

THE SEER WRITES BACK: EXAMINING THE ANTI-COLONIAL POLITICS IN SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S "RAJA YOGA"

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Abstract: As a thinker and reformer of the period ascribed as the "Bengal Renaissance", Swami Vivekananda is usually read and studied in the light of his impact on social and religious reforms in India. This has elicited multiple responses to Vivekananda's works and life ranging from profound spiritualism to political connotations. The latter again has come to be defined either in terms of eulogies for his contribution to social and political reforms during colonial rule or, much recently owing to postcolonial studies, in terms of complicity with colonial presumptions about the Orient such as the "effeminate Bengalee". The latter variety of critical discourse has come to closely resemble what Partha Chatterjee has aptly described as "derivative discourse". However, my principal contention in this paper is that while the derivative nature of Vivekananda's discourse has good enough claims to be made in its favour particularly when considered from the historical and social contexts of their formulation, its resistive potential as an anti-colonial intellectual exercise is too often missed due to a lack of serious textual engagement with them. This paper will attempt to focus on the textual aspect of Vivekananda's thought that establishes not only its critique to the foundations of Western discourse on logic, science and politics, but also identify possible sites of subversion of these foundations in the light of Vedantic interpretation.

Keywords: Vedanta, colonial, epistemological, representation, Raja Yoga.

As a thinker and visionary of the period ascribed as the "Bengal Renaissance", Swami Vivekananda is usually read and studied in the light of his impact on social and religious reforms in India. This has elicited multiple responses to Vivekananda's works and life ranging from profound spiritualism to political connotations. The latter again has come to be defined either in terms of eulogies for his contribution to social and political reforms during colonial rule

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or, much recently owing to postcolonial studies, in terms of complicity with colonial presumptions about the Orient such as the “effeminate Bengalee”, to cite an illustration of the same. In other words, the latter variety of critical discourse has come to closely resemble what Partha Chatterjee has aptly described as “derivative discourse” (Katrak 1988: 129).

It must kept in mind that Chatterjee’s use of this term applies mostly, in the course of these interpretations, to the outward and visible aspects of Vivekananda’s personality such as his embodiment of masculinity or to the concretely “material” component of his discourses on social and political life. However, my principal contention in this paper is that while the derivative nature of Vivekananda’s discourse has good enough claims to be made in its favour particularly when considered from the historical and social contexts of their formulation, its resistive potential as an anti-colonial intellectual exercise is too often missed due to a lack of serious textual engagement with the logical and philosophical façade of his discourses. While it is a point that can hardly be gainsaid that the milieu and moment of textual production is an important consideration in the deciphering of its message, it comprises only one out of a myriad possibilities of meaning(s).

In no way can interpretive “totality” be achieved owing to our limited understanding of all aspects of the original context of textual production or its subsequent re-activations, or of the dimensions of the text that are accorded primary or secondary importance in various cultures of reading. In accordance with this essential component of hermeneutics, it seems a bit hasty to conclusively analyze the entire oeuvre of Vivekananda philosophy through a given lens. Therefore, as an exercise in critical thinking this paper will attempt to focus on the textual aspect of Vivekananda’s thought that establishes not only its critique of the foundations of Western discourse on logic, science and politics, but also identify possible sites of subversion of these foundations in the light of Vedantic interpretation. The paper will attempt to present a case for re-thinking the notion of “thought” as the only intellectual claim to

knowledge in Western discourse and at the same time essay to confront claims of derivation by strategically highlighting differences established through a prolonged engagement with spirituality and Vedantic philosophy.

In fact, in textually analysing Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*, this paper will also highlight not only the differences between Vivekananda's discourse and the claims of representative Orientalist texts but also the points of difference between the same and Western discourses of resistance to such dominant worldviews as well. In a sense, therefore, it will present a case for Vivekananda's firm footing in a unique display of Vedantic confrontation that consciously steers clear of Western influences in any form. Despite the fact that this paper analyzes *Raja Yoga* as the representative text owing to its deeply philosophical and spiritual moorings, references to other works by Vivekananda are complementary additions to the points of analysis majorly highlighted or inferred.

WESTERN FOUNDATIONS ON ORIENTAL AND GLOBAL SITUATIONS: THE POINTS OF DIALOGUE FOR "RAJA YOGA"

Before any attempt is made to examine the text of *Raja Yoga* in detail, it is perhaps reasonable to chart out the major aspects of the Western intellectual corpus which will serve as guiding points in our critique. As has been hinted upon earlier, while there seems to be justifications in considering socio-historical underpinnings of Vivekananda's discourse and in examining how it responds to Macaulay's "effeminate Benglee", for instance, our analysis will focus exclusively on the intellectual history of European discourse. In so doing, the first point of contention would involve two representative traditions of political discourse on colonialism and its subjects—the Utilitarian as embodied in the works of thinkers like J.S. Mill and the Marxist as can be traced in Marx's own writings on the British rule in India.

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The second point of contention would involve philosophical writings from the Western corpus that will provide the rationale for the colonial experiment—namely, the phenomenological overtures of the Self and Other in Hegel’s elucidation of World History and the general tenor of violence involved in the coinage of this binary (and binaries in general) in Western thought procedures. The exploration of the pitfalls of this logic of binaries will also include the works of Indologists such as Sir William Jones in order to show how a pattern of resistance that a Vedantic reading offers needs to be dissociated from a simplistic view of the spiritual grandeur of the Orient against a materialistic West.

James Stuart Mill in his observations on the colonial experiment emphasized the rule of colonial difference. This was based on his understanding that while the “settler colonies” of Britain already represented the innate maturity of the principle of representative government founded on liberty, this was not the case with other colonies like India which had to first advance to a stage of such an innate realization through the colonial project of civilization (Bell 2010: 47). In fact, as Duncan Bell writes, Mill also regarded the colonial project as beneficial to the British as it would provide Britons with an opportunity to bring out their best and most refined selves in hitherto unexplored circumstances.

This was again subsequent to his belief that environments had a greater impact on character than any other attribute (Bell 2010: 46). However, Bell’s argument is challenged in his own essay when, despite this admission, he leaves Mill’s selection of races that are unable to have representative governments (with its inherent ethnic bias and essentialism of all “Oriental” environments) unquestioned. At the same time, while admitting the maturity of “settler colonies”, his arguments do not seem to vouch for their complete autonomy. Perhaps this contradiction is resolved when one interprets this as an indication of the essentially universalistic impulse of Mill’s position. While the “settler colonies” display an inherent ability to effectively manage responsible democracies, the particular nature of such a system must be held out to them as Britain’s own

responsibility (Bell 2010: 48). In other words, therefore it is the question of ascertaining who is best capable of upholding British gift of governance guised under the prospect of self-rule and liberty. This is dovetailed with what a more experienced Mill saw as another objective of the colonizing mission, namely, “reputation for wisdom and foresight, for justice, clemency and magnanimity in the eyes of all nations” (Bell 2010: 48).

The violence involved in the imposition of the Self and its attributes upon the Other is nowhere more apparent than in a formulation such as this. Even when political autonomy is expressed as an inevitable consequence of the maturity of such an ability, the autonomy of the Other is still questionable as it exists only as a mirror-image of the Self. While Mill’s impulse towards a scheme of universalism is entrenched in his discourse of colonialism, Macaulay’s observations on the nature of the proposed Indian Penal Code following the Charter Act of 1833 is indicative of the difficulties it encounters in the context of a colony such as India.

Faced with the conundrum of drafting a Common Code for India despite the complexity and variety of its customary laws, traditions and rules, Macaulay arrived at a rather strategic formula in order to keep the initial impulse of Mill’s thought upright albeit with uneasy reservations. In his speech delivered at the House of Commons, Macaulay summarizes this formula as “uniformity where you can have it, diversity where you must have it, but in all cases certainty” (Skuy 1998: 517). Reading between these lines carefully one is able to understand the italicized words clearly point to uniformity (in many aspects, this entailed a double uniformity since the Code attempted to transpose English law onto the sub-continent) as the foremost priority with difference (diversity) as an exceptional measure only. The issue of clarity further bolsters the singularly important connotation of uniformity in the Utilitarian tradition wherein it is impossible to conceive the co-existence of both aspects – universalism and particularities.

Karl Marx also conspicuously embodies this idea of “difference” in his commentary on British rule in India. In an article

published in *The New York Daily Tribune* on June 10, 1853, Marx initially draws geographical and political comparisons between “Hindustan” and Italy only to consciously deny to the former a stage of historical development he finds the latter (and European civilizations in general) to have attained. The following passage relating to water supply measures is reflective of this:

This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water, which, in the Occident drove private enterprise to voluntary association, as in Flanders and Italy, necessitated in the Orient where civilization was too low and territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of the Government (Marx 1853).

Thus, the fact that Hindostan seems lacking in the political development of a stage attained already by even the “sick man of Europe” is highly indicative of Marx’s indebtedness to Hegel. The unequivocal nature of Marx’s assertion of the agency of British colonialism in bringing about a “fundamental revolution” in Asia is expressed in the penultimate passage of the same report:

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the first interests and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. If not, whatever may have been the crisis of England, she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about this revolution (Marx 1853).

There happens to be another parameter of linkage between Mill and Marx which rests on the proposition of universalism and uniformity and insistence on the annihilation of the unique presence of the Other. Reinhard-Meyer Kalkus makes a distinction between Goethe’s understanding of the New World Order brought about by global trade and mercantile capital and that of Marx in terms of the principles of uniformity and difference. In his understanding, while Marx looked upon the New material changes of the 18th century as the first flush of a uniform and universal onset of bourgeois modernity, Goethe’s view (as it emerges in his notion of

the *Weltliteratur*) is founded on the possibility of encountering diversity of cultural expressions expressed in literary forms and bolstered by such global exchanges (Greenblatt 2010: 109-110). This distinction further shapes our understanding of Marx's worldview as being rooted in a fundamental logic of uniform universalism in the guise of the evolutionary dimension of history. In fact, when this dimension of Marxist theory is coupled with Marx's understanding of Oriental village societies, we find him charting out an intellectual trajectory from Oriental uniqueness to the subsuming of all unique characteristics within the umbrella narrative of Occidental progress. This is so because his identification of the nature of village societies (as a unique feature of Oriental feudal monarchies) is followed immediately by his contemplation of their dismantling by British intervention thereby levelling all differences and putting the Orient on the track of the global narrative of historical development.

The unease expressed in conception of Oriental difference comprises the deep structure of such discourses in spite of their fundamental opposition to one another. Kant's intervention in Western philosophy is characterized by his synthesis of the traditions of rationalism and of external perception or empirical observation in Western metaphysics. This is done through the presentation of external perception as the stimuli that is acted upon and analysed by the categorical parameters of space and time in the conscious mind. Hegel propels this idea further by presenting categorical maturity (and hence refined understanding) as historically contingent in his discourse on World-history.

The individuation of consciousness requires mutual recognition between the Self and Other, and all such recognitions are therefore approximations of the Other in terms of the "nearest isolated interest which they take in his actions, wishes and opinions" (Guha 2002: 18). Thus, harboured in the spatio-temporal context of colonialism, such a desire for mutual recognition is accomplished through the identi(ty)fication of the Oriental Other by the European consciousness as none but itself. Hence the subsequent stages

of historical progress can only be fulfilled in the wake of this recognition which further necessitates the phenomenon of Selving of the Other. While the development of historical consciousness requires rationalization of the idea of freedom (“prosaic aspect of history”), the Oriental epics and their sensuous poetry still lack the potential to emerge from a premature delineation of natural beauty to the prosaic rationalization of the “human element of freedom of consciousness” (Guha 2002: 38). It is this difference which hinders mutual recognition and the colonial encounter is destined to pave the path for the levelling of all such differences. In fact, the later Hegel as many Hegel scholars point out recognized in History the marks of Divine Providence and hence historical unfolding never ceased, in Hegel’s mind, to be devoid of rational purpose. Thus, even the colonial encounter stood justified as the rational step in the elimination of differences to foster the goal of mutual recognition.

In the light of Continental philosophy and the phenomenological tradition, these ideological suggestions could be questioned owing to the fact that they entail a position where the “domain of the same maintains a relation, but it is a relation I’m which the ego or consciousness reduces the distance between the same and the Other, in which, as Levinas puts it, their opposition fades” (Critchley 2004: 15). However, if we were to situate Vivekananda’s text in the context of anti-colonial thought, the radical manoeuvre of the text will be found to reside in the complete inversion of the proposed Self/Other binary in Western metaphysics, thereby suggesting that the binary itself along with Its occupants (European as Self and the Orient as Other) are barely rigid. Vivekananda illustrates this through a conspicuous complicity with some of the implications of this binary while also exploring the possibility of their application in a situation where the European as the Other is written about and broached by the Oriental Self. This is a characteristic and politically potent stance of reversal of the very gaze that constitutes Western thought on colonialism.

SITUATING “RAJA YOGA” AND VIVEKANANDA AS REACTIONS TO COLONIAL BINARIES

The introductory passages in *Raja Yoga* illustrate very carefully how Vedantic religion achieves a blend of both scientific methods and spiritual experience. This is done through an agreement with empirical inductive reasoning as a scientific method and then elucidating the Vedantic path of individual practice in order to witness a higher vision. Therefore, Vivekananda asserts: “the teachers of the science of Yoga, therefore, declare that religion is not only based upon the experience of ancient times, but that no man can be religious until he has the same perception himself” (Vivekananda 1920: 4).

The universal impact of a kind of experience is not wished away in such an understanding but it co-exists with a certain nature of attainment of experience. Moreover, the issue of agency in this context places individual enterprise and exercise at the forefront of this experience, unlike the Utilitarian or Marxist contemplation of the superior role of external agency alone. It must also be remembered at this juncture that the goal of Vedanta is not individualistic in Vivekananda’s understanding but the realization of its essential goal as monistic dissolution of the Self and Other is not simply attained through a master-oriented pedagogical episteme as in Western counterparts. Although in their encyclopedic volume on the gurus of modern yoga, Mark Singleton and Ellen Goldberg have identified the variations in the meaning of the *guru* and have stated that a modern individual Protestant spirit has de-mystified his esoteric centrality (Singleton, Goldberg 2014: 7-8), an analysis of Vivekananda’s *Raja Yoga* performs a similar de-mystifying exercise without the compulsions of extreme individualism as one traces in Western Protestant impulses.

This again does not mean that the need and recognition of an external agency is absent in Vivekananda’s discourse. In fact, the text of *Bhakti Yoga* lays a lot of emphasis on the qualities of the *guru* (Sanskrit equivalent of spiritual master). However even while delineating the significance of the agency of the *guru*, the text

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mentions that the recognition of the true and authentic master is a completely individual prerogative of the seeker whose duty it is to locate a deep resonance between his desire and the virtues of the *guru* (Vivekananda 2012: 22). The individuality of the seeker is a strategic reversal of the subsuming impulse of Western discourses on the position of the Other. The seeker, in the Vedantic tradition as elaborated by Vivekananda, is the Other that does not “empty itself of itself” in his encounter with the *guru*. It is in and through such an exposition of the redundancy of masterly authority that Vivekananda’s unique approach to yoga and theology rests. Although the methods of *yoga* and its knowledge did prevail in the West before Vivekananda’s lectures in the late 1890s, the role of organizations like the Theosophical Society (with whom Vivekananda was acquainted) had remained restricted in not moving beyond the esotericism of such practices or systems of thought (Killingley 2014: 25). Thus, when it is asserted at the beginning of this paper that Vivekananda did have a sound footing in non-Western modes of conception of thought, such differences and instances of divergence help justify the same.

Another point of departure that Vivekananda makes from Western discourse is with regard to the question of universal capacity. Unlike the rule of colonial difference, the goal of Vedantic enlightenment can be accomplished by one and all, as Vivekananda writes: “every human being has the right and the power to seek for religion. Every human being has the right to ask the reason why, and to have the question answered by himself, if he only takes the truth” (Vivekananda 1920: 19).

As a further deepening and consolidation of this analysis, his engagement with the discipline of Western science and its relationship with Vedantic spirituality needs to be broached. While mentioning the achievements in the field of physics (such as the discovery of atoms), Vivekananda credits the discovery of atoms as a foundational empirical validation of the teachings of the Advaita tradition in the Hindu religious oeuvre. The universality of the principle of the indivisible particle constituting all matter is, in his analysis, a

validation and verification of the indivisibility of the *praana* (vital essence) that collectively constitutes the entire realm of beings in the Advaita tradition (Vivekananda 1920: 32-33). However, as an explanation of why it took Western science so long to arrive at this validation, Vivekananda cites the precocity of the spiritual tradition. This turns out to be a radical reversal of the Hegelian insistence on the maturity from the poetic-primitive to the prosaic-rational element of history, since it is an illustration of Western epistemology attempting to catch up with Oriental spiritualism.

As far as the universalistic bind of the Advaitic tradition is concerned (a bind which exists because it holds individuality as the stepping stone to the universal *brahman*) it radically alters Marx's proposition of Oriental transformation to Western modernity and Macaulay's attempt to transpose British codes directly on the Orient. The universal *Brahman* is regarded as a truth over which no particular system of thought – European or Oriental – can lay claim as it precedes intellectual discourse. While the analytical rigor of the Continental tradition might regard the formulation of a pre-discursive entity as premature, it is an exercise in strategic essentialism that responds to the hegemonic impulse of Western discursive systems. The stance of an “universal truth” consciously avoids the imposition of a discursive formulation such as Mill's outlook on British responsibility in the colonies. Moreover, Vivekananda's analysis of Western science also places it as a stage in the gradual development of knowledge and admits that Western traditions (or, in his terminology, “Christian Science”) in their bid to acquire knowledge, have simply stopped short of advancing beyond this stage (Vivekananda 1920: 20).

This act of stopping short in the progress of civilization is an imitation of the narrative of the Indian civilization as an “arrested civilization” in its journey to progress alongside its European counterpart, as was argued by historians such as Alfred Lyall who belonged to a historiographic tradition different from the Utilitarians (Bhattacharya 2011: 24). However, this strategic intervention in Vivekananda's text tilts the argument against the Western tradition

by charting their path of “arrested” progress while keeping the evolutionary paradigm of historical thinking intact. Dismissal of Vivekananda’s narrative as derivative would therefore ignore these strategic role-reversals that are generated and re-activated in the process of textual analysis alone.

In ascertaining the nature of interactions between *Raja Yoga* and counter-discursive traditions in Western historiography based on the spiritual superiority of the Oriental past, one is able to trace a distinction between a representative figure such as William Jones and Vivekananda. Ashok Mohapatra, in his essay on the negotiations between Jones and Edward Said’s notion of orientalism, writes that Jones’s regard for British rule as a necessity for the revival of Hindostan’s past was steeped in imperialist intent albeit not in the same manner as that of James Mill as “it is doubtful if he [Jones] wanted to rehabilitate them into sectors of colonial production...because the industrial revolution had not properly begun in Europe in the late eighteenth century, not really until about the time Mill wrote history of India” (Mohapatra 2003: 10).

Whatever be the differences between these traditions of imperialist moorings, what is common to them is their deep entrenchment within the hegemony of the written text and of knowledge understood as pure intellectual exercise. One of James Mill’s testimonies to his conviction regarding the lack of civilization in ancient India was the absence of prosaic documents concerning the same and the overabundance of poetry (Bhattacharya 2011: 18). Likewise, William Jones’s study of the ancient heritage of Hindostan was another exercise in textual documentation and archival knowledge. What is tacitly conceded in these differing traditions of thought is the superiority of the written word and archive and rational elucidation as prosaic testimonies. This priority accorded to the written document as the testimony of pure knowledge clashes with the nature of spiritual enlightenment in the works of Vivekananda. In a passage from the *Bhakti Yoga*, Vivekananda clearly regards verbose knowledge as a minor stepping stone alone to the attainment of *sadchidananda* which can only be realized through consistent

meditation on the nature of truth in the universe (Vivekananda 2012: 19-20). The word (*sadchidananda*) as a compound of three components-truth, mind and bliss-incorporates the understanding of true bliss that is consciously derived through self-pursuit instead of the exclusive reliance on external expertise. The ineffable component of knowledge is, in Vivekananda's text, a finer and more superior stage of realization that supersedes knowledge as it is understood in the Western tradition. The Vedantic tradition, in Vivekananda's writings, accords a privileged position to the individual's unique role in the attainment of complete knowledge even while keeping the universal dimension of the same upright. No amount of explanation can lead to the imitation of the path of spiritual enlightenment as it is only mastered through practice and action rather than through verbal or textual reiteration (Vivekananda 2013: 23). One may even go a step further in claiming that Vivekananda's worldview also puts the very assumption concerning "knowledge" into question as an exercise in decolonization. This is because it holds up differential expositions of the idea that is universally taken for granted in Western scientific and positivist traditions. As S. N. Balagangadhara notes, the need for Indian analyses to first challenge the starting points of Western discourses on the Orient is the rudimentary need for decolonization par-excellence, failing which the attempt at decolonization remains rooted within Orientalist presumptions (Balagangadhara 2012: 49). Vivekananda's text therefore opens up the idea of 'knowledge' as an object of future scrutiny in the light of decolonization.

It must also be mentioned that Vivekananda does not fail to locate within the Western corpus its own counter-discursive currents. He refers to the field of psychoanalysis with special emphasis on the "hypnotists" and regards its development as a necessary response to the integrity of human consciousness and agency which the positivist and scientific traditions embody. As a reference, it might be stated that Freud's (whose disciplinary mentor, Charcot was responsible for the popularity of hypnosis as an analytical method) critique of self-conscious knowledge completely disrupts

the foundational core of colonial phenomenology as the Self is held to be incapable of knowing itself completely and is therefore no longer in a position to project its fully developed image onto the Other. The choice of the hypnotic school as a counter-discursive practice in Vivekananda's text is therefore significant from the perspective of its anti-colonial intent. However, the discourse of psycho-analysis is also shown to be ultimately steeped in the very presumptions of Western thought as it accords special privilege to the question of intellection and the role of the analyst is ultimately shown to be a logical and intellectual exercise in the process of analysis. The role of the external agency of the intellectual agent qua the analyst is again accorded a privilege in contradiction to the role of Vedantic meditation where every seeker is in a position to genuinely experience true knowledge and wisdom through individual exercise alone only aided by the direction shown by the guru. Vivekananda writes:

the so-called hypnotic suggestion can only act upon a diseased body and a clouded mind. And until the operator, by means of fixed gaze or otherwise, has succeeded in putting the mind of the subject in a sort of passive, morbid condition, his suggestions never work. [...] It is not really controlling the brain centres by the power of one's own will, but is, as it we're, stunning the patient's mind for a time by sudden blows which another's will delivers to it (Vivekananda 2012: 63).

One can locate the inherent prejudice in treating the very object of learning in this tradition as "diseased" and this is a further expose of the colonial impulse of regarding the Other (another subject of knowledge) as infantile and immature in Western discourse. Rather, the individual will and ability that are prerequisites in the Vedantic goal of acquiring knowledge clearly stand out in their propensity for championing individual pursuit and practice. Therefore, *Raja Yoga* not only emphasizes the avoidance of derivation and mere imitation vis-a-vis predominant European colonial narratives but also with respect to the counter-discursive traditions of thought

in Europe that had the potential to challenge the narratives of imperialism and colonialism.

CONCLUSION

In order to understand the fullest significance of Vivekananda's text, it is essential to examine not only the historical approach to Hindu revival in the colonial period but also the textual logic that responds to the predominant foundations of Western narratives. The aspect of spirituality and its pre-discursive assumptions is conspicuously silenced or disparaged in Western narratives on colonialism but *Raja Yoga*, on being read correspondingly and correlatively with such texts, reveals the strategic political nature of this silence. Thus, the significance of spiritualism lies not as an end in itself but as a signifier of difference and resistance vis-a-vis colonial, and Western epistemological foundations. Thinkers such as Marshall Berman identify in modernity the first ruptures of complacency with the self-certainty of humanism and Marxist analysts such as Fredric Jameson lament the dissolution of this radical posture of modernism with its appropriation within the broader contours of the postmodern logic of late capitalism.

However, the analysis of Vivekananda through the lens of anti-colonial critique lays the foundation for challenging the limits of certain representative traditions within the hermeneutics of Western scepticism itself. As Gyan Prakash asserts that while the modernist scepticism in the post-war period symbolized and continues to signify a paradigmatic critique of Western modernity and science and their characteristic separation of realms of nature and society, the simultaneity of the development of Western science and imperialism ensured that the colonies were privy to the aggression of modernity long before the onset of modernism (Prakash 1999: 12). Perhaps Vivekananda's discussion of European modernity and science is reflective of this same approach serving to testify the same although a prolonged preoccupation with Vivekananda and his

works in academic circles has still not been successful in establishing their radical analytical content. Though works by scholars such as Dermot Kilingley highlight Vivekananda's contribution in universalizing and democratizing the principle of yoga and its Vedantic affinities, the implicit anti-colonial tendencies in these discourses can be delineated only when the discipline of religious studies is made to dialogically interact with political philosophy.

At the same time, the identity of Vivekananda straddles the apparently segregated zones of spirituality and politics thereby initiating a response to the "reticence, if not resistance" in Indian scientists of the later colonial period in India who, as Gosling remarks with regard to Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose, saw the progress of science in the Western world as "a fulfilment of an important Hindu insight- the fundamental unity of all existence" (Paranjape 2008: 9). However, the political endorsement of such a reticent realization is provided by the insights of Vivekananda in ways that resemble strategic appropriations of Western discourse thereby exposing the latter's self-fulfilling logical structures. Vivekananda's text is therefore an essential act of 'writing back' - a communication in a language with which the addressee is familiar but cannot readily accommodate.

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