits that these yogic principles of self-mastery and self-discipline are the most likely for subjects of neoliberalism to resonate with.

Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate the similarities between two types of nationalist-fascist public sports performances. While the first image comes from Inter-

85 Cambridge Online Dictionary, Emotional capital, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/emotional-capital> (accessed 26.08.2015).

86 Benedicte Gendron, Why emotional capital matters in education and in labour? Toward an optimal exploitation of human capital and knowledge management, *Les Cahiers de la Maison des Sciences Economiques*, 2004, Vol. 113, pp. 1-35.

87 Sue Jackson and Penny Jane Burke, *Reconceptualising lifelong learning: Feminist interventions*, Routledge, New York, 2007.

88 Diane Reay, Shaun's story: Troubling discourses of white working class masculinities, *Gender and Education*, 2002, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 221-234.

89 Patrizia Dogliani, Sport and fascism, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2012, pp. 326-343; James A. Mangan (ed.), *Shaping the superman: Fascist body as political icon in Aryan fascism*, Routledge, London, 2013.

90 Joseph S. Alter, *The wrestler's body: Identity and ideology in North India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992.

91 Keiko Ikeda, Ryōsai-kembo, liberal education and maternal feminism under fascism: Women and sport in modern Japan, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2010, pp. 537-552.

92 Godrej, 2015, p. 12.

national Day of Yoga 2017, the second image is from a Nazi parade. Both events include group fitness regimes that aim to inculcate the participants into a (post) nationalist temperament. Not only are the visual similarities striking, but so are the aspirations and logic, behind them.



International Yoga Day -



Figure 3. International Yoga Day, 2017, New Delhi⁹³

Figure 4. A National Socialist event at Nuremberg, mid-1930s⁹⁴

This *Hindutva* supremacist ideology is used to support the notion that a Hindu ethnic identity should be promoted at the state level above all other groups within the Indian state. This privileging of an upper caste, hyper-masculine, communal worldview leads to intolerance towards females and minority groups; especially those that do not fall within the 'cohesive Hindu identity' rubric. While it is positioned as a justifiable post-colonial response to the hegemony of Western-centrism, and can be seen as the Indian state's own version of American exceptionalism; in this light, the Indian state believes itself to be special, and to have a unique mission to transform the world. Obviously, yoga plays a crucial part in this ideology, as the Indian state considers itself to be the 'world guru'.⁹⁵ Therefore, whether we understand it, or not, yoga, our yoga practice, and our yoga body is indelibly linked to broader political machinations.

Political Hinduism, as *Hindutva*, is currently the dominant mode of expression; which, at a secular level, does not support the current secular, democratic Constitution of India. Instead, in part, it is used to facilitate the promotion of a particularly neoliberal, fascist, majoritarian, currently-ruling political party; which made *Hindutva* its official ideology in 1989. However, as Radhika Desai⁹⁶ explains, the 'mobilisation of the lower orders to form the instrument of extra-state

93 Piyal Adhikary, International Yoga Day in pictures, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/gallery/2017/jun/21/international-yoga-day-in-pictures> (accessed 12.09.2017).

94 Kelsey Campbell-Dollaghan, Should Germany spend millions preserving Nazi rally grounds?, <https://www.gizmodo.com.au/2013/09/should-germany-spend-millions-preserving-nazi-rally-grounds/> (accessed 12.09.2017).

95 Priyanka Chopra, India: The world guru, <http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/reflexions-india-the-world-guru-1009629> (accessed 14.07.2015).

96 Radhika Desai, Hindutva and fascism, <http://www.epw.in/journal/2016/53/review-article/hindutva-and-fascism.html> (accessed 12.09.2017).

violence may make the fascist organisation seem distinct from, even opposed to, the (at least apparently) more cultivated ruling classes but fascism never comes to power without their explicit consent and connivance'. This extra-state violence of the lower orders is expressed in many ways. One clear example is the ongoing *gau-bhakti* (cow vigilantism) phenomenon that continues to plague Indian civil society. Prime Minister Modi's declaration that the extra-state murders and beatings are unacceptable has come too late to demonstrate much empathy for the people mourning the loss of their family members to this extremist vigilantism.⁹⁷ This extra-state violence is performed by storm-troopers; which is the distinctive element of fascism. Alankar⁹⁸ explains the central ideology of the *Sangh Parivar* (Family of Organisations); which, due to the growth of different groups that do not always align in ideology or practice,⁹⁹ especially when in power; this large group of associated Hindu supremacist organisations is better understood by the term *Hindutva Parivar* (Family of *Hindutva*).¹⁰⁰

Now, to discuss some concrete ways in which this entanglement, in and between worlds, occurs; which may help us better understand the position we are in; and, ultimately, how to untangle ourselves, if we might choose to do so.

Entanglement, Yoga and the Body

Erwin Schrödinger (1887-1961) was an Austrian Physicist. His critical thought experiment, popularly known as the 'cat in a box', was an attempt to address the paradoxes of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics. This is grossly oversimplifying things; however, the experiment shows that, at a theoretical level, until the lid of the box containing the cat is removed, the cat would be both 'dead' and 'alive'. Schrödinger developed the term *verschränkung* (entanglement) to describe the paradox related to 'quantum superposition'.¹⁰¹ According to Hugh Everett's *Many-Worlds Interpretation* of quantum mechanics, there is the possibility of 'decoherent worlds' existing simultaneously.¹⁰² This refers to the possibility that, once the lid of the box is removed, the 'observer states' related to the cat being dead or alive, form; which results in each 'observer state' becoming entangled with a dead cat, or a cat that is alive. This situation is a bit like when an email appears in the inbox, and without knowing whether the contents thereof will be good or bad, it is not until the email is opened, and read, that the

97 TNN, Killing in the name of gau bhakti not acceptable, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/killing-in-name-of-gau-bhakti-not-acceptable-says-modi/articleshow/59378802.cms> (accessed 12.09.2017).

98 Alankar, The dichotomy between Manusmriti and a liberal constitution, <https://thewire.in/56983/dichotomy-manusmriti-liberal-constitution/> (accessed 12.09.2017).

99 Editorial, <https://www.madhyamam.com/en/editorial/2018/apr/23/hindutva-parivar-post-thogadia> (accessed 09.07.2018).

100 Madan G. Chitkara, *Hindutva Parivar*, APH Publishing, New Delhi, 2003.

101 Jeffrey Bub, Quantum entanglement and information, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/qt-entangle/> (accessed 12.09.2017).

102 Peter Byrne, The many worlds of Hugh Everett, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/hugh-everett-biography/> (accessed 12.09.2017).

viewer becomes entangled with the contents. Before the email is read, anything is possible. Different social worlds, and the participant-observers therein, can become entangled; in worlds of their own making, and in the worlds of others. These worlds might exist in parallel or overlap and intersect; and, yet, at the same time, be otherwise oblivious of each other; but, nonetheless, have a symbiotic-commensalic relationship.

In the spirit of Karl Popper, this heuristic thought experiment is a variant of the 'cat in a box'; in which the 'cat' is replaced with a generic concept of global 'yoga'. Instead of the 'box', there is the 'body' of the yoga practitioner. Therefore, it is possible, at least in this thought experiment, that the many different 'worlds' of yoga can exist within the metaphysical body of the global yoga practitioner. Up until a time, at least, that one starts to question things. But, then, what happens? What happens when the self-assured yoga practitioner begins to doubt the narratives they have imbibed along their spiritual, wellness, fitness quest?

The *dis-embedded* image of the cat is a strategic use of a quantum physics paradigm. Using the metaphor of the cat—alive-and-dead-in-a-box—highlights the ease with which new religious movements (NRMs) selectively draw upon scientific literature, particularly quantum mechanics and string theory. Deepak Chopra is a case in point. He blends new-age, yoga-related advice and quantum physics into a pseudo-scientific genre. As Eriksen explains,¹⁰³ through the commodification of local products into distant imaginary *-scapes*, many concepts borrowed from science become theoretically dis-embedded through their use in popular mediums; which promotes 'representational incorrectness'. This is evidenced in a series of lectures facilitated by the Vedic India Foundation,¹⁰⁴ which present an idea of quantum physics with a new-age interpretation of Vedic cosmology that ultimately serves to create a Vedic India and world through combining it with string theory.¹⁰⁵ However, Woit¹⁰⁶ argues strongly against this position, 'Virtually every theoretical physicist in the world rejects all of this as nonsense and the work of a crackpot'. Ultimately, promoters of 'Vedic Science' aim to legitimise a Hindu nationalist worldview.¹⁰⁷

This partly demonstrates how the reverse process can occur that enables yoga-related ideas and practices to be dis-embedded and float into other worlds. Seen out of its original context, the idea of a 'Hindu nation and world' can seem more benign than what it really is; which might lead to the banal, affective consumption and support for what is, ostensibly, an authoritarian ideology. The

103 Thomas H. Eriksen, *Globalization: The key concepts*, Bloomsbury, New York, 2014.

104 Vedic India Foundation, International conference to re-establish Vedic India, <http://www.vedicindiafoundation.org/> (accessed 14.07.2015).

105 Scientific Basis for Vedic India, Dr. John Hagelin: Veda and physics: The science and technology of the unified field, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4u3f7_p18c&t=22s (accessed 09.07.2018).

106 Peter Woit, *Not even wrong: The failure of string theory and the continuing challenge to unify the laws of physics*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2006.

107 Nanda, 2003, p. 95.

same thing happens in the multi-trillion-dollar global wellness industry; which includes the global yoga, health and spiritual tourism industries. As has become glaringly clear in this post-truth world, opinions and feelings seem to matter more than facts. This ties back to the cultivation of affect that is central to the rhetorically arrogant strategies of yoga gurus and their political/religious allies.

Without becoming self-reflexive and critical of our consumption of yoga-inflected lifestyles, many possibilities remain. We need to remove the metaphorical lid of our own box to see how the yoga we practice is entangled with other worlds we might not know of, or appreciate. A very real possibility is that the yoga lineage a person has invested in is actively and subtly infused with a Hindu supremacist ideology. Not to mention the white washing capacity of capitalism to filter out any ethnically-othered mention of Indian cultures through the appropriating process. But, if the cognitive dissonance grows, it will take a very brave person, indeed, who might be willing to question whether the narratives they are consuming are *true*, or not. It seems that no amount of warrior pose could be enough preparation, for this part of the spiritual journey, at least.

In fact, *if* we do begin to peer inside our own yoga body, the observer states form and we become further entangled, possibly in a ball of string, which is theoretically endless. Therefore, it is understandable that some yoga practitioners choose not to explore the more intrepid and perilous topography of *Yogaland*. It is worth asking, though: up until the point that we do begin to enquire, do these worlds remain merely potentials? Does it matter that, through the influence of the Sanskrit-yoga episteme, one might buy Ayurvedic products and yoga paraphernalia from controversial organisations like Patanjali Yogpeeth and Divya Pharmacy, whose founders are proud supporters of right-wing Hindu supremacism, which aims to create a Hindu nation and pan-global Hindu theocratic state we could otherwise understand as a *Hindutva*-styled caliphate? Baba Ramdev, the founder of Patanjali Yogpeeth, is fond of sharing his aspiration to create a 'Vedic India and world'.¹⁰⁸ This is the catch-22 conundrum for global yoga practitioners. How far into the yogi's cave are we willing to peer? And, what might we see as the shadows of *Hindutva* and cultural appropriation dance on the wall?

Global yoga represents a neoliberal, bourgeois compulsion to improve the self. Yoga can be considered more than just a 'spiritual science'. It is a technology that helps with, as the Greeks called it, the 'art of life' (*techne you biou*).¹⁰⁹ This is one reason why it has become so popular, globally, and is marketed specifically as a very cosmopolitan, middle-class pursuit.

The global *-scapes* of *Yogaland* consist of various opinions about yoga's origins. This is evidence of, regardless of alternative opinion, that yoga is deeply political. *Yogaland* has a broad, fertile spectrum of opinions regarding yoga's history

108 Vedic India Foundation, Our ultimate goal is the development of a Vedic India and a Vedic World: Swami Ramdev, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WG7k42cg2W8&feature=youtu.be> (accessed 30.09.2017).

109 Gavin Flood, *The ascetic self: Subjectivity, memory and tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

and purpose. Because yoga serves as an instrument to counteract a perceived sense of disenchantment, the predominant narratives in the marketing of wellness and yoga quite often express romantic, anarchist-lite, eco-sensitive, utopian-idealised representations. An example comes from an article in Yoga Journal that explains how to harness the power of Hindu deities.¹¹⁰

However, as Alter discusses,¹¹¹ the birth of modern yoga occurred during the colonial period, and was directly related to the nationalist independence movement. Godrej¹¹² qualifies this as partially borrowed fitness techniques that involved nationalist aspirations and included an ethno-revivalism based around physical culture. Yoga, today, forms a central component of the Indian state's soft power agenda. Take, for example, the following, official, story related to the supposed origins, history and development of yoga, as found on the Government of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) website:

Several Thousand years ago, on the banks of the lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas, Adiyogi poured his profound knowledge into the legendary Saptarishis or "seven sages". The sages carried this powerful yogic science to different parts of the world, including Asia, the Middle East, Northern Africa and South America. Interestingly, modern scholars have noted and marvelled at the close parallels found between ancient cultures across the globe. However, it was in India that the yogic system found its fullest expression. Agastya, the Saptarishi who travelled across the Indian subcontinent, crafted this culture around a core yogic way of life.¹¹³

The quote from the MEA above represents the central tenet of the historical revisionist ideas of *Hindutva* logic; which proposes an alternative theory to the generally accepted Aryan Migration Theory;¹¹⁴ which explains how Sanskrit-speaking people moved into the subcontinent approximately 4000-3500 years ago. The antithetical view, known as the Out of India Theory, proposes that a Sanskrit-speaking people migrated out of India, and colonised the entire world. This concept has its roots in the fertile imagination of P.N. Oak¹¹⁵, in his 2-volume book, titled: *World Vedic Heritage: A History of Histories*. This historical revisionism is central to the post-colonial critique of Eurocentric perspectives; which is also

110 Tascha Eichenseher, How to use yantras to bring the power of the gods & goddesses into your daily life, <https://www.yogajournal.com/yoga-101/what-are-yantra-and-how-to-harness-their-energies> (accessed 12.09.2017).

111 Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in modern India: The body between science and philosophy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004.

112 Godrej, 2015, p. 4.

113 Ishwar V. Basavaraddi, Yoga: Its origin, history and development, www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?25096/Yoga+Its+Origin+History+and+Development (accessed 12.09.2017).

114 Edwin Bryant, *The quest for the origins of the Vedic culture and the Indo-Aryan migration debate*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001; Asko Parpola, The Dasas of the Rgveda as proto-Sakas of the Yaz I-related cultures: With a revised model for the protohistory of the Indo-Iranian speakers, in: *Journal of Indo-European Studies* edited by James P. Mallory, et. al., Institute for the Study of Man, Washington, 2012, pp. 221-264.

115 Purushottama N. Oak, *World Vedic heritage: A history of histories*, Hindi Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, 2003.

promoted by senior ministers and religious leaders.¹¹⁶ This incurable fondness for Oak's theories by senior members of the Indian government is something that Elst¹¹⁷ believes is a problem for the Indian state's reputation. As Truschke¹¹⁸ explains, 'In India, history is a matter of vibrant public debate, especially in the current political climate, in which Hindu nationalists seek to rewrite the past'. This leads to millions of yoga practitioners being tacitly enculturated into a normative 'way of life' that underpins an ahistorical civilisational ethos. Although, as Peter van der Veer¹¹⁹ asserts, any promotion of a civilisational ethos is potentially dangerous, particularly for the marginalised and oppressed minorities, who do not fit into the majoritarian, state-sanctioned narratives. Furthermore, many yoga gurus promote a 'soft *Hindutva*', which Meera Nanda explains:

Regardless of their styles, the prominent gurus of all three types have one thing in common: their soft *Hindutva*. While using the language of universalism, tolerance, good health, and peace, they very clearly propagate a world view of India as a Hindu nation, Hinduism as a superior religion, and the need to make India (indeed the whole world) more Hindu. Given their underlying Hindu nationalism, it is not a surprise that the Sangh Parivar counts on them to use their charisma to bring moderate Hindus into the *Hindutva* camp.¹²⁰

Even for the earnest yoga teacher-trainee, or scholar-practitioner, who wants to do the right thing, but is lost within a sea of misinformation; like other global yoga practitioners, there is very little appreciation of how politics and yoga are entangled. Instead, an apolitical disposition is valorised as emblematic of what many global yoga practitioners consider an 'authentic' or 'legitimate' yogic disposition to be. This is fertile ground for unwitting consumers of yoga-inflected lifestyles to be enculturated into a Hindu supremacist world view, without even realising it.

This ethno-nationalist ideology seeks to create a pan-global Hindu theocratic state, which is eerily similar to an ISIS caliphate.¹²¹ Yet, with all the discussions about radicalism, radical Islam, and terrorism, there is very little appreciation for how the soft power of the Indian state uses the cultural capital of yoga, and the prestige of Sanskrit, to subtly radicalise global yoga practitioners into unwitting support for its post-colonial, globally-hegemonic aspirations. And, if we are be-

116 First Post Staff, The whole world was Hindu, Russia was abode of rishis: New gyaan from VHP leaders, <http://www.firstpost.com/politics/the-whole-world-was-hindu-russia-was-abode-of-rishis-new-gyaan-from-vhp-leaders-1850505.html> (accessed 12.09.2017).

117 Koenraad Elst, The incurable Hindu fondness for P.N. Oak, <http://koenraadelst.blogspot.com.au/2010/06/incurable-hindu-fondness-for-pn-oak.html> (accessed 12.09.2017).

118 Audrey Truschke, Censoring Indian history, www.historytoday.com/audrey-truschke/censoring-indian-history (accessed 12.09.2017).

119 Peter van der Veer, *The value of comparison*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2016.

120 Nanda, 2009, p. 99.

121 Dhaval Kulkarni, Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders want whole world converted to Hinduism. www.dnaindia.com/india/report-vishwa-hindu-parishad-leaders-want-whole-world-converted-to-hinduism-2043938 (accessed 12.09.2017).

ing honest, why would there be any?

Take, for example, a talk by Swami Chidananda at the International Yoga Festival,¹²² in which he introduces India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, as the 'divine Prime Minister', 'who is a man of action and perfection', 'who has the vision, wisdom, mission, and plan, not only for India, but the entire world'.¹²³

Now, compare this with my ethnographic study of the Temple of Peace (Shanti Mandir) community.¹²⁴ Between 2012-13, I spent twelve-months in their ashram in Valsad District, Gujarat, India. During this time, I met many individuals who either lived in the ashram or came to visit, either for a few nights, or several weeks, if not months; or, in some cases, several years. One phenomenon relates to the overwhelming reluctance of international devotees of this tradition to engage in political discussions; or, rather, anything deemed 'unyogic'. On several occasions, it was made clear that talking about domestic and international politics was generally considered an unwelcome distraction to a devotee's *sādhana* (spiritual practice). Many international devotees explained how they had not come to India to think, or talk about, politics. Instead, they were there to deepen their understanding of 'yoga' and their relationship with their guru.

In contrast, many Indian residents and visitors to the ashram were much more open to talking about politics. A common sentiment was that they previously voted for the INC (Indian National Congress) party, but had since changed. The general response focused on the assertion that the Congress party was allegedly corrupt and is now 'the party for Muslims'; while the BJP (Indian People's Party) better represents the communal interests of Hindus. Not only this, but the overwhelming majority of Indian nationals, and NRIs (non-resident Indians) I spoke to in the ashram were proud of their support of Modi's BJP and the RSS. This is hardly surprising, as the ashram is located in his own state of Gujarat, where he ruled, controversially, as the Chief Minister for a decade. Even though, fifteen years on, the victims of anti-Muslim violence that occurred under Modi's watch still face intimidation and displacement after the state-sanctioned communal violence in 2002,¹²⁵ one senior member of the *Temple of Peace* community explained that, 'it was not as bad as what everyone thinks it was'. Alternatively, other, and normally younger devotees, had no idea that such violence, within such proximity to the ashram, ever occurred.

The *bhagvā dhvaj* is a flag that has been a symbol of Hindu religiosity and political identity for, what many would argue is, a very long time.¹²⁶ Stephen

122 International Yoga Festival, *International yoga festival*, <http://www.internationalyogafestival.org/> (accessed 12.09.2017).

123 Chidananda Saraswati, Prime Minister of India addresses the International Yoga Festival, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-shuf7KqP3E> (accessed 12.09.2017).

124 Shanti Mandir, <https://www.shantimandir.com/> (accessed 13.09.2017).

125 Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu nationalism and anti-Muslim violence in India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2012; Human Rights Watch, India: A decade on, Gujarat Justice Incomplete, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/24/india-decade-gujarat-justice-incomplete> (accessed 12.09.2017).

126 FPJ Bureau, RSS explains importance of saffron flag, <http://www.freepressjournal.in/india/rss-explains-importance-of-saffron->

Knapp is a high-ranking, long-standing member of the ISKCON movement, which is more commonly known as the *Hare Krishna* group. He is also the Co-chairman of the Vedic Friends Association; along with two promoters of *Hindutva*, namely, David Frawley and Jeffrey Armstrong. In various books and videos, Knapp proposes that the original humans were Sanskrit-speaking Vedic people, who had established a global empire.¹²⁷ His thesis is based entirely on that of the above mentioned P. N. Oak. These truth claims are the result of an exceptionally fertile mind; however, they gain lives of their own as a repeated factoid, not only amongst fringe-dwelling conspiracists, but high-ranking government ministers; which validates the idea that reconstituting India, and the world, into a reimagined 'Vedic' land is possible. Returning to the flag, Knapp describes it as consisting of two triangles:

The upper triangle being shorter than the lower one. The triangles represent the rising flames of burning fire. The flames rise in the upward direction, only those rising from the bottom being the longest. They teach us to rise above and become better always. The Bhagwa flag has existed and guided the Vedic society right from its origin. It has inspired and has been honored by the Vedic Saints and heroes. In ancient times, the warriors used to put on saffron robes and go to the battlefield. If they are victorious, they will rule and if vanquished, they might die on the battlefield and thus go to heaven--such was the motivating force for the heroes.¹²⁸

This is the flag of choice for the RSS and its affiliates, which they consider as their 'guru'.¹²⁹ Controversially, the RSS has for five decades refused to hoist the nation's tricolour flag at their Nagpur headquarters, saying they never would.¹³⁰ Moreover, as this article, titled: *The Significance of Bhagwa (Saffron) and Its Origin – Time Has Come for The World People to Get Saffronized Completely*, makes it very clear that the *Hindutva* agenda includes an explicit proposition to create a pan-global Hindu 'caliphate'. More importantly, it demonstrates how the seemingly innocuous ISKCON movement's political agenda is deeply intertwined with the expansionist *Hindutva* project to completely saffronise the world.¹³¹ Figure 3 shows one version of the flag, which looks rather innocuous, because it has an 'om ॐ' symbol on it.

flag/787699 (accessed 12.09.2017).

127 Stephen Knapp, The Vedic Friends Association, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdLMejDnIj0> (accessed 12.09.2017).

128 Stephen Knapp, Basic points about Vedic culture and Hinduism: A short introduction, www.stephen-knapp.com/basic_points_about_vedic_culture_hinduism.htm (accessed 12.09.2017).

129 Hindu Svayamsevak Sangh, FAQs, www.hssaus.org/faqs/ (accessed 12.09.2017).

130 Shamsul Islam, The RSS doublespeak: Bhagwa for itself, tricolour for the 'others', <https://sabrangindia.in/article/rss-doublespeak-bhagwa-itself-tricolour-others> (accessed 12.09.2017).

131 HariBhakt, The significance of bhagwa (saffron) and its origin: Time has come for the world people to get saffronized completely. <http://haribhakt.com/the-significance-of-bhagwa-saffron-and-its-origin-time-has-come-for-the-world-people-to-get-saffronized-completely/> (accessed 12.09.2017).



Figure 5. The Bhagvā Dhvaj Flag¹³²

However, it also happens to sit upon the roof of many Hindu temples and ashrams. This is, in part because it has been a Hindu religious symbol for centuries. Yet, could this mean that every temple/ashram supports, explicitly, the political philosophy of the RSS, or that the RSS has simply co-opted the flag, and interpolated their own political imagination onto the symbology inherent in the flag? Either way, it is confusing, and causes many to become entangled, as it happens to also represent *sanātana dharma* (eternal 'way of life'), which is synonymous with Hinduism. Therefore, the semiotic entanglement of this one particular sign is confusing. What is not to think, other than, that saffron coloured goods with 'ॐ', 'ॐ', 'ॐ' on them are quaint, and worth wearing, or in this case, hoisting? This makes untangling the difference between a moderate Hindu and Hindu supremacist, all the more difficult. As it is also clear that dharmic ideology rests at the core of the *Hindutva* project. It is quite similar to trying to parse ISIS from Islam.

Now, we explore the rhetoric of particular groups, like the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS, Hindu People's Awakening Society)¹³³; which also supports establishing a Hindu theocratic state, and also believes in the prehistoric, pan-global Vedic civilisation¹³⁴. As Prashad¹³⁵ explains, the Hindu Students Council (HSC) is the cultural-youth wing of the far right-wing Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA); which is the United States of America branch of the VHP; and is, ultimately, the religious wing of the Sangh Parivar in India. Even though the HSC pretends

132 World Hindu News, Jihadis throw away saffron flag put up on the occasion of Shivajayanti, <http://www.worldhindunews.com/2014/04/08/21343/jihadis-throw-away-saffron-flag-put-up-on-the-occasion-of-shivajayanti/> (accessed 12.09.2017).

133 Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, <https://www.hindujagruti.org/> (accessed 09.07.2018).

134 Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, Dharma (Righteousness) and the importance of India (Bharat), <https://www.hindujagruti.org/hinduism/hindu-dharma/importance-of-india> (accessed 12.09.2017).

135 Vijay Prashad, Letter to a young American Hindu, <https://www.countercurrents.org/prashad230507.htm> (accessed 09.07.2018).

it promotes liberal multiculturalism, it is the 'youthful fingers of the long arm of Hindutva-supremacy'¹³⁶; which also had speakers from Hindutva-inspired groups, such as the The Bhakti Center and Gayatri Parivar.¹³⁷ Why, then, does Shanti Mandir repeatedly allow the HSC to run a camp at its New York ashram?¹³⁸ The answer, it seems, is obvious. Symphathy for *Hindutva*.

While conducting fieldwork, I was present in the temple at a typical Sunday morning event. The guru, Nityananda, was also present, and oversaw the distribution of the HJS almanacs. The HJS is a hate group implicated in the murder of journalists, rationalists, and others considered to be 'anti-nationalist'.¹³⁹ They have a sister organisation, the Sanathan Sanstha¹⁴⁰; which is also considered to be a hardline, right-wing, Hindu supremacist, impeding-doomsday group; which thinks that only the 'pure Hindus will survive'.¹⁴¹ As Prasad explains:

But apart from this absurd mixture of nationalist Hindutva, doomsday panic and even theories of a mass cult in formation, the Sanatan Sanstha has also been accused of having blood on their hands for three bomb blasts in Goa and Mumbai and cold-blooded murders of Govind Pansare, Narendra Dhabolkar, MM Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh — all rationalists and activists who didn't agree to their point of view.¹⁴²

On this day, in 2013, a paper version was distributed; however, it is now freely available as a smartphone app on Google Play (HJS, 2017). Figure 5 shows the variety of covers from the past few years. The title, सनातन पंचांग (*sanātan pañcāṅga*) translates to the 'eternal five-limbs'. These are found on the golden steps leading people toward the Hindu nation. They are: *dharma-śikṣā* (instruction on *dharma*), *dharma-jāgrti* (awakened *dharma*), *hindū-saṅgaṭhan* (organising Hindus), *dharma-rakṣā* (protection of *dharma*), *rāṣṭra-rakṣā* (protection of the Hindu nation). *Sanātan-dharma* (eternal principles) is an emic term used to describe Hinduism. It is, however, an amorphous signifier that evokes a dubious homogeneity that also avoids clear articulation of what constitutes it, while presupposing Hinduism to be a monolithic tradition.¹⁴³

136 *ibidem*.

137 The Bhakti Center is a branch of ISKCON (International Society of Krishna Consciousness). Both it and the Gayatri Parivar are Hindutva-inspired organisations; see M.G. Chitkara, 2003, p. xiv.

138 Shanti Mandir, Hindu students council collegiate camp, <https://www.shantimandir.com/camps/> (accessed 09.07.2018).

139 The Wire Staff, Gauri Lankesh murder: Four more arrested, SIT to file charge sheet today, <https://thewire.in/media/gauri-lankesh-murder-four-more-arrested-sit-to-file-chargesheet-today> (accessed 09.07.2018); First Post Editors, Sanatan Sanstha and rise of hardline right wing groups in Maharashtra, <https://www.firstpost.com/politics/sanatan-sanstha-and-rise-of-hardline-right-wing-groups-in-maharashtra-1069201.html> (accessed 09.07.2018).

140 Sanatan Sanstha, <https://www.sanatan.org/en/> (accessed 09.07.2018).

141 Prasad Pallavi, The Sanatan Sanstha: Of spirituality and pseudo-science, <https://www.thequint.com/explainers/the-sanathan-sanstha-of-spirituality-and-pseudo-science> (accessed 09.07.2018).

142 *Ibid*.

143 John Zavos, Defending Hindu tradition: Sanatana dharma as a symbol of orthodoxy in colonial India. *Religion*, 2001, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 109-123.

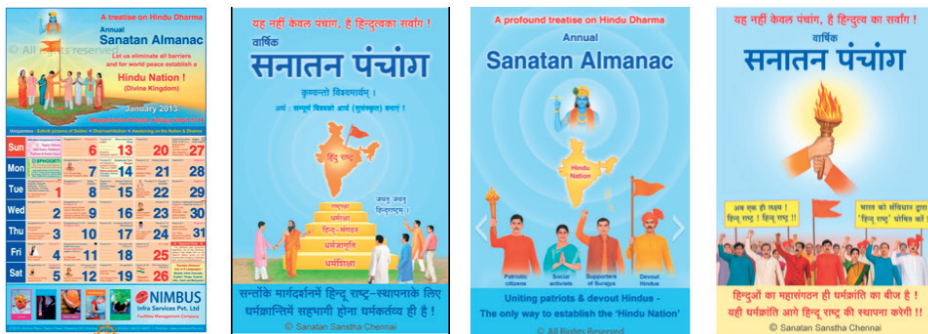


Figure 6. Almanac Covers of 2013, 2014, 2017, and 2018¹⁴⁴

Through the casual distribution of almanacs in an ashram, we can see how unsuspecting, earnest global yogis can become enculturated into banal support for soft *Hindutva*; which is now strategically sanitised and replaced with the deep ecological principles inherent in the term, Integral Humanism¹⁴⁵. Therefore, people can, in a de facto way, potentially consume a toxic ideology without really being aware of it. And, if they are, it is normalised as the status quo and legitimized through the guru's support; which is generally never questioned, certainly not by sincere devotees.

Many devotees thought the messages found throughout this almanac were exceptionally banal. While many non-Indian devotees were not aware of the secular foundation of India's constitution; they had assumed that India was already a Hindu nation. Furthermore, many seemed not to appreciate, or be distressed by, how changing the current Indian constitution to give Hinduism status as the official religion of the state could create problems for minority groups, who would most-likely become second-class citizens, or worse, non-citizens, in their own country.

Concluding Remarks

It becomes very tricky to untangle oneself once the metaphysical yoga body has been opened up for investigation from the types of decoherent worlds we possibly find waiting for us within *Yogaland*. Yet, this type of investment in a *Hindutva*-motivated paradigm does not always occur. There are many ways to be modern, cosmopolitan, global yogis. And, just like Godrej's hopes, there is certainly the possibility to subvert neo-liberal subjectivities and the commensal

144 Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, Sanatan Pachang, <https://www.hindujagruti.org/sanatan-pachang> (accessed 09.07.2018).

145 Patrick McCartney, The unintended consequences of International Day of Yoga, <https://www.dailyo.in/variety/international-yoga-day-soft-power-hindutva-narendra-modi-deen-dayal-upadhyaya-hedgewar/story/1/25021.html> (accessed 10.07.2018).

proto-Fascism of *Hindutva*. Possibly, millions of global yoga practitioners do not aspire to become Hindu, find a guru, change their name, or construct an identity related to the 'traditional' formula of the guru-disciple relationship. However, these people are the ones charged with insensitive, neo-colonialist, cultural appropriation, which is apparently breaking India's apparent 'grand narrative'. The Hindu exceptionalists like Rajiv Malhotra cannot have it both ways. They cannot control what happens to yoga as there is no global trademark. Neither can they say what is, or is not, yoga. Also, they cannot promote 'India's greatest cultural export' and also seek to collect the economic and symbolic profits from wellness tourism, but then also bemoan what it morphs into beyond the control of its self-appointed human handlers. Furthermore, they cannot say that those who deny the Indian roots of yoga are 'white washing' yoga, but at the same time insist that those who try to assume a Hindu-inspired identity should be charged with insensitive cultural appropriation. This charge is even more egregious when it is claimed that no one can speak on behalf of all Hindus or Indians, yet, at the same time, argue to have the *adhikāra* (authority) to do just that.

Regardless of which path the global yogi chooses, many people who do practice yoga without any desire to go 'full Hindu' are just as susceptible, if not more so, of adopting an attitude towards the politics of yoga that unwittingly enables support of a Hindu supremacist agenda. Therefore, we ought to continue pulling at this string until it, and ourselves, is completely untangled and yoga is fully decolonised; which is an unenviable task for the self-proclaimed protectors of a static, monolithic, yoga tradition. None of whom seem to know how to practically go about decolonising yoga, particularly what the criteria are for determining success.

Furthermore, yoga, can and should be explored for its roles in state formulations of fascist-nationalist power, and should not be bypassed. This is because the Indian state and other non-state actors seek explicitly to use the global popularity of yoga to create a Hindu nation and world, and seek to privilege one group above others and provide this group with benefits (*i.e.* an ethno-religious Brahminical, patriarchal, chauvinistic hegemony) at the expense of others, within a proposed Hindu theocracy. The global imagination of yoga and the consumption of yoga-inflected lifestyles helps to create within the neoliberal world a commercial identity of the Indian state that is nominally Hindu. The white washing that occurs to strip yoga of its inherently ethnic roots and contents is equally at fault in producing a bland idea of India and yoga as essentially Hindu; which is equally problematic. This is regardless of the fact that the Constitution of India is secular. Therefore, one's casual or vocational participation in, and consumption of, yoga-inflected lifestyles exists on many levels. Many of which may not be visible or knowable. One can choose to think more about this phenomenon and how one's sacralising/de-sacralising consumptive practices may be involved in broader socio-political machinations. One can also choose to have an imme-

diate, visceral revulsion to these ideas, and in the process, bypass the shadow, direct to the utopian-inspired *Yogaland*. What also needs to be explored is the limits to the tolerance of global yogis towards this expansionist agenda. Surely, if it were to happen at a practical level, the overwhelming majority of female global yogis would revolt in unprecedented numbers from any attempt to curtail their personal liberties. But, from the safer distance beyond India's borders, any discussion of India's domestic politics, and its possible impact is discounted as theoretical and too distant to be of much or any concern. It is also considered by many to be Hinduphobic, racist, and oppressive to offer any criticism of yoga or India that does not fit with the politically correct narratives. This is why it is terribly important to explore, in much more detail, the mechanisms involved in promoting and normalising Hindu supremacy through the soft power apparatuses inherent with *Yogaland*.

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Патрик Мек Картни

ВЕРСКИ БАЈПАС И УПЛИТАЊЕ У ЈОГАЛЕНДУ: КАКО НЕОЛИБЕРАЛИЗАМ, МЕКА ХИНДУТВА И БАНАЛНИ НАЦИОНАЛИЗАМ УТИЧУ НА ЈОГА ФУНДАМЕНТАЛИЗАМ

Сажетак

Јога је постала веома популарна у свету. Глобална мрежа коју је развила јога се обично назива Јогаленд. Овај чланак мапира неке од главних карактеристика овог метафизичког, друштвено измишљеног света, и смешта практиканте јоге у сложену испреплетаност друштвених, политичких, економских и теолошких «светова». У првом делу овог рада се истражује како концепт верског бајпаса утиче на поједине погледе у оквира Јогаленда. У другом делу рада бавимо се фундаменталном природом испреплетаности, која често укључује светове које појединци не желе, или чак и не знају да постоје. У складу са тим, овај чланак идентификује начине на које се глобални учесници у јоги социјализирају од своје нео-либералне субјективности до несвесне подршке, често на баналан начин, супремацијској хинду идеологији, која се може водити до „јога фундаментализма“.

Кључне речи: глобална јога, верски бајпас, испреплетаност, Јогаленд, хинду супремација, јога фундаментализам

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