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Krishna consciousness discourse – modern secularism
versus traditional theism

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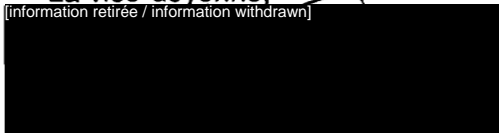
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RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire de maîtrise porte sur la problématique que pose la représentation de l'ISKCON (Société internationale pour la conscience de Krishna) par ses adeptes et exégètes traditionnels d'une part et par les observateurs et chercheurs spécialistes de la question d'autre part. Le discours sur la conscience de Krishna, qui comporte à la fois des aspects religieux et séculiers selon l'entité qui le représente, pourrait très bien se prêter à une analyse comparative.

S'agissant des nouveaux mouvements religieux, la tension entre le discours théiste d'un côté et le discours séculier moderne de l'autre est habituellement alimentée par la question du contrôle s'exerçant sur les membres de tels mouvements. On considère très souvent que les disciples des nouvelles pratiques religieuses sont l'objet d'un lavage de cerveau et manipulés pendant leur recrutement à titre de néophytes ; le contrôle qu'ils exercent sur leur propre vie ne serait plus crédible. Les adeptes de l'ISKCON affirment le contraire : il n'est véritablement possible de contrôler sa vie personnelle que grâce à la conscience de Krishna, la société laïque moderne en général et la science profane moderne en particulier ne parvenant pas à fournir un but et un sens à l'existence humaine.

La méthode d'analyse comparative choisie est fondée sur *L'ordre du discours* (1971) de Michel Foucault. Dans ce traité, Foucault présente les processus rattachés aux discours religieux, médical, politique et littéraire ainsi qu'au discours profane moderne. Ce penseur français est également connu pour sa métamorphose personnelle, de philosophe militant niant la subjectivité « anthropologique » (Foucault, 1970) en ardent défenseur de cette théorie (Foucault, 1981-1982). Des thèmes foucaldiens comme les relations de pouvoir, le sexe, le contrôle et les techniques de soi traditionnelles peuvent être considérés comme des aspects fondamentaux de la controverse entourant l'ISKCON. Espérons que l'analyse discursive de cette controverse saura contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de l'aspect ethnolinguistique de ce débat et de la nature du besoin qu'a l'homme de vivre dans une société différente de la société dominante.

MOTS-CLÉS :

Anthropologie, ethnolinguistique, discours, religieux, séculier, ISKCON, techniques de soi

The purpose of this thesis is to address the problem of the representative of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) both by its traditional followers and interpreters from one side and scholarly observers and researchers on the other. Krishna Consciousness discourse, which demonstrates both theistic and secular aspects, depending on the representing agency, appears as a potentially good candidate for a comparative analysis.

When new religious movements are concerned, the tension between theistic discourse on one side and the modern secular one on the other is usually fuelled by the issues of control concerning the members of the movements in question. Quite often the followers of the new religious practices are considered as brainwashed and manipulated in the process of being recruited as neophytes by their adoptive institutions; their control over their personal lives is no longer credible. The ISKCON's followers though claim the opposite: the real control over one's personal life is possible only with Krishna consciousness, because modern secular society in general and modern secular science in particular fail to provide goal and sense of meaning for human existence.

The method of comparative analysis will be based on the Foucault's treatise *L'ordre du discours* (1971). In this work Foucault outlined the procedures relevant to religious, medical, political, literary, and modern secular discourses. The French thinker is also known for his personal metamorphosis from a militant philosopher denying "anthropological" subjectivity (Foucault 1970) into someone fervently defending it later (Foucault 1981-82). Foucaultian topics like power relations, sex, control, and traditional self-techniques can be recognised as salient features of the ISKCON controversy. The discourse analysis of such a controversy will hopefully promote a better understanding of the ethnolinguistic aspect of the ISKCON's debate and the nature of the human need of living in a society different from the mainstream one.

KEY WORDS:

Anthropology, Ethnolinguistics, Discourse, Theistic, Secular, ISKCON, Self-techniques

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Chapter I: Introduction

> From delusion lead me to Truth
> From darkness lead me to Light
> From death, lead me to Immortality.
>
> Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.2, 28

On the 8th and 9th of July 2006, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) celebrated both The Festival of Chariots and the 40th anniversary of its foundation. For 40 years the activity of ISKCON has been a common sight in most of the major cities of the world, yet the true nature of that society is largely unknown. Founded by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, ISKCON is often perceived as a cult movement even after the demise of its charismatic leader. The movement, deprived of the guidance of its bona fide guru, was expected to naturally die out, nevertheless it is alive and in noteworthy health. The turbulent sixties might be gone together with the 20th century, but some of their main actors are here to stay. Why is that so? Is the idea of an alternative consciousness and lifestyle only a dream, or there is a general misunderstanding and misrepresenting of the ISKCON movement?

The purpose of this thesis is to address the problem of representing ISKCON by both its traditional followers and interpreters on one side and secular observers and scientific researchers on the other. It is important to note that the modern interpreters and researchers could belong to either of both camps – theistic or secular. Science and tradition are not necessarily separate; secularity is not mandatorily modern. Antiquity testifies to the secular materialistic attitudes of Greek *Atomists* or *Ionians* (Leucippus, Democritus), their Roman follower (Lucretius), Indian *Cārvākah* or *Lokāyatah* (Brihaspati), *Jains* (Mahavira) and certainly *Buddhists* such as Dharmakirti and Dignāga. Idem for the scholarly approach; it is part of the tradition as well.

Thus the need of an operative discursive distinction for this thesis is indispensable. For the sake of clarity modern will be identified with secular, while traditional will stand for theistic. If some particular author, treatise or approach related to secularism or theism

vis-à-vis Krishna Consciousness will eventually need additional contextualisation, the same will be duly done. The thesis originated due to the general consideration of the following basic question:

Since the subject of this research is Krishna Consciousness discourse, what kind of discursive analysis proper will satisfy the purpose of the thesis?

Usually while one deliberates the idea of a discursive analysis the initial association comes to the fore under the name of Michel Foucault. That modern, or rather Post-Modern French philosopher was first to coin the term "discourse formations" in L'*Archéologie du savoir* (1969), which term was later reduced in circulation to the simple "discourse". As far as Post Modernism is concerned, it was defined by François Lyotard in *La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir* (1979) as being an "incredulity towards meta-narratives". Science, Religion, Marxism etc. are the grand theories that fit the qualification meta-narratives, describing the world through a range of absolute values and ideas.

While Nietzsche ("On truth"; 1873) is considered the grandfather of Post modernist thought, Foucault could be nominated as his most famous successor. Both authors relativize the canons of truth; there is no universal all-pervading truth, but only multiplicities of truths. The post modernist attitude of Foucault makes his methodology especially attractive when a comparative discourse analysis is concerned. Krishna Consciousness discourse, which demonstrates both theistic and secular aspects depending on the representing agency, appears as a potentially good candidate for a Foucaultian analysis.

Given the difficulties of separating ontology from epistemology and respectively method from analytical strategy, for this thesis it will be useful to stress a prevalence of epistemological issues. The intention is to focus mostly on the analysis of the observations and conclusions of the others regarding Krishna Consciousness, rather than dealing with the immediate behaviour of those others; in a similar vein the goal will be to test presuppositions, without directly generating knowledge of subjects.

Once the analytical strategy is adopted, the choice of a specific method of analysis becomes pressing. In *L'ordre du discours* (1971), Foucault outlined the procedures relevant to religious, medical, political, literary, and modern secular discourses. That

treatise seems promising in terms of its nearly universal application, and the question that follows is:

How well will the procedures outlined by Foucault in *L'ordre du discours* (1971) fit the analysis of the literature on Krishna Consciousness and to what extent will that analysis be productive?

The specific procedures for discourse control can be tested on both theistic and secular Krishna Consciousness discourse formations. The results of the analysis will be summarised in terms of efficiency and productivity.

When new religious movements are concerned, the tension between the theistic discourse on one side and the modern secular one on the other is usually fuelled by the issues of control concerning the members of the movements in question. Quite often the followers of the new religious practices are considered as brainwashed and manipulated in the process of being recruited as neophytes by their adoptive institutions. Once somebody is identified as a follower of a certain new religious movement like ISKCON his control over his personal life is no longer credible. Thus the next question regarding the ISKCON's discourse is the following one:

What is to be in control of your own life and how the same notion of control is made tenable through the modern secular discourse on Krishna Consciousness from one side and traditional *Vaiṣṇava* discourse from another side?

To begin with, we need to find out what the foundation of the western notion of a self-governing subject is. It is necessary to know how the idea of individuality took shape, and what the procedures of establishing self-control were. This is the first analytical stage, given that the issue of self-control could be defined as "western" with respect to the ISKCON being perceived as cult and its followers as brainwashed.

Logically the second stage should involve delimiting the Indian concept of subjectivity, in particular according to the V*aiṣṇava* tradition. In that case, the interest of investigation focuses on the different attitude toward the same concept demonstrated by Indian thinkers.

The third step will be to question the beliefs and practices of ISKCON followers vis-à-vis the notion of subjectivity in the new modality of the Indian *Vaiṣṇava* tradition

adapted to the western cultural milieu. The critical gaze will search for the possible nodes of cultural syncretism on the practical level of everyday life in the ISKCON community.

In view of the fact that this thesis adopts discourse analysis as a method of investigation, Chapter II is dedicated to the theoretical premises of Foucault's approach and scientific strategy. The chapter elaborates on the early works of Foucault and his pronounced interest in the issue of power relations permeating different institutionalised discourses. The focus is on genealogical analysis, although this cannot be separated from the archaeological one.

Foucault assumes Nietzsche's critique of history and defines the genealogical strategy as opposed to traditional historiography. Foucault is not concerned with a description of actual events. The intention is to query contemporary discourses and practices by referring them back to the hegemonic conditions under which they are originally established and to uncover "the hazardous play of dominations" (Foucault 1991: 83).

Chapters III, IV and V deal with the analysis proper of the sources expounding and interpreting Krishna Consciousness as a credo and practice for its followers. Chapter III deals mainly with genealogical issues, chapter IV elaborates on the notion of the subject in the traditional theistic and the modern secular thought, chapter V expounds the ISKCON's and the modern secular perspectives on the procedures for discourse control, while chapter VI treats the questionnaires, interviews and sermons. Chapter VI is meant to illustrate and back up the interpretations on the already institutionalized discourse of Swami Prabhupada.

This thesis is a kind of crystallization of a long process of self-search and questioning, initiated by my first encounter with some ISKCON representatives at the end of the 1970s. That took place in the former People's Republic of Bulgaria in its transitory existence as an Eastern Block country, which is now only the Republic of Bulgaria, but part of the bigger formation of the European Union. Understandably, my first acquaintance with the Krishna Consciousness movement happened some good dozen years after its initiation in North America. The 'Iron Curtain' at the time allowed only a slow und intermittent trickle of information from the West as a side effect of the intense rivalry aiming to finally prove whose democracy is better – "ours" or "yours"; people's or liberal one. It is hard to imagine a better illustration of Foucault's concepts vis-à-vis

"power relations" and "discourse formations." Reality almost always exceeds any attempt at description or analysis to the point of being grotesque, but not entertaining.

For similar reasons I was exposed to the thinking of Foucault shortly after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the whole Iron Curtain affair. That was a memorable experience. It was literally elucidating to realise that some practices, such as the medicalization of madness (Foucault 1965), are quite recent and their rationale rather questionable than self-evident.

Foucault made me aware of the origins of modern discoursivity, "the excluding procedures and forms of reason, and hence of society, including inclusive forms of exclusion" (Foucault 1970). That challenged severely the certitude of my own judgements and transformed my intellectual constitution into something quite close to the Buddhist notion of "aggregates" or "dependently originating" states of self-awareness (Rahula 1959). Yet I am not so receptive to the Buddhist epistemology, finding it quite exclusive and one-sided with respect to the treatment of the 'Self' or the 'Person' (Ibid.). Thus, Foucault put me into the difficult task of defining my personal ontology as an anthropological researcher.

The context of ISKCON development as a discursive formation with the related issues of autonomy, alternative forms of society, brainwashing and control, appealed to me as a good testing ground for modern analytical strategies. That happened mainly because of the traditional approach of the movement towards the contemporary science, values and social practices, which provides a perfect reference point for an incursion into modern discoursivity.

The personal metamorphosis of Michel Foucault from a militant philosopher denying the "anthropological" subjectivity (Foucault 1970) into someone fervently defending it later (Foucault 1981-82), only reinforced my motivation. I will argue that Foucaultian topics like power relations, sex, control, and traditional self-techniques are salient and well recognisable features of the ISKCON problematic. I will also argue that the ISKCON members and representatives proactively advocate their autonomy and consciously share in the critical discourse involving their activities in the capacity of equal participants.

Chapter II. Foucault's discourse analysis

2.1 Introduction

> **Foucault has become a kind of impossible object: non-historical historian, an antihumanist human scientist, and a counter-structuralist structuralist.**
> **Clifford Geertz 1992**

Foucault always rejected being structuralist or poststructuralist. He is sometimes thought one (White 1994), due to the fact that he developed his discourse analysis in an environment of structuralists, especially his teachers, the Marxist and ideology theorist Louis Althusser and the philosopher Georges Canguilhem (Eribon, 1991&Andersen, 2003). The truth is that Foucault qualified himself as structuralist, but later carefully denied that fact (Eribon, 1991). Niels Andersen chose to read Foucault as a phenomenologist, "without consciousness as the origin of meaning – a subjectless phenomenology" (Andersen, 2003: 2). According to David Carroll (1994) the assumption shared by most of the prominent theoreticians in France (Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, etc.) is that "the subject is not original but derived, not a presence but an absence, and that the text, discourse, language, or the unconscious (the Symbolic) is primary and determining (present)" (Carroll 1994: 157).

The logical gaps on the manifest level betray the presence of a hidden and latent structure beneath. There is a clear signal of a logical breach when the visible text provides answers without questions being asked, and when questions are left without answers. The invisible text could be compared to a regime that condemns specific questions. By directing attention toward those logical gaps in the manifest text, structuralism can raise questions regarding the underlying text, which must exist so that the apparently incoherent and meaningless makes sense after all. In Althusser, this is called symptomatic reading, that is, a reading of the logical breaches of the visible text as symptoms of an underlying and controlling structure (Althusser & Balibar, 1970).

Poststructuralism maintains the notion of structure but sees the structure as much more loose and undefined. Both positions are unacceptable for Michel Foucault - there is only one level, which is one of appearance. The focus is on the statements as they emerge

and as they appear; they should not be reduced to anything else. It is crucial to Foucault that discourse is not a structure. But what is it then?

According to Andersen (2003) it is rather the writer's reconstruction of the historical relationship between discourse and institution. If we were to associate Foucault with structuralism, he could be called a *transformation structuralist*:

> First, he would not define the notion of structure within a synchronous perspective as, for example, in the works of de Saussure, Lévi-Strauss and Althusser. Structure would then be transferred into a diachronic analytics, precisely as a transformational structure, asserting itself at moments of change and rupture. Hence, structures would not be an attribute of the world but of the diachronic story (Andersen 2003: 3).

The fundamental concern of Michel Foucault is the critical investigation of discursive assumptions. Individual will and reason are questioned by demonstrating how every statement is a statement within a specific discourse to which certain rules of acceptability and exclusion apply. Foucault targets the humanities and the social sciences in particular as responsible for establishing regimes of knowledge and truth. As such, they not only elucidate our approach to ourselves, each other and our environment but make themselves available for moralising projects.

In *The order of things*, Foucault (1970) shifts the focus onto his own scientific discourse and its historical conditions. His archaeology of human sciences studies the ways in which people accept the taxonomies of an epoch without questioning their arbitrariness (Kermode, 1994). Foucault sets out to examine the historical conditions of structuralism and investigates how language replaces man as the object of knowledge. According to White (2002) Foucault views the Structuralist movement ironically, as the last phase of a development in the human sciences which began in the sixteenth century. In that period Western thought fell prey to the illusion that "the order of things" could be adequately represented in an "order of words," if only the *right order* of words could be found:

> The illusion on which all of the modern human sciences have been founded is that "words" enjoy a privileged status among "the order of things" as transparent icons, as value-neutral instruments of representation. The ascription to words of such an ontologically privileged status among "the order of things" is a mistake which modern linguistic theory at last has permitted to be identified. What modern linguistic theory demonstrates is that words are merely things among other things in the world, that they will always obscure as much as they reveal about the objects

they are meant to signify, and that, therefore, any system of thought raised on the hope of contriving a value-neutral system of representation is fated to dissolution when the area of things that it consigns to obscurity arises to insist on its own recognition (White 2002: 28).

Foucault simultaneously studies the origin and disappearance of the humanities as a result of the repression of human beings by language. Man is defined by the "human sciences" (sociology, psychology, philology, economics, history) as the subject in a double extension of, on one hand, a transcendental being charged with will and reason, and, on the other hand, an empirical being (observable one). This provides the possible conditions of the humanities as humans observing humans. The point is that through structuralism, language is made subject by a similar dichotomy into empirical and transcendental being. Now structures speak instead of humanity. While 'it' speaks as Lacan formulates it, the conditions of the humans recede. In other words, discourse becomes central: "Where there is a sign, there man cannot be, and where one makes signs speak, there man must fall silent" (Foucault, 1998a: 266).

2.2 Foucault's archaeological discourse analysis

> Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write.
>
> **Foucault 2002**

Soon after the publication of *The Order of Things* (1970) the critics introduced Foucault as Sartre's successor. The master launched a harsh counterattack and Foucault knew right away that the stakes were considerable. The fight was on and if Foucault wanted to make off with the winnings, he could not disappoint the expectations of an eager crowd awaiting the next heated exchange. Foucault was hard at work on *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). He wrote furiously and struggled violently with notions of enunciation (statement or énoncé), discursive formation, regularity, and strategy (Eribon, 1991: 191).

According to Andersen (2003) the archaeology of knowledge installs a distinction between statement, discourse and discursive formation. These three concepts provide a joint foundation for discourse analysis:

- *statement* is the atom of discourse – its smallest unit;
- *discourse* is the final, actually demarcated body of formulated statements – it is the archive of the discourse analyst;
- *discursive formation* is a system of dispersion for statements; it is the regularity in the dispersion of statements (Andersen 2003: 8)

Brown and Cousins (1994), though, do not view the statement as the smallest unit of discourse. For them "it is part of Foucault's insistence that the statement is not a thing, an elementary particle of a discursive formation" (Brown & Cousins 1994: 193). To Said (1994) the archive is not limited to discourse; it is "the *place* of discourse, its setting, in which statements occur" that is specified by Foucault as the *archive* (Said 1994: 72). As for the discourse itself, it is not a structure and does not exist on a level different from statements. As for statements, they do not represent a discursive structure. A discursive formation is actually the regularity of the irregular distribution of statements. Simply stated, the fundamental guiding difference in Foucault's archaeology of knowledge is the regularity/dispersion of statements:

Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statements, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity, we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation (Foucault, 2002: 41).

According to Foucault, a discourse does not consist of texts and discourse analysis is therefore not a textual analysis. Texts are much too boundless to function as the basis for discourse analyses. That "material individualization" of a book, which occupies a "determined space", has limits indicated by a number of signs and an economic value, does not necessarily mean the book is only the object that one holds in one's hands:

The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network (Foucault 2002: 25-6).

There is a general tendency to perceive literary works (oeuvres) as the embodiment of one writer's thoughts, experiences or unconscious. The fundamental problem consists of treating texts as the indication of a whole, which is not obvious in the textual fragments but must be ascribed through interpretation. According to Foucault the works of authors are not bound wholes in the sense of "a collection of texts that can be designated by the sign of a proper name" (Foucault 2002: 26). How about the authorship of texts signed under a pseudonym? How about hasty notes or a sketch that is discovered posthumously in the form of an unfinished draft, and another that is merely a notebook? What, for example, asks Foucault, should be considered as belonging to the work of Nietzsche?

> The youthful autobiographies, the scholastic dissertations, the philological articles, *Zaratustra, Ecce Hommo*, the letters, the last postcards signed 'Dionysos' or 'Kaiser Nietzsche', and the innumerable notebooks with their jumble of laundry bills and sketches for aphorisms (Ibid.)?

The critique of Foucault aims not only at literary analysis. His discourse analysis comprises any textual analysis "which professes to refer the statements of the text back to the author and his intention, concerns, unconscious, circumstances and so on" (Ibid.: 10). Statements do not stand for a tacit structure that secretly animates them. The discourse at hand is more than the disturbing presence of the unspoken. A discourse analysis cannot be reduced to a structural one. Foucault explains discourse analysis as "pure description of discursive facts" (Foucault, 1972: 234). The spirit of such a discourse analysis is a "felicitous positivism" (Ibid.). Foucault's desire is to construct a discourse analysis capable of escaping the fate of commentary by presupposing that the stated only exists in its historical rise and emergence (Foucault, 1986b: 17).

According to Foucault, a statement is a function of existence that enables groups of signs to exist (Foucault, 1986a: 86-8). We are thus able to recognise the statement by its momentary creation rather than by its appearance as a sign, sentence, book or argument. Statements are positive events that produce existence through enunciation. This function of existence contains at least four aspects: objects, subjects, conceptual network and strategy (Ibid.).

The statement constructs discursive objects that are classified and identified by the statement itself. The statement creates the object to which it refers through enunciation.

The enunciation of the object implies that it is brought to life as a social and discursive fact and can therefore be articulated (Ibid: 88-92).

It is not enough for a statement to create objects to be regarded as such – they should relate to a subject (Foucault 2002). To Andersen (2003) the subject positions should be assigned to individuals, while for Brown and Cousins (1994) recourse is not being made to human persons either as authors, speakers or actors in the conventional sense. That function of a statement rather "designates a position of the subject, a controlled space from which the signs may function as a statement in their enunciation" (Brown&Cousins 1994: 193). These are the discursive positions from which something can be stated. Similarly to discursive objects, subjects do not stand outside of the statement; conversely, the statement articulates the space and possibility of subjects.

According to Foucault, all statements re-actualise other statements in some way. Linguistic elements such as signs and sentences are only statements if they are immersed in an associative field, in which they simultaneously appear as unique elements. This is how Foucault summarises it:

> There is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belong to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from and distinguishing itself from them: it is always part of a network of statements, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be, to play (Foucault 1986a: 99).

A statement becomes a statement only if it both reactualises and extends other statements. A statement can be defined as a statement only if it is integrated into operations or strategies in which the identity of the statement is maintained or effaced (Foucault, 1986a: 100-5). A statement always chooses a materiality, at least in the form of a medium for its creation, for example speech, writing, report, arrangement or image. It always seeks support in a context; it appears with a status derived from the strategic context of its origin:

> Could one speak of a statement if a voice had not articulated it, if a surface did not bear its signs, if it had not left some trace – if only for an instant in someone's memory or in some space? Could one speak of a statement as an ideal, silent figure? The statement is always given through some material medium even if that medium is concealed, even if it is doomed to vanish as soon as it appears (Foucault 2002: 112).

Since the statements are always parts in some *discourse*, the field of discourse analysis should be "the compilation of all actual statements (spoken or written) in their historical dispersion and in their specific momentary value" (Ibid.) It is difficult to decide in advance which discursive formation regulates the dispersion of particular statements. In order to make evident that which ultimately regulates what has been said and not been said in a particular society, the discourse analyst should construct the archive of statements and discourse formations. In Foucault's words: "One ought to read everything, study everything. In other words, one must have at one's disposal the general archive of a period at a given moment. And archaeology is, in a strict sense, the science of this archive" (Foucault 1998a: 263). By reading "everything" Foucault means the following:

First, that one cannot limit one's reading to a theme such as, for example surveillance, simply because it is not possible to define the discursive formation beforehand. Themes change over time and relate to each other in unpredictable ways; therefore we have to follow the references of the statements and the references of the references in time and space in the broadest sense. There is no shortcut without consequences, thus the references should be followed until they appear to form a completed whole.

Foucault maintains secondly that it does not suffice to read the canonical works of the history of ideas. It is crucial that the reading also includes the statements of the institutions able to demonstrate practice. Unravelling the history of madness includes readings of philosophical works as well as scientific dissertations and the statements, regulations and accounts of the institutions themselves. Third, and finally, we must be careful not to install a preconceived distinction between official and more private and individual sources, as if the private and personal sources exist outside the discourse (Andersen 2003: 13).

In his studies of the self-relation of the self, Foucault frequently used diaries and personal notes from Rome of the 1st and 2nd centuries; likewise he addressed many novels, paintings and other personal documents from later historical periods. Understandably, we cannot weigh up the types of statement against each other in advance, as if a text by Voltaire is of greater importance than documents written by an historically anonymous person, which, in turn, are more important than the diaries of a doctor, and so on (Ibid: 14). .

We can start asking questions about regularities appearing in the irregular dispersion of statements only when the entire body of statements has been pieced together. The fundamental question to the statements posed by discourse analysis in the attempt to define discursive formations is: "Why did this and no other statement happen here?" The aim is to detect the rules that govern the way different statements emanate in discourse formations. Rules about when a statement is accepted as a logical and reasonable one represent rules of acceptability (Ibid.).

Foucault identifies four levels in a discursive formation, that is, four bodies of rules for the formation of statements (Foucault 2002: 23-78). These are the levels of formation of *objects*, formation of *subjects*, formation of *concepts* and formations of *strategies*. To Foucault (2002) different questions apply to the different levels of discursive formation. For example the questions applicable to the formation of objects are:

- What rules the existence of statements as objects of discourse?

- According to what particular law of emergence does the object of discourse find its place in a defined discursive formation?

- According to which rules are the objects ordered and classified?

- Why this enumeration rather than another?

- What defined and closed group does one imagine one is circumscribing this way?

- What relations exist between objects of discourse?

- Which hierarchy of objects does the individual object form a part of?

- How are the objects specified and characterised (Foucault 2002: 45-7)?

The fundamental question regarding the formation of *subjects* is why the statements create subject positions the way they do. The questions pertaining to these subject positions are the following:

- Who is speaking?

- Who, among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language (*langage*)?

- Who is qualified to do so?

- Who derives from it (this sort of language) his own special quality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true?

- What is the status of the individuals who – alone – have the right, sanctioned by law of tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse (Ibid.: 55)?

Furthermore the enunciation of subject positions and discursive objects implies the association to concepts and the ensuing questions:

- Why does the statement actualise particular concepts and not others?

- How do concepts organise and connect statements?

- What are the rules for conceptualisation and how do specific discursive formations draw on concepts from other formations, including the rules of transcription, which seem to exist between different discursive formations (Andersen 2003: 15)?

- Should the dispersion of concepts (on a broader scale of different disciplines such as grammar or economics) be left in its apparent disorder?

- Should the same dispersion be seen as a succession of conceptual systems, each possessing its organization, and being articulated only against the permanence of problems, the continuity of tradition, or the mechanism of influences?

- Could a law not be found that would account for the successive or simultaneous emergence of disparate concepts?

- Could a system of occurrence not be found between them that was not a logical systematicity (Foucault 2002: 62)?

The fourth level in a discursive formation is the formation of *strategies*. Strategy is about rules of selection for the completion or actualisation of the rules of acceptability and mutual exclusion of the discursive formations. Here is what Foucault has to say on this:

> Such discourses as economics, medicine, grammar, the science of living beings give rise to certain organizations of concepts, certain regroupings of objects, certain types of enunciation, which form according to their degree of coherence, rigour, and stability, themes or theories...like the theory in nineteenth-century philology, of a

kinship between all the Indo-European languages, and of an archaic idiom that served as a common starting-point; a theme, in the eighteenth century, of an evolution of the species deploying in time the continuity of nature, and explaining the present gaps in the taxonomic table...Whatever their formal level may be, I shall call these themes and theories strategies(Foucault 2002: 71).

Regarding the level of strategies Foucault admits that he could not be as precise as he is with the preceding three levels of discursive formations. Thus the questions he applies to the formation of strategies bear the sign of heightened theoretical uncertainty:

• How are strategies distributed in history?

• Is it necessary that (the mode of distribution) links them together, makes them invisible, calls them to their right places one after another and makes of them successive solutions to one and the same problem?

• Are the chance encounters between ideas of different origin, influences, discoveries, speculative climates, and theoretical models that the patience or genius of individuals arranges into more or less well-constituted wholes?

• Can one find regularity between them (the wholes) and define the common system of their formation?

2.3 Politics of discourse – contextualisation as Power and Control

According to Foucault (1980) between every point of a social body, between a man and a woman, between the members of a family, between a master and his pupil, between every one who knows and every one who does not, exist relations of power which are not purely and simply a projection of the State's power over the individual. Those relations of power are the fertile soil in which the State's power is grounded, the conditions which make it possible for it to function. The family, even now, is not a simple reflection or extension of the power of the State; it does not act as the representative of the State in relation to children, just as the male does not act as its representative with respect to the female. The State is able to function in the way it does due to some quite specific relations of domination which have their own configuration and relative autonomy. Here is how Foucault understands the relation of the State to the others social units:

State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth.

True, these networks stand in a conditioning-conditioned relationship to a kind of 'meta-power' which is structured essentially round a certain number of great prohibition functions; but this meta-power with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power (Foucault 1980: 122).

The mechanism of power must be perceived as a chain. Power should be analysed as something, which circulates – it is never precisely localised, "never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth" (Foucault 1980: 98). Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. The individuals are not only inert or consenting targets of power; they are also elements of its articulation. Individuals are the true vehicles of power, not its points of application. They are not simply subdued or crushed like inert material. The individual is an effect of power and an element of its articulation. To demonstrate the workings of power Foucault developed the genealogical analysis. That analysis seeks to open up the discursive field through tracing practices, discourses and institutional lines of descent, including the lines of connection to different historical conflicts and strategies of control (Lash 1994; Jacques 1994; Visker 1994; Andersen 2003).

2.4 Genealogical analysis as a historical dimension of the archaeology of knowledge

It is impossible to separate genealogical analysis from the archaeological one. Their relationship is frequently described, in Foucault, as two periods in his writings in which the genealogical breakthrough is called upon by the article 'Nietzsche – genealogy and history' (Foucault, 1991). Even before this publication Foucault had already used the term 'genealogy', at times together with the word 'archaeology'. In addition to that, the majority of the questions discussed in the Nietzsche article had already been addressed in *The archaeology of knowledge* (Foucault, 1986a), in the chapter 'Discourse and discontinuity', and in different introductory problem formulations in his historical works.

According to White (1994), Hoy (1994), Andersen (2003) and Visker (1994) genealogical analytical strategies should be construed as the historical dimension of the archaeology of knowledge, therefore conducting a knowledge-archaeological analysis in separation from the genealogical one appears illogical and impractical. The framework for the gaze of archaeology of knowledge is the distinction between regularity and

dispersion of statements, while the framework for the genealogical gaze is the distinction continuity/discontinuity (Andersen 2003: 17).

The designation of genealogy as a particular historical analytical strategy was initially developed by Friedrich Nietzsche, primarily in his dissertation *On the genealogy of morality* (Nietzsche, 1998). There Nietzsche explains how he started by looking into the origins of good and evil but how he gradually realised that this manner of questioning was extremely problematic by dint of the question's implicit supposition about an archetypal essential morality that would appear increasingly clear as one approached its source while tracing it back through history (Ibid.)

By redefinition of his question Nietzsche ascribes to it the characteristics of genealogy. The question is: "Under what conditions did man invent those value judgements – good and evil? And what value do they themselves have (Nietzsche, 1998: 2-3)?" Subsequently the genealogy of morals revolves around "the conditions and circumstances out of which [these values] have grown, under which they have developed and shifted (Ibid.: 5)." That way appears the necessity to question the value of values in all possible aspects. Therefore the genealogy of morals could be qualified as a critique of morality.

2.5 Regularity and discontinuity

According to Andersen (2003) and Megill (1979), Foucault maintains distinction between life and death. Megill refers to the tension between Apollo (the god of light, knowledge, the arts and civilisation) and Dionysus (the god of wine, mysteries, darkness and death) as a fundamental tension in Foucault's analytical-strategic development (Megill, 1979: 459). That tension is tangible in Foucault's works as the tension between archaeology as systematic analytical strategy (Apollonian), concerned with regularity of the irregular, and genealogy as analytical strategy, concerned with discontinuity, which brings on life and undermines presuppositions (Dionysian). Foucault, therefore, tries to apply Dionysian thinking in his genealogies. Genealogy in Foucault comprises three critical forms of application that serve life:

1. *Reality-destructive use*, which opposes the historical motif recollection-recognition. Historiography in Foucault is reality-destructive when, as in *Madness and Civilization*, it challenges the way the present recognises itself in historical texts (Andersen 2003: 19).

2. *Identity-destructive use*, which opposes the historical motif continuity-tradition. Foucault's historiography is identity-destructive when it denounces humanist identity as in *Discipline and Punish*. This is done by showing that the history of punishment does not consist in one act of movement towards a humanisation of the penalty system since the Middle Ages. Conversely, the modern means of punishment indicate an intensification of punishment, since the aim is no longer simply to torment the body but also to control the psyche. Thus history in Foucault is employed for the purpose of undermining the humanist complacency of the present. He wants, says Andersen (Ibid.), professional practitioners of humanism in the institutions to feel uncomfortable. This is how Foucault perceives the identity-destructive application of genealogy: "The purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation" (Foucault, 1991: 95).

3. *Truth-destructive use*, which opposes the historical motif of knowledge. This application could be found in Foucault's critique of psychology and psychoanalysis. There Foucault demonstrates how the truth about insanity can never be found in psychology itself, for the simple reason that society is responsible for creating the conditions for insanity and madness to emerge. Therefore the truth about insanity should be located in the society itself, which implies a solution that is far from being a facile one. Because for Foucault "all knowledge rests upon injustice" (Ibid.), the goal of the destructive use of genealogy is to create in history a counter-memory (Foucault Ibid.: 93).

According to Foucault the purpose of genealogy is not to describe actual events. Genealogy is rather a history of the present designed to outline the historical conflicts and strategies of control by which knowledge and discourses are constituted and operate, and to use these descriptions as a counter-memory (Andersen 2003: 19). Foucault is mostly concerned with the redescription of "not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations (Foucault, 1991: 83).

The aim is to query the discourses and practices of the present by referring them back to the hegemonic conditions under which they have been established, which also includes pointing out ruptures in the grounds on which strategies, institutions and practices are shaped. The presuppositions of the present are to be dissolved by means of history (Andersen 2003: 20). Here is the Foucault's own formulation of the genealogy's goals:

The isolation of different points of emergence does not conform to the successive configuration of an identical meaning; rather, they result from substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals. If interpretation were the slow exposure of the meaning hidden in an origin, then only metaphysics could interpret the development of humanity. But if interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations. The role of genealogy is to record its history: the history of morals, ideals, and metaphysical concepts, the history of the concept of liberty or of the ascetic life; as they stand for the emergence of different interpretations, they must be made to appear as events on the stage of historical process (Foucault 1991: 86).

The tool for observation in Foucault (1991) is the continuity and discontinuity of difference. That tool is applied in order to distinguish discontinuity in that which presents itself as continuity and to examine possible continuities in what is presumed to be different and unique. Characteristic for the genealogical method is the ongoing openness of the object. There is no preliminary definition of the object of examination. How the object has been construed historically in different ways and in different circumstances is something that needs investigation.

The focus should be not only on those events that stand out clearly as seen from the present, but as well on those practices, constructions, and strategies that, for some reason, never made themselves conspicuous and remained disintegrated or changed into something else. Ergo we should not just trace that which became history, but also very much that which has been defined as mistakes, antiquated, unrealistic and so on. Foucault names the perspective constituted by the difference continuity/discontinuity a *glance of dissociation*, a glance that distinguishes, separates, and disperses; that is capable of liberating divergence and marginal elements – the kind of dissociating view that is capable of decomposing itself, capable of shattering the unity of man's being through which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of his past (Foucault 1991: 87).

2. 6 Conclusion

The greatest preoccupation of Foucault as a discourse analyst is to challenge popular discursive assumptions. He is adept in demonstrating how every statement is a statement within a specific discourse, thus questioning individual will and reason through the specific rules of accessibility pertaining to the same discourse. His goal is to explore scientific discourse from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse. For him it is important to know whether the subjects responsible for scientific discourse "are not determined in their situation, their function, their perspective capacity and their practical possibilities by conditions that dominate and even overwhelm them" (Foucalult 1970: XIV).

Foucault insists that as long as humanities and social sciences in particular are inseparable from different moralising projects, knowledge cannot provide a neutral discursive position. Humanities and social sciences not only interpret and explain out our world, but they establish and maintain regimes of knowing and truth able to regulate the ways we relate to each other, to our environment and to ourselves as well:

> Discourse in general, and scientific discourse in particular, is so complex a reality that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels and with different methods. If there is one approach that I do reject, however, it is that (one might call it, broadly speaking, the phenomenological approach) which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity – which, in short leads to a transcendental consciousness. It seems to me that the historical analysis of scientific discourse should, in the last resort be subject, not to a theory of the knowing subject, but rather to a theory of discursive practice (Ibid.).

To Foucault the important point is that any given discourse applies excluding procedures, which in their turn produce outsiders on one hand, disqualified as abnormal or irrational, and legitimate groups on the other hand, which possess the right of judgment over the outsiders. The excluding procedures deny legitimate access to discourse mainly through disqualifying certain arguments, themes and speech positions.

Chapter III. Analysis of the sources expounding and interpreting Krishna Consciousness.

> **Thereafter, at the conjunction of the two yugas, the Lord of the creation will take His birth as Kalki incarnation becoming the son of Vishnu Joshi, when the rulers of the earth shall convert into almost to the rank of the plunderers.**
>
> **Shrimad-Bhagavatam (1.3.164)**

3.1 Introduction

When searching for the reasons why westerners have taken with such alacrity to the new eastern religions we usually look to Western societies and their problems, rather than to the East. According to Angela Burr (1985) those reasons could be found in the practical philosophies of eastern religions proper. They are highly attractive themselves to the westerners by dint of offering an ideal framework for dealing with the existential and social problems confronting them in their daily lives.

In addition to the attractiveness of the eastern philosophies and religions, the post war western societies of the 60s were already largely secularised, thus providing a mild receptive climate for new influences. According to Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1996) the process of secularization was mostly representative for the west, but not that much regarding India, China, or the Arab world. Hervieu-Léger backed up her opinion with Max Weber's (1964) elaboration on Protestant ethics and capitalism. Nevertheless, the biographer of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Goswami (2002), demonstrates something else for India of the 60s:

> Somehow Abhay (Prabhupada) realised that the golden era of preaching that had flourished in the days of Srila Bhaktisiddhânta Sarasvati was no longer. He also noticed during his extensive train travels in India more and more people smoking cigarettes and more and more women traveling alone. "India was becoming westernized. And the national leaders were paving the way – the blind leading the blind" (Goswami 2002: 139).

When communist China is concerned it is difficult to perceive the state atheism as promoting something else but secularism, while the Arab's petro-dollar affluence does the same, only expressed in different terms: economic growth and consumerism. The German sociologist Weber (1964) has a good reason to consider the individualistic Protestantism

as conducive to rational behaviour, but the same applies to the four principle goals in Hindu life (*Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Mokṣa*), let alone many of the Buddhist practices (why not in China?) with their clearly stated non-theism. Islam is practiced differently across the Arab world, but it also promotes rational behaviour even to the point that the alms giving (*zakāt*), which is one of the pillars of the Muslim faith, is specified to "consists of 2.5 per cent of the value of all accumulated wealth" of the donor (Ayoub 1996). Thus, it is problematic to explain 20th century secularism as something really particular to a specific religion.

The one's failure to find the meaning of life in the social sphere often shifts one's attention to the personal internal space. Since the 1960s, people's investigating of their inner psyches, in order to uncover meaningful significations and deeper understanding of existential phenomena, has gained new momentum and scope. People have ventured to explore and transcend the boundaries of their consciousness with the hope of achieving a radical transformation of the self; a self which will better respond to the new requirements of technocratic modernity.

ISKCON is only one of many oriental religious movements which prioritize the importance of an ecstatic and mystical experience at the expense of modern technocratic rationalism. According to Pace (1993), there is a great variety of ideological approaches adopted by the new oriental religious movements with regards to worldview and practical application in life. To him the main three attitudes in terms of alternative practice are exemplified by the corresponding movements of Rajneesh, Sai Baba and ISKCON. These three attitudes can be differentiated on the basis of radicalism vis-à-vis the mainstream lifestyle of the adoptive society.

ISKCON takes the middle ground by being motivated to experiment with a different mode of salvation through individual asceticism, while remaining receptive to the rest of the world. At the one extreme is the practice of the Rajneesh followers with their total denial of western culture; at the other the adepts of the Sai Baba's teaching, accepting that one can keep on living peacefully in this world, as long as its prevailing rationalism is abandoned in the name of spiritualism and healthy naturism.

The new eastern religions significantly reinforce the unfolding tendency of westerners to explore new forms of spirituality. Traditionally eastern religions consider the altered states of consciousness attained through different kinds of yoga, mental

concentration and meditation as the primary means for achieving knowledge, self-realisation and personal liberation. For the same reasons the spiritual leaders of ISKCON refer to Krishna Consciousness as "The Science of Self Realisation."

3.2 Early development of *Bhakti* tradition

The Hindu tradition as we know it today emerged following a major development around 2nd century BC (Ratnakar 1996). The ideal that prevailed was that of *bhakti* or ecstatic devotion to a personal god. *Bhakti* involved an entirely new view of the Absolute and an entirely new way of realising it.

Historically the earliest evidence of *bhakti* is to be found in the Upaniṣads. The usual word employed for expressing devotion in the Upaniṣads is *upāsana* (service, devotion). *Bhakti* is mentioned explicitly for the first time in Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (6.23):

> To one who has the highest devotion (*bhakti*) for God,
> And for his spiritual teacher (*guru*) even as for God,
> To him these matters which have been declared
> Become manifest [if he be] a great soul (*mahātman*) –
> Yea, become manifest [if he be] a great soul!
>
> (Hume 1968: 411)

The single-most important text that firmly established bhakti as the dominant Hindu mode of relating to the gods was the Bhagavad Gītā. The scholarly understanding is that the ritual and mystical traditions of Hinduism are rooted in ideas and values structurally opposed to each other (Eliade 1958, Krishnamurthy 1994, Ratnakar 1996). While the ritual tradition insists on the involvement with the world and its hierarchical organisation, the mystical one points towards renunciation of the world and emphasises universalism and monism. Ratnakar (1996) believes that the Bhagavad Gītā was composed sometime about 250BC. Sargeant (1994) refers to the same period, specifying that the book was conceived in Epic-Purāṇic Sanskrit (500B.C. – 400A.D.), the language of the Epics, Purāṇas and Upaniṣads, and "it was probably first written down in the early centuries of the Christian era through like many other works which are embodied in written form, it undoubtedly dates from an earlier word-of-mouth version (Sargeant 1944: 3)." Sargeant

further elaborates that Epic-Purāṇic Sanskrit is in many ways the simplest form of the language. Some occasional aorists remain (eight or ten of them in the whole Gītā) and some occasional use of the prohibitive "*mā*" in place of the "*na*" ("not") of Vedic Sanskrit. The typically long compounds of Classical Sanskrit, though, have not yet appeared. Here follows the conclusion of Sargeant:

> The Bhagavad Gītā, in its written form at any rate, is generally thought to date from the second or third century A.D., being considered a later interpolation in the long Epic, the Mahābhārata, most of which describe an India of an earlier period, possibly 800B.C (Sargeant 1994: 4).

Ratnakar (1996) compares the two competing philosophies (or traditions) at the time of the composition of the Bhagavad Gītā to clashing armies on a battlefield, disputing the right to rule over the Hindu mind and heart of future generations. According to Mircea Eliade (1958) Kṛṣṇa attempts to solve the dilemma by showing that the two traditions, previously opposed, are equally valid:

> ...it being possible for each individual to choose the method – be it action or be it knowledge and mystical contemplation that his present karmic situation permits him to practice. It is here that Kṛṣṇa turns to "Yoga" – a Yoga that was not yet Patañjali's *darśana*, but that was equally far from being the "magical" Yoga referred to in other passages in the *Mahābhārata* (Eliade 1958: 155).

The resolution of that opposition offered by Lord Kṛṣṇa gives rise to new speculations and practices in which the two seemingly irreconcilable principles come to coexist. Today the Bhagavad Gītā is a pan-Hindu text; its authority and influence are based on its capacity to resolve the most essential ideological conflict of Hinduism and in this way to eclipse all sectarian and regional considerations as well.

The context in which Kṛṣṇa delivers his lessons to Arjuna is the impending Battle of Kurukṣetra between the Pāṇḍhavas and Kāuravas, both being cousins of one and the same clan. While the two great armies of cousins face each other, Arjuna realizes that his duty as a *Kṣatriya* prince to fight in righteous warfare somehow confronts his desire to renounce the world, rather than killing his friends, relatives and teachers. The hero-prince is caught between the claims of *dharma* of his cast and the seductive pull of renunciation, and he desperately turns to Kṛṣṇa for advice. In the spirit of Upanishadic tradition Kṛṣṇa is the charioteer of Arjuna. The popular image of the charioteer expresses the function of

the spiritual guide (look at Kathopaniṣad3.3, 4, 5). At this battle of dharma the spiritual guide is personified by the human form of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa himself introduced a new message in Hindu theology, the message of an affectionate personal God, delivered directly to the devotee. The essential framework of orthodox Brahmanism is preserved, but at the same time revolutionized from within. In the Gītā (18 : 47), Kṛṣṇa expounds the traditional logic based on a hierarchical social structure:

> Better one's own duty, though imperfect, than the duty of another well performed;
> Performing the duty prescribed by one's own nature, one does not incur evil.
> (Sargeant1994: 708)

The acceptance of social hierarchy is asserted right from the beginning and maintained to the end of the Gītā. But then Kṛṣṇa puts forward the remarkable new proposition, which is the essential message of the Gītā – the doctrine of motiveless action. One should observe one's dharma, with complete disregard for the consequences:

> Your right is to action alone; never to its fruits at any time.
> Never should the fruits of action be your motive;
> never let there be attachment to inaction in you.
> (Sargeant 1994: 132)

Finally Kṛṣṇa argues that the disinterestedness he is advocating is possible only through an unconditional surrender of the self to a God from whom all things and all beings have emanated and through whom they subsist and perish. The purity of the motive itself should not be guaranteed by vigilance, introspection, and ascetic austerities, but by the surrender of the ego in the abandon of devotion, to a personal deity who is nevertheless responsible for everything in the world. If *bhakti* is sufficient to remove one's own ego and one's desires as motives for action, then whatever one might do will be in fact God acting through him:

> He who is free from wants, pure, capable, disinterested, free from anxiety,
> Who has abandoned all undertakings and is devoted to Me, is dear to Me.
> (Sargeant 1994: 523)

The most important purāṇic source for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and the Hare Krishna Movement by far is the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The setting of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa precedes the famous battle described in Bhagavad Gītā when Kṛṣṇa expounds his message of Yoga. The most popular and influential part of this work for the Hare Krishna Movement is the tenth *canto*, which gives in detail the early life of Kṛṣṇa during his descent to earth. In the eroticism of the expression of love for Kṛṣṇa is found one of literature's most impassioned symbols of souls searching, longing for, and finding the love of God (Judah 1974: 30).

The growth in popularity of Vaiṣṇavism can perhaps be measured by the increase of Vaiṣṇava inscriptions during the Gupta period, which began in the fourth century A.D. The epigraphs range from invocations to Vaiṣṇava deities to grants made to various temples for their repair or maintenance. At the same time, images of Vaiṣṇava deities, which had begun to appear about the second century B.C., began to increase in complexity of iconographic forms, as though in rhythm with the developing philosophy. The blending of *tantric* and *Śakta* elements into Vaiṣṇavism, which had also begun in the Kuṣāna period, continued. These elements, emphasizing the female energy of the deity in personalized form, received veneration of devotees. Not until the late fifth century A.D., however, did Śrī Lakṣmī appear as the power (*śakti*) of Viṣṇu, through whom he acts to create and destroy the worlds (Judah 1974: 31).

It was also during the Gupta period that epigraphic evidence reveals the great cosmic proportions that Kṛṣṇa had attained. The earliest of Vaiṣṇava inscriptions (A.D. 404), after giving an invocation to Viṣṇu, describes Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa) as the abode of the whole universe, immeasurable, unborn, and all powerful. Coins of this period bearing symbols and emblems of a religious nature are evidence that a number of the Gupta monarchs patronized one or another of the Vaiṣṇava deities; some took the title *parama bhāgavata*, highest or chief *bhāgavata* (divine).

By the sixth century A.D. Vaiṣṇavism had spread to Assam and Bengal. Bengal became one of its greatest strongholds; one finds there many sixth - to ninth-century

sculptures depicting the various sports (*līlā*) of Kṛṣṇa (Jaiswal 1967: 29-30, 108, 192, 195, 198).

In expanding into the Tamil's land in the South, Vaiṣṇavism was influenced by a group of *gurus* known as the Alvars, whom modern scholarship has placed in the period between the middle of the seventh and the middle of the ninth centuries A.D. The traditional date for the earliest Alvars is 4203 B.C. Their doctrine that all beings should regard themselves as women in their love for God was later to be echoed in the philosophy and devotion of Chaitanya (Dasgupta 1940: 64, 68). Thus Śaṭhakopa, one of the Alvars, "conceived himself as a woman longing for her lover and entirely dependent on him" (Ibid.: 70). His feelings of anguish and longing over being separated from God are echoed in similar expressions by Chaitanya.

At some point of the twelfth century, Rāmānuja originated the Śrī Vaiṣṇava sect, the first of the important Vaiṣṇava groups that have continued to the present day. His philosophy, known as *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta*, is a qualified monism, in opposition to the *advaita Vedānta*, which is best characterised by the popular school of Śaṅkara. Rāmānuja viewed the soul as an individual part of God, which retained its individuality when liberated, rather than becoming merged into the Absolute, as the system of Śaṅkara would imply. The system also requires a complete surrender to God in his personal aspect, a doctrine that Rāmānuja derived chiefly from the Alvars (Judah 1974: 32).

In the thirteenth century appeared the sect founded by Madhva, who propounded a philosophical dualism. It was the first to be based on Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* at Vṛindāvan. As it depended heavily on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, there was no place for Rādhā in his system. The next sect to develop, the Viṣṇuswāmins, have almost disappeared today. Although their views were basically similar to those of Madhva, they extended their devotion to Rādhā as well as to Kṛṣṇa (Ibid.).

Nimbārka formed a new Vaiṣṇava sect in the thirteenth century. His philosophy was *dvaitādvaita* or a dualistic monism; like the *bhedābheda* system of Chaitanya, it held that God was at the same time one with and yet separate from each soul. Nimbārka moved

one step closer to Chaitanya's philosophy by conceiving of Rādhā as the consort of Kṛṣṇa (Ibid.).

3.3 *Bhakti* tradition under the star of Chaitanya

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu was born in February, 1486 to the pious Vaiṣṇava family of Jagaṅnāth Miśra and his wife, Sachī Devī. Although affectionately known in his youth as Nimai, his given name was Viśvambhara. As a boy he was full of mischief, but showed himself to be of above average intelligence. He became proficient in his studies, while enjoying the social privileges of his Brahmin caste (Ibid.: 33).

When his father died Chaitanya was fourteen or fifteen years old. The boy assumed responsibility for his mother, became a householder, and married Lakṣmī, the daughter of a Brahmin scholar. Then he started his own school, and attracted many pupils. Chaitanya was successful as a promising scholar, but according to his early biographers had no inclination toward religious studies and appeared to be rather proud and arrogant. The death of his first wife by snakebite may have been the turning point in his life, because despite the quickly arranged second marriage by his mother, his union to Viśṇupriyā was short-lived as he renounced the life of a householder completely.

During a pilgrimage to Gayā, made when he was twenty-one or twenty-two, he met the famous ascetic, Īśvara Purī, who became his guru and gave him a ten-syllable Kṛṣṇa *mantra* to chant. Chaitanya returned completely changed – he was a *bhakta*, a devotee, entirely dedicated to Kṛṣṇa. He no longer cared about his personal appearance or about his work. Some considered him mad, so intense was his devotion for Kṛṣṇa. Often he would go into mystic trance; at times he raved and chanted Kṛṣṇa's name continuously. Sometimes he would cry or faint, and his teaching suffered to such an extent that he had to discontinue the school. He next organized *saṅkīrtans*, often dancing and singing on the village streets, and he preached a message of universal love (Adhikary 1995: 49; Mukherjee 1970: 4-9; Kennedy 1925: 11-29; De 1961: 76-77).

The *saṅkīrtans* were received with mixed emotions by the townspeople. Some of the Brahmins were very jealous, so they finally took the matter before the Kazi, the Muslim magistrate of Navadvipa, presenting the *saṅkīrtans* as a public nuisance. The magistrate

took the complaints of the Brahmins seriously and at first warned the followers of Chaitanya not to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa loudly. The Vaiṣṇavas disobeyed the order of the Kazi and he was forced to send constables who interrupted a *saṅkīrtan* and broke some of the *kholes* (drums). The magistrate also threatened to punish anybody who would host the party of *nāmasaṅkīrtana* in his house. Then, Chaitanya quietly organized a mammoth, non-violent mass demonstration, without breaking the law. He is the pioneer of the civil disobedience movement not only in India, but possibly in the world. The magistrate had to recognize the peaceful and religious nature of the activity, got converted by Chaitanya and took part himself (Adhikary 1995: 52).

To increase his movement, Chaitanya became initiated as a *sannyāsin* or holy man of the Bharati order, and received the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (Divine Krishna Consciousness). Having decided to leave his native town he left Bengal, and at the request of his mother he made his permanent home in Purī in Orissa. There he converted the famous Vedāntist, Sarvabhauma, thus gaining the full respect and support from the King of Orissa and establishing a strong future for Chaitanyaism there (Judah 1974: 35).

Shortly thereafter Chaitanya began a pilgrimage of almost two years to the south. During this time he is said to have performed miracles and made many conversions through his lectures and his contagious devotion. Chaitanya spent the rest of his life in Purī, leaving it only twice. Accompanied by a few chosen disciples, he spent his time in devotion to Kṛṣṇa, and never again saw his wife or his mother. In the last few years of his stay in this world, he experienced profound ecstatic symptoms. For example, his bodily limbs would periodically recede into his body and then expand again, like a turtle's limbs into its shell, as he cried uncontrollably in love for Kṛṣṇa. According to Gaudya taxonomy, such symptoms only manifest in the twelfth stage of *mahābhāva* – an exalted level of devotion, rarely achieved (Rosen 2004: 70).

He thus spent the final eighteen years of his life in Purī, after which he left this world in 1534, at age of forty-eight. Perhaps he drowned in the sea during a trance state, as has been suggested. In his Caitanya Maṅgala, Jayānanda attributes the disappearance of Chaitanya to a wound in his foot by a stone, which caused fever and death (Kennedy 1925: 39, 46-51; De 1961: 84, 90-97). According to Adhikary (1995) when he was

dancing during singing, in the Car Festival in the month of Asharh, his left big toe was suddenly pierced by a brick lying on the road. He developed a temperature, his whole body was swollen, and he died two days later, during the day of Akshay tritia. From this description, it appears that he died of gas gangrene. His body was buried within the temple in a place called 'Kaili Vaikuntha' according to a plan made between Roy Ramananda and King Pratap Rudra and other few close advisers. The news was kept secret for a few reasons, the important one of which was to avoid the political tension between Bengal and Orissa. It was announced that the body of Chaitanya blended with the shrine of Jagannatha (Adhikary 1995: 59).

According to another view Chaitanya was killed by Vidyadhar who wanted to capture power from King Pratap Rudra. Being loyal to the King, Chaitanya was perceived as a great political obstacle. Chaitanya was killed within the temple by Vidyadhar and his close associates, his body was buried there and for their own safety, they had to declare that Jagannatha himself was too pleased with his prayer and engulfed his body (Ibid.: 60).

3.4 Later development of Chaitanya's Vaiṣṇavism

Immediately after the death of Chaitanya, his Movement declined. The sound of the *saṅkīrtan* that had flooded the countryside was not heard on the banks of the Ganges for some time. During this period of decline, however, the lines of descent were established. Nityānanda and Advaitācārya, were considered *Goswāmis* or *gurus*, and passed their titles and privileges on to their descendents.

Although Chaitanya left the later development of his movement and the formulation of his philosophy in written form to his disciples, his contribution to bhakti philosophy is unquestionable. His chief ability was to convert and inspire capable men to carry out his ideas and wishes. His close disciple Advaitācārya worked to propagate the faith, but because of his advanced age he was not as effective as the equally revered Nityānanda (Judah 1974: 37).

Nityānanda carried out to the letter Chaitanya's injunction to regard all people as spiritually equal, and admitted many low caste people to the Movement (Kennedy 1925: 61-63), thus causing rifts between himself and Advaitācārya. Vīrabhadra, the son of Nityānanda, continued his father's work of admitting low caste and outcaste devotees to

the Movement. Perhaps the most important of these were 2500 male and female mendicants, remnants of a decadent Buddhist order, the Nera-Neris, who were living as outcastes in the Hindu community (Ibid.).

The seventeenth century saw a period of renewal of the Chaitanya faith, due to the influence of three men: Śrīnivāsa ācārya, Narottama Datta, and Śyāmānanda Dās. All three had studied under one of Chaitanya's disciples and at Vṛndāvan. All of them converted wealthy *rājas* like Vīra Hamvīra and Rasikā Murāri thus providing the money and influence needed to aid the spread of the Movement. During this period the poems and songs of Acyutānanda, Balarāma, Jagannātha, Ananta, Yaśovanta, and Chaitanya popularized the work of these three men. The strong feeling of the people for Chaitanya there even today owe much to the work of these poets of Orissa, who are known as the six *Dāsas* (Kennedy 1925: 69-78).

The next two centuries again saw a decline in Vaiṣṇavism, until a gradual renewal began to be noticed in Bengal in the mid-nineteenth century. The popularity of the Brāhma Samāj, a Hindu reform movement, may have contributed to this reawakened interest during the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Ibid.).

3.5 The Gauḍīya Vaiṣnavas and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Mission, established by Bhaktivinode Thākur in 1886, had the formal name of Śrī Viśva Vaiṣnav Rāj Sabhā. This association of Vaiṣṇavas is interested in propagating Chaitanya's philosophy and practices, and claims descent from its founder, Jīva Gosvāmi, one of Chaitanya's "six Gosvāmis." Bhaktivinode was a city magistrate in the city of Purī in Orissa and the superintendent of the Jagannātha temple. His son, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Gosvāmi, had been a professor of mathematics and astronomy before his renunciation. Thereafter, he continued his father's work of revitalizing Vaiṣṇavism and informing the English-speaking world of Chaitanya's message during the first half of this century. He founded the Gauḍīya Math Institute for teaching Krishna Consciousness in 1918, and during his life established sixty-four

missions (Ray, 1965:64; *Back to Godhead*, 1967: 28). One of his disciples was A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svāmi Prabhupāda, whose efforts have had such a marked influence on the American youth of the counterculture.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svāmi Prabhupāda, or "Prabhupād," as he is affectionately called by his devotees, was born as Abhay Charan De in Calcutta in 1896. After being graduated from the University of Calcutta with majors in English, philosophy, and economics, he worked as manager of a chemical firm until his retirement in 1954. His missionary work, however, was foreshadowed as early as 1922, when he first met Bhakti Siddhānta. Bhakti Siddhānta became his spiritual master, and gave him the idea of spreading Chaitanya's message throughout the world. After Abhay Charan De's formal initiation took place at Allahabad in 1933, shortly before his spiritual master's death in 1936, Bhakti Siddhānta ordered him to carry the teaching of Krishna Consciousness to the Western world (Judah 1974: 41).

In 1947 the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava recognized De as Bhaktivedanta. In 1959 he took *sannyāsa*, the religious order marking one's total renunciation of life for devotion to God (Bhaktivedanta, 1968a: xiii). He also left his house to live in Vṛndāvan, where he made many friends, acquaintances and disciples, some of them quite wealthy and influential. At this stage he thought seriously, about the request his spiritual master made, forty years ago, to spread Chaitanyas' message through the world:

> I thought that Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmi wanted me to preach this cult – not only he, but before that Bhaktivinode Thākur wanted this cult to be preached all over, especially in the Western countries. I did not carry out his order. And my brothers – God brothers – are now engaged in litigation, and they are not pushing forward this movement. So after my retirement I began thinking of coming to the Western countries (Judah 1974: 41).

Svāmi Prabhupāda was favoured by one of his disciples, the owner of a merchant ship company. He was given free passage in a cargo ship named 'Jaladuta' by the Scindia Steamship Company. He arrived at Commonwealth Pier, on September 17, 1965. On his arrival in New York, Swāmi Prabhupāda began chanting the names of Krishna while sitting beneath a tree in Tompkins Park on the Lower East Side. He soon attracted followers, many of them hippies. Conversions took place. The first center of the

International Society for Krishna Consciousness opened in New York in 1966. The beginning of a temple in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district followed in 1967. From then on the movement continued to spread (Judah 1974: 42).

3.6 Conclusion

As it became evident from that chapter, ISKCON represents the latest development of *Bhakti* tradition, which is deeply rooted in India and could be traced back to the 2nd century BC (Eliade 1958, Krishnamurthy 1994, Sargeant 1994, Ratnakar 1996). One of the most important dates for the Krishna Consciousness movement is that of the birth of Lord Chaitanya, who revitalised the *Bhakti* tradition during his lifetime in the 15th century and to a great extent outlined the ways of active devotion and practice. Since then for the peoples of South India the tradition of *Bhakti* is mostly associated with the name of Lord Krishna.

After the death of Chaitanya his *Bhakti* movement experienced several periods of decline and revival. The most important renewal periods of Chaitanya's faith are the one during the 17th century led by Śrīnivāsa ācārya, Narottama Datta, and Śyāmānanda Dās and the period greatly influenced by Bhaktivinode Thākur in the late19th century. The son of Thākur, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Gosvāmi, successfully kept on and passed the spirit of the faith to the founder- ācārya of the nowdays movement in the west A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svāmi Prabhupāda.

The ISKCON movement was initiated in 1965 within the context of the secularization of the post-war world. The begining was in New York, San Francisco, and Montreal in North America; it later spread further in Western Europe and slowly in the rest of the world. During the last 16-17 years the process has gained momentum in East Europe as well, following the deep political and social changes after the fall of the comunism (Burkhard 1987, Beyer 1998, Altglas 2002). ISKCON represents one of those new religious movements led by charismatic gurus and stressing an experience which is personalised on an affective emotional level (Bruce 1996; Hervieu-Léger 1990).

Nowadays the presence of ISKCON in the "global ecumene" (Hannerz 1992) is pronouncedly tangible (over 200 temples and farms in sixty countries [Gruson 1988]) and undisputable. As it is well expounded by Burr (1984), ISKCON's main "attraction is

that it has its feet in both camps – both eastern and western culture." The movement presents meaningful opportunities for the global Asian community to negotiate the incompatibilities of its own religion and values with those of the western culture. While the Asian community provides ISKCON with service infrastructure, financial support and expertise, the movement pays back with prestige, recognition and legitimisation of cultural values.

Chapter IV The Notion of Subject in traditional theistic and modern secular thought

> **One must, throughout one's entire**
> **life, be one's own project.**
> **Foucault 1982**

4.1 Introduction ·

According to Foucault (1997, 1998b) and Balibar (1994) spirituality is defined as the pursuit, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth. The pursuits, practices, and experiences could be renunciations, purifications, ascetic exercises, conversions of ways of looking, modifications of existence etc., which are done not in exchange for knowledge, but offered by the subject as a price to be paid for the access to knowledge alone.

Foucault stresses the importance of the fact that "throughout Antiquity (in the Pythagoreans, Plato, the Stoics, Cynics, Epicureans, and Neo-Platonists), the philosophical theme and the question of spirituality were never separate" (Foucault 2005:17). Another important point is that there is someone, who is called "the" philosopher by many, to begin with by Aquinas, by dint of being "the only philosopher in Antiquity for whom the question of spirituality was least important; the philosopher whom we have recognised as the founder of philosophy in the modern sense of the term: Aristotle" (Ibid.). What really matters in this case is that Aristotle is not the pinnacle of Antiquity, but only its exception – a fact by itself being far from sufficient for establishing the exclusivity and importance of that philosopher.

In the modern age, says Foucault, it is assumed that what gives access to the truth, the condition for the subject's access to truth, is knowledge (*connaissance*) and knowledge alone. Foucault names that assumption the "Cartesian moment", explicitly stating, though, that Decartes was not the inventor of that specific access to truth or the first to claim this. In particular the modern age of the history of truth begins when knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth (Ibid.).

The idea is that the scientist (the philosopher or simply someone who seeks the truth) can recognise the truth and have access to it in himself and solely by his activity of knowing, without the necessity of any personal change, or some other demand being

imposed on him. Certainly, there are some conditions, but they are strictly formal, objective conditions, like the structure of the object to be known and the formal rules of method. However, in any case, the conditions of the subject's access to the truth are defined within knowledge, while the other conditions are only extrinsic, like the cultural or moral conditions. The cultural requirements are that we need education, and we have to operate within a certain scientific consensus, while according to the moral ones we must make an effort, and avoid deceiving our world. Further we have to combine the interest of financial reward, career, and status in a way that is fully compatible with the norms of disinterested research (Ibid.: 18)

4.2 The western notion of the self-governing subject

Foucault identifies Christian theology as the agent responsible for the modern attitude regarding the knowing subject, founded on Aristotle by Aquinas and the scholastics. Christian theology claims to be a rational reflection and qualifies faith as universal vocation. That theology also represents the knowing subject as one finding absolute fulfilment and the highest degree of perfection in God, who is his creator and so his model. There is a correspondence between an omniscient God and subjects capable of knowledge, conditional on faith. Thus one of the main elements leading Western thought, or its principle forms of reflection, is to extricate and separate, to free itself from "the conditions of spirituality that had previously accompanied it and for which the *epimeleia heautou* (caring for the self) was the most general expression" (Ibid.).

On the other side, notes Foucault, most of nineteenth century philosophy: Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Husserl and the 20th century Martin Heidegger consider knowledge (*connaissance*), or the activity of knowing, still linked to the requirements of spirituality. In all these philosophies, a certain structure of spirituality tries to link knowledge and the conditions and the effects of the activity of knowing to a transformation in the subject's being; the example given is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1979). Foucault points to a certain pressure or resurgence of the structures of spirituality quite noticeable in the field of knowledge (*savoir*) strictly speaking. As all scientist say, we can recognize a false science "by the fact that access to it requires the subject's conversion and that it promises enlightenment for the subject at the end of its development" (Ibid.: 28).

The important thing to notice is that in those forms of knowledge (*savoir*) that are not exactly sciences, and which we should not seek to assimilate to the structure of science, there is again the clear presence of at least certain elements and requirements of spirituality. Foucault identifies as such forms of knowledge (savoir) both Marxism and psychoanalysis, but warns against confounding them with religion and spirituality. In both Marxism and psychoanalysis we can witness the problem of what is at stake in the subject's being, and the question of what are the subject's aspects that might be transformed by virtue of his access to the truth. The point is that neither of these two forms of knowledge has openly considered the old and fundamental question of *epimeleia heautou* clearly and willingly (Ibid.: 29).

There has been an attempt to conceal the conditions of spirituality specific to these forms of knowledge within a number of social forms. The conditions of class position, school or party membership, allegiance to a group etc., refer back to the questions of the condition of the subject's preparation for access to the truth, but conceived of in terms of social organization. What really matters, according to Foucault, is whether psychoanalysis poses "in its own terms, that is to say in terms of the effects of knowledge (*connaissance*), the question of the relations of the subject to truth, which by definition – from the point of view of spirituality, and anyway of the *epimeleia heautou* – cannot be posed in terms of *connaissance*" (Ibid.: 30).

4.3 The Indian concept of subjectivity according to Vedic and Vaiṣṇava traditions.

In India, the first elaborate explanation of human being as structured of different elements of nature can be dated as far back as the Taittirīya Upaniṣad. Nature is Brahman or Ātman itself and in its unfolding materiality leads to the final manifestation of man:

> From this soul (*ātman*), verily, space (*ākāśa*) arose; from space, wind (*vāyu*); from wind, fire; from fire, water; from water, the earth; from the earth, herbs; from herbs, food; from food, semen; from semen, the person (*puruṣa*). This verily, is the person that consists of the essence of food. This indeed, is his head; this, the right side; this, the left side; this, the body (*ātman*); this, the lower part, the foundation.
>
> (Hume 1968: 283-4; Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2, 1).

Man is built of five *kośas* (sheaths): *annamaya kośa* (sheath composed of food), *prāṇamaya kośa* (sheath composed of vital energy), *manomaya kośa* (sheath composed of mind), *vijñānamaya kośa* (sheath composed of intelligence), and *ānandamaya kośa* (sheath composed of bliss). The sheaths repeat the shape of man at the level of the corresponding energy (Ibid.: 2, 2-5).

Although Ātman itself, the human being is always immersed in māyā - the "illusionary" materiality of creation. In the Kaṭhopaniṣad the Self is referred to as Ātman, who is in the position of the master of a chariot (the human body), while the "pure discriminating intellect" is the charioteer, the mind serves as reins; the senses are harnessed as horses, and their sense objects are the roads to travel (Kaṭhopaniṣad 3, 3-4). The goal of man is to transcend worldly preoccupations and to attain the final liberation from the insane cycle of birth and death. The way to attain the goal is to apply "correct understanding" and "right discrimination" while being on the road of the material existence:

> He, however, who has not understanding,
> Who is unmindful and ever impure,
> Reaches not the goal,
> But goes on to reincarnation (*saṁsāra*)
>
> He, however, who has understanding,
> Who is mindful and ever pure,
> Reaches the goal
> From which he is born no more.

(Hume 1968: 352; Kaṭhopaniṣad 3, 7-8).

To the South Asian and to the Hindu sensitivity in particular, a person represents itself as a flow of various streams of substances, rather than a bounded, fixed entity. The Hindu understanding of life does not divide the universe into separate realms of spirit and matter, but perceives it as composed of "coded substances" (Marriott 1989). According to Marriott the South Asian person is a "dividual," who is "permeable, composite, partly

divisible, and transmissible" in opposition to the Western idea for the separate, autonomous "individual," who is distinctively apart from others (Marriott 1976b: 194).

The South Asian person cannot be defined otherwise but in the context of permanent relations with others: a family, a clan, a lineage, a caste etc. The Hindu subject always interacts with others by "sending bits of him – or herself off in the form of gross bodily substances such as the voice, the gaze, or the bits of the self that are incorporated into the food that one cooks" (Leavitt 1988: 84). In addition ancient Indian thought closely associated a definite pattern of behaviour or conduct with a specific place or region. Olivelle (1993) gives example of that tendency with Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra1.1.2.9-12, which associates the region of north-central India called Āryāvarta ("region of the Āryas") with customs "to be regarded as authoritative on questions of *dharma*" (Olivelle 1993: 18).

To Olivelle (1993), based on the close association between place of habitation and way of life, *āśrama* means the life of those who live in *āśramas*, and conversely "the modes of life of those belonging to the *āśramas* of student, householder, and hermit are often referred to by their respective residences: teacher's house, home, forest or wilderness" (Ibid.). Olivelle explains as well that the verb √vas ("to dwell") is regularly used with reference to the pursuance of an *āśrama*, reinforcing again the association between conduct and place. The Mahābhārata (3.134.10), for example, calls the four *āśramas* "four houses" (*niketana*) – the fourth one not mentioned previously was the *āśrama* of renouncer.

According to the most ancient formulation of the system presented in the *Dharmasūtras*, the *āśramas* are not stages but rather permanent modes of life open to any young adult who has completed his period of Vedic education. Within this formulation the temporary period of studentship following Vedic initiation was not considered an *āśrama*. It was four or five centuries later, around the beginning of the Common Era, that the classical formulation of the system appeared, and it was only within that formulation that the *āśramas* came to be considered stages of life through which a person was expected to pass (Olivelle 1993).

The totality of the Brāhmaṇical *dharma* (order, duty) is often referred to simply as Varṇāśramadharma, an expression that modern scholars and native interpreters alike have seen as the closest approximation within the tradition to what we have come to call Hinduism: "Even now," observes the eminent Indian sociologist G. S. Ghurye (1964), "varṇāśramadharma, duties (*dharma*) of castes and *āśramas*, is almost another name for Hinduism" (Ghurye 1964: 4). To the great scholar and saint in the Kṛṣṇa conscious tradition Bhaktivinoda Ṭhakūra (1838-1914) the *varṇa* system naturally occurs in all societies:

> When we consider the modern societies of Europe, whatever beauty exists in these societies depends upon the natural *varṇāśrama* that exists within them. In Europe, those who have the nature of traders are fond of trading and thereby advance themselves by trade. Those who have the nature of *kṣatriyas* adopt the military life, and those who have the nature of *śūdras* love doing menial service (Ṭhakūra 1974: 107).

Bhaktivinoda criticises the prevailing cast system of modern India because of its insistence on birth as the selective criterion of one's *varṇa*. To him the original *varṇa* system was pure and based on scientific (*vaijñānika*) principles. In the following 5000 years (roughly) after the time of *Mahābhārata* the system had become corrupt and deviated from its original purpose, that is, to help people gradually develop love of God. The same applies to the today's Western societies; their natural *varṇa* system is far from being a scientific (*vaijñānika*) *varṇāśrama*. Here is the brief summary of the Vedic perspective according to *Bhaktivinoda Ṭhakūra* :

> 1. *Varṇa* should be determined by studying the nature of a child after examining a child's associations and tendency toward learning during childhood. 2. At the time of selecting *varṇa* there should be some consideration of the *varṇa* of the mother and the father. 3. *Varṇa* should be determined, at the time of education, by the family priest, father, respectable seniors, and spiritual preceptor. 4. In case of dispute, there should be a two-year trial period and a review committee to examine the case after that time (Ibid.: 117).

According to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness theology man's true nature is spirit. While part of Kṛṣṇa, he is in a conditioned state with a material body. Since both spirit and matter are

rooted in Kṛṣṇa's nature, however, they are not to be considered as unreal, but as covered over by illusory *māyā*. Man has five component parts: The Supersoul, the individual soul, the material body, Time, and activities. Four of these are eternally related to Kṛṣṇa (Bhaktivedanta 1968b).

The Supersoul, the *paramātman*, exists in each living entity as Viṣṇu. According to Swāmi Bhaktivedanta, the practice of *yoga* is meant to discover this localized aspect of Viṣṇu within one's heart (Bhaktivedanta 1968b: 157-158). It is in the capacity of the Supersoul that Kṛṣṇa acts as the inner controller of man's actions. Although Kṛṣṇa is the controller, as Viṣṇu he allows man certain freedoms. If man wants to gratify his senses, he is free to do so, but he must pay the consequent price for that. In fact it is said that Kṛṣṇa "created this material world for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu" (Ibid.: 94).

The individual soul (*jīva*) and the source of man's consciousness is both one with and yet distinct from the Supersoul. Man's soul is qualitatively one with Kṛṣṇa as part of his marginal energy (*jīva-śakti*), but quantitatively is atomic in size. It is called his marginal energy because it is intermediate between his internal and external potencies, his higher and lower energies (Ibid.).

The soul is the proprietor of its own material body, but Kṛṣṇa is the proprietor of all. The conditioned soul, although transcendental, is trapped in material existence. Its natural body is subject to the three modes of nature according to its *karma*. Man's false ego, his intelligence, the five senses, and the mind are all representations of material conceptions. Taken together they are all part of man's material body, which is a nonpermanent entity composed of *prakṛti* (material nature) (Bhaktivedanta, 1972b: 622-623, 625-626, 628); Bhakti Siddhānta, 1967 : 99-100).

The living entity, or soul, is composed of superior *prakṛti*. There is also inferior *prakṛti*, which is Kṛṣṇa's lower material nature. Material nature is energy that is separated from Kṛṣṇa, while the living entities are unseparated energy, and are eternally related. Another difference between the higher and lower prakṛti is that the former has consciousness similar to Kṛṣṇa's but never as expanded (Bhaktivedanta 1972b).

Man's consciousness is perverted because of his material conditioning, whereas Kṛṣṇa even during a descent is unaffected by matter. Because of our conditioned consciousness we identify ourselves with our material bodies. We believe that we are enjoyers and are lords of the material world, when it is Kṛṣṇa who is enjoyer and creator. The road to liberation from this conditioned state is *bhakti*, which is said to purify our activities because devotion to Kṛṣṇa is transcendental to material conditioning. According to Bhaktivedanta this is the first step to be taken (Bhaktivedanta, 1972b: 8-11).

Eternal Time is another element of man composed of the three different combinations of material modes or *guṇas*: goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and ignorance (*tamas*). These modes of matter cause activities (*karma*), the last component part of man, to come into being. All of man's component parts, with the exception of karma, are eternally related to Kṛṣṇa. Because he has this partly material nature in his present state, he is conditioned by these three material modes. The mode of *sattva*, being the purest, frees one from sinful reactions. It gives man a sense of happiness and allows him to develop knowledge. This very achievement, however, keeps him bound and prevents his liberation.

The second mode of *rajas* develops in him a desire for material enjoyment, such as a wife, children, and a home, as well as honour in society; it gets him to work hard to achieve his goal. As a result, he again becomes attached by becoming too closely associated with the fruits of his work. The mode *tamas* leads to degradation and madness. According to Bhaktivedanta this is best exemplified by people working hard to accumulate money with little care for the eternal spirit. The mode of goodness leads to rebirth on a higher planet; the mode of passion brings one back to reengage in more activities for their rewards; but the mode of ignorance allows the possibility of rebirth as an animal (Bhaktivedanta 1968: 265-268).

Man is conditioned in life to enjoy or suffer the fruits of his actions according the laws of his material nature. Although the Supersoul employs a certain grace by giving him directions on how to act, the living entity being controlled by his karma forgets how to behave properly. Frustration is always the reward for the wrong choices made, which leads to endless wandering from life to life until a time arrives when he is in the mode of goodness and decides to end his bondage through *bhakti* (Ibid.: 26-28)

4.4 *Epimeleia heautou* and *gnōthi seauton*

> The art of living (*biotic, hē biōtikē*) is more like
> wrestling than dancing, in that you must stay on
> guard and steady on your feet against the blows
> which rain down on you, and without warning.
>
> *Mark Aurelius, Meditations VII. 61*

According to Foucault (2005) the expression "caring for the self" emerges and appears in Plato with the dialogue *Alcibiades*, but the practice or the set of practices in which the care for the self will appear has actually its roots in very old techniques and modalities of experience established well before Plato and Socrates. Well before these philosophers there was "an entire technology of the self related to knowledge (*savoir*), whether this involved particular bodies of knowledge (*connaissance*) or overall access to truth itself" (Ibid.: 46).

First there are rites of purification: without being purified one cannot have access to the gods, cannot make sacrifices, cannot face the oracle and understand what s(he) says, and cannot benefit from a dream which will enlighten one through ambiguous but decipherable signs. The practice of purification is well attested for a long period extending through the Classical, Hellenistic Greece and the Roman world as well. This is a preliminary rite not only before contact with gods, but also with the truth they may vouchsafe us (Ibid.: 47).

Another important technique is the one for the concentration of the soul, given that the soul is something mobile. The soul or the breath is something easily disturbed and over which the outside can exercise a hold. Needless to say this could be dangerous and is something to be avoided at any cost. The *pneuma*, or the breath, is to be protected from external dangers such as something or someone attempting to have a hold over it. The dispersal of the breath at the moment of death is to be avoided too. One must therefore concentrate the *pneuma*, gather it up, unite and condense it in itself in order to give it a solidity, which will enable the soul to last, to endure and hold up through life and not be scattered even at the arrival of death (Ibid.).

Another procedure falling under these technologies of the self is the technique of withdrawal (*retraite*), for which the Greek term is *anakhōrēsis* (withdrawal or

disengagement from the world). This archaic technique of the self is understood as a particular way of detaching and absenting oneself from the world in which the self is immersed, but doing so "on the spot" – somehow breaking contact with the external world, no longer feeling sensations, no longer being disturbed by everything taking place around the self. One should act as if one no longer sees what is there in front of his or her eyes. This is the technique of the visible absence. While you are there, visible to the eyes of the others, you are actually absent, elsewhere (Ibid.: 48).

Another example is the practice of endurance, which is linked, moreover, to the concentration of the soul and to the withdrawal (*anakhōrēsis*) into oneself. The concentration and withdrawal into oneself enables one either to bear painful and hard ordeals or to resist temptations one may encounter.

Most of those techniques were already integrated within the well-known spiritual, religious, or philosophical movement of Pythagoreanism with its ascetic components. One of the self-techniques practiced in Pythagoreanism was, for example, the purifying preparation for the dream. Since dreaming while you sleep is, for the Pythagoreans, to be in contact with a divine world, which is the world of immortality, beyond death, and also the world of truth, you must prepare yourself for the dream. Among the preparations are those of listening to music, inhaling perfumes, and also, of course, examination of conscience. Reviewing the whole of one's day, recalling the faults you have committed, and thus purging and purifying yourself of them by this act of memory, is a practice whose paternity was always attributed to Pythagoras (Ibid.).

To Musonius Rufus, a Roman Stoic, the acquisition of virtue involves two things. On one hand there must be theoretical knowledge (*epistemē theōrētikē*), and then there must also be *epistemē praktikē* (practical knowledge).This practical knowledge, he says, can only be acquired through zealous, painstaking (*philotimōs, philoponōs*) training; and he uses the verb *gumnazesthai*: "doing exercises, gymnastics," but clearly in a very general sense. So taking pains, zeal, and practice will enable us to acquire the *epistemē praktikē*, which is as indispensable as *epistemē theōrētikē* (Foucault 2005). That virtue is acquired through an *askēsis* no less indispensable than a *mathēsis* (knowledge, *connaissance*) is obviously a very old idea. The idea is founded in the oldest Pythagorean texts. It is found in Plato. It is also found in Isocrates when he speaks of the *askēsis philosophias* (Foucault 2005: 316).

According to Foucault the meaning of *askēsis* for the Ancients did not involve the aim of arriving at self-renunciation at the end of the process. It involved, rather, constituting oneself through *askēsis*. Or, more precisely, involved arriving at the formation of a full, perfect, complete, and self-sufficient relationship with oneself, capable of producing the self-transfiguration that is the happiness one takes in oneself. The nature itself of the means, of the tactic put to work to achieve this objective, is not primarily or fundamentally renunciation. It involves, rather, acquiring something through *askēsis*. We must acquire something we do not have, rather than renounce this or that element of ourselves that we are or have. We must acquire something that, precisely, instead of leading us gradually to renounce ourselves, will allow us to protect the self and to reach it. In brief, ancient ascesis does not reduce: it equips, it provides (Ibid.: 320).

What ascesis equips and provides us with is what in Greek is called a *paraskeuē*, which Seneca often translated into Latin as *instructio*. When the objective of ascesis is to arrive at the constitution of this full relationship of oneself to oneself, its function, or rather its tactic or instrument is the constitution of a paraskeuē. This is both an open and an oriented preparation of the individual for the events of life. In the askesis, the *paraskeuē* involves preparing individual for the future, for a future of unforeseen events whose general nature may be familiar to us, but which we cannot know whether and when they will occur. It involves, then, finding in ascesis a preparation, a *paraskeuē*, which can be adapted to what may occur, and only to this, and at the very moment it occurs, if it does so (Ibid.: 321).

4.5 Yoga process, self-control, *sādhana*

4.5a Patañjali *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga*

The sage Patañjali is said to have composed the Yoga Sūtras and he is considered the father of *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. *Aṣṭa* means "eight," *Aṅga* means "limbs," and *Yoga* means "the act of yoking," joining"(Monier-Williams; 1970); "joining ," "union," "yoke"(Apte W.S.; 2004); "to link together," "to bind closely," "to harness," "to bring under the yoke"(Eliade M.; 1969). Etymologically the term is derivative from the Sanskrit root yuj, having all the above meanings, but it is extremely difficult to define the discipline (or the science) of yoga itself.

In the context of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras the chief aim of Yoga is "to teach the means by which the human spirit may attain complete union with Īśvara or the Supreme Spririt" (Monier-Williams 1970: 856); "to teach the means by which the human soul may be completely united with the Supreme Spirit and thus secure absolution" (Apte W.S. 2004: 788). Those two interpretations express the traditional mystic understanding of Yoga. For the purpose of this thesis though, the secular interpretation is needed as well and the one proposed by Mircea Eliade (1969) follows this course of reasoning:

> Even in its "mystic" connotation – that is, even in so far as it signifies *union* – yoga implies a prior detachment from the material, emancipation with respect to the world. The stress is placed on man's effort ("to bring under the yoke"), on his self-discipline, thanks to which he can achieve concentration of mind, even before he has invoked – as in the mystic varieties of yoga – the aid of the divinity. "To link together," "to bind tightly," "to bring under the yoke" – the purpose of all these actions is to unify the spirit, to eliminate dispersion and the automatisms that are characteristic of the secular consciousness. To the "devotional" (mystic) schools of yoga, this "unification," obviously, merely precedes true union, the union of the human soul with God (Eliade 1969: 10).

The limbs of Yoga are: *yama* (self-control), *niyama* (discipline of the mind), *āsana* (physical postures), *prāṇāyāma* (breathing exercises), *pratyāhāra* (sense detachment), *dhāraṇā* (concentration), *dhyāna* (meditation), *samādhi* (profound meditation). The ethical foundations of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* are *yama* and *niyama*. According to Eliade (1969) *yama* means "restraint", while *niyama* corresponds to "discipline"; to Prahlādānanda Swami (2005) *yama* and *niyama* mean respectively "social" and "personal" discipline.

The sage Patañjali divides *yama* and *niyama* into ten categories:

Yama (self-control or social discipline):	Niyama (discipline of the mind or personal discipline):
ahiṁsā – non-violence	*śauca* – sincerity
satya – truthfulness	*santoṣa* – contentment
asteya – not stealing	*tapas* – austerity
brahmacarya – celibacy	*svādhyāya* – study
aparigraha – non-possessiveness	*īśvara-praṇidhānā* – devotion or surrender to God

According to Prahlādānanda Swami we have the chance to reach the goals of yoga described by authorities, in case we "systematically follow a yoga process; just as to graduate from a school we follow its curriculum" (Prahlādānanda 2005: 13). We have to always keep in mind that the ultimate yogic goals are not health and mystic powers but realizing the self in union with the Absolute reality. By following yogic disciplines, our attachments to the modes of passion and ignorance diminish and we gradually attain the state of goodness, wherein we know more and suffer less.

4.5b Śrīmad-Bhagavatam, Bhagavad-Gītā and self-discipline

Disciplining of the senses and mind is indispensable to someone aspiring to spiritual goals in life. The process for refining one's capacity for spiritual life is explained in Śrīmad-Bhagavatam as follows:

> To concentrate the mind, one must observe a life of celibacy and not fall down. One must undergo the austerity of voluntarily giving up sense enjoyment. One must then control the mind and senses, give charity, be truthful, clean and non-violent, follow the regulative principles and regularly chant the holy name of the Lord. Thus a sober and faithful person who knows the religious principles is temporarily purified of all sins performed with his body, words and mind. These sins are like the dried leaves of creepers beneath a bamboo tree, which may be burned by fire although their roots remain to grow again at the first opportunity (Bhaktivedanta 1999: 19; 6.1.13-14).

In Bhagavad Gītā (chapters 2 and 3) Lord Kṛṣṇa identifies desire as the worst enemy of the spiritual aspirant. The enemy is described as voracious and greatly injurious – it is able to obscure the knowledge and the judgement of the wisest among men. Desire is insatiable as fire and by ravaging the senses, the mind and the intellect leads to destruction of the ability for discrimination, by which the soul is finally lost:

> For a man dwelling on the object of the senses, an attachment to them is born;
> From attachment, desire is born; from desire, anger is born.
> From anger arises delusion; from delusion, loss of the memory;
> From loss of the memory, destruction of discrimination;
> From destruction of discrimination one is lost (Sargeant 1994: 147-8)

Although being so vicious and powerful, desire still can be subdued and vanquished. The body is said to be "inhabited by the eternal, the indestructible, the immeasurable

embodied Self (Ibid.: 103) and that Self (or Ātman) is said to be superior to the senses, mind and the intellect (Ibid.: 199). That Ātman could be our best friend and ally in the difficult struggle for Self-realisation:

> One should uplift oneself by the Self; one should not degrade oneself;
> For the Self alone can be a friend to oneself, and the Self alone can be
> an enemy of oneself.
> For him who has conquered himself by the Self, the Self is a friend;
> But for him who has not conquered himself, the Self remains hostile,
> like an enemy (Sargeant 1994: 276-7).

4.6 Conclusion

The notion of the subject (or the self) in the traditional theistic thought is always related to certain processes of transformation, of self-improvement, revelation, enlightenment and transcendence; while for the modern secular thought the subject has no specific need of such deep changes in order to have access to truth in general, and to self-knowledge in particular. In the first case there is a price to be paid for the access to truth in the form of renunciations, conversions of looking, purifications, modifications of existence and ascetic exercises. In the second case, the subject (the scientist) can recognise the truth and have access in himself to it through knowledge (*connaissance*) alone, complying with external formal rules of method and conditions regarding the structure of the object to be known.

The traditional theistic notion of the subject was developed for millennia through different more or less ascetic practices both in the East and the West. The exchange of spiritual "know-how" must have been intense and continuous, given that many techniques for self-control and self-improvement cited in Stoics, Cynics, Epicureans, Pythagoreans, Vedantists, Vaiṣṇavas and Yogis, refer to the same states of consciousness or being. For example the Greek term *anakhōrēsis* (withdrawal or disengagement from the world) can be easily associated with the practice of *pratyāhāra* (sense detachment) in Yoga. The same applies to the Yogic *dhāraṇā* (concentration), which is described as concentration of *pneuma* (breath) in the Classical Greek and Roman Stoic traditions (Foucault 2005). Later

in Christianity we cannot help noticing the direct application of the Yogic *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) and *dhyāna* (meditation) in the practice of Hesychastic prayer (Eliade 1969).

As for the modern secular notion of the subject, Foucault recognises its inception in Christian theology. The specific Western attitude to the knowing subject is based on Aristotle by Aquinas and the scholastics. According to the Christian theology God is a creator and a model for the knowing subject; thus the subject is perceived as capable of emulating the omniscient God. The conditions of the subject's access to the truth are primarily defined within knowledge (*connaissance*), while the other cultural or moral conditions are only extrinsic.

Chapter V. Procedures for discourse control - the ISKCON and the modern secular perspectives

> North-American culture is characterised by the co-existence of the secular and the religious. It is the dialectical relationship between these forces on which we should focus, tracing out how each involves the other and how the boundary between the secular and the religious is continually negotiated...this process of negotiation has been as much a part of our past as of our present, occurring, for example, even in Puritan New England, a time and place when, according to conventional wisdom, religion was all important.
>
> David Hall 1997

5.1 Introduction

To Foucault (1971) there is no civilisation as much respectful toward discourse as our own. Discourse has never before been so honoured, never so universalised and liberated from all constraints. Nevertheless, it appears that behind all obvious logophilia and veneration of discourse there is a hidden apprehension. It seems that prohibitions, barrages, thresholds and limits were employed in order to master, at least, partially the great proliferation of discourse, so that its dangerous richness could be checked and its disorder organised according to expressivity, which is able to avoid its most incontrollable aspects (Foucault 1971: 52).

According to Foucault there is, no doubt, a deeply rooted logophobia in modern societies, a kind of suppressed apprehension and hostility to all discourse events, to the aggregation of things uttered, to the eruption of all these statements and everything that could be violent, discontinuous and perilous; to the great incessant humming and disorder of discourse. If one wants to analyse that logophobia, in all of its conditions, games and effects, there are three possible solutions for its successful treatment, which our modern mentality is still reluctant to entertain. The first solution would be to question our will to truth, the second to restore discourse to its status of event, and the third to divest the signifier of its sovereignty once and for all (Ibid.: 53).

In *L'ordre du discours* (1971) Foucault outlined the procedures for discourse control with remarkable punctuality and clarity, given his notoriety for being one who "makes it very hard" for others "to find out what he is saying" (Kermode 1994: 8). Here is the table of procedures for discourse control established by Michel Foucault:

I. Externes
    1. L'interdit
    2. Le partage
    3. L'opposition Vrai-Faux
II. Internes
    1. Le commentaire
    2. L'auteur
    3. L'organisation des disciplines
III. Régulatrices de l'accès
    1. Le rituel
    2. Les « sociétés de discours»
    3. Les doctrines

In the following chapter every specific procedure will be elucidated according to Foucault's own elaborations. All the procedures identified by Foucault (1971) are equally applicable to both secular and theistic discourses; they will be tested against the secular and theistic aspects of the Krishna Consciousness discourse in particular.

5.2 External procedures or procedures of exclusion

The external procedures for discourse control as established by Michel Foucault are threefold: 1. *l'interdit* (the forbidden); 2. *le partage et le rejet* (division and rejection); 3. *l'opposition vrai-faux* (the opposition true-false). To certain extent those procedures appear as inseparable, so the challenge will be to make them distinct as well as possible.

According to Foucault (1971) *l'interdit* is the most explicit and familiar form of *exclusion*. It is generally accepted that we do not have the right to say everything and that in particular circumstances we cannot talk at all. In other words it is impossible for anyone to talk about anything in any circumstances:

> Tabou de l'objet, rituel de la circonstance, droit privilégié ou exclusive du sujet qui parle: on a là le jeu de trois types d'interdits qui se croisent, se renforcent ou se compensent, formant une grille complexe qui ne cesse de se modifier (Foucault 1971: 11).

To begin with, there are minimum requirements for active participation in the Krishna Consciousness movement, as well as for engagement in a modern secular research. In the case of the ISKCON we have the four precepts or the four regulative principles: **no meat eating, no intoxication, no gambling, and no illicit sex** (Judah 1974, Burr 1984, Daner 1974, Bhaktivedanta 1990). As far as modern secular research is concerned I can recognize at least four basic rules for justifiable presentation and argumentation: **no plagiarism** (look at p.7, 10, 36), **no moral judgment** (look at p.17), **no unfounded claims** (p.10), **and no subjectivism** (p.10-11, 36). Certainly the corresponding short lists of precepts, principles, or rules could be significantly extended. In some cases the rules that can be added are clearly distinct; in other cases they should be assigned, rather, to the category of the previous principles. For example there are some explicit rules of exclusion in the Vaiṣṇṇava discourse like **the bans on *saṁnyāsins* to travel in the lands of *mlecchas*** (foreigners, barbarians or outcasts), **initiating *mlecchas*, access of *mlecchas* and women to serve the deities, and homosexual practices**. In modern secular discourse the honourable mention could fall to the issues of **racism, gender discrimination, homosexual discrimination**, and the so-called **ethnocentrism** in general.

The ISKCON's four regulative principles are in no way different from the rites of purification described in the chapter 6.5 regarding the *epimeleia heautou*. Thus the four precepts are actually part of the Vedic *saṁskāras* (purification ceremonies), "prescribed for every civilized person, from birth to death (Bhaktivedanta 1990: 52)." To Bhaktivedanta the purpose of *saṁskāras* is to bring a person who has no knowledge of spiritual life gradually to the spiritual level; by the purification processes, one attains spiritual rebirth:

> You cannot become a devotee unless you give up sinful activity. Therefore you have to begin by following these four prohibitions. You have to avoid sinful activities like illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling, and intoxication, including tobacco, coffee, and tea. Then you'll gradually become completely sinless. On one side you have to follow restrictions, and on the other side you have to engage yourself in devotional service. To engage oneself in devotional service under the order of the spiritual master and the *śāstra* (rule, teaching) is the way to remain on the transcendental platform (Bhaktivedanta 1990: 55).

While those four purification requirements or prohibitions are transplanted in the west without compromising, it is not the same with the taboos regarding the travelling of *sannyāsins* in the land of *mlecchas* (Gosvami 2002), the initiation of *mlecchas*, the access of *mlecchas* and women to deity service (Valpey 2004), and homosexuality (Bhaktivedanta 1999). For example Bhaktivedanta, who was a *sannyāsin*, not only travelled to the West, but also introduced the Hindu deities for worship there. When Bhaktivedanta was consecrating the images of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa deities in Sydney, Australia, in 1971 he uttered the following appeal: "I am leaving You here in this *mleccha deśa* ("land of barbarians"). Now, these devotees, they have come to You, kindly give them intelligence so that they can serve You nicely. This is my prayer" (Valpey 2004: 45).

Valpey (2004) also points to a notable difference between Indian temples and ISKCON temples outside of India – namely the participation of women as temple priests. As the Krishna Consciousness movement attracted women as well as men quite early in its development, Bhaktivedanta "awarded brahmanical initiation to both, authorising and particularly encouraging his women disciples to perform deity worship in ISKCON temples" (Ibid.: 52). The same ISKCON temples in India though, exclude women from service directly in the deity room. Notwithstanding that they can participate in other services related to deity worship, including cooking, "Rādhārāmana temple, for one, has only Brahmin men cook for the deity" (Ibid.: 58). Valpey (Ibid.) is suspicious that this is the case in most public Vaiṣnava temples in India, though a research into that is yet to be conducted.

As far as the issue of homosexuality is concerned, according to the Krishna Consciousness discourse, it is generally explained out as a practice of illicit sex – sexual practice that is self-serving (could be heterosexual also) and deviates from procreating of Krishna Conscious children. In my field research I have never witnessed an open discussion on the subject during a Sunday sermon in the ISKCON temple of Montreal, or in a Bhagavad Gītā class at the same place. All I know about that issue is either due to the Vaiṣnava scriptures and modern books or my personal communication with the devotees. Here is the authoritative narration of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam with the purport of Bhaktivedanta:

Lord Brahmā then gave birth to the demons from the backside of his body, and they were very fond of sex. Because they were too lustful, they approached him for copulation. The worshipful Brahmā first laughed at their stupidity, but, finding the shameless *asuras* (demons) close upon him, he grew indignant and ran in great haste out of fear (Bhaktivedanta 1999: 775-6).

Purport

Sex life is the background of material existence. Here also it is repeated that demons are very fond of sex life. The more one is free from the desires for sex, the more he is promoted to the level of the demigods; the more one is inclined to enjoy sex, the more he is degraded to the level of demoniac life. Sexually inclined demons have no respect even for their father, and the best policy for a saintly father like Brahmā is to leave such demoniac sons (Ibid).

According to Vicar (2003), which was recommended to me by one of the devotees, neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality can be qualified as "natural." His idea of natural is somehow significantly different:

Heterosexual desire is a perverted reflection of our original love for Kṛṣṇa and homosexuality is another twist. Śrīla Prabhupāda:"the homosexual appetite of a man for another man is demoniac and is not for any sane man in the ordinary course of life." (Vicar 2003: 107).

Further on Vicar (Ibid.) explains that with the advancement of Kali-yuga, the Krishna Consciousness movement will have to accommodate more and more people with past perverse lives and give them the opportunity for purification. Extending the logic that a heterosexual desire can be effectively accommodated within the *gṛhastha-āśrama*, Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended marriage (to a woman!) for a disciple with homosexual desires. No matter how unpractical this advice may seem, homosexuality and heterosexuality are equally treated as lust with the specification that in homosexuality "the lust has increased to an abnormally high degree" (Ibid.).

To Vicar (2003) the solution is to provide homosexuals coming to Krishna Consciousness with special guidance from senior devotees. This is how homosexuals should be accommodated:

The homosexual must be understood as an individual person and be given proper facility after frank discussion. He should understand his condition to be especially fallen, but should be confident that by Kṛṣṇa consciousness, all difficulties can be overcome. And other devotees should be sympathetic and understanding with such sincere souls (Ibid.).

Modern secularity shares the attitude of being sympathetic and understanding also, but assumes a kind of neutral and detached position – acceptance with no paternalistic, judgmental, or correctional slants. In exchange though, the gay-lesbian communities in Montreal are fairly aggressive in promoting the "queerness" and "diversity" in their typical lambada-balloon-pride-parade style. This is precisely the kind of "obtrusive militancy" that kept Michel Foucault, André Baudry and other intellectuals at a distance some decades ago (Eribon 1991: 29).

Having in mind qualifications like "demoniac," "insane," and "frank discussion" it is good to notice that Foucault was equally disturbed by the invitations to "speak up," "to confess" and "come out of the closet" as if he was hiding his sexual orientation in a desperate attempt to conform to the "straight" establishment. There was nothing more loathsome to Foucault than the very idea of "confession." As Eribon commented, Foucault made lots of efforts in his last books "to reject, refuse, and defuse the order to say, to speak, and to make someone speak" (Ibid.: 30). Here is actually what Michel Foucault believed homosexuality should be and what he shared with Sylvia Lacan: "There will be no civilization as long as marriage between men is not accepted" (Ibid.: 154).

The second principle of exclusion pointed out by Foucault is the one of "un partage et un rejet (Foucault 1971: 12)." That principle relates to the opposition of reason and craziness (more precisely, the stupidity, or the unreason of a mad person). Since the beginning of the Middle Age the discourse of the mad was not allowed to circulate like that of the others. As Foucault put it:

> Il arrive que sa parole soit tenue pour nulle et non avenue, n'ayant ni vérité ni importance, ne pouvant pas faire foi en justice, ne pouvant pas authentifier un acte ou un contrat, ne pouvant pas même, dans le sacrifice de la messe, permettre la transsubstantiation et faire du pain un corps (Ibid.: 12-13).

At the same time the discourse of the mad was invested with the strange powers of expressing hidden truths, predicting the future and seeing clearly where the wisdom of others fails. The madness (unreason) of the mad was recognised through his (her) words, and the sharing or the rejection were mediated at the level of discourse. In the practice of the Krishna Consciousness movement, though, the principle of division and rejection applies vis-à-vis ecstatic dancing rather than talking. There were some incidents of drug

induced ecstatic dancing (Hubner & Gruson 1988), most probably in emulation of the "rapturous frenzy" of Lord Chaitanya, but generally such behaviour is considered unacceptable. According to Angela Burr (1984) the dance form in ISKCON is to some extent controlled, reflecting in this way the constraints under which devotees live too:

> Not only has the dance become part of every morning and evening routine, there are also limits placed on the degree to which spontaneous dancing is acceptable. Real ecstasy is believed to be a sign of a 'pure' devotee, the sign of someone who is in actual contact with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. To show signs of extreme ecstasy, such as rolling on the ground or becoming hysterical, as did Chaitanya, would be to imply that the person was a 'pure' devotee. Any devotee who attempted to show such signs would be considered boastful and would be thought bogus and get short shrift from other devotees (Burr 1984: 228).

The last external principle of exclusion established by Foucault is the opposition true-false. At the level of proposition this principle seems inseparable from the previous two, but at another one, namely the level of will to truth, there is a historically identifiable principle of the kind:

> Car, chez les poètes grecs du VIe siècle encore, le discours vrai – au sens fort et valorisé du mot – le discours vrai pour lequel on avait respect et terreur, celui auquel il fallait bien se soumettre, parce qu'il régnait, c'était le discours prononcé par qui de droit et selon le rituel requis; c'était le discours qui disait la justice et attribuait à chacun sa part; c'était le discours qui, prophétisant l'avenir, non seulement annonçait ce qui allait se passer, mais contribuait à sa réalisation, emportait avec soi l'adhésion des hommes et se tramait ainsi avec le destin (Foucault 1971: 16-17).

Later at the turn of the 16th and the 17th centuries (mostly in England) arose another will to knowledge, one that was prognosticating based on the available, and designing plans with achievable goals within the scope of the observable, the measurable and the classifiable. That will to knowledge imposed on the knowing subject a certain position, attitude and function – observe rather than read; verify rather than comment. In order to achieve verifiable and useful knowledge, a technical methodology was prescribed and prevailed in the process of acquiring that same knowledge (Ibid.).

That will to knowledge, like other systems of exclusion, relies on institutional support: it is simultaneously reinforced and redirected by a rich variety of practices like pedagogy, distribution of literature, libraries, learned societies formerly and laboratories today (Ibid.). A similar mechanism for providing institutional support for the will to

knowledge is readily available within the structures of the ISKCON as well, but subordinated to radically different goals and based on different epistemology.

The undisputed truth in ISKCON discourse is that the materially conditioned soul can be liberated from the endless cycle of birth and death only by acquiring the eternal knowledge of the Vedas. That knowledge is *śruti* (revealed) and constitutes the absolute authority. Orthodox Brahmins contrast the sacred literature of *śruti* to the *smṛtis*, the law books or traditional texts; to them the end of the Vedic literature is marked by the Upaniṣads. Bhaktivedanta for his part extends the authority of the *śruti* to the Bhagavad Gītā and Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

> The four original *Vedas* are considered *śruti*. But simply by hearing them, one cannot understand fully. Therefore, the *smṛtis* have explained further. *Purayati iti purāṇa*: by hearing the *Purāṇas* and other *smṛtis*, one makes his understanding complete...So whether you take *śruti* or *smṛti*, the subject matter is the same. Both *śruti* and *smṛti* are spiritual evidence. We cannot do without either of them (Bhaktivedanta 1990: 29).

According to Bhaktivedanta (1997) every part of the *śrutis* and *smṛtis* is sacred and what is true; false is modern impersonal science. Modern scientists are mental speculators who have nothing to offer but their unsubstantiated theories. The followers of Darwin are bluffers, who calculate a span of million or even billion years and mislead people by their foolish theorising (Bhaktivedanta 1998: 38). American astronauts never visited and walked on the moon: "In the days when the whole earth was watching man's first steps on the moon, Śrīla Prabhupāda said it was bunk" (Jayādvaita Swami1977: 3). Why is that so? Because according to the Śrīla Prabhupāda's understanding of Vedic science a mission like this is absolutely impossible. We are reminded also, that the human eyes are unreliable and we have already been misled many times. Bhaktivedanta elucidates the television viewers with the example of King-Kong: "On television you can see a gorilla climb the Empire State Building, he argued. And do we have to believe it's real? The scientists may trust their eyes, he said. We trust the Vedas" (Ibid.:). Further on follows the elaborate scientific argumentation of Bhaktivedanta:

According to the Vedas, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, the moon isn't such an easy place to land. The moon, say the *Vedas*, is Chandraloka, a heavenly planet. And it's not cold end desolate – it's full of life. It's the abode of pious souls, born there as a reward for the noble deeds of former lives. And those pious souls on the moon aren't keen on receiving tourists, especially not low-minded beer-drinking meat-eating Americans on a mission to "conquer space". Even to get to America, Śrīla Prabhupāda noted, you need a visa. Try to bust your way in, and you're up against the American government. No documents, no permission, and you're blocked out. Then why should the moon be so easy (Ibid.)?

The interpretation of what probably happened proceeds like this:

We didn't go. Either it was a hoax, or the space conquerors could have veered off course – or been purposely diverted – and had landed, bewildered, on the dark Vedic planet Rahu. Or who knows what. But one thing was sure: they didn't go (Ibid.).

On the account of Bhaktivedanta's own statements he should be perceived as a faithful and punctual proponent of the sacred Vedic scriptures. To Lorenz (2004) though there are some good reasons for reserves in this respect:

Bhaktivedanta Swami's work is neither text-critical nor systematic. He basically drew from whatever sources happened to be easily available to him at the time. For his English translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita As it Is*, he relied to a large extent on Dr.Radhakrishnan's English *Gita* translation. His English translation of the Bhagavata Purana is based on a number of different sources. In his translation of the third book, for example, there are a large number of stanzas that agree verbatim with C.L.Goswami and M. A. Sastri's earlier English translation of the text…From the twenty-eight chapter of book 4 to the thirteenth chapter of book 10, his work is clearly based on the Gaudiya Math Bengali edition of the Bhagavata Purana…His books, however, nowhere state the actual sources on which they are based…Bhaktivedanta Swami's purports also contain a range of statements that sound as if they were the conclusions of earlier commentators, but turn out to be his personal contributions when one compares them to all the commentaries that he possibly could have used (Lorenz 2004: 113).

Now it is important to mention that to Nataraja (1973) there are some ancient practices according to which the author is required to renounce his own identity in favour of some other name that is more important for the Hindu tradition itself. It might be well the case of Bhaktivedanta too. What really disturbs Lorenz is the fact that Bhaktivedanta Swami went so far as to tell his readers that Shridhara Swamin condemns impersonalist philosophy, "when the fact is not only that Shridhara did not do this, but it is he, out of all

the Bhagavata commentators, of whom it may be said that he had impersonalist leanings" (Lorenz 2004: 121).

Another disturbing fact is that Bhaktivedanta never worked with competent Sanskrit editors, which makes it hard to determine to what degree he was aware of such misrepresentations. Lorenz (2004) claims that Bhaktivedanta repeatedly criticized or dismissed many of his disciples who gradually achieved a certain level of proficiency in Sanskrit: "I am practically seeing that as soon as they begin to learn a little Sanskrit immediately they feel that they have become more than their guru and then the policy is kill the guru and be killed himself" (Ibid.: 128).

5.3 Internal procedures for discourse control.

Foucault identified the internal procedures for discourse control in a tripartite way as well: 1. *Le commentaire*; 2. *L'auteur*; 3. *L'organisation des disciplines.* The first and the second procedures of that triad were already alluded to in the case of Lorenz (2004) and Nataraja (1973) above.

These procedures could be called internal, because first of all discourses exercise their own control and second, because the same procedures appear as principles of classification, prescription and distribution as if it were a matter, this time, of controlling another dimension of the discourse: the one of chance and event. Probably there is no society where the practice of commenting does not exist. To put it otherwise, commenting is a major narrative that people exchange, repeat and diversify: the formulae, the texts, the ritualised assemblies of what is narrated, according to the circumstances; the things said once but preserved after, because people are suspicious of some secret or more intricacies to arise (Foucault 1971).

The most interesting and probably the most important property of the major texts is to get confused and disappear, allowing commentaries to take over. It is just a matter of elapsing time and circulation for new commentaries to immerge, introducing an understanding critically different from the one of the original narrative: "Le commentaire conjure le hasard du discours en lui faisant la part: il permet bien de dire autre chose que le texte même, mais à condition que ce soit ce texte même qui soit dit et en quelque sort accompli" (Foucault 1971: 27-8).

In the religious and philosophical traditions of India, commentaries are indispensable for the exegesis of scriptures and a proof of their deep understanding. Vaiṣṇavas of all schools also contributed significantly in this respect, producing their share of exhaustive commentaries on the Bhagavad-gītā and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The entire literary work of Bhaktivedanta, all his interviews, conversations and sermons constitute a continuing commentary on the sacred origins of Krishna Consciousness. According to Sherbow (2004) the Vaiṣṇavas founded their claim that the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhagavata Purana) is the original commentary on the Vedānta - sūtra (Brahma-sutra), on the verse *janmādy asya yataḥ* (from whom the creation of the manifested universe) being identical for both scriptures. This is not the only common characteristic they share. To Bhaktivedanta (1990) both scriptures are written by the same author:

> Now, because Śrīla Vyāsadeva knew that in this Kali-yuga people would not be able to study *Vedānta Sūtra* nicely on account of a lack of education, he personally wrote a commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtra*. That commentary is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Bhāṣyaṁ brahma-sūtrāṇām*: the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the real commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, written by the author of the *Vedānta- sūtra* himself. The *Vedānta- sūtra* was written by Vyāsadeva, and under the instruction of Nārada, his spiritual master, Vyāsadeva wrote a commentary on it. That is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (Bhaktivedanta 1990 : 34).

In the spirit of the above reasoning and according to the Hindu tradition of commenting, the literary works of Bhaktivedanta and his elaborate purports to the sacred verses of Bhagavad Gītā and Śrīmad Bhāgavatam should be perceived as logical educative efforts on the part of a missionary like him. The fact that at some occasions he assumes a polemical stance, interprets the scriptures in a new way, or claims things never claimed before, does not undermine his contribution to the Vaiṣṇava tradition in any way. In addition, his participation in Vaiṣṇava discourse conforms perfectly well to Foucault's understanding of the nature of commentary in principle.

The controversy surrounding the scholarly merits of Bhaktivedanta's literary work is not surprising in any way. As Smith (1963) has pointed out, one of the objections most often directed to any scholarship undertaken by the religious insider is that the work is inherently unscholarly because it lacks necessary detachment and critical analysis. On the other hand, noted Shukavak (2004), "the religious adherent often says that any

scholarship performed by outsiders lacks an understanding of the essence of religious faith and therefore cannot adequately comprehend the tradition" (Shukavak 2004: 98).

When religious and scientific discourses are compared there is a clear distinction of attitudes towards authority on one side and author on the other. Any traditional religious discourse presents authority and author as inseparable. God and his revelation are sublime; the ultimate truth is there, and everything else that might be added will be an attribute, a commentary, or an elaboration. Till the Middle Ages scientific discourse was governed by a similar principle – the attribution of an author was considered indispensable and the author was an embodiment of truth itself. Since the 17 th century that function of an author in the scientific discourse has gradually faded away and authority has assumed the nature of Truth that is simultaneously abstract, conditional and universal. The author has been marginalized and reduced to a label of an item: "il ne fonctionne plus guère que pour donner un nom à un théorème, à un effet, à un exemple, à un syndrome" (Foucault 1971: 29).

The ISKCON's discourse is strictly traditional in its presentation of author and authority. God is a person; his name is Kṛṣṇa; he is the eternal creator, and he expounded the science of Yoga – the best way of liberation for the materially conditioned soul, fallen under the spell of Māyā. The eternal truths revealed by the śrutis (the four original Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta-Sūtra) and revised according to the dictates of the changing times by the smṛtis have the same divine origin:

> The smṛtis are given by the Lord and His representatives. They come from spiritual authorities such as Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The śāstra, or scripture, also gives this authority. For instance, for this age, Kali-yuga, the Lord has prescribed a special means of God-realization – the chanting of His holy name (Bhaktivedanta 1990: 27).

In addition to the principles of commentary and authorship, Foucault defines a third one as distinctly opposed to them. This is the principle of organization of disciplines. A discipline appears as different from an author by dint of being an anonymous system of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, rules and definitions, techniques and instruments (Foucault 1971). That anonymous system is accessible for anyone without the need of validity related to a certain inventor. An author is different, but not separate from a discipline – s/he is a part of the discipline.

A discipline also differs from a commentary, because in a discipline there is no meaning to be rediscovered, or an identity to be repeated. The necessary condition for the existence of a discipline is the opportunity for the creation of a new statement, or more precisely, an indefinite number of new statements (Ibid.).

The discipline is a principle of control over discourse production. The discipline outlines the limits of a discourse by the exercising of an identity, which assumes the form of a permanent reactivating of rules. This type of control is necessary because within its limits every discipline recognises true and false statements as well:

> Bref, une proposition doit remplir de complexes et lourdes exigences pour pouvoir appartenir à l'ensemble d'une discipline; avant de pouvoir être dite vraie ou fausse, elle doit être, comme dirait M. Canguilhem, «dans le vrai» (Foucault Ibid. : 35-6).

Taking into consideration all of the above that is said about the organization of disciplines it is evident that there are not so many (if any) opportunities of applying this principle of control over the ISKCON's discourse. First of all, according to Foucault (1971), the principle of commentary should be associated more with religious discourse, while those of author and discipline fit literary and scientific discourses better. Second and most importantly the discourse of Krishna Consciousness is not, under whatever circumstances, presented as anonymous system of methods, rules and definitions. It might be true that there are always opportunities of creating new statements within the ISKCON's discourse, but those statements will always be identified with their primary source and author - the Lord(śruti; the revealed) or his representatives.

5.4 Discourse control as regulations of access

The last group of procedures for discourse control are those regulating the access to discourse. Foucault (1971) introduced them as the following triad: 1. *Rituel*; 2. *Les «sociétés des discours»*; 3. *Les doctrines*. These procedures determine the conditions required for a discourse to take place, impose certain rules on the individuals performing them, and limit the access for the majority of people. The idea is that not just everybody qualifies for a given discourse, and not all the domains of that discourse are equally accessible:

> Toutes les régions du discours ne sont pas également ouvertes et pénétrables; certaines sont hautement défendues (différenciées et différenciantes) tandis que

d'autres paraissent presque ouvertes à tous les vents et mises sans restriction préalable à la disposition de chaque sujet parlant (Foucault 1971 : 39).

The most superficial and the most visible form of this restrictive system can be labelled as *ritual*. Ritual names the required qualifications for the individuals who talk and who have to occupy certain positions and formulate certain statements in the discourse. This restrictive procedure defines the gestures, the behaviour, the circumstances and the whole ensemble of signs that should accompany the discourse.

According to the V*aiṣṇava* tradition access to discourse is ritually regulated through *paramparā* (discipular succession) and initiation. As it was mentioned earlier Abhay Charan De took his formal initiation as the *saṅnyāsin* Bhaktivedanta from his guru Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī in 1933 at Allahabad. Here is the discipular succession for the transmission of the Bhagavad-Gītā:

> 1) Kṛṣṇa 2) Brahmā 3) Nārada; 4) Vyāsa, 5) Madhva, 6) Padmanābha, 7) Nṛhari, 8) Mādhava, 9) Akṣobhya, 10) Jayatīrtha, 11) Jñānasindhu, 12) Dayānidhi, 13) Vidyānidhi, 14) Rājendra, 15) Jayadharma, 16) Puruṣottama, 17) Brahmaṇyatīrtha, 18) Vyāsatīrtha, 19) Lakṣmīpati, 20) Mādhavendra Purī, 21) Īśvara purī, (Nityānanda, Advaita), 22) Lord caitanya, 23) Rūpa (Svarūpa, Sanātana) 24) Raghunātha, Jīva, 25) Kṛṣṇadāsa, 26) Narottama, 27) Viśvanātha, 28) (Baladeva) Jagannātha, 29) Bhaktivinode, 30) Gaurakiśora, 31) Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, 32) His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (Bhaktivedanta 1972: 29)

The same principle of ritualised initiation that provides an access to discourse is characteristic 'for jurisprudence, therapeutics, politics and academia as well (Foucault 1971). In the domain of academia the ritual function is enacted by the ceremonies for the acquiring of degrees, awarding of different honours, publishing by certain institutions etc.

"Discourse societies" have the function of preserving or producing discourses and making them circulate in a limited space. The strict regulations for discourse distribution should not affect the members of the societies in question. The example for «sociétés de discours» given by Foucault (1971) is that of the ancient model of rhapsodes, who had the knowledge for the recitation of poems, but that knowledge remained ritual. It was protected, defended and preserved within a limited group of people by the exercise of complex forms of mnemonics. Apprenticeship meant participating both in a group and a

secret, and while the recitation was narrating it was not at all revealing: « entre la parole et l'écoute les rôles n'étaient pas échangeables » (Ibid: 42).

Nowadays there are no more societies functioning precisely this way, but even in the published discourse, which is ritually free still can be found some forms of appropriation of secret and non-exchange. Practically there are still many "discourse societies" functioning in a regime of exclusivity and divulgation: classified military technological data, and the forms of diffusion and circulation of medical, economic and political discourses.

As far as ISKCON discourse is concerned there is no evidence for the existence of some secret knowledge or closed "discourse society". The access to knowledge and discourse is regulated according to initiation, personal efforts and work for Kṛṣṇa. There is one specific mantra (*gāyatrī mantra*) that is revealed to a devotee in his Brahmin thread ceremony, but since it is considered inauspicious to utter it aloud, it cannot be treated as a part of some secret doctrine, or a sign of belonging to a closed "discourse society." On the other side there are no issues within the ISKCON movement that could not be discussed, questions that should not be asked, or questions that will be eventually left unanswered.

While there is no evidence for a distinct "discourse society" within the Krishna Consciousness movement, another mechanism for discourse control is definitely outstanding and this is what Foucault names *«les doctrines»*. At first glance "doctrines" are the total opposite of "discourse societies." The number of speaking individuals in "discourse societies" tends to be limited; the circulation and transmission of discourse as well. On the contrary, "doctrine" tends to propagate itself, allowing unlimited number of adherents to identify themselves through one and the same discourse.

On the surface it looks like as though the only requirement for doctrine is the recognition of the same truths and rules of conformity with the valid discourse. If that were true, "doctrine" would not have been different from any scientific discipline. Discourse control would have remained operative only on the level of the form or content of statements, but not exercised on the speaking subject. Doctrinal affiliation, though, involves both the statement and the speaking subject and binds them together. The speaking subject is involved through his/her statements in a way that entails the effects of exclusion and rejection, when one or more of the statements appear impossible for

assimilation – heresy and orthodoxy do not differ from the fanatical exaggeration of doctrinal mechanisms.

Inversely "doctrine" allows the speaking subject to signal his affiliation through his statements. The affiliation could be to class, social status or race, nationality, interest, revolt, resistance, or acceptance:

> La doctrine lie les individus à certains types d'énonciation et leur interdit par conséquent tous les autres; mais elle se sert, en retour, de certains types d'énonciation pour lier des individus entre eux, et les différencier par là même de tous les autres. La doctrine effectue un double assujettissement : des sujets parlants aux discours, et des discours au groupe, pour le moins virtuel, des individus parlants (Foucault 1971 : 45).

Judging by the goals set for the Krishna Consciousness movement by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and his disciple Bhaktivedanta, also by the results achieved, there is a salient doctrinal aspect in the ISKCON's discourse and practices. Doctrinal and ritual purity are always vigorously defended (Bhaktivedanta 1972, 1990, 1999) and the rules of conduct followed as strictly as possible. Special attention should be given to the issue of *Māyāvādī Vedantists'* heresy as opposed to the orthodoxy of the Caitanya's teaching. There is one class of transcendentalists, which is called impersonalistic, *Māyāvādī*. They are generally known as *Vedantists*, led by Śaṅkarācārya, who established his doctrine, *Advaita-Vedanta* (non-dualistic *Vedanta*) in the 8th century A.D. Śaṅkarācārya (1991) explained the nondual substance, Brahman, as the ultimate reality, which to Bhaktivedanta is something absolutely unacceptable:

> But the rascal Māyāvādīs - without understanding *Vedānta-sūtra*, and without reading the natural commentary, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* - are posing themselves as Vedantists. That means they are misguiding people. And because people are not educated, they're accepting these rascals as Vedantists. Really, the Māyāvādī Vedantists – they are bluffers. They are not Vedantists. They do not know anything of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. That is the difficulty. Actually, what is stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* – that is the real *Vedānta* (Bhaktivedanta 1990: 34).

The devotees also quite explicitly discriminate between themselves and the *karmi* (one who is attached to the fruits of his actions) species belonging to the mainstream society. The mainstream society is usually described as materialistic, consumerist, crazy, demoniac, gloomy, sad and hopeless. To live in such an environment is tantamount to

burning in fire – the fire representing one's desires, ready to be replaced at the moment of their fulfilment with new ones. Karmis are obsessed with their sense gratification to such an extent that they are considered to be reduced to their orifices:

> .Devotees gleefully state that the soul of people in the outside 'karmi' world will leave at death from the anus, whilst the souls of yogis will leave from the top of the head. Devotees constantly associate their minds with stool and urine too. 'Our minds, which have been bathed in stool and urine, are factually being washed clean in the transcendental ocean of devotional service' (Burr 1984: 176).

Finally, keeping in mind that "the doctrine" tends to propagate itself and attract unlimited number of adherents, we will have to note that the movement was successfully propagated abroad initially in the West, later in Africa, Australia and East Europe; the number of the ISKCON adherents commands respect. Efforts are constantly made through chanting, book distributions, public festivals and temple preaching to spread the message of Kṛṣṇa to a wider audience.

5.5 Conclusion

The external procedures for discourse control (procedures of exclusion) as described by Foucault (1971) do not have the nature of immutable laws and they are not universally applicable. Depending on the nature of discourse (secular or theistic) the procedures could vary according to the cultural constraints and requirements, time period, gender and social status of the participants. The examples are numerous: the differential attitude toward women's participation in ISKCON temple's activities within and outside of India, the choice of Prabhupada to travel abroad despite the interdict of the tradition against such travels for sannyāsins, the initiation of mlecchas and so forth. The modern secular discourse of the last two decades is also marked by a significant shift of attitude towards homosexuality from one of denial to another one of openness and acceptance.

Semantic accents are also case sensitive, bearing the corresponding doctrinal overtones. For example Bhaktivedanta (1990) employs the sanskrit term saṁskāra with the less popular connotations of "purificatory rite," or "sacred ceremony," while the oriental philosophy reader is mostly exposed to the Buddhist designation of "faculty of recollection," or "impression on the memory" (Apte 2004). Bhaktivedanta also extends the authority of the śruti (revealed) from the Vedas to the epics of Bhagavad Gītā and

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. To him every part of śruti and smṛti is sacred and true, while modern impersonal science has nothing to offer except unsubstantiated theories (Bhaktivedanta 1997). For modern secular science, though, verifiable knowledge could be based on observation and testing only – not on reading and commenting (Foucault 1971).

As far as internal procedures for discourse control are concerned, it is evident that the principles of author and commentary should be more closely associated with theistic discourse, while the principle of discipline fits secular scientific discourse better. According to the ISKCON's discourse, the exhaustive commentaries on the Bhagavad Gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam are indispensable for the sound understanding of the scriptures, while the authority and the author of the same scriptures are inseparable categories. In scientific discourse after the 17th century, authority was relegated to an abstract Truth that is simultaneously conditional and universal, while the function of the author was reduced to a label of an item (theory, effect or syndrome).

Modern secular and theistic practices differ mostly with regards to regulations of access to discourse. The ISKCON's discourse demonstrates salient doctrinal characteristics such as insistence on ritual and exegetical purity, strict rules of conduct, and discrimination between heresy and orthodoxy. Neither of these characteristics applies to modern secular discourse, though. Secular discourse formations also differ from theistic ones through being organised in closed "discourse societies" responsible for the forms of diffusion and circulation of statements. While the ISKCON's discourse is open to the whole world, there are still many "discourse societies" functioning in a regime of exclusion and divulgation: some forms of diffusion of political, economical, medical and military discourse formations. At the same time, though, both secular and theistic practices ritually regulate access to discourse: through initiation and discipular succession (paramparā) according to the Vaiṣṇava tradition; ceremonies for the acquiring of degrees and publishing by certain institutions in the domain of academia.

Chapter VI: Analysis of the field data – questionnaires, interviews, sermons

> **Nous sommes une
> culture de l'éjaculation précoce. De plus en plus
> toute séduction, toute manière de séduction, qui
> est, elle, un processus hautement ritualisé,
> s'efface derrière la réalisation immédiate et
> impérative d'un désir.**
>
> **Baudrillard 1977**

6.1 Introduction

The data for this thesis was collected mainly through printed material, but somehow I felt that my analysis of the ISKCON discourse would not be complete without some degree of field research. I already knew from the works of Michel Foucault that discourses are not linguistic systems or just texts – they are also practices. Thus in order to represent ISKCON discourse to a fuller degree, other research methods were involved – questionnaires, interviews, and personal participation.

The field research was conducted within the periods of July-December 2006 and March-May 2007 at the setting of the ISKCON temple in Montreal. The participants involved in the questionnaires and the interviews were six women and six men. While the individuals were chosen at random, which is mainly due to the ethical requirement of volunteering, the number of participants selected from both sexes was intentionally equal in order to avoid gender biasing.

The questionnaire was brief and mostly regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants: age, sex, ethnic origin, citizenship, first religious affiliation, education, and profession. Some of the questions, though, touched upon the nature of the participants' involvement with the ISKCON movement: first contact with ISKCON, initiation as a follower of the movement, attendance at the ISKCON temple in Montreal, and socialisation within the movement. The questionnaire was handed out in person at the temple, and served actually as a preparation for the interview, which was usually conducted one or two days later. In two or three of the cases the devotees confirmed their availability right away and the interview took place immediately after the questionnaire was filled.

The most important part of the field research was the interviews, since they were expected to provide more personal information and deeper insight into the nature of

devotees' involvement with the ISKCON movement. Thanks to the experience of other field researchers I was already aware that no matter how specific a question could be, "the desire to cooperate may lead the person interviewed to offer information s/he believes is wanted, rather than accurate information" (Judah 1974: 3). That particular awareness was responsible for the choice of broad discussion questions; in addition the respondents were presented with the initiative to elaborate freely on the subject matter.

As far as my personal participation was concerned, it was mainly limited to attending the Sunday services and sermons and partaking in the *prasādam* (food presented to people after having been offered first to the deities). My exchange with the devotees included mainly enlisting their help in identifying some reference sources for this thesis and naturally some personal discussions (I made some friends at the ISKCON temple) that will not be reflected here. The devotees were really helpful and I was granted an access to the literature on the Krishna Consciousness available in the temple's library.

6.2 Questionnaires

The data gathered from the questionnaires allowed the composition of the actual, and to a great extent general profile of an ISKCON devotee. The data gathered by Rochford (1985) indicate that over half of the devotees joined the movement before their twenty-first birthday and only one in five joined over the age of twenty-six. Twenty years later the average age of the participants is 30, with the youngest being 22 and the oldest 57. If we divide them into five age groups we will be presented with the following table of distribution:

Age groups of the respondents				
18 – 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 – 55	56 – 65
33%	33%	18%	8%	8%

The ethnic origin of the devotees is diverse: Russian, Canadian, Flemish, German, Mexican, Mauritian, and Indian. About a third of them were born in Canada, while the rest are naturalised immigrants. Only one respondent was a visiting European – neither born in Canada nor intending to stay permanently. During the ISKCON early days, the

movement drew its support almost exclusively from young Anglo-Americans. A high proportion (14.5 per cent in a survey Judah, [1974: 147,] carried out at the Berkeley and Los Angeles Temples) of devotees came from middle-class Jewish backgrounds, noted for the liberalism of their child-rearing practices. In fact, in the early days of the movement, Bhaktivedanta was nicknamed the 'Jewish guru' for this reason (Burr 1984:12).

In terms of educational background, given the youth of the devotees that joined the movement at its very beginning, many had not completed college (Rochford 1985) prior to their decision to become ISKCON members. The majority had completed high school, but less than one-fourth had received a college degree or graduate degree. While most devotees had not completed college, most had attended for some period before dropping out. Sixty-one percent of the high school graduates in the movement had attended college for a one-year period or longer before dropping out. Today the level of education attained by the devotees is well diversified. Divided into five groups again, they form a distribution table like this:

Level of education of the respondents				
primary	high school	college	university	post-graduate
8%	25%	25%	17%	25%

Some of the devotees are unable to define a particular profession; some of them are students, while the others mentioned professions like: translator, cook, plasterer, steel worker, model, and housewife. One of the devotees identified himself as a preacher, and two others as full-time monks.

Most of the researchers in the field of the religious conversion have usually assumed that young people joining the new religious movements were coming from a non-religious worldview (Judah 1974, Lofland and Stark 1965, Richardson and Stewart 1978; Snow and Phillips 1980). By definition conversion involves a fundamental shift in one's sense of grounding (Heinrich 1977) or what Kuhn (1970) refers to as a "gestalt switch". The process often involves an experience by which an individual's worldview is transformed from a nonreligious one (materialist or secular) to a perspective where God

or the spiritual are operative in the world of mundane experience. In the particular circumstances of ISKCON though, the process is clearly different.

With few exceptions, ISKCON devotees at the beginning of the movement were members of one of the established churches or synagogues during their childhood. Only a small minority grew up in households where religion had little or no importance, or where no specific religion was practiced. Most of the devotees originate from Protestant or Catholic families, with a substantial participation of Jewish youth also. Since the time of IKSCON's early years in America, it appears that the number of Catholics joining the movement has increased. For example Judah's (1974) research in San Francisco found that 33 percent of the devotees surveyed were from a Catholic background.

Most of the Montreal respondents reported as their first religious affiliation Christianity – either Orthodox or Roman-Catholic. Only two of them did not comment on that and one answered with Hindu. In half of the cases they learned about ISKCON from the books of Bhaktivedanta, or from the pages of *Back to Godhead* magazine. The other half was introduced to the movement by family or friends. About 41% of the respondents are relatively new recruits – they have participated at the activities of the ISKCON temple since 2003. Another 41% were affiliated to the movement during the 90s of the 20th century. Approximately 18% of the respondents reported being introduced to the movement as early as at the end of the last century's 70s.

Those who have opted to live permanently in the temple are 25% of the respondents, while the other 75% of them visit at least once a week. All of those living in the temple and 80% of the living outside are celibate versus only 20% who are non-celibate. Almost all of the respondents joined the movement with friends or members of their family and later introduced somebody else. Those who joined the temple's activities alone or did not introduce new members are rare.

The mobility of respondents is impressive – 75% of them have visited other ISKCON temples in India and North America once, or repeatedly. The rest of them who have not done that yet are really enthusiastic about the idea, especially of visiting India. All of them believe that such a visit will be inspiring and uplifting.

6.3 Interviews

The interviews took place at the temple of ISKCON in Montreal within the period of July-September 2006. The initial intention was to keep the duration of each interview within the limit of 30min. with the desire to avoid disturbing the usual routines of the devotees at the temple. That limit was respected and in two or three of the cases the conversation lasted between 10 and 15min. The discussion was roughly divided into three parts: 1) movement affiliation in its symbolic function – representation of the self as a member of ideal community 2) movement affiliation in its social function – being a member of an alternative society 3) movement affiliation in its political function – the power of self-transformation and self-expression.

For the following account I chose not to use names (real or fictional) whatsoever. To satisfy the requirements of privacy, devotees will be referred to only by their sex (*dāsa* – male servant, or *dāsī* – female servant), by a capital letter, and by the date of the interview. The responses of the interviewed are presented word for word after being transcribed from a digital recording.

6.3a Presentation of the ISKCON movement as an ideal society

Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky (1971) discussed in a televised debate the possibility of existence of an ideal, just, or as Chomsky put it "decent" society. To Chomsky the appropriate form for advanced technological society should be a kind of anarcho-syndicalist system build of federated, decentralised, and free associations incorporating economic and social institutions. His main preoccupation is that such a society should be able to provide conditions and possibilities for the realisation of the human need for a creative work, or creative inquiry – a need he considers as fundamental element of human nature. Briefly, human nature should be central to any quest for a just and decent society.

Foucault responded sceptically that human nature *per se* simply does not exist outside the constraints of our civilization marked by a specific type of knowledge, philosophy, and class system. To him the notions of human nature, justice and realisation of human essence are derivative and subordinate to the existence of our human society in general. In order to develop a better society, the immediate political action that we should

take is to criticise the "game" of institutions that are seemingly neutral and independent, thus forcing the same institutions to let the political violence obscurely operating within them surface, so that it could be effectively countered.

30th of July 2006 interview

Interviewer: Bhaktivedanta a fondé la Société de la Conscience de Krishna comme une société idéal selon le model de la société Védique traditionnelle. Selon vous, quelles sont les caractéristiques, les principes les plus important de cette société idéale?

M. Dāsī: Mais dans la littérature védique, dans les Védas s'explique que le mieux c'est d'avoir un ashram. La signification de ça c'est la maison, mais dépend de la situation. Il y a ashram de la brahmacārīs, gṛhasthas, vānaprasthas, and sannyāsas.

30th of July 2006 – second interview

Interviewer: As we know Bhaktivedanta founded the ISKCON as an ideal society – that was his intention. So...what would you say are the main features of that ideal society?

V. Dāsa : The main features of the ideal society... Well, the ideal society is based on the actual... the harmony, or the society on the laws of nature. So, there are certain laws and there is certain structure in universe according to which everything functions. Krishna explains in fourth chapter that there are four divisions in human society: Brāhmaṇas, kṣātriyas, vaiśyas, and śudras. And later in the eighteenth chapter he also explains that actually, like, these divisions are based on the qualities of people.

1st of August 2006 interview

Interviewer: Bhaktivedanta founded the Krishna Consciousness Society, the ISKCON as an ideal one, as an ideal society. So according to you, what are the main principles, the main features of that ideal society?

Q. Dāsa: OK well, one thing, we try to engage everybody according to their nature, and their capacity. Not necessarily according to our needs, but according to the person's tendency... We all have different capacities and that is why we try to engage everybody according to their capacities.

I: Could you be more specific? Like...

Q. D.: I can think it is really detailed in our books. There are basically four types of people: those who have very high intellectual capacity, which we called Brahmans, and those who have a tendency more into management, like ruling, those who are qualified to be like government administrators. People who are more inclined towards doing business, or farming, so...yeah. And also those who do not really have any specific intellectual quality or things like that, they can be, they have like strong bodies, and their mentality is more into working. They are workers, like common workers. So these four types: the workers, those who are merchants, the administrators, and the intellectual class, so these are basically the great lines of the four types of people... it is not that somebody is superior; it is just that we are different. And if, like personally I am a worker, my personal tendency is very much as a worker. So once we establish wide community like the farming community, or

something like this, I would be engaged in doing things like building houses, or helping for, you know, in the field, in the logging...things like that.

20th of August 2006 interview

Interviewer: ...What could you say about the main principles of that ideal society?

S. Dāsī: Varṇāśrama system and the caste system rather. We have those different social functions that we perform in order to observe these things that we use to purify us as necessary.

According to the ISKCON theology as expounded by Bhaktivedanta (1990), the *varṇāśrama* system, or the four occupational divisions of society are set up by Kṛṣṇa. Vedic religion means strictly *varṇāśrama-dharma* : "Everywhere, but in India especially, people should know that the real religion is this Vedic system" (Bhaktivedanta 1990: 21).

In India, an individual is born into and inherits *varṇa* (colour or "caste"). But ISKCON condemns the unconditional inheritance of caste affiliation and maintains that *varṇa* is not inherited but achieved; while ISKCON has a similar hierarchy, *Brāhmaṇa* status is not inherited, but achieved by demonstration of commitment to spiritual life. At the same time ISKCON organisation stands in opposition to the egalitarian ideals of the western Liberal (or Permissive) Society as well. Thus the ISKCON hierarchy operates symbolically as a buffer, which seeks to reconcile the cultural extremes of the West and the Orient.

6.3b ISKCON as an alternative society

According to Burr (1984), to perceive ISKCON as representing 'anti-structure' as a reaction to the overstructuring of western society is far from realistic, "for ISKCON both in America and Britain, attracts its recruits generally from the most unstructured section of society" (Burr 1984: 289). During the sixties of the 20th century it was popular (Deikman 1966, Turner 1969, Prince 1974) to view movements and cults such hippies, 'beats' and new eastern religious groups such as ISKCON as transitional or "liminal" events, based on the fact that they recruited primarily from young people. Van Gennep(1960) has termed a state that is liminal – between and betwixt – *rite de passage*. Young people certainly love to experiment while they mature, but if the transitory stage between childhood and adulthood was justifiably taken into consideration at the onset of the ISKCON movement, now in 2006 such logic is no longer applicable.

ISKCON definitely offers more than an adolescent *rite de passage*. The Movement has a highly organised structure and provides the devotees with a long-term membership in the form of permanent full-time occupation and a life-long home. Again according to Burr (1984) ISKCON should not be perceived as a counter-culture movement for the following reasons:

> ISKCON indicates, with its stress on individualism, petit entrepreneurialism, capitalism as well as its focus around a theme basic to western civilisation, namely its emphasis on a body/soul dichotomy that western youth, are not so different from their parental generation which they claim to despise (Burr 1984: 290)

Yet the ISKCON cannot be treated as a new religious movement perfectly conforming to the host culture, simply because that movement demonstrated maturity lately. In many ways ISKCON remains hostile to the standards of the mainstream society, being quite particular on the issues of blatant materialism, consumerism and hedonism. While it is not obvious that ISKCON is an 'anti-structure' it is certainly evident that the Movement is not intending to conform enthusiastically. What are the alternatives then?

25th of July 2006 interview
Interviewer: Often the ISKCON is considered like an alternative form of society. Could you elaborate on that?

H. Dāsa: Real religion is called *sanātana-dharma* - eternal religion. And this *sanātana-dharma* exists since time immemorial. It includes certain ways of living, which are conducive for spiritual life. It is unfortunate, but most of these religious principles are contrary to the interest of modern society. This modern society is based on economic exploitation. It is not considering the well-being of the soul – only the well-being of the body. So it is difficult to integrate in a society. We would not be able to live a spiritual life and generally all monks of whatever tradition, they live separate, they live in monasteries, they have a very simple life in service to God and we are not different in that. We are not different in a Christian monastery from other monastic lives. There are some differences in practice in terms of Yoga process, but this is really the field for the connoisseur of spirituality and I do not feel like speaking about that.

26th of July 2006 interview
Interviewer: Usually the movement for Krishna Consciousness is considered as an alternative movement. What is your personal way of incorporating those alternatives in your life?

G. Dāsa: Good question. Just considering alternatives, may be it is because of the purpose of it. The purpose of ISKCON is to elevate, actually to purify the conditioned souls, so that they can go back to Godhead, back to the spiritual world where we actually belong. Now we must understand the common thing in everyone that we all look for happiness. It does not matter whether it is a devotee of Krishna or not a devotee; we are all looking for happiness. It is the intrinsic nature of the soul to be happy. So, people are looking for in different ways. Before I came to Krishna Consciousness I was thinking that to find happiness I would need money. And in

order to get money I need a job, a good job. If I have a lot of money, then I get love. I can get more things and be happier. That is the conception. So, in order to get lots of money you need a good job. In order to get a good job you need an education and so and so on. So, because people are grown up with this idea that money buys you happiness, and therefore I must get money. And therefore the education is not about learning anymore; it is about getting a good job. So, that one can have a high paying salary and try to get that happiness we are all looking for. So, now in Krishna Consciousness the goal is not to be happy in the material world, because we understand it – it is not possible.

27th of July 2006 interview

Interviewer: What are the alternatives, which Krishna Consciousness is introducing in that society and how do you personally practice them?

C. Dāsī: I personally think that this is the way real life is. And what I used to do before was working backwards... Because I used to have a crazy lifestyle, I live alternative life style all my life trying to search for, you know, higher truth and pleasure, and I never found it... All the sense gratification and all, you know, you are trying to control what would the people think, trying to control the love, how would people love me, and trying to live, you know, a hideous lifestyle like what I used to do before, through you know, different types of drugs and sexual practices, all sorts of things like that, you know. Like I have been alternative all my life and it did not work for me. I tried it and it is a big waste of energy, but it brought me to where I am today, you know, like I could say that I have tried everything and I know that Krishna Consciousness is the real thing, the real deal... And it is like my eyes are opening up to that... This is real. What I used to do is the illusion. This is the real stuff. Krishna Consciousness is the real thing.

1st of August 2006 interview

Interviewer: Usually the ISKCON is perceived as an alternative society compared to the mainstream style of life in our western society. Could you comment on the alternatives and most importantly how do you personally apply them in your life?

Q. Dāsa: Nice question. It is actually an alternative because we see, you know, you just look in the paper, just watch TV or anything and you'll see that the people are more and more frustrated. They are more and more deceived by the present society. We have been promised, since...We have been promised happiness, we have been promised we would not die. We would not be sick, we would not get old and still these things happen. People get old; they get diseased, new diseases actually - more and more. And the people are less and less happy. Just like here in Québec, I don't know the latest figures, but males especially commit suicide more than anywhere else in the world. And coming to that point it is not exactly a sign of happiness. So we present people with the alternative that can actually bring them real happiness, lasting happiness, not just temporarily flickering happiness.

Taking into consideration the comments of the ISKCON devotees we can identify the alternatives offered by their lifestyle as affecting mostly their inner world, and as an effort to improve the way they personally relate to the ultimate realities of life. Their goals are mostly related to satisfying their needs for personal balance, happiness, and sense of purpose in life, rather than confronting the mainstream society with some kind of

rebelious postmodernism. Their answer to the problems of the contemporary Western value system is actually what they call the Yoga process – a long, arduous, and sustained effort of self-improvement. And what looks like a "personal trip" or defiance to the mainstream society is practically their personal struggle to cope with the human condition as a part of the universal life-drama.

6.3c ISKCON represented through the regime of Self-control

ISKCON is often perceived as a dogmatic cult and is frequently accused of 'brainwashing' its recruits. In the past (during the sixties and the seventies) many organisations were set up in the West by upset parents and concerned friends such as the People's Organized Workshop Against Ersatz Religions (POWER) in Britain, and Citizens Engaged in Reuniting Families (CERF), and Committee Engaged in Freeing Minds (CEFM) in America. Although I am not familiar with similar organisations in Eastern Europe, the initial response to the ISKCON being officially introduced at the beginning of the nineties was not welcoming at all. In 1993, the permanent presence of only a small group of devotees in a rented house at the resort town of Bankia (some 30km from the Bulgarian capital Sofia) was enough to provoke a massive protest on the part of the local population. ISKCON was simply perceived as part of the unprecedented wave of new religious movements, attracted by the temporary vacuum left by the decades of communist state atheism. If the intimidated Bulgarian townsfolk only knew of how the departed leader of ISKCON usually responded to the accusation of brainwashing, I am afraid their reaction would have been far more violent (in a non-discursive manner). Bhaktivedanta once commented like this:

> The whole world is under a misconception, and we are giving them knowledge. And they say we are brainwashing. People in general do not know that the body is valuable only as long as the soul is there. Therefore, their brain is rubbish and must be washed, or human civilisation is lost (BTG, Vol. 12, No.5, p. 17).

According to Burr (1984) the prevailing majority of devotees are "dogmatic", "parrot-like", "uniform of their beliefs", and absolutely "uncritical" of Bhaktivedanta's teachings. They are unwilling to listen to criticism of ISKCON philosophy and immediately reject any in a very intolerant manner: "If it takes place within the temple, the person is generally asked to leave – 'You are stupid', 'You are a nonsense person', 'I

don't want to talk to you, go away', are responses frequently used by devotees for dealing with critics" (Ibid.: 258). Thus for outsiders, who had only superficial contact with the devotees it would be logical to conclude that they were programmed robots.

ISKCON's devotees appear as repetitive when one follows closely their own narratives explaining out the Krishna Consciousness belief system and practices. The repetitiveness becomes even more pronounced where the Bhagavad Gītā lessons (or the sermons) are concerned. That does not necessarily mean that the devotees are "parrot-like" or limited in any way, because they could be also quite individual in their interpretations according to their education, life experience, and personal sensitivity. They are also definitely not "uniform in their beliefs," because they adopt differentially even the basic four precepts for participation in the movement, admitting that sometimes it is really tough to follow them to the letter (from personal communication).

The devotees are really dogmatic though; they worship their guru Bhaktivedanta, and they do not accept any criticism of his teaching and commentaries. It is important to note here that the personal example of Bhaktivedanta vis-à-vis ritual purity and fidelity to discipular tradition was really strong. His personal charisma and leadership qualities were without blemish, a fact that explains to a great extent the faithful rigour of his disciples to the doctrine and practice of Krishna Consciousness.

Devotees who demonstrate dramatic influences on their personality are not representative of ISKCON. For her three-year period of field research Angela Burr did not encounter a devotee who appeared brainwashed or had lost control of his or her mind. As Burr (1984) testified:

> No one came to light either who had undergone a radical personality change. The majority of mainstream devotees seem to be only superficially influenced by ISKCON's mind-bending internal organisation, as their individualism bears witness. In ISKCON devotees' individualism counteracts and overrules the controlling influence of the movement's internal organisation (Ibid.: 269).

It is also important to note that the nature of playing the ISKCON' 'belief game' requires absolute conformity with Bhaktivedanta's beliefs, and total denial of any criticism on them. To an outsider it is a symptom of brainwashing, but to a devotee who is willing to stay with the movement it is role-playing and just acting according to the rules. As Burr (1984) pointed out: "It is easy to recognise when a full time living-in

ISKCON devotee is about to 'bloop' (to quit). When they no longer feel any commitment to the movement they start criticising ISKCON" (Burr 1984: 275).

In my personal communication with the devotees of the ISKCON temple in Montreal I focused my questions mainly on the issue of self-control, rather than on any possible institutional control. I did that for several reasons: 1. I was well aware of the devotee's psychological balance and their capacity to reason and argue confidently. 2. The devotee's affiliation to the Movement is nothing else but voluntary. 3. When faith is under discussion, resistance to criticism is natural – doubt and belief are not good companions. 4. *Bhakti* is not Academia, and a sermon cannot be a seminar at the same time.

24th of July 2006 interview

Interviewer: Yes, this is fine, because I know a verse of Bhagavad Gita stating that who really acts is not the I or the Self, but the material nature. So that is *quite a good point*. So going back to the material nature, being more specific on that material nature again... In what way, let's say, the celibacy helps you to better control your life in general, not your sexual desires, but your life in general? And in what way it helps you out with decision making; taking better decisions and assuming better strategies for life?

F. Dāsa: Nice question. So what are the benefits of the celibate life? There are lots of benefits and there is a book called *Brain Games* by Danavir Gosvami who cites lots of different quotes from lots of different philosophers and scientist speaking about the benefits of celibacy and I can just read a couple. The main benefit which celibacy can provide is "the person who does not waste his vital energy, his determination increases very much." So the celibacy gives person the determination to attain the goal he is aiming at. Secondly, person's memory increases. He can remember things and store more, while the person who wastes his energy, his life energy, his memory dwindles and then after a while the person just can't remember anything.

I.: How about any possible risks or dangers related to that abstention, or abstinence from sexual enjoyment? Don't you think it is kind of risky, because it happened a lot in other monastic movements and I believe in ISKCON movement also (obsession instead of liberation or mastery over senses and sensual impulses)? Could you elaborate on that?

F.D.: This is a good point. So there are two types of abstinence: one abstinence may be caused by the mind, and the second one may be caused by "the higher taste". But history has proved that in many, many different religions that those monks, who are doing that without actual taste for spirituality, then they fell short and they engaged in lots of abominable activities. Also a person can have a different driving force – driving force coming from the soul experiencing pleasure of reciprocation with the Super soul – the God, Lord Krishna. Moreover, when a person experiences at least a small drop of that reciprocation, then for him celibacy becomes not mechanical, becomes natural and then strength, strength to do that. However, it is coming from spiritual experience.

25th 2006 of July interview

Interviewer: Don't you think that there is a certain risk and a certain danger in practicing the so-called celibacy? Because usually, not always, but there are lots of cases when instead of achieving liberation, or certain level of freedom, people are elapsing into obsessions?

H. Dāsa: If you study the Bhāgavatam you'll see that every point explained is true. And most miseries are coming because our mind is uncontrolled. Where does that control come from? Because the senses are controlling the mind and the mind is controlling you. So we are brainwashed by the senses, but becoming God-conscious you get transcendental knowledge, and by the power of celibacy (*brahmacarya*) you get to control your mind and your senses. Because mind is the cause of the unhappiness of people. Why there are so many people going to the psychiatry? So many! Because they have problems with their minds. And then you go back – all the problems are because there is overindulgence with the sex life. So this is a science. What can I say more? This is confirmed by scientists. But of course you have to follow the process. Knowledge... this is not from today till tomorrow and we are going to control our minds. Krishna Consciousness is not a process of controlling the mind. That's a misconception. We are not here to control the mind. We engage the mind in the service of God and by that is the conscious control; it is a side effect. If you think I am going to join this movement to control your mind that creates problems, because that is not possible. Controlling the mind means purification of consciousness, changing your desires. It takes 40 years at least, 30-40 years...It's a slow process. It is not happening tomorrow. It takes some time...

26th 2006 of July interview

Interviewer: Judging by the color of your robe, and by your answer in the questionnaire, you are celibate. So, my next question is: "Do you think that there might be a hidden danger, some hidden risks in practicing celibacy, simply because instead of achieving a level of freedom or liberation, you could achieve an obsession in a long run"?

G. Dāsa: There is a verse in a Bhagavad Gita: "*param dṛṣṭvā nivartate*" that means that everything is based on taste. People, they all have different tastes, some people like to eat many chips, some people like...some people like ketchup. So chemists, they synthesise these chemicals, these tastes.... In the laboratory, they put them on chips and people buy it to get that taste. So, same also, there is what we call a higher taste, which is even more pleasurable than a sex life. That higher taste is when you actually experience your connection with the supreme – the God. Usually anyone that has come to Krishna Consciousness has that some kind of experience, higher experience and they experience... As devotees we want to continue to experience that connection with the divine. Yoga means connection. By practicing Yoga one can get connected and the higher taste is there. So, in this verse he explains that we give up the lower taste by experiencing the higher taste. So, if we do not experience the higher taste, then as some people have done, they fall back down, because there is no higher taste. It is like they give up the lower taste, they give up the world, but they have nothing else, nothing sweeter.

7th of September 2006 interview

Interviewer: My question is related to that practice of *brahmacarya*. What do you think could be the benefits of being celibate? I mean what are the benefits when somebody makes that vow of being celibate? What are the intentions? What are the benefits? What could be the benefits of being celibate?

D. Dāsī: Oh, the benefits. It depends. Because you see, Krishna Consciousness is based in four stages. This is celibacy, married life and then renounced, you know, first

is like renounced, then completely renounced become a sanyasin too. So it is not necessarily everybody has to be a celibacy, or not necessarily everybody has to be a married couple. Not everybody has to take renounced order of life. You know sometimes you could be renounced, but after you think after 10-20 years - oops! I am a nerd, you know. You want to change. But it depends. It is to volunteer to have Krishna Consciousness Movement; it's a volunteer society. We do not push anybody; we don't brainwash nobody. The philosophy is here; Prabhupada's book is here.

All of the above interviewees share the common trait of being ritually admitted to the Krishna Consciousness discourse by being initiated and by strictly following the four basic precepts for participation in the movement. Given that the requirement for celibacy is the most difficult to follow, according to the devotees' shared acknowledgment (personal communication), the opinions of those dedicated to celibate life are especially important for that research. Some of those respondents participate more actively in the propagating of the Krishna Consciousness by giving the Sunday's Bhagavad Gītā lessons (or preaching on other occasions during the week).

The benefits of celibacy as a form of self-control can be summarised as: *concentrating and saving the vital energy, preserving and improving the memory, control over the mind and the senses,* and *acquiring of transcendental knowledge.* On the road to self-purification and realisation the devotee should avoid mechanical abstention – practice that is forced upon the person by his own will only. Abstention should be done only according to "a higher taste," which is provided by the blissful loving bond with the deity. Otherwise the devotee could elapse into "obsession with the senses" and into "abominable activities." Self-realisation through the Bhakti Yoga-process is a long and arduous journey. The process requires strong determination and patience; it takes time – sometimes a whole life.

The attitude of a Krishna Consciousness devotee to self-purification and self-realisation shares a lot with the late Foucaultian elaborations on what he named "self-techniques", or "self-technologies." The early Foucaultian insistence that the human being does not have an innate nature (Foucault 1970) gave way to a pronounced interest in the Self and its metamorphosis (Foucault 1981-2). The next pages offer some brief account of the later Foucaultian research in the field of the hermeneutics of the Self.

6.4 Discourse as hermeneutics of self-techniques

> **We are beings that create forms, which ironically imprison our creativity. This pattern of creation and constraint is ceaselessly repeated.**
>
> Foucault (1988)

Foucault's objective, according to his own words (Foucault 1988), for more than twenty five years was to sketch out a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves: economies, biology, psychiatry, medicine and penology. His main goal was to analyse these so-called sciences as very specific "truth games" related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves.

Foucault distinguished four major types of "truth technologies" that serve as matrix of practical reason: (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or significations; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or Immortality (Foucault 1988: 18).

Since Foucault was mostly concerned with the development of the western tradition of thought, he chose Late Greek antiquity as a point of departure for his investigation on the technologies of the self. He started with the practices constituted in Greek as *epimeleia heautou*, "to take care of yourself", "the concern with self", "to be concerned, to take care of yourself." In Foucault the *epimeleia heautou* and its connection with the *gnothi seauton* ("know yourself") remained a fundamental principle for describing the

philosophical attitude throughout Greek, Hellenistic, Roman, and later in Christian culture:

> This notion was important in Plato, Epicureans, Cynics (in Cynic Demetrius), Stoics (Seneca, Epictetus), in Philo (*De Vita contemplative*), in Plotinus (*Enead*, II). You find this notion of *epimeleia* also and especially in Christian asceticism: in Methodius of Olympus and Basil of Caesarea. It appears in Gregory of Nyssa: in The Life of Moses, in the text on The Song of Songs, and in the Beatitudes. [...]Given that, for Gregory of Nyssa, freedom from marriage (celibacy) is actually the first form, the initial inflection of the ascetic life, the assimilation of the first form of the care of oneself and freedom from marriage reveals the extent to which the care of the self had become a kind of matrix of Christian asceticism. You can see that the notion of *epimeleia heautou* (care of oneself) has a long history extending from the figure of Socrates stopping young people to tell them to take care of themselves up to Christian asceticism making the ascetic life begin with the care of oneself (Foucault 2005: 8).

6.4a   Philosophy versus Spirituality in Self-technology analysis

In his course titled *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (1981-2), Foucault raised some general questions about the history of thought: What is the price, for philosophy, of a history of thought? What is the effect in history, of thought and the events that are peculiar to it? How do individual or collective experiences depend on singular forms of thought, that is, on that which constitutes the subject in its relations to truth, to the rule, to itself (Foucault 2005: xxii)?

According to Foucault the form of thought that asks what determines that there is and can be truth and falsehood and that one can or cannot separate the true and the false could be qualified as "philosophy." Hence, "philosophy" could be the form of thought that asks what it is that allows the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject's access to the truth. If we call this "philosophy", then we could call "spirituality" the pursuit, practice, the experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth. We will call "spirituality" the set of these pursuits, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etcetera, which are not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth (Foucault 2005: 15).

In Foucault, the three most significant characteristics that set spirituality apart from philosophy are (1) spirituality postulates that the subject as such is not capable of having access to truth, and, more specifically, that truth is not given to the subject by a simple act of knowledge founded on his status as subject; (2) in order to have access to truth, the subject has to undergo a conversion or transformation and therefore his very being is at stake; (3) once the subject has access to truth, the effects of spirituality on the subject are such that his very being is fulfilled, transfigured, or saved (Foucault Ibid.: xxiv).

Further, says Foucault, spirituality postulates that the truth is never given to the subject by right. Truth is not given to the subject by a simple act of knowledge (*connaissance*). Spirituality postulates that for the subject to have right of access to the truth he must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become, to some extent and up to a certain point, other that himself. The truth is only given to the subject at a price that brings the subject's being into play. For as he is, the subject is not capable of truth (Ibid.).

According to Foucault, what follows from that point of view is that the attainment of truth is impossible without some form of conversion or transformation of the subject. Roughly put, that transformation may happen in the form of a movement that removes the subject from his current status and condition (either an ascending of the subject himself, or else a movement by which the truth comes to him and enlightens him). That particular *displacement* of the subject, in either of its directions, Foucault calls the movement of *eros* (love).

The other major mode for the transformation of the subject in his drive for truth is a kind of labour. This is the enterprise of the self on the self, the tough ordeal of progressive conversion for which the self takes responsibility in a long labour of ascesis (*askesis*). For Foucault *eros* and *askesis* are the two major forms in Western spirituality for transforming the subject into one worthy for truth.

Foucault qualifies the effects of the truth on the subject as "rebound" ("de retour"). Once access to the truth has really been opened up, the consequences are something quite different and much more. The truth liberates the subject; the truth gives beatitude and tranquility of the soul to the subject. At the same time knowledge alone, without being accompanied, doubled, and completed by a certain transformations of the subject, could never give access to truth:

Recall what Goethe says: "Philosophy, sadly! Jurisprudence, medicine, and you also, sad theology!... I have studied you in depth, with passion and patience; and now here I am, poor fool, no wiser than before". This knowledge, that is precisely not spiritual knowledge. It is the knowledge of intellectual knowledge. The subject cannot expect anything by way of his own transfiguration from this knowledge. What Faust demands from knowledge are spiritual values and effects, which neither philosophy, nor jurisprudence, nor medicine can give him [...]Star of silver light, silent moon, deign one last time to look down on my pain!... So many nights I have kept watch by this desk! It was then you appeared to me, melancholy friend, over piles of books and papers! Ah! If only I might climb high mountains in your soft light, wander in caverns with spirits, dance on the pale prairie turf, forget the miseries of science, and bathe, young again, in the cool of your dew!" I think we have here the last nostalgic expression of a knowledge of spirituality which disappeared with the Enlightenment, and the sad greeting of the birth of knowledge of intellectual knowledge (Foucault 2005: 310).

6.4b   Subjection and subjectivation in Self-technology analysis

According to Andersen (2003) while knowledge-archaeological discourse analysis allows for studies of the way in which subject positions are created, the analysis of self-technologies permits studies of the practical staging of the relationship between individual and subject position. At an early stage in his writings, Foucault spoke of practice as something that unambiguously coincides with discourse. The concept of practice however remained unclear. With respect to the history of sexuality, the concept of practice appears to be replaced by the concept of technology, although this replacement is not unambiguous. What is unambiguous, in turn, is the question posed by means of the concept of technology – it pertains to the self-relation of the subject to its self-care (Andersen 2003: 24).

In his sociology, Simmel (1971) defines a distinction between position and vocation as two different ways in which a person can become an individual. In a similar vein Foucault differentiates between subjection and subjectivation (Foucault, 1997, 1998b; Balibar 1994). To Foucault, subjection means that an individual or collective is proclaimed subject within a specific discourse. The individual or collective is offered a specific position in the discourse from which one can speak and act meaningfully in a specific way. Subjectivation is evident when the individual or collective has not only been made the subject but also aspires to be so. Thus, subjection signifies the space where one

receives oneself, whereas subjectivation signifies the space where one *gives oneself to oneself* (Andersen 2003: 24).

The distinction is between two modes of subjection: two forms of discursive demands on the person who is to become the subject. While the appropriation of a subject position by the individual is not observable in terms of discourse analysis, the whether and how the discourse demands active self-appropriation of a subject position are observable. What Foucault discovered in the history of sexuality was the fact that the individual is not only required to fill out a particular subject position but also to care for her/himself independently (Ibid.).

The discourse itself, through the subjecting of the individual, makes a distinction between subjecting and subjectivation in which the former assumes a counter-concept in relation to the latter. As it is the individual is expected to actively give oneself to oneself, not to simply receive oneself passively. In such a case, the mode of subjecting is actually a *mode of transformation*. The passively receiving and subjected is invoked in a manner that s/he may cross the line from subjection to subjectivation, thereby making her/himself actively independent in her/his own self-creation. It is an invocation to the individual to invoke her/himself (Ibid.)

6.4c Basic elements of self-technology

The question of how the self-transformation comes about was opened up by Foucault while introducing self-care technology as meditation (Foucault, 2005). Foucault differentiates between four types of technology: production technologies, sign technologies, power technologies and self-technologies. The latter technology allows the individuals to influence operations that concern their own body, soul, thoughts, control and mode of existence, so that they are able to transform themselves and achieve a specific state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality (Foucault, 1997) To put it otherwise, the purpose of the self-technologies is for the self to address itself. Self-technologies are procedures that prescribe how the individual is to define, maintain and develop her/his identity with a view to self-control and self-awareness (Ibid.).

Since the question is not merely theoretical, Foucault defines specific criteria in relation to self-technology. These criteria allow the definition of basic questions through

which self-technologies can be examined (Davidson, 1986; Hacking, 1986). Here are the four criteria:

1. The transformational mode of subjecting.

2. The objectification of the self.

3. Self-activating activity.

4. Telos.

1. The transformational mode of subjecting

The fact that the individual is called upon to give itself to itself and that this is a transformational mode of subjecting is the first criterion of self-technology. The question is:

• How is the individual subjected with a view to crossing the boundary between subjecting/subjectivation?

2. The objectification of the self

The objectification of the self as a second criterion concerns the form of knowledge that the individual can establish about itself as self. The question is:

• As what is the self to master itself? Is the self to master itself as feeling, as desire, as will, or as culture?

3. Self-activating activity

The third criterion is the stipulation for self-activating practices. They could be, for example, the diary as self-activity that emerged in the 2nd century in the Roman Empire (Foucault, 1977), or the confessional practice of the Catholic Church. Examples of modern technologies could be the 'time manager' of the 1980s or competence interviews in the workplace (Andersen 2003).

4. Telos

The final criterion is the fact that self-activity needs to have a direction or goal leading and extending beyond the activity itself. The applicable question is:

• In what way does the self-technology provide the individual with a particular *telos* for life?

In conclusion the self-technology can be understood as prescriptions for activities through which the individual, having received itself through subjecting, is prepared to reach a point of transformation so that it can give itself to itself in order to attain a desired

personal goal or condition. Self technologies are postulated as techniques through which the individual can transform itself from a state of being responsible for duties into a state of assuming responsibilities. Thus the individual's development is put on the agenda and s/he accepts responsibility for it.

According to self-technology analysis the world of self-activities is divided into subjecting and subjectification, promoting this way a sensitivity to the practices through which the self call upon itself and initiate itself in order to muster its own creation. The concept of 'subjecting', which was a subconcept in archaeological discourse analysis, increases in importance and becomes one aspect of the fundamental analytical way of seeing (Andersen 2003: 26).

6.5 Bhagavad Gītā classes (or sermons)

In many ways what looks like a Sunday sermon is a regular Bhagavad Gītā class. The significant difference is that the weekend audience is much larger compared to a class attendance during the week. Usually the classes start with the Invocation to Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

Om namo bhagavate vasudevaya

O my Lord, the all-pervading Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

When the time frame allows that, the devotees and the visitors also chant Jaya Radha-Madhava. Bhaktivedanta was very fond of this song and sang it just before his lectures. Bhaktivedanta said that this song is "a picture of Vrndāvana. Everything is there – Srimati Radharani, Vrndāvana, Govardhana, Yaśoda, and all the cowherd boys (www.harekrishna.com/col/books/RP/SVA/jrm.html)." Here is the text of the song:

Jaya Radha-Madhava
(Glory to Radha and Madhava)
by Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura
jaya radha-madhava kuñja-vihari
gopi-jana-vallabha giri-vara-dhari
yaśoda-nandana braja-jana-rañjana
yamuna-tira-vana-cari

Krishna [Madhava] is the lover of Radha. He displays many amorous pastimes in the groves of Vrindavana, He is the lover of the cowherd maidens of Vraja [the gopis], the holder of the great hill named Govardhan, the beloved son of Mother Yashoda, the delighter of the inhabitants of Vraja, and He wanders in the forests along the banks of the River Yamuna (everything2.com).

The geographic location of Vraja is the region of central northern India, in which the pilgrimage town of Vṛndāvana – depicted in the Rāsa Līlā ("Dance of Divine Love") as a small agricultural village – is situated. The name Vṛndāvana means "the forest of Vṛnda or Tulasī" (Krishna's favourite plant and the Goddess who embodies it). The setting of the Rāsa Līlā is in this world but not exactly of this world. The divine realm of Vraja manifest in this world and known as Gokula is identical with its divine counterpart, the "heavenly Vraja," known as Goloka. Vraja is a world in which every personality, including all plants, trees, and animals participate in and fully experience the love between Krishna and the cowherd maidens (Schweig 2005).

The spiritual realm of Vraja is described as a place that clearly contrasts with the world as we know it. It is a mystical world of beauty; the ground in Vraja is covered with devotional jewels named *cintāmaṇi*, each "a fabulous gem supposed to yield to its possessor all desires." Even the trees are not ordinary, and are called *kalpa-taru*, or "wishing trees." Vraja is of extraordinary abundance: the trees produce fruit during every season, cows give milk unlimitedly, and the water is nectar. Here all walking is dancing and all talking is singing, and time is only an eternal present within which varieties of divine events occur. The world of Vraja is devotionally alive as every object and soul exists only for the sake of the Beloved Lord. Every being and everything in this spiritual setting is full of knowledge and bliss, and gives off splendour like the various luminaries of the sky (Schweig 2005: 125).

After the initial chanting, the preacher usually asks the visitors whether some of them are attending for the first time and the next question is how they learned about the temple. After a brief exchange they are welcomed into the class and the lecture (or sermon) begins. The preacher starts with the announcement of the topic, which is most of the time a chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā or Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Then selected verses are recited in Sanskrit and expounded conforming to the purports of Bhaktivedanta. The comments do not deviate in any way from the text of the guru and the examples given are more or

less elaborate depending on the experience of the preacher and how articulate he is. The same lecture is conducted simultaneously for three different classes in English, French, and Russian.

The presentation mainly contrasts the material and spiritual aspects of life. Materialistic and consumerist attitudes and modes of life are criticised and condemned, while the alternative given is Krishna Consciousness and *Bhakti*.

> **The whole purpose of life is to go back to the Lord Kṛṣṇa, about what most people are largely unaware. 5000 years ago Kṛṣṇa gave instructions how to follow him. All the Vedic literature and seers were absorbed in serving Kṛṣṇa, but today we follow Hollywood personalities.**
>
> 4th of March 2007 Bhagavad-Gītā Lesson

> **Every second of our life, every action should be measured at the end. It is like shooting an arrow – we cannot know the consequences, so we have to be very, very careful. Devotee is like a holy place – wherever he goes he creates auspiciousness by not creating bad karma. For humans there is a door opened for salvation, but the animals and other living beings are stuck here in this material existence.**
>
> 11th of March 2007 Bhagavad-Gītā Lesson

> **The material world is a sober place, but instead of being sober people seek to be entertained in this world, to be intoxicated. People prepare materially very well for their future; they accumulate lots of material things, but in the end are totally unprepared for their death.**
>
> 15th of April 2007 Bhagavad Gītā Lesson

Regular chanting of the *mahāmantra* is recommended and encouraged as the proper way of practicing Yoga for the Kali Yuga (the Dark Age). The "greatest (*mahā*) prayer formula (*mantra*) for deliverance" is virtually a "sonic re-enactment of the Rāsa Maṇḍala, consisting of a series of alternating names of God in the vocative case, both calling out for and praising the presence of the divine. When the mantra is recited repeatedly in meditation or song, it worshipfully enthrones the Soul of the soul within the heart of the devotee, forming a sonic *maṇḍala* (Schweig 2005: 179).

The circuitous arrangement of the words of this *mahāmantra* consists of an alternating pattern between an equal number of feminine (as *hare*) and masculine (as *Kṛṣṇa* and as *Rāma*) names of the divine. The sacred thirty-two-syllable mantra appears as follows: *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma,* Hare

Hare. The patterned movement of eight pairs of feminine and masculine names of the divine can be observed in the mantra. Within four of the pairs (the first, second, fifth, and sixth) the feminine and masculine names appear alternately. In the other four pairs (the third, fourth, seventh, and eight) two masculine names appear together in one pair, followed by two feminine names in the next pair. Thus the dance like movement can be observed both within and between pairs (Ibid.)

Additionally, the mantra begins and ends with feminine names, enclosing the masculine names, just as the Gopīs engulf Kṛṣṇa when they encircle him during the commencement of the Rāsa dance. When practitioners recite the mantra over and over, the divine names form a circular pattern imitative of the exchange between the feminine and masculine partners in the Rāsa dance. It can be seen, then, that the presence of the Rāsa Maṇḍala is archetypal in Vaiṣṇava practices (Ibid.)

The way out of the burning hell of our desires is to chant the Hari Nama (the Lord's name). It is indispensable to chant at least the minimum required 16 daily rounds. The proper chanting should be done on beads made of the *tulasī* plant. This plant is considered to be a great female devotee of Kṛṣṇa, even a consort of Viṣṇu, who has taken the bodily form of a plant that is worshiped on a daily basis in Vaishnava temples and homes. Her minty leaves are used to garnish food preparations for sacred offerings, and are found decorating the feet of sacred images of Kṛṣṇa. The wood of expired *tulasī* plants is carved into beads that are worn around the neck by Vaishnavas and also used as a rosary for the recitation of God's names (Schweig 2005: 129).

The materialistic way of life is represented by blind consumerism and endless pursuit of sense gratification. More importantly, though, there is a corresponding mentality that has to be addressed and eventually defeated.

Prabhupāda was very tolerant towards others. He knew that what can help people out of their misery was Krishna Consciousness. Chanting is not difficult and helps a lot, while our foolish civilization is just speeding on the highway of material achievements.

1st of April 2007 Bhagavad Gītā Lesson

Spiritual life is not only acquisition of knowledge; there is a practical dimension, a practical application of that knowledge, of spirituality. That practical dimension is mantra. Mantra means *man* – mind, mental, and *tra* – to liberate from the mental.

15th of April 2007 Bhadavad Gītā Lesson

The audience is repeatedly reminded that the material life is illusionary and tends to be ultimately unsatisfactory. People naively believe that they will be able to satisfy their desires, but the wicked market economy always invents new products and subversively creates new "needs". By participating in that vicious system people only fuel the ever burning fire of their own desires.

> We need physical, emotional and spiritual satisfaction. Only Kṛṣṇa is able to satisfy all our needs. We can pay our bills, we can shop, we can drive our cars and have a sense of freedom, you know... we can go everywhere. We can get a better cell phone, a faster internet connection, but we always discuss eating, sleeping, mating and defending – all of our sophistication is about that.
>
> 15th of April 2007 Bhagavad Gītā Lesson

> Everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa; to claim the opposite is to steal, to deceive...It is like finding a wallet on the street. You know that it does not belong to you and if you keep it for yourself you are a thief.
> Who owns my body? We claim ownership over houses, cars, furniture, bank accounts, but who owns our bodies? One day they will be taken from us.
>
> 22nd of April 2007 Bhagavad Gītā Lesson

We have to always ask ourselves what the best way to serve Kṛṣṇa could be, and how to help others do the same. The best way suggested is to always think and talk about Kṛṣṇa, and associate with other devotees.

> It is very unfortunate to witness the others' misery. Karma changes but in the meantime devotees are very concerned with others' suffering. Prabhupāda witnessing in the night how children fight with stray dogs for food leftovers, with tears that came in his eyes said that nobody within 8 miles distance from the ISKCON temple should be left hungry. Everybody should be able to eat at the temple.
>
> 11th of March 2007 Bhagavad Gītā Lesson

> You have to be always attentive to Kṛṣṇa; it is not difficult when you love Kṛṣṇa. It is the same like working for your family and kids – you do that and it is not difficult because you love them. If you love Kṛṣṇa you will do what is required. That is why we chant on the streets, distribute books, do service in the temple ...and so on.
> Sinful reactions gradually recede, but we have to always strive to get to the spiritual platform; we have to tune ourselves to the holy vibrations of love for and associate with other devotees, because you will become a thief if you associate with thieves. Thieves are also able to draw you to their level of consciousness. So that association is very important – devotees are inspiration for each other. We have to be careful while giving our pure association to the other, because at the same time we should avoid associating with materialistic goals and attitudes.
>
> 1st of April 2007 Bhagavad Gītā Lesson

Another important point usually discussed by the preachers is the impartiality of Krishna Consciousness towards other religions and faiths. Different people are viewed as sharing the same nature and originally belonging to one and the same God. Differences between people are only illusionary and conditional on misconceptions and poor understanding of God's nature and material realities of life. What devotees need is tolerance, understanding, and love for others who do not share the same beliefs.

> We all belong to God; everything around us belongs to God. We are all brothers and sisters. We can have different ways of worshipping, but these are different levels of understanding of God; the same as there are schools, colleges and Universities.
>
> We have to make God our priority. Kṛṣṇa is like a pet name, like a friend – not like a diluted impersonal God. Śrīla Prabhupāda opened the treasure trove of love; *Bhakti* attracts *Bhakti.*
>
> 1ˢᵗ of April 2007 Bhagavad Gītā Lesson

> *Māyā* is serving Kṛṣṇa also like his devotee. All religions worship the same god. But they have to be authentic: to have scriptures, to have gurus – the process of worshiping should be there.
>
> There is no need of hostility among religions. There is no need to destroy and tear apart somebody worshiping God, to blame the other being sinful, or demonic, or impure. The church, the mosque, the synagogue, the temple are in spirit one and the same place. When I have a nice day I forget God, but when I have a bad day, or suffer I remember and search for God.
>
> 8ᵗʰ of April 2007 Bhagavad Gītā Lesson

Teaching Bhagavad Gītā classes (or preaching) is one of the numerous ways to serve the deity, but as a devotee would say, not everybody "qualifies" to perform that duty. The access to the ritualised discourse depends on initiation, in depth knowledge of the scriptures, and recognised advancement in the practice of *Bhakti Yoga*. In the ISKCON's temple of Montreal there are approximately four or five devotees that take turns in leading the classes, but once in a while special guests visiting from other temples do the service. These are devotees considered as the most advanced in the devotional practice and many of them knew Bhaktivedanta personally.

The last minutes of the class are dedicated to the questions of the audience and when all of them are answered, the topic of the next lesson is announced and everybody moves to the hall where the ritual meal (*prasādam*) is served. Usually the preachers enjoy the

attention of some of the more inquisitive visitors or devotees, so that the theological and philosophical discussions on Bhakti Yoga linger till the end of the *prasādam*.

6.6 Conclusion

According to the results of the questionnaires, the profile of the contemporary Krishna Consciousness followers changed significantly over the last two decades. Devotees tend to be more mature, with ethnic and educational backgrounds that are more diversified. The history of their religious adherence prior to joining the ISKCON movement is also richer. In addition to the predominant Protestant affiliation of the devotees in the 60s and the 70s, nowadays there are lots of adherents coming from Orthodox, Roman-Catholic, and Hindu background.

Professional skills of ISKCON's devotees are more sophisticated, reflecting their age variety and life experience. Most of the respondents are relatively new recruits and only a small part of them have opted to live permanently at the temple, while the majority is happy to visit once a week. Contemporary ISKCON's devotees tend to be celibate, which does not necessarily mean monks. The broader meaning of celibacy includes fidelity to one partner (monogamy) and sexual life subordinate to the needs of procreation only. While being fixed and well established in their intimate relationships, devotees show remarkable social mobility. They travel a lot to exchange visits among the different temples and to participate in the organising of their big annual festivities. Surely India is the favourite destination and there is no one among the Krishna followers who would not be desirous of visiting Vṛndāvana.

Krishna devotees do believe that the ideal society is a realistic project and that there is an underlying "structure of the universe according to which everything functions". To get as close as possible to the ideal equilibrium the society should be based solidly on the Vedic principles of varnāśramadharma or broadly speaking on "the laws of nature". Every individual should act responsibly and according to his/hers innate "nature and capacities". The idea is not to impose an order of strict subordination, but to balance the need of hierarchy and efficiency with the one of personal growth and happiness.

When asked for the alternatives that ISKCON is able to offer to mainstream society, the devotees respond with criticism on the consumerism and the materialism of modern

life. According to their views people in the modern world are largely deceived and frustrated and this is perfectly logical, because "it is impossible to be happy in the material world". The example one of the devotees gave me was with the alarming suicide rate in the province of Québec, which is "not exactly a sign of happiness," he said. Another devotee commented that Krishna Consciousness is an "eye opening" and "the real stuff," therefore it could not be an alternative, given that it is the only thing that works. If they have to name an alternative after all, this is their sanātana-dharma – the eternal religion. This is the only religion able to elevate and purify the materially conditioned soul.

In order to get elevated and purified the devotee should be actively involved in the process of *Bhakti Yoga* and undergo certain personal transformations. Prior to initiation s/he should meet the minimum requirements of the basic four precepts discussed earlier in chapter 5.2. Next s/he should be always looking for ways to expand her or his services for the Lord Kṛṣṇa; for example to help with the temple maintenance, to serve as *pūjāri* (one who attends to the deities at the altar), to participate in the *saṅkīrtans*, to chant more daily rounds of the *mahāmantra* etc.

In principle the requirement and the expectation for a Krishna Consciousness devotee to get purified and elevated agrees with the antique practices of *epimeleia heautou* and *gnōthi seauton* , which aim at attaining a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or Immortality (Foucault 1988). According to Foucault (2005) spirituality postulates that the subject as such is unable of having access to truth without actively seeking an individual transformation (*subjectivation*) through "giving oneself to oneself". The aim (*telos*) of the individual transformation is to remove the subject from its current status and position – could be either elevating of the subject, or truth coming to him in an act of enlightenment. Foucault (2005) named that particular displacement of the subject *eros* while the labour and the ordeal of that conversion received the designation *askesis*. Both eros and askesis can be easily recognised in the practice of *brahmacarya*, which is considered as especially rewarding in the Krishna Consciousness movement.

Conclusion

Deux excès:
exclure la raison;
n'admettre que la raison
Blaise Pascal 1999

The pioneer of French sociology August Comte expounded in his highly influential *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-42) that knowledge passed through three phases, the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive or scientific. With the dawning of the scientific age the traditional forms of religion declined and Comte devised a Religion of Humanity, which would perform for the modern world those necessary functions of providing meaning, ritual and a basis for morality, which had once been the province of the churches.

According to the summary of recent historical scholarship given by McLeod (2000), the extent, chronology and causes of secularisation remain unclear. Despite the increasing wariness among historians of modern religion about the use of the term 'secularisation' and its status as the supposed key to modern religious history, there is a relative agreement upon the basic approaches of identifying the process of secularisation. In Germany and France, though much less frequently in England, many historians argued that the turning point was the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The approach more favoured by British historians focuses on the Industrial Revolution from about 1800 onwards. Historians of ideas and literature highlight various developments in science, philosophy and the study of religion around the middle of the nineteenth century, with Darwin usually being identified as the central figure, while the fourth approach focuses on the period since about 1960 (McLeod 2000: 4).

Authors like Cox (1965, 1977), Wilson (1966), Luckmann (1967), and Berger (1967) shared a commitment to the 'secularisation thesis', holding that the dwindling social significance of religion is an inevitable consequence of the processes of social development in modern societies. Professional specialists take over more and more of the roles previously performed by the clergy. Science replaces theology as the principle source of authoritative knowledge, while growing pluralism leads to a sophisticated relativism, in terms of which the moral absolutes prescribed by the various religions lose their binding force. As Harvey Cox (1965) claimed, "religion was privatized" and while remaining important perhaps to some individuals its influence on public institutions

belongs to the past. At least this is how the secularisation thesis looked during the 1960s and 1970s.

From the later 1970s onwards, though, with the political mobilisation of evangelicals in the United States, the role of the churches in some of the revolutions in the former Eastern Bloc countries, and the advance of the militant Islam, the number of doubters of the orthodox status of the secularisation thesis correspondingly increased. These developments called into question the assumption that religion would inevitably be privatised and marginalised in modern societies. In the United States, some sociologists of religion like Stark and Bainbridge (1985), Iannacone (1991) and Finke (1992) rejected the concept of secularisation altogether. In Europe the tendency has been to suggest that secularisation and the complexity of religious change were rather oversimplified (Martin 1978, Casanova 1994, Davie 2000). Meanwhile there have been other sociologists, most notably Steve Bruce (1996), who have reaffirmed and refined the secularisation theory, essentially in the form advanced by such authors as Bryan Wilson in the 1960s (McLeod 2000).

The popular opinion, widely shared in the West, that we are in control of our lives, is most probably due to the processes of modern secularisation. That involves the underlying conviction that we are inherently able of purposefully applying our will in order to bend the life circumstances in our advantage. ISKCON maintains the opposite – we are not, and we cannot be in control of our lives. We are already materially conditioned and controlled by our past karma (the chain of actions and reactions built through our previous incarnations). There is only one who is able to control Life and he is the Supreme Controller – Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The important consequence following from this arrangement is that in order to have access to some control we have to surrender absolutely to the Lord. The best control available to humans is to serve Kṛṣṇa. For one unfamiliar with the Oriental philosophical tradition a claim like this might sound like an oxymoron. Another similar example could be that "Saṁsāra is Nirvāṇa" (or that the endless chain of rebirth and suffering itself is our very liberation from that chain). Paradoxical as it might be, the logic is there and it is quite sound.

Why surrender first of all? To begin with, when one goes to his Guru, according to the Oriental tradition the same one needs, yearns and expects to be instructed and led; not the opposite – to instruct and to lead the master. Thus, the disciple owes obeisance to his Guru. It is like in the Army. One swears an oath, which means unconditionally accepts the authority of the higher command. In principle the army commander is not an empty suit. The higher the rank, the higher the qualifications should be; otherwise the award for any deficient leadership in battle is certain death. It is not accidental at all that many monastic orders in the past had a military structure like the order of the Christian Templars, or the famous Shao-Lin temple in China, just to name a few. Similarly the battle for Krishna Consciousness and spiritual advancement requires some self-discipline and conforming to strict rules. The life of a *brahmacārin* is not in any way different from the life of any other monk.

As far as scientific rigour is concerned, there are no particular reasons to consider the Science of Yoga as less rigorous than any other scientific discipline. We hardly need to go back to the Vedic times to realise that in our historical past, science and religion were not compartmentalised yet and they were actually aspects of one whole. Given that even in its Hollywood style application, Yoga is able to produce unquestionably beneficial effects; one can logically expect better results to follow a genuine dedication to the process. To put it in another way – the principles of Yoga are nothing less than operative.

When we compare Bhakti and modern secularism it is evident that the very idea of discursive rigour varies. While modern secularism encourages discussions and free exchange of opinions, Bhakti neither promotes an exploration of the zillion of possibilities (their number is limited to four modes of love relations to Kṛṣṇa), nor recommends compiling a litany of all opinions on the subject matter. Citing is highly recommendable, but only as far as it is conforming to the scriptures and *paramparā* (discipular succession).

Regarding the procedures for discourse control identified by Michel Foucault (1971), my conclusion is that they fit adequately the analysis of ISKCON discourse. Certainly the ISKCON's discourse does not satisfy Foucault's definitions for a "discipline" and a closed "discourse society", but it does so perfectly well for all the other aspects of discourse control. As far as discursive violence is concerned, nowadays ISKCON appears

as relatively restrained. Apart from the usual *Māyāvadī* issue and the overstated contempt for formal academic education, I did not witness anything comparable to the outright self-righteous disdain demonstrated by Bhaktivedanta:

> In Montreal a Bengali gentlemen inquired, "Swamiji, you are using very strong words – 'fools and rascals.' Can it be explained otherwise?"
> And I replied, "No. These are the only words – that you are all rascals and fools" [Laughter.] (Bhaktivedanta 1996: 15).

As more important appears the problematic of "representation of men" and the "being of man" (Foucault 1970), as far as they become "clearly separate issues once we consider discursive and cognitive functions of language, once we raise the question of discourse, of its ontological privilege and epistemological powers" (Racevskis 1983: 57). According to Foucault (1970) man exists as an element of discourse. Since this existence is due to a radical change in the epistemological configuration of Western discourse, man is simply to be viewed as the product of a historical contingency. Although we may find it difficult to imagine this, Foucault reminds us that there was a time "when the world, its order, and human beings existed, but man did not." Our thinking has been conditioned by forces beyond our conscious control and yet we "believe ourselves bound to a finitude which belongs only to us, and which opens up the truth of the world to us by means of our cognition" (Ibid.: 322). This illusory mode of producing the truth about ourselves and the world characterizes, as we have seen, an anthropological process and is a function of the episteme that governs our mode of cognition (Racevskis 1983: 58).

To Foucault, Classical thought was incapable of self-representation, or in other words, man was incapable of perceiving himself as subject and object at once, as simultaneously representing and being represented, as an entity present to himself in the process of representation. The presence of man was recognised in a Linnaean like mode, but deprived of any reflexivity:

> Before the end of the eighteenth century, man did not exist... Of course, it is possible to object that general grammar, natural history, and the analysis of wealth were all... ways of recognising the existence of man.... But there was no *epistemological consciousness* of man as such (Foucault 1970: 308-309).

With Kant, the modern age is inaugurated. But as soon as the metaphysical seal on the correspondence between language and world breaks down, the representational function of language itself becomes a problem. Foucault develops his basic idea that

modernity is characterized by the self-contradictory and anthropocentric form of knowledge proper to "a structurally overloaded subject (a finite subject transcending itself into the infinite) in a wide arc that stretches from Kant and Fichte to Husserl and Heidegger" (Racevskis 1983 :69).

As it is evident, both Classical and Modern thought (being contradictive and anthropocentric) do not satisfy Foucault's need of sound knowledge regarding man's nature (or the nature of man's cognitive abilities). Foucault's genealogical inquiry into the history of the western "self-technologies" and the "hermeneutics of the self" is an interesting symptom of an ever growing need for holistic knowledge – one that is transforming its subject in the process of self-realisation.

We can always ask the questions: What is first - our need to know or our need for self-realisation? Do we need to know in order to change ourselves or do we need to change ourselves in order to know? What kind of knowledge is more valuable – the personal (transformational) one, or the objective (impersonal) formal scientific knowledge? Answers are not readily available and when they present themselves they are not universal. As one devotee put it: "It takes 40 years at least, 30-40 years…It's a slow process. It is not happening tomorrow. It takes some time…(p. 102)" The opinion expressed by the American myth theorist Joseph Campbell (1988) regarding the choice of attitude towards the process of acquiring knowledge is in the same vein:

> Each religion is a kind of software that has its own set of signals and … will work. It will work but suppose you have chosen this one. Now for person really involved in religion and really building his life on it, you better stay with the software that you have got. For a chap like myself who likes to play with "cross software" … I can run around, but I will probably never have an experience comparable to that of a saint (Bill Moyers & Joseph Campbell 1988).

Foucault insists in his *L'ordre du discours* (1971) that in order to restore discourse to its status of event and to finally divest the signifier of its sovereignty, we need to start with questioning our will to truth. He understood that task as applying a method based on the four main principles: *renversement, discontinuité, spécificité et extériorité*. According to the principle of *renversement,* the figures perceived as positive, like *author, discipline,* or *will to truth,* should be recognised as negative in their function of interrupting and dispersing of the discourse. The principle of *discontinuité* requires that the discourse

should be treated as discontinuous practices that are touching and intersecting among themselves, yet ignoring and excluding each other.

The third principle of *spécificité* is especially sensitive to the problematic of both theistic and secular discourses on Krishna Consciousness. Foucault (1971) formulated that principle as a precaution against reducing a discourse into «un jeu de significations préalables», and against the assumption that the world presents to us «un visage lisible que nous n'aurions plus qu'à déchiffrer», that are practices pertaining to the secular discourses. The world should not be perceived as a tool especially designed to facilitate our learning process, or to assume the existence of «providence prédiscursive qui le dispose en notre faveur», which is something so typical for theistic discourses.

Foucault (1971) recommends always observing the principle of *extériorité*, which means not to focus on the hidden interior of a discourse, or on the nucleus of some thinking manifested in it, but to rather start from the surface and the regularity of the discourse and move towards its external conditions of possibilities. The first and the last principles recommended, namely *renversement* and *extériorité*, closely resemble on one side the tested mathematical method of proving a theorem by assuming its opposite, and on the other side a desperate wrestling with a Zen-Buddhist *kōan*. Nevertheless, they both seem challenging and promising.

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