

Doing Well by Doing Good:
Logics of Corporate Social Responsibility in Bangalore, India

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DEDICATION

For the *rishis*

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ABSTRACT

Based on 12 months of research in Bangalore, this dissertation examines the practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in India, an activity that became mandatory with the 2013 revision to the Companies Act. It is specifically concerned with the historical, conceptual, and sentimental dimensions of the decoupling of social policy from nation-state in India, indexed by the increasing responsibility taken for the social by transnational and local corporations. Engaging largely with CSR practitioners rather than the targets of CSR programs, and relying on data gathered through archival research, interviews, and participant observation, this work seeks to extend and adapt theorizing in the anthropology of humanitarianism to an analysis of corporate forms of social intervention. I ask the following questions: How do the logics of CSR give rise to corporate interventions into society that differ from those typically associated with nation-states? What novel iterations of governance, society, and citizenship might come into being when responsibility for population welfare is decoupled from the nation-state and comes to be shared with profit-seeking entities such as corporations? And what kinds of sentiments fuel corporate forms of social intervention in the Indian context? I demonstrate how CSR in India constitutes a hybridized and diverse set of practices with varied implications: CSR programs that claim to empower female garment factory workers while at the same time generating returns for businesses; corporations that govern entire townships; the deployment of idioms of debt and sacrifice to target expanded conceptions of the social by a corporate-partnered voluntary organization; and the recognition of selfishness and the ego in guiding charitable activity by CSR practitioners, who strive towards non-attachment in their lives and work. I contend that CSR today can be situated within a longer history of the relationship between the provision of welfare and governmental legitimacy, one that is reconstituting the meaning and practice of governance, citizenship and society, animated by corporatized logics of intervention as much as religiously-grounded humanitarian sentiments.

RÉSUMÉ

S'appuyant sur 12 mois de recherche de terrain à Bangalore, cette thèse examine la pratique de la responsabilité sociale des entreprises (RSE) en Inde, rendue obligatoire suite aux révisions faites à l'Acte des Compagnies (Companies Act) en 2013. Elle porte plus précisément sur les dimensions historiques, conceptuelles et sentimentales de la dissociation de la politique sociale de l'État indien, politique qui est dorénavant marquée par un accroissement de la responsabilité sociale des entreprises locales et transnationales. En examinant les praticiens de la RSE plutôt que les cibles des programmes de la RSE, en s'appuyant sur des données recueillies en archives, lors d'entretiens et au cours d'observations participantes, cet ouvrage vise à étendre et à adapter les théories situées dans le champ de l'anthropologie de l'humanitaire afin d'analyser les formes d'intervention sociale des entreprises. Je pose les questions suivantes dans cette thèse: comment les logiques de la RSE engendrent-elles des interventions de la part d'entreprises auprès de la société qui soient différentes de celles normalement associées à l'État? Quelles nouvelles formes de gouvernance, de société et de citoyenneté peuvent survenir lorsque la responsabilité du bien-être de la population est dissociée de l'État et en vient à être partagée avec des entités en quête de profits, telles que les entreprises? Enfin, quelles sortes de sentiments suscitent les différents types d'intervention sociale des entreprises dans le contexte indien? Je montre comment la RSE en Inde constitue un ensemble de pratiques hybrides et diversifiées aux différentes implications: les programmes de RSE qui affirment accroître le pouvoir d'agir (empowerment) d'employées d'usines de textile tout en générant des profits; les entreprises qui gèrent des townships entiers; le déploiement du langage de la dette et du sacrifice afin de cibler des conceptions élargies du social par les organisations bénévoles qui sont partenaires d'entreprises; puis la reconnaissance de l'égoïsme et de l'égo en tant que guidant des activités caritatives par des praticiens de la RSE, qui visent toutefois le détachement tant dans leur vie qu'au travail. J'avance dans cette thèse la nécessité de situer la RSE aujourd'hui au sein d'une histoire plus large de la relation entre l'offre de soin et du bien-être (welfare) et la légitimité gouvernementale, une relation reconstituant le sens et la pratique de la gouvernance, de la citoyenneté et de la société qui est à la fois animée par la logique entrepreneuriale de l'intervention autant que par des sentiments humanitaires pouvant être fondés sur la religion.

INTRODUCTION

Bill Gates Visits India

In March 2011, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, currently the world's wealthiest man, made a much-publicized visit to India. Gates was joined by his wife, Melinda, as well as Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffet, the second richest American. Gates had organized a closed door reception in New Delhi with India's wealthiest, who flocked to meet the two American businessmen. Despite the impressive combined net worth of the participants, the topic of the meeting wasn't about making money, however. Gates was instead trying to convince the Indian business elite to join him in his efforts to give it away.

As co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Gates was seeking to motivate Indians to replicate his foundation's success in marshalling enormous resources towards presumably more efficient, non-state forms of global development. Gates thought it expedient to work alongside India's business leaders to redress the apparently lower proportion of charitable donations made in India as compared to the United States: According to a 2010 study by Bain management consultants cited in nearly every article that covered the story, charitable donations in India made up only about 0.6 percent of the country's gross domestic product, well below the 2.2 percent of the United States (Sheth 2010; Timmons and Bajaj 2011).

Despite its apparently lower investment in charity, Gates nonetheless praised India's "remarkable tradition of giving", and the reception was described as having been well-received by attendees (Karmali 2011). The suggestion taken by some to be implicit in his visit – that Indians needed Gates' philanthropic prodding in the first place – was however one that was not as well-received; many commentators took the billionaire's visit as a Western indictment of Indian cultures

of giving, a discourse that casts a long shadow backward into the colonial era. Indeed, Jeff Raikes, CEO of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in an interview with the Economic Times, made this position more explicit a little over a year later: “There is a strong culture of philanthropy in the US and charitable contributions account for a substantial portion of GDP. In India, the culture is not the same” (Raikes 2012 in Singh 2012).

Gates’ visit and the assumptions about India’s culture of philanthropy that accompanied him contributed to much public debate, within and outside CSR circles. Critics in India accused Gates of being unaware of India’s long and substantial history of business and merchant philanthropy. Some argued that the statistics on Indian philanthropy did not account for the numerous charitable gifts that are routinely given and never reported, with some highlighting the Hindu imperative to keep silent about one’s gifts because it embarrasses the recipient (Vaidyanathan 2011). A business school professor told me that strategic philanthropy of the kind promoted by Gates would never take off in India because it ran counter to dominant conceptions of Hindu ethics prescribing that one should act without regard for the results of one’s actions. Perhaps the most provocative riposte came from a person who referred me to a speech of a former executive Director of the Tata Group, India’s best-known and most philanthropic corporation, to underline that it was in fact an Indian, the Hindu reformer Swami Vivekananda, who had first given America the “gift” of business philanthropy. During his visit to Chicago in 1893, Vivekananda was rumoured to have been visited by Standard Oil business magnate John D. Rockefeller, who was curious to meet him. After having told him of things no one but Rockefeller could have known, Vivekananda succeeded in convincing the businessman to use his “God-given” wealth to “help and do good to people”, thus prompting the birth of the first American business trust by (Guiding Thoughts 2012).

For Gates, securing increased philanthropic contributions from the Indian business community was argued to be an efficient and effective non-governmental means of addressing the low level of poverty reduction in India, where more of the world's income poor live than in any other country (Datt and Ravallion 2002:2). Particularly pressing were the income inequalities that, despite India's impressive economic growth, began to be exacerbated following the liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991. Where in the early 1990s income inequality in India was close to that of developed countries¹, by 2011 the top 10% of wage earners in India made 12 times more than the bottom 10%, a doubling from a ratio of six in the 1990s (OECD 2011). It is clear then while much wealth has been created in India in the past three decades, this wealth has not been evenly distributed. Even though the Indian state has begun to finance and mount its own development projects around the world – in 2011 it pledged five billion dollars to help African nations meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals, an amount nearly equal to its own annual health care expenditure² – poverty and the human suffering that accompanies it continue to be widespread. Malnutrition in the state of Gujarat, one of the richest states, is worse than the average level of malnutrition in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2010, the UN recorded one maternal death at childbirth every ten minutes in India, with a maternal mortality rate higher than that of Sudan, Ethiopia and Bangladesh. Infant mortality in the state of Madhya Pradesh, one of India's poorest states, is higher than in Senegal or Eritrea (Bandyopadhyay 2013).

India's relatively low spending on social welfare, combined with difficulties in access and distribution to government subsidized social programs have made it notoriously difficult for the government to address these issues alone. The Indian government spends less than 5% of its GDP

¹ In the past two decades, India's Gini coefficient, the official measure of income inequality, has risen from 0.32 to 0.38, with 0 being the ideal score (OECD 2011), although determining whether or not the absolute level of poverty has risen or fallen remains a contentious issue. See Datt and Ravallion (2011:2) for a review.

² Bhowmick (2011).

on social welfare as compared to Brazil's more than 15% (OECD 2011:59). The overwhelming share of non-agricultural employment in India continues to be located in the informal sector: a full 75% of usual status employment in rural areas and 69% in urban areas are located in the informal sector (National Sample Survey 2011:ii). The low percentage of formal sector workers in the country mean that tax revenues remain insufficient to finance an expansion in public spending. Tax revenues as a proportion of GDP in India are under 20% – the lowest of all emerging economies, and just half that of developed countries (OECD 2011:62-3).

The government social programs that are available have been steadily eroded by corruption and inefficiencies. In 2005, 62% of Indians were estimated to have paid a bribe to access government services³ (Transparency International, 2005). India is home to some of the highest staff absences in the public sector, particularly in health and education⁴: government-run hospitals and schools are known to be staffed by “ghost doctors” and “ghost teachers”, creating problems of access for the poor who rely on these services, and prompting some to discount the welfare state in India as an “absent presence” (Williams 2011).

³ Indian citizens are increasingly using the internet to identify corrupt officials and monitor and counteract corruption. In 2010 Bangalore-based citizen's organization Janaagraha launched the website www.ipaidabribe.com. In March 2014 the site's visitors had reported 25,241 bribes paid in 651 cities to the tune of 66.3 crore rupees (nearly 11 million USD). By November 2014 this number had risen to 32,404 reports of demands for bribes totalling 239.24 crore rupees, over 38.4 million USD. These bribe reports likely represent only of a fraction of the bribes paid in the country, requiring access to a computer and internet connection to make a report; according to 2011 census statistics, only 9.4% of Indian households own a laptop or computer and only 3% an internet connection.

⁴ A 2006 study found that over three separate visits to 3000 government schools in India, one quarter of government primary school teachers were absent from school, and only 45% of the teachers who were there were actually engaged in teaching when enumerators arrived at the schools (Chaudhury, et al. 2006:91). Health care providers are even more likely to be absent than teachers; 40% were absent from the 1,350 primary health centers visited on three separate occasions (p. 92). By comparison, Indian factory workers, who enjoy a high degree of job security, have an absence of only about 10% (p. 96). Chaudhury et al also provide a cogent analysis of some of the reasons for these absences: lack of disciplinary sanctions as much as lack of incentives for good performance, low earnings in the public sector combined with the presence of a parallel private sector in which it is possible to “moonlight” while still collecting a government salary.

While Gates' visit and his confidence in corporate giving as a solution to problems such as the ones described above were highly publicized, he was not the first to make such a suggestion. The Indian government too had for years been calling for increasing corporate involvement in social issues, asking corporations to reflect on their positions as beneficiaries of liberalization, a process which had fuelled economic growth as much as economic inequalities.

In 2007, then-Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh released his Ten Point Social Charter at a speech given to the Confederation of Indian Industry, one that called for a new Partnership for Inclusive Growth between government and industry that was rooted in getting business to realize what he called its "wider social responsibility." As Singh put it, the dangers of persisting economic inequality in India were real, and could no longer be addressed by government interventions alone:

Rising income and wealth inequalities, if not matched by a corresponding rise of incomes across the nation, can lead to social unrest. The electronic media carries the lifestyles of the rich and famous into every village and every slum. Media often highlights the vulgar display of their wealth. An area of great concern is the level of ostentatious expenditure on weddings and other family events. Such vulgarity insults the poverty of the less privileged, it is socially wasteful and it plants seeds of resentment in the minds of the have-nots. If those who are better off do not act in a more socially responsible manner, our growth process may be at risk, our polity may become anarchic and our society may get further divided. I invite corporate India to be a partner in making ours a more humane and just society (Singh 2007).

In a 2011 article, Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of the ruling United Party Alliance, echoed the sentiments of the Prime Minister of her party, calling on corporations to share responsibilities that for much of the latter half of the twentieth century, had been recognized as the legitimate and principal domain of the Indian state:

With greater wealth comes greater responsibility. I hope our industrialists, entrepreneurs and businessmen will recognize that the responsibility for the uplift of the poor, the disadvantaged and the marginalized *is not that of the government alone, but one that they must share* (Gandhi 2011, my emphasis).

Later that year, the government of India, following the lead of countries such as Denmark, Malaysia, and South Africa, took steps to formalize the involvement of the private sector in social development by passing voluntary legislation relating to the practice of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The National Voluntary Guidelines (NVGs) that were released by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in July 2011 were originally intended to be passed as a formal bill of law. The proposition of mandatory CSR legislation however was met with vocal outcry on the part of the business community, an outcry which was said to have prompted the Ministry to concede with a set of watered down voluntary guidelines (Pramar 2011). The NVGs asked all companies operating in India to voluntarily adhere to a minimum set of ethical standards, such as transparency, producing sustainable goods, caring for well-being of employees, promoting human rights, and caring for disadvantaged stakeholders. By 2013, however, the Government of India, to the surprise of many, added potent fuel to Gates' entreaties for greater corporate philanthropic involvement in social development in India. In August, the Government of India passed a comprehensive revision of the Companies Act (2013), one *mandating* that India's most profitable corporations devote 2% of their yearly net profits towards spending on corporate social responsibility.⁵ While Indian corporations had long involved themselves voluntarily in CSR, they were now required by law to be more "socially responsible" than ever before. With the 2013 revision to the Companies Act, India became the first country in the world to mandate that private corporations devote a percentage of their net profits to meeting state-defined development goals, such as eradicating hunger and poverty, and promoting and improving sanitation, preventative health care, education, and rural development.

⁵ While foreign companies are currently not included within the NVGs nor the Companies Act, planners have discussed the possibility of including them at some future date.

This devolution of social welfare functions to non-governmental entities has increasingly become a feature of twenty-first century neoliberal modes of governance, involving not only corporations but also humanitarian agencies, NGOs, and volunteers, raising concerns about the legitimacy of these actors to provide services that have been traditionally associated with the nation-state. But what remains little explored is what a specifically *corporate* responsibility for the welfare of society, an entity that has traditionally been positioned as the exclusive responsibility of the nation-state, concretely implies. In other words, what exactly is the “social” for which corporations are both being made and making themselves responsible? And how exactly is this responsibility being justified and enacted?

The Corporate Social

It is clear that corporations and other commercial organizations, in India and elsewhere, are expressing an increasing interest and involvement in social intervention. New global institutions, such as the UN Global Compact, launched in 2000, have created platforms to encourage businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies and practices. Philanthropic foundations funded by members of the business community, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation mentioned above, are described as having “marginalized” both nation-states and the World Health Organization, the institutions formerly responsible for international health (Rees 2014a). The development and widespread use of standardized auditing procedures, such as the Global Reporting Initiative, Social Accountability International’s SA8000 standard, and the International Standards Organization’s ISO 26000 standard now permit businesses to quantitatively and qualitatively measure, report on, and acquire certification for their progress in being socially responsible, whether in relation to their employees, other stakeholders, or the environment. A discourse and practice of “public-private partnership” has risen to prominence,

where corporations self-identify and are identified as essential partners to development rather than antagonistic forces, working alongside NGOs, governments, and philanthropic organizations often funded with corporate dollars.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has risen to prominence alongside these movements in recent years, embodying an apparently kinder side to capitalism. What exactly is meant by CSR – its rationale, values, and purpose – however remains an open question, and one that is still in the process of being addressed by practitioners. The Sage Brief Guide to Corporate Social Responsibility (2011:2) defines it most broadly as “the general belief held by many that modern businesses have a responsibility to society that extends beyond the stockholders or investors in the firm. That responsibility, of course, is to make money or profits for the owners.” Businesses that have assumed various forms of corporate social responsibility move far beyond this mandate, targeting objects as diverse as consumers, employees, the community at large, government, and the natural environment. The author notes that discussions about CSR tend to center around larger organizations, because they are more visible and have more power, closing with a truism apparently intended to justify CSR’s *raison d’être*: “And, as many have observed, with power comes responsibility” (ibid). It is precisely this relationship between the apparent expression of “power” and the responsibility for society that I am interested in theorizing in this dissertation, specifically as it is being articulated by non-governmental entities, in this case by corporations in India today.

Forms such as CSR can be situated within which what James Ferguson (2010:168) has called the “rise of transnational forms of government, and particularly of the philanthropic funding of what we used to call ‘the social.’” While in part resembling the twentieth century “social” of the social welfare state, in its focus on providing goods such as health, hygiene, sanitation, and

education, such transnational forms of government are also emblematic of new relations between the state, business, philanthropic entities, and society that have begun to decouple social policy from the nation-state (ibid). Of course as we can see from the case of the Indian government's approach to CSR, such a decoupling neither implies a wholesale retreat of the state from the domain of the social, nor from its regulation of the corporations that are enjoined to intervene into it. But I would argue that this decoupling nonetheless has important effects, not only for the targets of these interventions, but also for theorizing in the social sciences. Humanitarianism for example, as a quintessential non-state form of social intervention, has been argued by anthropologists to have profoundly troubled the stability and coherence of several concepts critical to theorizing in the social sciences: society, citizenship, and governance, for example (Redfield 2012; Rees 2014b; Ticktin 2011). CSR likewise challenges a whole social scientific conceptual repertoire that has positioned the nation-state as the principal caretaker of society, a role which the philanthropic funding of the social calls into question.

It is thus important to interrogate the use of these concepts and to assess their continued applicability in the face of broader political, economic, and institutional shifts. For example, Tobias Rees (2014) has proposed that the very concept of society might be a time and place specific event, one, following Foucault (2010) that is brought into existence by – and so is contingent upon – the nation-state and its specific techniques of governance. If prior to the existence of the state other forms of human collectivity (i.e. tribe, village) structured and ordered the world, then today broader institutional and governmental shifts might likewise be giving rise to new forms of human collectivity, forged through novel forms of governance and techniques of intervention. In relation to global health programs of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Rees (2014) argues the object

of its intervention are no longer citizens of nation-states, but rather are framed by practitioners as comprising members of an aspirational global “humanity.”

Peter Redfield’s (2012) research on the interventions of global health humanitarian organization *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) against epidemics of sleeping sickness in various African nations expresses a similar set of concerns. Redfield asks whether the increasing involvement of non-state organizations such as MSF in the health of populations across borders suggests a reconceptualization of the notion of citizenship itself: today, can one be a “citizen” not only of a nation-state, but also of a neglected disease? For Redfield, the humanitarian activities of MSF engender distant forms of citizenship that are constructed out of humanitarian concern rather than territorial projects of nation-state or empire; MSF’s humanitarianism can then be seen as a form of intervention targeting humans sick with a marginal condition or disease rather than citizens⁶ (Redfield 2012:231). MSF’s form of governance is thus one that is limited and temporary; while the responsibility for life is assumed by MSF, political responsibility lies elsewhere, with nation-states (ibid).

In the Indian context, scholars have examined too how apparently universal concepts such as “society” have been historically inflected there in particular ways. For example, Partha Chatterjee (2013) argues that the Indian developmental state’s relation to the poor in the 1970s resulted in a kind of bifurcation in techniques of government, one that oriented itself to middle class citizens on the one hand, and varied poor populations on the other. While the urban poor

⁶ Shifts in the concept and practice of citizenship brought by global health interventions and their role in forging new modes of (humanitarian) subjectification have also been explored by Nguyen (2010), who examines how regimes of “therapeutic sovereignty” in West Africa determine access to anti-retroviral medications based on medical criteria rather than citizenship rights and by McKay (2012), who analyses the provision of aid in Mozambique as comprised of “patchwork assemblages of care” shared among various NGOs that target biologically vulnerable “beneficiaries” rather than citizens. Adriana Petryna’s (2002) work similarly explores how the Ukrainian state’s policies in the wake of Chernobyl have come to target individuals sick with conditions stemming from radioactive poisoning rather than citizens more broadly.

squatted on lands they lacked title to, paid no taxes, and stole electricity and water, as providers of necessary labour and their status as a group that could endanger the safety of citizens, they were nonetheless provided with various forms of welfare by government. The provision of welfare operated not through a universal social, but rather through government welfare schemes targeting groups such as slum-dwelling children, or working mothers below the poverty line. Such populations were defined and governed through census and survey data that segmented them into “empirical categories of people with specific social or economic attributes [...] relevant for the administration of developmental or welfare policies”, categories that would shift along with the scheme in question (Chatterjee 2013:136). For Chatterjee, this meant that the governmental administration of development and welfare in India produced what he calls a “heterogeneous social”, one consisting of multiple population groups to be addressed through multiple and flexible policies.

I engage with anthropological theorizing on humanitarianism rather than on the corporate form, largely because of a lack of sufficient theoretical interest in the latter within the discipline of anthropology. As Welker, et al. (2011:S4) have noted in a recent article on the topic, “the overall corpus on the subject remains small, and we have yet to see the emergence of a sustained line of scholarship and inquiry [within anthropology] that would extend to the corporation the same critical weight or significance accorded the nation-state” (Welker et al 2011:S4). The academic division of labour in the social sciences and the anthropological tendency to focus research around subalterns has meant that “to date, one cannot discern a coherent set of research questions or competing schools of thought characterizing the anthropology of corporations” (ibid). This work thus seeks to fill a gap in anthropological research on the corporate form by theorizing around *corporate* interventions into human welfare, focusing on the specificity of their logics,

goals, and conceptions of the human, and the ways in which these might *trouble established concepts and categories used broadly in the social sciences*.

A singular focus on the *logics* of CSR, as is suggested in the title of this work, however might imply that CSR is a wholly *rational* process, tied up with a cold and impersonal bureaucratization and corporatization of life under neoliberalism. But to assert this would imply that human action is largely guided by reason, which is a questionable claim (see Stoler 2008 for a challenge of colonial reason). It might also imply a disproportionate focus on the architects and planners of CSR programs, who are not always the same people most intimately involved with the deployment of CSR programs in the field. The vast majority of CSR programs are in fact implemented neither by rule-bound bureaucrats nor by efficient corporate leaders, but rather by unpaid volunteers. These volunteers are often employed within the companies that implement CSR programs, although they are also drawn from the volunteer pools of non-profit organizations with which corporations partner, as is the case with the volunteer organization Youth for Seva, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. Not only logic, but also sentimental and affective justifications, often grounded in religious beliefs, are central to volunteer participation in CSR, and hence are key to its operation.

Anthropological research has likewise demonstrated the centrality of sentiments, affect, and emotion to humanitarian interventions⁷ (Bornstein 2012; Muehlebach 2012; Ticktin 2011). Some have focused specifically on how the deployment of sentiments within humanitarianism and other non-state forms of social intervention appears to function as a new form of politics (or anti-politics), one which effectively silences discussions of history, structural violence, rights and social

⁷ Liisa Malkki (2013) and Peter Redfield (2013) have both drawn attention to the ways in which humanitarian efforts are produced through a dialectic between the affective and the unsentimental; the imperative to save lives is often accompanied by a focus on technical prescriptions and efforts to “do a good job.”

justice (Fassin 2012; Ferguson 1990; Ticktin 2011). Myriam Ticktin (2011) for example, shows how the French government's "illness clause", which offers asylum only to immigrants able to demonstrate trauma or a medical condition, effectively replaces the right to asylum with a "humanitarian state of exception" that operates through sentimental compassion for physical suffering. In this work I bracket questions about the political or depoliticizing effects of humanitarian sentiments to instead focus instead on some of the specific forms that they take in the Indian context. In doing so I seek to nuance the anthropological literature on humanitarian sentiments, which has tended to focus largely on their expression in Euro-American contexts, following the deployment of affects within global humanitarian agencies and their export through programming and interventions to various locales around the world.⁸ Focus has further tended to center around humanitarian sentiments in countries with historically Catholic (or Christian) values, values which have been shown to persist, in modified form, in justifications for contemporary (often) secular forms of humanitarian intervention (Fassin 2012; Malkki 2013; Muehlebach 2012; Redfield 2013). Here I focus on specifically Hindu lines of thinking that structure the sentimental experience of CSR. While India is also of course home to a variety of religiously-grounded traditions of charity found within Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism, the individuals involved in my research were largely Hindu, and drew on Hindu repertoires. Rather than appearing as a strictly rational-technical response to the needs of populations then, individuals' participation in CSR in India, similarly to the participation of individuals in humanitarian intervention, is structured by sentimental and affective justifications that shape both the objects and forms of corporate intervention into the social.

⁸ Erica Bornstein's recent *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Delhi* (2014) is one exception.

Approach and Methods

This dissertation then is specifically concerned with the history and conceptual and sentimental dimensions of the decoupling of social policy from nation-state in India, indexed by the involvement of transnational and local corporations in intervening upon and refiguring the social domains for which they take a newfound responsibility. To understand what society is to a corporation, my ethnographic chapters focus on both the logics and sentiments that guide CSR interventions, logics and sentiments that are variegated to be sure, but that nonetheless reveal specific conceptions of development and “the good”, along with the best ways to achieve it. I ask the following questions: How do the logics of CSR give rise to corporate interventions into society that might differ practically and conceptually from the forms of intervention typically associated with nation-states? What novel iterations of governance, society, and citizenship might come into being when responsibility for the welfare of populations is decoupled from the nation-state and comes to be shared with nongovernmental entities such as corporations, for which the pursuit of profit is also an eminent responsibility? And what kinds of sentiments and affects might be said to fuel or guide corporate forms of intervention in the Indian context?

I had arrived in Bangalore in 2011, intending to focus solely on CSR programs run by US-based apparel companies that had partnered with Bangalore-based organizations to “empower” and provide health information to women working in the supplier factories around the world where garment production is outsourced. These programs not only claimed to empower women and improve their knowledge, but also to increase levels of productivity in garment factories – a clear instantiation of the claim that CSR can help businesses “do well by doing good.” While Bangalore tends to be better known as the center of India’s IT industry, a “Silicon Valley” of the East, it is also one of its major garment-producing centers, home to 1700 garment factories employing close

to 500,000 workers, the majority of them women. I eventually broadened my research focus beyond the garment industry to include the CSR activities of Indian corporations, which in many cases had much longer histories of CSR as well as distinctive approaches to the practice. I also came to focus on their NGO partners, entities which were often charged with implementing CSR programs and providing services on the ground, activities which made them important mediators between corporations and various community stakeholders that were defined as the beneficiaries of CSR programming.

My research, focused as it was on the design and implementation of CSR programs, thus largely centers around those who design and implement CSR programs rather than their beneficiaries. I conducted interviews, engaged in informal discussions with CSR professionals working at various corporations and NGOs in and around Bangalore, and attending CSR planning meetings. I also attended numerous conferences, workshops, and training sessions for practitioners. I served as a volunteer on CSR programs run by Bangalore-area corporations, which involved activities as diverse as helping doctors to screen the health of children attending government schools, a corporate-sponsored town clean-up, running games booths at a CSR event for underprivileged children, and helping out at a CSR health camp to test villagers in Tamil Nadu for eye problems. In relation to garment factories, I visited several, both with an auditor conducting a social compliance audit for an American apparel brand, as well as with a group implementing a CSR program for women workers. I attended a training session for social compliance auditors run by Social Accountability International (SAI), as well as a set of sessions run by SAI and the GIZ, the German international development agency, intended to train garment factory managers in the principles of social compliance. I met with activists and union organizers to better understand the history of the industry and contemporary worker relations in Bangalore. I also conducted archival

research on philanthropy and welfare provision in the erstwhile princely state of Mysore, today known as the southern Indian state of Karnataka, of which Bangalore is the capital. I do not make extensive use of this archival research here, having rather chosen to conduct an extensive review of secondary historical sources concerned with indigenous, colonial and post-colonial approaches to and engagements with charity and social welfare. Rather than focusing solely on Mysore state, I draw examples from the secondary historical literature on various Indian states, which has better enabled me to theorize the relationship between welfare and governance in a broader historical context.

I did not try to determine whether or not the CSR programs I observed were *effective*, either in relation to realizing their own goals or in comparison to other kinds of programming. Many corporations are themselves concerned with measuring the efficacy of their programs with the use of increasingly sophisticated techniques, although, as will become apparent in Chapter 2, the findings of such studies should necessarily be approached critically. Instead I try to bring the specificity of corporate logics and humanitarian sentiments into view to examine their conceptual and practical effects in reconstituting the “social” and society, along with ideas about citizenship and governance. Such logics are neither cohesive nor uniform, but rather embody diverse inspirations, aspirations, and approaches. But the objects of their interventions and ideas about the most appropriate ways to intervene differ in important respects from national social projects, and it is this difference that I seek to draw attention to in an effort to lay out what is specific about corporate engagements in social welfare. What is clear in examinations of CSR programs is that their targets do not map on to the target of the nation-state’s welfare programs; that is, society, or a universal body of citizens constituted through the social contract, which includes the right to various forms of welfare as a fundamental aspect of citizenship. Rather, what I contend is that CSR

defines objects of varying other scales: both targeted and delimited, as with the instance of female factory workers who are intervened upon to increase productivity and to apparently benefit their families along with the economies of developing countries, or the individuals living in a gated residential company township built for the employees of a watch factory outside of Bangalore. At the same time, the objects of CSR can be slightly more expansive, coming to include the residents of an entire government-defined economically “backward” district, or comprising efforts to clean up an entire town. Its sentimentally-guided logic sometimes exceeds the concept of society itself, coming to include non-humans and nature, as with the targets of intervention defined by Youth for Seva: not only humans, but also animals, knowledge, gods, and ancestors should also be propitiated through voluntary service. What is the social then appears to expand and contracts according to the ways in which different entities decide to intervene into it.

While an examination of contemporary CSR programming is useful in thinking about shifts in the relation of state and non-state actors to society, so too is an examination of similar processes throughout India’s history. In this thesis I foreground a historical approach (Chapter 1) in an effort to situate CSR within a history of the involvement of the business community and other non-state actors in welfare provision in India, highlighting the shifting relationship between welfare provision and the legitimacy to govern throughout the colonial, nationalist, and post-independence periods. Businesses are just one component of a more expansive assemblage of actors that have historically and continue to assume “responsibility” for communities across India. The apparently contemporary decoupling of social policy and nation-state there thus extends significantly further back in time than the twenty-first century. It is therefore difficult to posit a zero-sum relationship between the contemporary rise of global neoliberal forms of humanitarian or corporate governance on the one hand, and the fast-eroding legitimacy of nation-states on the other. Rather, what I try to

illustrate is that the nation-state's tenure as a provider of welfare in India has been a relatively short one. The rise of CSR then might be seen less as a neoliberal technique that erodes the legitimacy of the state, and more a means of maintaining it.

Anthropological Engagements with Corporations and Humanitarianism

To inform my work, I engage with anthropological analyses concerning the political implications of the entry of non-state forces into domains traditionally managed by the state. These debates have tended to bifurcate around two poles: the first centering around efforts to extend Michel Foucault's (2010) state-centered theorizing on biopolitics to humanitarian and non-state entities, and the second around analyses that apply Marcel Mauss's (1990 [1950]) theorizing on the gift to understand the kinds of relations fostered by the provision of welfare by non-state entities.

Biopolitical Governance beyond the State?

Michel Foucault's (2003; 2010; 2012) writings on biopolitics explore the emergence of a new politics of life that arose at the intersection of biology and politics in late eighteenth century France. For Foucault, biopolitics indexed a shift from an earlier form of governance that he called sovereign power. The sovereign power of the king over his subjects was almost strictly deductive, concerned with the seizure of property or physical punishment, while the protection of his own life was paramount; sovereign power was thus characterized largely by the power to take life or let live in the interest of protecting the king. With the shift to the nation-state, however, comes biopower, a power over life. While biopower, like sovereign power, could also be deductive, it was newly productive, in that it was concerned with "making live" through the enhancement of what Foucault called the "vitality", or health, of national populations, as well as the insertion of individuals into productive systems. It is thus the life of the population, or society, rather than that of the sovereign, that biopower endeavours to protect, administer, optimize, and multiply. As

Foucault explains, the nation-state form was central to developing the techniques required for a biopolitical mode of governance, in collecting statistics that allowed national populations to be known, monitored, and intervened upon, and in developing a host of institutions throughout the nineteenth century to discipline and mould bodies and souls through education, health, and work: schools, barracks, prisons, and hospitals, for example (Foucault 2012a; Foucault 2010; 2012b; c).

With the rise of non-state forms of intervention into the health and well-being of global populations, scholars have begun to reflect on how “humanitarian governance” might be theorized as distinct from the biopolitical mode of governance of the nation-state. In a recent review of the treatment of the topic in the social sciences, Michael Barnett (2013) highlights the ways in which humanitarian governance is often framed as a form of biopolitics:

[...] modern humanitarian governance can be understood as the project to “secure the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health,” and the betterment of its general well-being (Foucault 1991:100 in Barnett 2013:381).

Anthropologists have also made efforts to nuance the biopolitical specificity of humanitarian modes of governance, reflecting on the risks and implications of the devolution of biopower to global, non-state entities. Didier Fassin for example challenges what tends to be the unmitigated popular approval and support of humanitarian action in the West, analyzing humanitarianism as a form of governance that is ultimately depoliticizing, one that reveals existing inequalities rather than counteracting them. Fassin argues that global humanitarianism is a “politics of life”, although it is one that differs analytically from a Foucauldian biopolitics. Where defining features of biopolitics include “technologies defining, studying, counting, controlling, and, more generally, ‘normalizing’ populations” (Fassin 2007: fn 1), for Fassin, the politics of humanitarianism instead is nongovernmental, and concerned largely with “the evaluation of human beings and the meaning of their existence” (2007:151). He defines humanitarian governance as “the administration of

human collectivities in the name of a higher moral principle that sees the preservation of life and the alleviation of suffering as the highest value of action.” (ibid). While Fassin’s work touches on theorizing humanitarianism as a form of governance, his focus centers largely around drawing attention to its unethical, inequitable and depoliticizing nature. The mobilization of affect and emotion are key to this depoliticization; images of innocent “victims”, such as South African children with HIV, serve to fuel humanitarian efforts while at the same time obscuring histories of structural violence, colonialism, and oppression (Fassin 2012:160-181). According to Fassin, they also rely on a false assertion of human equality that ultimately obscure deeper inequities in global positioning; humanitarian agencies are unable to face the uncomfortable “hierarchies of humanity” which refuse to risk the “sacred” life of an expatriate physician volunteer, for example, for the often “sacrificable” life of the recipient of humanitarian aid (Fassin 2012:223-230).

Mariella Pandolfi’s (2008:157) research on UN interventions in the former Yugoslavia likewise reflects on the biopolitical contours of humanitarian intervention. She highlights how such apparently “humanitarian” actions in fact constitute a form of forced Westernization, one that imposes a monolithic model of intervention that does not consider local contexts. Further, militarized humanitarian responses that claim to act in the name of human rights and the responsibility to protect mean that humanitarians are able to transgress international norms to call a “state of exception”, which Giorgio Agamben identifies as an eminent mark of deductive sovereign power that makes it possible to reframe the citizen’s qualified political life (*bios*) as *zoe*, a form of “bare life” that can be subjected to violence (2008:159). For Pandolfi then, humanitarian governance lies at the intersection of the deductive sovereign’s right to call the state of exception and that of a productive biopolitical mode of intervention into the lives of populations, albeit one that is no longer confined by national borders.

Peter Redfield's (2012, 2013) research on the activities of Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) engages deeply with the question of humanitarian governance. In its limited focus on preventing death and ensuring survival in situations of crisis, or in other words, in elevating biological life over political life, Redfield argues that MSF offers a kind of "minimal biopolitics", one that serves as only a partial compensation for the failures of states, and is "hardly the ideal basis for a full life" (2013:16). While MSF's work involves the functions of governing, it does not seek anything like classical sovereignty and rejects conventional claims to power, rather justifying its intervention in terms of an "ethical motivation" to act in the face of suffering (2013:18). As Redfield rightly notes, however, the categories of citizenship and sovereignty fit imperfectly with the conduct of a transnational NGO (2013:20). Its interventions are after all attenuated and circumscribed, more ethical than political. "In responding to crisis and state failures, MSF asserts what a functioning state should do – foster life. The only aspect of sovereignty MSF retains is the ability to define a state of exception that defines those in crisis" (ibid).

In varying ways then, the activities of humanitarian entities are theorized by anthropologists in relation to those of the state. Certain analyses highlight their illegitimacy or insufficiency in this respect. For Pandolfi, humanitarian agencies are transgressing into domains that are perceived as the responsibility of the state. For Fassin, the selective, minimal, and affective nature of humanitarianism constitutes a poor substitute for the more comprehensive systems of social welfare that should ideally be coordinated by states. In contrast to the universal forms of social welfare provided by the nation-state, humanitarian organizations instead offer goods significantly less substantial and equitable. Humanitarian and corporate forms of welfare are analyzed in terms of an untoward incursion into state sovereignty, where non-state entities are accused of attempting to govern populations illegitimately when they engage in the provision of

health, infrastructure development, education, or any number of efforts oriented towards the enhancement of life that has been associated with a biopolitical mode of governance.⁹

Corporate and Humanitarian Gifts

Anthropologists have also examined transnational forms of government by drawing on Marcel Mauss's theorizing on gift relations. As will be discussed further in Chapter 2, according to some interpretations of Mauss's argument, reciprocated gifts generate social solidarity, while those that cannot be reciprocated do not; in this sense, charity has been presented as a gift that is "wounding" because it indebts the receiver and forbids a return (Douglas 2000 [1924]:ix). Anthropologists drawing on Mauss have thus contrasted the unreciprocated (or unreciprocable) quality of humanitarian and corporate gifts to the redistributive form of the nation-state's social welfare that Mauss argued was the principal means of generating solidarity in modern societies (Mauss 1990 [1950]:67-71).

For example, Dinah Rajak (2011) has analyzed the CSR activities of a South African mining company as self-interested gifts that operate on the premise of a profit motive. While the promise of CSR holds out a vision of mutual interdependence and sustainability, Rajak (2011:188) argues that "[...] the practice of CSR re-invents older relations of patronage and clientelism which recreate the coercive bonds of 'the gift', inspiring dependence rather than autonomy and

⁹⁹ Similarly, Geert DeNeve's ethnographic research on social compliance auditing in garment factories in Tamil Nadu offers a reading of foreign buying companies as illegitimate governing bodies that come to replace the retreat of state responsibility: "For the workers on the shop floor of the larger firms, these audits are rapidly becoming a familiar encounter given that inspections by both local and foreign auditors now take place on an almost weekly basis. In the absence of state regulation on the shop floor, it is the hand of the market that becomes ever more visible and gripping. Through a plethora of inspections, audits and checks, foreign buying companies tighten their control over suppliers and extend their governance over a widening radius of firms and workers" (De Neve 2009:68). At the same time, activists appear to assert that brands are only begrudgingly beginning to take responsibility for the globally dispersed garment workers that they do not directly employ (Hoskins 2015). What remains taken for granted in these analyses is reflection on what exactly is implied by governance or responsibility, and how governance and responsibility are negotiated when decoupled from the nation-state.

empowerment.” Where social welfare creates ties and bonds through reciprocity, unreciprocated corporate gifts deny obligation and replace “the reciprocal interdependence on which society is founded with an asymmetrical dependence” (ibid). Corporate gifts thus ultimately “debase” and humiliate recipients, leaving them indebted and vulnerable to the whims of donors in relations of deference and compliance¹⁰ (Rajak 2011:189). It is thus precisely “...the impossibility of reciprocal return which both demonstrates the company’s generosity and ensures the power it achieves over recipients. Herein lies the capacity of CSR to command compliance and co-opt allegiance to the company’s authority” (ibid).

Rajak argues that the provision of basic social goods, such as education, by corporations means that “the rights and entitlements that might be expected from the state are transformed into gifts, leaving the recipients dependent on the goodwill and patronage of their corporate donors”, thus unable to make rights-based demands (Rajak 2011:221). Citing Muelebach (2009:4 in 2011:221), Rajak writes, “the willingness to do good on the part of companies is not met with an accompanying social obligation; the duty of these good corporate citizens is not met with a corresponding right to citizenship.” Rajak argues that the moral authority accrued from the role South African companies play as agents of educational empowerment not only co-opted support from recipients, but served to silence dissent, in large part owing to “the enduring power of the gift to demand gratitude” (Rajak 2011:220-21). Didier Fassin too emphasizes the asymmetrical relation apparently inherent in the humanitarian gift, one that explains the shame felt by the poor who receive “gifts that call for no counter gift” (2012:3), or in the case of recipients of limited aid

¹⁰ It must be said that these critiques apply what has been recognized as a typically Western notion of gift relations that has been challenged, most notably by Jonathan Parry (1986) in the Indian case, and which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2.

from France's Social Emergency Fund, who, in offering the French state the "gift of the fragments of their life [...] receive the counter gift of a means of their survival"¹¹ (Fassin 2012:81).

In these analyses, corporate and humanitarian forms of intervention are presented as coercive gifts that, contrary to popular belief, debase rather than help recipients. This is because unlike the social welfare provided by the state, which is premised on the social contract and the exchange of the right to welfare for the responsibilities of citizenship, CSR and humanitarianism both operate on a premise of obligation and apparent non-reciprocity. Gifts can only be accepted passively by recipients, but never reciprocated, and never demanded as rights are by citizens of a nation-state.

Towards a Conceptually-Driven Anthropology of Corporate Social Responsibility

The implication in some of the analyses above is that humanitarianism and CSR are inferior and partial substitutes to the rights of citizenship – and particularly the right to universal and comprehensive social welfare – that are assumed to be the fundamental offerings of a legitimate and just state to its citizens. Such critiques are undoubtedly necessary on the level of social justice; they constitute an important means of interrogating the provision of aid and welfare outside the centralized and coordinated manner of the welfare state, and increasingly through "patchwork assemblages" of transnational humanitarian agencies (McKay 2012), or affectively-driven – and hence sporadic – donations or voluntary activity on the part of individuals or organizations (Bornstein 2012; Muehlebach 2012). Likewise, the interrogation of CSR is necessary in a global context in which corporate malfeasance and "greenwashing" is real; research into CSR is particularly necessary considering that the public's (and researchers') access to corporate social

¹¹ The relation established between agents of humanitarianism and their targets "...is less one of solidarity than of obligation, in which the gift of life is at stake" (Fassin 2012: 241).

responsibility programs can be difficult, due either to the distance between consumers and corporations in an era of globalized production, or an unwillingness to share information on CSR programs, either because they are defined as “strategic” efforts able to sharpen a company’s competitive edge, or because CSR programs are simply not as effective as a company asserts them to be. Further, corporations are not subject to the same laws that have been designed to give citizens the right to access information concerning government programs, such as India’s Right to Information Act¹² (RTI), which provides citizens access to information concerning such programs within a specified time period. In contrast, the apparently “social” activities of corporations remain in most cases effectively unmonitored by government and shielded from public scrutiny. The interrogation of claims that CSR or humanitarian efforts constitute successful and humane means of meeting the needs of the poor and marginalized is therefore imperative.

Often, however, critiques of CSR and humanitarianism are accompanied by the claim that nation-states should counteract humanitarian and corporate incursions into the biopolitical domain by taking on the responsibility to provide stronger and more comprehensive forms of welfare provision, because these are argued to be the most effective route to achieving equality and social justice. As James Ferguson (2010) has argued, such suggestions tend to ignore the specific historical configurations that had earlier permitted the installation of welfare states in developed countries. In contrast, social and economic configurations specific to developing countries, such as large informal labour pools and insufficient tax revenues, in addition to legacies of colonial economic extraction, make the replication of European-style welfare states in post-colonial contexts a challenging proposition (Ferguson 2010:168). Foucault’s genealogy of biopolitics in

¹² The RTI permits citizen access to information under the control of public authorities, within a period of 48 hours to 48 days, in order to ensure transparency and accountability. Despite its provisions, certain efforts to obscure information have been reported; several RTI activists have been assaulted or killed following their efforts to uncover information.

France – which theorizes the very origins of welfare statism – is thus ill-fitting when applied to postcolonial contexts such as India, which, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1, has its own genealogy of biopolitics, one in which the nation-state has appeared as one welfare-providing actor among many (Chatterjee 2013; Hodges 2008; Stern 2011).

Organization of Thesis

Chapter 1 examines the provision of various forms of “welfare” – or efforts to care for the health and well-being of populations – and its role in establishing the legitimacy to govern in India from the late nineteenth century onwards. What becomes possible in examining the *longue durée* of welfare provision in India is a historicization of the nation-state, one in which it appears as but one biopolitical entity in a layered and contested history of welfare provision by an assemblage of actors. The first section examines colonial engagements with welfare provision and charity to nuance the scholarly claim that colonial biopolitics was characterized by a persistent neglect of the Indian population. Colonial welfare efforts reveal the extent to which the entrenchment of colonial rule relied on the displacement of indigenous forms of patronage-based sovereignty with liberal and utilitarian forms of charity. The second section examines the early twentieth period referred to by historians as a “late colonial biopolitics” in India, one in which the oft-remarked neglect of the health of colonial subjects gave way to a moment where health became both an object and mode of governance. Late colonial biopolitics is notable as a form of governance that took place largely *outside* the realm of formal rule, managed by nationalists, voluntary organizations, and business leaders who came to assert a kind of biopolitics in the absence of an independent nation-state. The voluntary provision of welfare was accompanied by nationalist critiques of colonialism centered on the claim that a state’s legitimacy to govern a territory rested on its ability to care for the welfare of its population. This critique served as powerful discursive support for nationalist

claims for *swaraj*, or self-rule, allowing the Congress, the main nationalist party, to position itself as a more legitimate biopolitical actor than the colonial state. The final section examines how following India's independence, the state took on a strong biopolitical role, one focused around socialist policies intended to redress the lack of attention to its welfare of the colonial era. The state appeared during this period as what Nayar (2009) calls an economic leviathan, and what I likewise call a "social leviathan", focused on controlling the economy as a means of achieving social welfare goals. While the role of the private sector in both the economic and social realms became dwarfed with the growth of state power in the decades following independence, the state's inability to serve as a strong provider of welfare increasingly provided a space for the intervention of the business community, particularly through the legislation of CSR. Following Ferguson (2010), I suggest that this move constitutes a "use" of a neoliberal technique to a social end that ultimately – and surprisingly – appears to preserve rather than erode the state's legitimacy.

Chapter 2 examines a transnational form of CSR financed and implemented by largely American apparel brands that targets women working in Bangalore's many garment factories. Prevented from examining the operation of these programs in great detail the field, I turn to an interrogation of their logic and rationale, one that straddles the distinction between altruism and self-interest. These CSR programs are justified in part with recourse to a rising current of development thought that positions investments in women as the most effective and efficient means to achieving development goals. But they also draw on a branch of management theory that justifies investments in CSR only if programs can be proven to "create shared value"; that is, to generate not only social value for communities, but also economic value for business. Such claims of "creating shared value" tend to obscure the ways in which Southern women's labour itself has been historically selected for its ability to generate excess surplus value beyond the labour of men.

Despite the focus on rationalizing CSR by limiting investments to a space of “shared value” where corporations must also benefit, apparel companies paradoxically never measure or refer to the economic value these programs generate for them. The value that these programs generate for American apparel brands is thus of an affective variety, one that operates through making visible the images and words of ostensibly cared-for women workers to consumers. In the final part of the chapter I explore what is conceptually new about “creating shared value”, arguing that the practice erodes several commonly held dualisms in the social sciences, that between economy and society; gift and market exchange; and altruism and self-interest, and gestures to the saturation of an economic logic throughout society and the individual, one in which individual accumulation and charitable dispensation are not at all mutually exclusive pursuits.

Chapter 3 examines the *corporate governance of space* through an analysis of the history and construction of the Titan Township, a residential housing colony created primarily for workers at the Indian watch company Titan’s factory outside of Bangalore. Specifically I examine how the corporate responsibility for space is one that is often delimited spatially, coming to encompass groups and communities on scales that are more circumscribed than those inhabiting the nation-state’s territory, generally comprised of a homogenous body of rights-bearing citizens afforded access to welfare as a benefit of citizenship. The rise of non-state forms of spatially delimited governance thus appear to suggest that the Indian body politic is not only comprised of a “heterogeneous social” (Chatterjee 2013) governed singularly by the nation-state, but also by heterogeneous forms of governance that come to settle around private and spatially circumscribed spheres of power. In India today, private enclaves of various kinds create their own forms of infrastructure and systems of governance as a means of cordoning themselves off from the state’s notoriously inefficient and unpredictable offerings. Titan however refuses to become what it calls

an “island of excellence in a sea of deprivation”, striving to assume responsibility not only for the space of the Titan Township and its inhabitants, but also for the broader economically disadvantaged Dharmapuri district in which its township and factory are located. Corporate-governed spaces thus also appear capable of a certain measure of permeability and extensibility, features that are apparent in both Titan’s approach to CSR and in the design of its company township.

Chapter 4 turns to an examination of Youth for Seva, a “volunteer platform” that partners with Bangalore-area corporations to implement CSR programs that aim to fill “gaps” in government services such as health and education. The chapter asks two related questions: First, how might welfare and its object – that is, society – be reconceived when corporate-NGO partnerships arise as a novel technique to addressing trenchant “gaps” in state provided services? And second, how might local “humanitarian” and voluntary affects and sentiments fuel welfare interventions beyond the state? To answer these questions, I examine how YFS both draws on and departs from Hindu philosophies of debt (*runa*) and sacrifice (*yajna*) to promote an ideal form of humanitarian selfhood among its volunteers, one in which ethical life is conceived of as a process of the repayment of congenital debts. The entity to which volunteers owe a debt is however not society, but rather a more expansive category, one comprising ancestors, teachers, animals, nature, and “humanity” more generally. Analyzing the use of these concepts in the Vedic sacred texts from which they are drawn shows that YFS’s specific iteration of Hindu concepts is novel, and oriented towards the development of broad-based civic forms of responsibility through voluntary action.

In Chapter 5 I present a negative image of the indebted humanitarian sentiments presented in Chapter 4, as well as to Christian notions of selflessness, through a series of encounters with individuals working in CSR who expressed alternative conceptions of sacrifice, debt, and the

ethical life. Key to these was the concept of *runanubandha*, or relationships arising from karmic debts, or *runa*. *Runanubandha* explained my arrival as an anthropologist within the field at the same time that it appeared as a justification for the desire to engage in charitable activity. If YFS presented debt and indebtedness as an ethical orientation to the world that could be operationalized through the practice of corporate volunteerism, this chapter explores the “other” of indebted volunteer selfhood through an examination of individual’s aspirations towards the goal of renunciation and the necessity of severing one’s attachments to others; in recognizing that the self and its spiritual needs is in fact the most worthy pursuit of all. In renouncing one’s attachments, one consequently discharges one’s congenital debts and becomes *runa muktha*, or free of debt. For the sake of the self, then, the renunciation of the world and its binding forms in favour of a spiritual life is conceived of as a legitimate means to “sacrifice all.” By way of a conclusion, I reflect on the proliferation of dualisms in theorizing around corporate social responsibility, an eminently hybrid form.

CHAPTER 1: WELFARE, GOVERNANCE, AND LEGITIMACY IN INDIA

This chapter examines the relationship between welfare and governance in India from the late nineteenth century onwards. By the term welfare, I refer to various efforts oriented towards the well-being of populations, whether these focus on the development of infrastructure, or efforts oriented towards health and education. By governance, I refer to the varied ways in which populations are controlled and managed and become objects of various forms of power. What becomes clear in examining the *longue durée* of welfare provision in India is that the nation-state's appearance as a biopolitical agent holding a monopolistic control over social welfare is preceded not by a period of deductive sovereign power, or even by a solely deductive colonial form of power. Rather, examining India's history reveals a layered and variegated involvement of sovereign, state, corporate, and voluntary entities in a concern for the welfare of Indians, an involvement that appears to have played an important role in the acquisition of governmental legitimacy.

Historicizing the nation-state's role in welfare in India serves to highlight the specificity of biopolitical configurations in colonial and post-colonial contexts, which received marginal attention in Foucault's Europe-focused genealogies. Scholarship aiming to redress this gap in Foucault's work by theorizing the contours of colonial biopolitics has tended to draw attention to the ways in which colonial biopolitics operated less on the premise of an *enhancement* of the lives of colonial subjects, and more through violence and deduction. Achille Mbembe (2003), for example, drawing on Giorgio Agamben's reading of Foucault, argues that biopolitics in African colonies often appeared as a kind of racially delimited necropolitics, a politics of death. For Mbembe, the African colonial project was one premised on territorial expansion and segregation, where colonial subjects were seen as "savages" resembling little more than animal life that could

be dispensed with as necessary (2003:21-27). Necropolitics thus fostered a permanent state of exception, permitting an absolute and extractive form of control over the bodies and lives of colonial subjects.

Lisa Stevenson's (2012) research in the Canadian north, on the other hand, highlights how colonial projects have also occupied a troubling space between the necro- and biopolitical. While the Canadian state's colonial relationship with the Inuit has been one characterized by various interventions seeking to enhance the biological lives of the Inuit, these efforts were focused at the level of populations and not at the level of individuals. Individual Inuit bodies and lives are instead treated with a kind of indifference that Inuit have experienced as murderous; forcibly removed children were never returned home to their parents after time spent in Southern sanatoria, and families never informed of the deaths of their members. While the Canadian state's approach is couched in benevolence and care, it remains ultimately indifferent to the individual Inuk, unable to reconcile its bureaucratic efforts to care for the health of populations with the value ascribed to an individual life.

The Indian context too is characterized by its own biopolitical specificities. For example, traditional forms of sovereign power there have been characterized as relying less on deduction and more on the provision of various forms of patronage from which the sovereign's legitimacy was derived (Ikegame 2013; Sharma 2001; Watt 2005). Techniques of governance associated with the independent nation-state also have different historical trajectories in the South Asian context. As Partha Chatterjee (2013:36) has noted, governmentality, or efforts to classify, describe, and enumerate population groups as the objects of policy in order to render them governable, was a feature of colonial rule in India and had no necessary relationship to the independent nation-state, as it had in Europe. As a part of the colonial project in India, populations were made the objects

of a diverse set of policies relating to “land settlement, revenue, recruitment to the army, crime prevention, public health, management of famines and droughts, regulation of religious places, public morality, education”, along with a whole host of other governmental functions (ibid). Such efforts, along with related drives beginning in the mid-nineteenth century to construct “works of public utility”, such as railways, postal services, and communications infrastructure likewise produced a governmentalization of the state that was essential to enabling the colonial project (Prakash 1999:161). Colonial governmentality was however *not* founded on a politics of life oriented to enhancing the vitality of the Indian population, but as David Arnold (2000, 1993) has quite meticulously argued, rather a persistent neglect that I will discuss in greater detail the first part of the chapter.

This chapter then seeks to outline with the ways in which something like a biopolitical relationship to the population can be observed in India through the colonial, nationalist, and post-colonial periods. Examining such a long historical period means that I focus only on a few key moments that illustrate what appears to be a common theme throughout this history: that the multiple centers of power and contests over governance throughout India’s colonial history have made the provision of welfare an important means of acquiring the legitimacy to govern populations. While following 1947 it has largely been the nation-state that dominated welfare provision, prior to and following this period an assemblage of actors have been and continue to position themselves (or are positioned) as “responsible” for providing welfare to populations: the colonial state, Indian princes, merchants, voluntary associations, bureaucrats, nationalists, businessmen, the independent Indian state, and Indian and transnational corporations. The provision of welfare then appears to serve not only as a mode of governing populations and making them governable, but also as a means of staking a claim for the ability or legitimacy to govern

those populations, whether as an attempt to acquire power and legitimacy in its formal absence, or as a means of entrenching it once it has been acquired.

I begin with an examination of colonial-era welfare provision. Historians have emphasized that colonial biopolitics focused on the welfare of Europeans and generally neglected that of the Indian population. Moving beyond the scholarly focus on colonial neglect, I seek to highlight specific instances of colonial welfare provision to Indians. I do this *not* to recuperate evidence of a more caring, benevolent side to colonialism, but rather to examine the role the provision of welfare played in two related processes: first, as a response both to filling gaps left by the colonial displacement of indigenous rulers and the forms of patronage they had earlier provided to their subjects, particularly in times of need; and second, as a means of actively displacing traditional forms of patronage with “rational” and “civilized” forms of welfare informed by liberal and utilitarian thought and financed by charitable contributions that targeted an anonymous colonial “public.” While it is clear then that the colonial period was marked by a general neglect of the vitality of the Indian population, it is also clear that the extension of limited forms of colonial welfare were linked to broader projects of asserting the legitimacy to govern India, and emerged in conversation and competition with already existing local forms of patronage and charity.

The second section explores a shift towards what historians have called the birth of a “late colonial biopolitics” that arose in the early twentieth century. This was a biopolitics that operated largely outside the formal political realm, involving the efforts of voluntary organizations and, to a lesser extent, Indian members of government who were extended limited governing powers over domains such as health and education for the first time in 1919, with the British installation of a split form of governance known as dyarchy. Also during this period, nationalists began to link the legitimacy to govern to the state’s responsibility for the welfare of the Indian population, critiquing

the colonial state's neglect in this regard as evidence of its illegitimacy. Nationalists jointly mobilized alongside Indian politicians, voluntary organizations, and importantly businessmen to care for the welfare of the Indian population, which increasingly came to be conceived of as a nascent *samaj*, or “society” that could be nurtured as a means of anticipatory nation-building under the limitations and strictures of colonial rule.

The final section examines the monopoly over welfare provision that characterized the post-independence Nehruvian state. The assemblage of diverse welfare-providing entities, including members of the business community, which had multiplied during the nationalist period came to be dislodged by an independent Indian state that assumed monopolistic control over not only the economy, but also the domain of social welfare. As the liberalization of the economy in 1991 conceded an increasing amount of economic space to the private sector, and as the state increasingly began to fail to meet its social welfare objectives, a new demand for responsibility emerged, one that is now demanded by the state, of business: to take responsibility for the growing economic disparities that had arisen in the wake of liberalization, and to share the responsibility for the social that was monopolized by the state since India's independence. In the Indian case then, I contend that CSR does *not* appear to portend a zero-sum relationship between corporate forms of governance on the one hand, and the fast-eroding legitimacy of the nation-state on the other. It rather appears as a neoliberal technique that is being used or applied to presumably social ends (cf. Ferguson 2010), a means of preserving the state's governmental legitimacy, founded as it was upon the provision of welfare, even though it now appears in the position of a coordinator of welfare rather than a direct provider and financer of it.

Colonialism as Corporate Governance?

In a work concerned with contemporary forms of corporate governance in India, it is interesting to consider that colonial histories of India often begin with the merchant traders of the East India Company (EIC), one of the world's first multi-national firms (Barber 1975:229). While the merchants of the EIC initially began their tenure as supplicants to more powerful local rulers, as the EIC eventually broadened its control over Indian territory, so too broadened the gulf between ruler and ruled (Ghosh 2006; Loomba 2007:108). In 1813, the Crown formally permitted the Company to assume control over the economy as well as governance functions in India, such as the collection of taxes and the promotion of education, giving rise to a peculiar admixture of trade and governance that was heavily criticized by eminent economists of the era (Barber 1975:36, 56-62, 83-98).

Still, the historiography of the British empire has tended to depict the East India Company as a mere trading entity rather than a governing power, marking the beginnings of the imperial period, known as the British Raj (rule), with the assumption of governing functions by the British Crown following the 1857 Sepoy Rebellion. Philip Stern (2011:3) has recently challenged this depiction, seeking to extend the beginnings of colonial governance further back in time. Stern's work thus reframes the East India Company as "a state in the disguise of a merchant", one that not only traded, but also had responsibilities over vast territorial revenues, the administration of justice, and the maintenance of a large army (ibid).

While Stern seeks to nuance analyses of the EIC that depict it strictly as a trading entity, Barber, in a related vein, challenges depictions of the British Raj as a strictly governmental one. He reframes India under the Raj; managed not as a territory ruled by a colonial power, but rather as "Britain's first nationalized industry", administered in "a strikingly similar way to that which

guided the structuring of British public corporations after the Second World War” (Barber 1975:232). In light of Stern’s and Barber’s observations then, it appears that a commercial idiom has been central to both the trading and imperial periods of colonial rule in India, albeit one that only shifts its valence from one period to the next – from “Company Rule” in India to ruling India as a company. Commercial idiom such as these ones remain surprising relevant today; as Ravinder Kaur (2012:41) has noted, the Indian nation’s acquisition of a new nomenclature – “India Inc.” – has become vastly popular in corporate and policymaking circles, highlighting “the corporate character of the nation that has become its prime identity in the past two decades.” In the logic of nation as corporation, Prime Ministers are referred to “Chief Executive Officers” who stimulate economic growth and secure deals for the nation with global organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Kaur’s observations suggest a shift in emphasis concerning the state’s roles, where success is now measured primarily by the state’s ability to “attract capital investments and maximise revenues” rather than its ability to secure territory and population welfare, though the latter of course remains a salient concern.

Drawing attention to such hybrid forms is useful not only for exploring shifts in the relationship between forms of governance, welfare, and the legitimacy to govern that were apparent in colonial India, but also because they allow us to put the nation-state in its place, situating it as one form among many rather than “the final and ultimate form of sovereignty and political community” (Stern 2011:viii). Such locally specific trajectories of governance are useful in expanding our notions of what it has meant – and hence, what it can mean – to govern a territory and its people. They also allow us to examine historical junctures where fundamental conceptual distinctions become muddled: “between nations and empires, politics and commerce, companies and states – that increasingly seem neither intuitive nor tenable” (ibid). While this chapter aims to

explore instances of such muddying in relation to the question of the historical provision of welfare, the ethnographic chapters gesture to its continuation as a feature of the state/corporate interface in contemporary India.

Part I: Welfare in Early Colonial British India

Scholarly accounts of colonialism in India are unanimous in their contention that the colonial administration was negligent in caring for the Indian population in any meaningful way, particularly in the domain of health. For a significant part of the nineteenth century, the health of the Indian population had constituted an area of generalized neglect, with colonial health interventions limited to the enclaves of the army, European communities, and prisons (Arnold 2000; Arnold 1993; Berger 2013b; Hodges 2008). With the rise of modern medicine in the late-nineteenth century, basic interventions into the health of Indians began to be more routinely undertaken. Still, these interventions rarely moved beyond a crisis model focused on managing outbreaks and epidemics through preventative vaccination¹³ or the use of force, and relying heavily on the model of a *cordon sanitaire* to separate and segregate Indians from Europeans in order to protect the health of the latter (Arnold 2000; Arnold 1993; Harrison 1994; Levine 2003; Mushtaq 2009:9). Such efforts have thus *not* been analyzed as reflective of a biopolitical mode of governance oriented towards the enhancement of Indian lives, but rather in terms of their centrality to the maintenance of the colonial project, which could be threatened by the social disorder that tended to accompany widespread outbreaks of disease.¹⁴

¹³ For example, smallpox vaccinations grew in importance beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century, growing from a mere 350,000 vaccinations in British India in 1850 to 4.5 million in 1877 (Arnold 2000:75). By the 1890s the annual number of vaccinations had risen to nearly 8 million and grew further into the twentieth century, although these initiatives were largely concentrated in urban environments (ibid).

¹⁴ For example, the need to hospitalize victims of the plague in the Bombay Presidency in the last years of the nineteenth century caused the British to reflect on the connections between disease and destitution and apparent threats to the social order (Corbridge 2005:52). See also Kidambi (2007).

At the same time as health constituted an area of neglect, however, also apparent is the somewhat paradoxical rise of a series of liberal techniques of welfare provision ostensibly oriented towards improving the health and lives of colonial subjects, and justified in terms of Britain's "civilizing mission." What is interesting about these forms – which included practices ranging from famine relief to infrastructural development to the construction of clinics and dispensaries – is the way in which they jostled with and ultimately served to displace traditional forms of charity and benevolence. While the colonial provision of welfare was informed and inflected by traditional forms of giving and largesse employed by Indian rulers on the one hand, it also arose as a means of replacing forms of patronage that had been eroded by colonialism, at the same time that it challenged and sought to displace them with liberal utilitarian forms. Its interventions thus appear to have constituted an effort to tap into a locally-relevant association between care for the physical well-being of populations and the legitimacy to govern those same populations.

Such processes are visible in the three domains that will be discussed below: first, in organizing the labour of Indian colonial subjects towards the construction of works of public utility as a form of "welfare" during the famines of the early nineteenth century; second, in coordinating and channeling international and local charity and philanthropy towards the development of physical infrastructure and medical and educational institutions for Indian subjects; and third, in the formal and informal regulation of traditional forms of charity, accompanied by efforts to replace them with liberal utilitarian forms.

I do not focus on these interventions to highlight colonial benevolence while dismissing its clearly violent and extractive facets, but rather to illustrate how philanthropic approaches to welfare in colonial India appear to have grown out of a complex intersection of interests, chief among them the efforts of both the East India Company and the colonial state to be recognized as

the *legitimate ruler of India's territory*. I turn now to a brief discussion of the influence of liberalism and British justifications for colonial rule of India.

The Influence of Liberalism

Chief among the logics that animated colonial approaches to governance was a form of liberal utilitarianism deeply indebted to the thought of political theorist James Mill, a prominent figure in the administration of India.¹⁵ According to Mill's liberalism, *laissez-faire*, comprised of systems of low taxation and minimal government interference, combined with the enforcement of contracts through the rule of law, was argued to be the best way to create the conditions for local initiatives that would stimulate the Indian economy and at the same time lift India out of poverty, freeing the people from the apparently "barbaric" influence of excessively extractive landlords and despotic Oriental rulers.¹⁶

Liberalism was of course also promoted as a means of remaking Britain. However, as historians of the colonial period have noted, the doctrine was never comprehensively or coherently implemented there, encompassing heterogeneous views and encountering significant resistance from local constituencies and interests (Barber 1975; Metcalf 1995:29). In India, by contrast, liberalism acquired a coherence it never had in the metropole, applied to colonial subjects who "could not as easily protest measures introduced for their presumed benefit" (Metcalf 1995:29). Hence, as Metcalf and others have noted, colonial India became "[...] something of a laboratory for the creation of the liberal administrative state, and from there its elements – whether a state

¹⁵ In 1818, Mill, despite having never visited India, published the influential *History of British India*. The work classified India according to its "barbaric" level of civilizational development, and was influential in the development of colonial policy while at the same time serving as powerful support for Britain's civilizing mission.

¹⁶ Concerns about the well-being of Indians under the rule of the East India Company were first expressed by British citizens "inspired by an aroused social conscience" in the 1770s and 1780s, who maintained that the Company's position as a territorial sovereign had tended to "victimize innocent peoples in India" (Barber 1975:101). Such debates were launched partly by Adam Smith's critiques of the East India Company's mingling of sovereignty and commerce in the 1770s (Barber 1975:94-100)

sponsored education, the codification of law, or a competitively chosen bureaucracy – could make their way back to England itself¹⁷” (ibid).

The installation of a modified economic doctrine of liberalism then was not only an economic project that served to facilitate the colonial enterprise, but was also justified as a means of civilizing India. This civilizing mission provided much of the justification for what Partha Chatterjee has called the “rule of colonial difference”, premised on civilizational hierarchy that positioned India as a “barbarian” society incapable of modernity, and in need of the guidance and governance of “civilized” Britain (Chatterjee 1993:19,33). Liberalism then appeared as an enlightened means of managing the economic domain that would bring about India’s development, while the indigenous practices that competed with it, including approaches to charity and patronage, were coded as irrational and uncivilized, and targeted for reform.

Local forms of philanthropy

While indigenous forms of charity and patronage were discursively mobilized as evidence of India’s civilizational degeneracy, they also posed a practical challenge to British governance. This was due to their role in producing and fostering relations of patronage and obligation, whether between rulers and ruled or elites and peasants.

The role of patronage in conferring the sovereign with the legitimacy to govern his subjects is one that is apparent in various South Asian traditions of rule. Kingly duty for both Hindu and Mughal rulers involved care for the physical and religious needs of subjects through the giving of food, gifts, agricultural lands, and the construction of irrigation tanks, temples, ashrams, mosques, and *chattrams* (traveler’s rest houses) (Chopra 1963). In the Hindu tradition, such forms of charity

¹⁷ For further analyses of India as a liberal laboratory, see Barber (1975:160), Mehta (1999:9), Prakash (1999:13).

and philanthropy were referred to *rajadharma*, and positioned kings as divine benefactors bound by relations of care to their subjects, who were thereafter bound in gratitude and loyalty to them (Ikegame 2013:19). The legitimacy of kingly rule, therefore, rested largely on the king's ability to acquire status and prestige by engaging in appropriate relations of gifting and redistribution more than on his ability to wield a form of absolute and deductive sovereign power.

Rural elites were also involved in relations of welfare and patronage with peasants throughout the nineteenth century, for example by feeding villagers when crop failures occurred (Sharma 2001:172). For Hindus, the practice of *dana*, or ritualized gifts of land, animals, clothing, and food from the landed castes to priestly Brahmins and *sannyasis* (renouncers) have traditionally been – and continue to be – widely practiced in India (Bornstein 2012; Parry 1986; Raheja 1988; Watt 2011). Likewise, the sponsorship of festivals, shrines and saints constituted (and continue to constitute) common modes of Hindu and Jain charity linked to the acquisition of *punya*, or religious merit, whereas Muslim forms of charity centered around compulsory forms of giving called *zakat*, or voluntary forms called *sadaka* (Sharma 2001:178).

With the colonial deposal of Mughal and Hindu rulers along with shifts in the role and power landed elite in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, systems of patronage were eroded, although in some cases traditional modes of giving were preserved and transformed. As C.A. Bayly (1988:142, 317, 342-5, 386-90) has noted, the installation of the market in the nineteenth century allowed newly emerged mercantile elites to take up the various forms of patronage that were earlier the responsibility of rulers, in so doing conferring status, prestige and legitimacy upon themselves. The British colonial administration's response to famine relief in the nineteenth century appeared to produce similar effects, albeit through the promotion of the construction of "works of general

public utility”, which were presented as a virtuous liberal alternative to “wasteful” forms of indigenous charity.

Famine and Works of Public Utility in the Nineteenth Century

An early idiom and technique of welfare and mode of governance both, first applied in the early nineteenth century, works of public utility included various forms of infrastructure that facilitated the colonial project – roads, jails, and police stations, for example, but also wells, irrigation systems, inns, clinics, dispensaries, and schools (Sharma 2001:159-167). What becomes clear in examining the growth of works of public utility is the way in which such techniques developed alongside and in competition with local forms of patronage and charity.

Sanjay Sharma (2001) suggests that the first colonial deployment of works of public utility can be traced to the famine that affected the Doab region of the United Provinces between 1837 and 1838, one of the most severe of the colonial period. The famine, which resulted in significant loss of life and widespread crime, was also a “watershed moment in famine relief, the first where relief on ‘modern principles’ was undertaken largely through the construction of works of public utility” (2001:ix). Such works, influenced by Britain’s New Poor Laws of 1834, involved the development and implementation of policies intended to prevent deaths by starvation of those affected by famine. This was accomplished not through the free distribution of surplus grain stocks, as had earlier been the tradition among local elites, but rather by employing large numbers of affected people, for a relatively minor wage, in the construction of works of public utility (Sharma 2001:135-169). While the wages paid were minimal, the numbers of individuals employed in this way were significant: at the height of the famine in Agra, in the month of May 1838 alone, the colonial administration employed 83,734 people in the construction of such works (2001:139).

As Sharma argues, the rationale for such interventions was multifaceted. There was the immediate necessity of tempering the massive rise in crime that accompanied the famine, which threatened to fill jails with people who had broken the law by stealing food, or who courted arrest simply to have access to prisoner rations. There was also the need to protect the property of large landowners and to avoid massive migration and loss of life of peasants, upon which the state relied not only for tax revenues, but also to provide sustenance to the growing urban centers of colonial power (2001:x, 24, 37, 136-137). Finally, the justification of colonial rule with recourse the “civilizing mission” also made it imperative that the colonial government was perceived not as a deductive sovereign, as the “Oriental despots” they were deposing had been framed, but rather as a benevolent and life-affirming power. An 1826 statement from the Indian Board of Revenue makes this point clearly (in Sharma 2001:1):

The Government is getting weaker and weaker every day in the affections of the people. It is known only as a Government of taxation and police, a forcing despotic Government of taxation...This is not the Government of land and will [sic] but of the sword. It is the duty of the Board to prove to the people that the Government should be looked upon as wishing to be just, and beneficent.

Rural villagers had actively petitioned colonial administrators to provide patronage as traditional rulers had, and colonial administrators apparently responded to these calls in liberal rather than traditional ways, which were discounted as wasteful, argued to encourage dependency and inefficiency.

While colonial justifications centered around a discourse of benevolence, the colonial imperative to intervene was also prompted by what Sharma calls a “crisis of responsibility” and a “social-ethical vacuum” caused by the erosion of local systems of patronage, which had in many cases broken down when the famine intersected with new power structures and economic intermediaries that had been introduced by the British (2001:134). The colonial state then had little choice but to step in or risk a widespread breakdown of the social order. In doing so, its activities

became part of a larger process of the consolidation of the colonial state, bridging a gap between the will of the state to govern its territory, and its ability or capacity to do so (2001:169). The 1837-38 famine was thus one of the first instances which “provided the context for the quest for legitimacy in which the state claimed to be the ultimate, desirable, and authentic source of benevolence and charity”, while at the same time addressing threats to social order and providing a means for the British to appear humanitarian (Sharma 2001:ix). The situation of the famine demonstrates how the colonial state was prompted to assume some responsibility towards a subject population, while still retaining a formal adherence to laissez-faire in a way that contributed to the expansion of the infrastructure and administrative roots of the colonial state (ibid). A similar process can be seen in the colonial installation of indirect rule in Mysore State, where an indigenous form of sovereign power based on patronage was likewise targeted for displacement as a means of consolidating colonial rule.

The Reform of *Rajadharma* in Mysore State

Efforts to reform indigenous forms of giving in favour of relations of patronage recoded as works of public utility managed by colonial administrators were also apparent in the expansion of colonial power over the erstwhile princely state of Mysore (modern day Karnataka) throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mysore, one of India’s largest princely states, was indirectly and directly ruled by the East India Company from 1799 to 1881, following the deposal of the Mughal ruler Tipu Sultan. It was indirectly ruled by the British Crown thereafter through a series of Maharajas drawn from the descendants of the Wodeyars, a royal dynasty that had been earlier displaced by Tipu Sultan.

Rajadharma, or kingly duty, was a local idiom and practice of rule deeply entrenched as a component of South Indian sovereignty, one that the British strove to displace. Despite having

been placed on the throne as an instrument of colonial governance, the first indirect ruler of Mysore, the Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III (1794-1868), continued to play the role of the ideal king as was expected by local traditions, despite the fact that he was denied access to a standing army by the British (Ikegame 2013:11). During his tenure he spent the surpluses of the state treasury in acts of royal largesse, for instance giving gifts in the form of both land and money to Brahmins, temples, Hindu monasteries, and his own relatives, rather than investing in the forms of efficient public welfare provision desired by the British (Stein 1993:189 in Ikegame 2013:17). His gifting practices were thus decried as wasteful, inefficient, partial, and neglectful of the broader public welfare of his subjects, framed by the British as the obligation and responsibility of a legitimate sovereign (Ikegame 2013:21).

The Maharaja's efforts to consolidate his power through patronage with the use of state revenues were ill-tolerated by the British, and following his inability to make the requisite subsidy payment, the administration of the state was handed over to the direct rule of the East India Company between 1831 and 1881. The Maharaja's power was curtailed and he was redefined as a "private individual", forbidden access to state finances and entitled only to a pension from its treasury. He nonetheless continued to apply this pension towards royal gift giving, causing the British to respond by restricting his funds further, eventually forbidding him from giving grants of land intended to secure the dedication of landholders (ibid). With these restrictions, the Maharaja's gift giving, and along with it, the basis of the legitimacy of his sovereign power, thus became effectively confined within the walls of the palace, his largesse restricted to employing and feeding a personal retinue of 10,000 servants (Ikegame 2013:20-23).

By the time of the Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III's death in 1868, colonial power had effectively eroded the system of sovereign patronage in Mysore, along with the governmental

legitimacy that came with it, thus clearing the ground for its own systems of governance and rule. To ensure a thorough erosion of the basis of indigenous idioms of rule, the British thereafter removed the Maharaja's sons from the palace at an early age, providing special instruction in English schools under the direction of British resident administrators, which included education in areas such as statecraft, hunting, and sports. These more totalizing efforts to control and shape the princely subjectivity generally achieved their intended goals; for the remainder of the nineteenth century, the princes lost their attachment to indigenous forms of rule, and in some cases even their native languages, and governed largely in line with British directives (Ikegame 2013:53-69). As Janaki Nair (2001) has discussed, this situation persisted until colonial control over princes was relaxed in the early twentieth century in the face of nationalist agitations, leading to a hybridized resurgence of the idiom of *rajadharma* under the "monarchical modern" rule of Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV (1884-1940).¹⁸

The Regulation of Indigenous charity and the rise of the "Public"

The examples of North Indian famine relief and the undercutting of *rajadharma* in Mysore state illustrate the ways in which competing forms of indigenous power, which operated through traditional forms of patronage, came to bear on British efforts to assert their own governmental legitimacy, and were hence targeted for displacement.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the partial and localized efforts such as those described above began to give way to more systematic forms of legislative control over charitable activities in India. This period saw the implementation of a barrage of legislation relating to indigenous charity, such as the Charitable Endowments Act (1890) and the Charitable and

¹⁸ For recent works examining the hybridized character of Mysore's princely forms of governance, see Gowda (2010) and Bhagavan (2003).

Religious Trusts Act (1920). Ritu Birla (2009) argues that such forms of legislation constituted a colonial effort to replace forms of community premised on caste-specific relations of obligation with a colonial “public” comprised of transacting actors bound together by contract rather than status.

Indigenous or “vernacular” forms of charity were maligned by the British not only for their propensity towards waste and ostentation, but also for secretly privileging kin- and caste-based interests over those of colonial power and the broader colonial public it sought to install (Birla 2009: 21-2, 33-102). More specifically, colonial critiques coded indigenous capitalists and their community-focused forms of charity as reflective of a “pre-modern” *gemeinschaft*, or communal, mode of social arrangement that mingled the symbolic capital of kinship and caste with the capital flows of market exchange. Such an arrangement constituted a barrier to the installation of a *gesellschaft*, or social one, based on contracting, exchanging actors whose benefit was, under colonialism, defined in terms of capitalist productivity rather than political representation (Birla 2009:21, 59, 237).

Legislation that regulated and incentivized publicly-oriented forms of charity was thus a key technique of more comprehensively curtailing indigenous forms of charity and the forms of obligation-based relationality they fostered, while at the same time redirecting charitable gifts towards a colonial “public” that could be governed through the state’s regulation of charity. For example, the Charitable Endowments Act (1890) restricted the definition of charity as a gift benefiting an anonymous “public” that was intended to accomplish an “abstract purpose”, such as poverty relief, or the advancement of education, while disciplining and reframing merchant endowments of temples and educational institutes as “private” gifts that were denied tax benefits and official recognition as charity (Birla 2009:70-94). Birla argues that such distinctions between

public and private gifts were foreign to Hinduism, which relied on the belief that “every act of dedication is for the benefit of the world (*jagat-hitaya*), since every act of *dharma*, whether obligatory or optional, contributes to the welfare of mankind” (Derret 1970 in Birla 2009:76).

The colonial regulation of charity thus indexes a key shift in idioms of access to sovereignty, one that is implicated in “a new mapping of the social itself” (2009:74, 104). Where precolonial rulers had acknowledged shared forms of sovereignty that relied on the distribution of socially beneficial gifts, twentieth century legislation instead reconstituted participation in the sovereign’s responsibility for social welfare “...as a philanthropic investment in an abstract public.” This recoding of customary social gifting into a contractual relation with an anonymous colonial public reflected broader transformations into liberalism’s political modernity: a shift from what Birla (2009:105) calls “forms of negotiable and shared sovereignty to shares in a non-negotiable sovereignty.” It was now the colonial state that would determine the form and content of charity, and along with it, the kinds of relationships of obligation that might accompany it, inserting itself as an intermediary between what were earlier directly mediated relationships of patronage and obligation as a means of asserting its sovereignty.

Philanthropy and Health

The role of the colonial state in mediating and directing charitable investments towards an undifferentiated colonial public as another means of asserting its legitimacy can be seen clearly in the domain of organizing the development of health infrastructure such as dispensaries (pharmacies) and hospitals beginning in the late nineteenth century. David Arnold (1993:269-73) has analysed the philanthropic funding of hospitals by Indian patrons as an instance where colonial governance operated through consent and coercion, extending limited forms of influence, prestige, and political recognition to locals in exchange for donations to hospitals and other public works.

However, it also offers an example of a technique that blurs the distinction between welfare provision and charity through its application of a model of *shared responsibility*, one in which the colonial state appears as but one patron among many.

Health efforts through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appear to have been routinely coordinated by the colonial state and co-financed by donations from prominent individuals, both European and Indian. The Dufferin Fund for example, inaugurated in 1885 by Queen Victoria with a personal donation of £100, sought to address the poor health of Indian women. The Fund was financed by donations from local and international philanthropists and voluntary groups, and was also used to bring women doctors from Europe, train local midwives, and open local women's hospitals.¹⁹ The activities undertaken through the Fund, along with restrictions on the practice of missionary medicine, which had begun to offend local sentiments with its focus on conversion, also served to assert British authority and benevolence in the eyes of colonial subjects²⁰ (Lal 1994; Lang 2005).

The philanthropic financing of hospitals was common in Mysore state as well, where hospitals were in whole or in part funded by philanthropic organizations or by grants given by local businessmen or religious groups, the remainder of financing often coming from the Maharaja (Ramusack 2003; 2007). In 1880, the 24-bed Bangalore Maternity Hospital was opened with the substantial support of a local merchant, as well as the 30-bed Maharani's Hospital for Women in Mysore City, founded by the Maharaja and named after his wife (Ramusack 2007:178). Bangalore's Bowring Hospital, still in operation today, was established in 1867 for men, financed

¹⁹ Similarly, the Medical Women for India Fund, founded by US businessman George Kitteridge and an Indian associate, brought Western-trained female doctors to India beginning in the 1880s.

²⁰ Beginning in the 1880s, medical missionaries began to apply the late nineteenth century advancements in Western medicine to the work of saving bodies and souls in India, constituting a significant source of medical care in India (Fitzgerald 2001:122).

with private funds raised by Chief Commissioner of Mysore (1862-1870) Lewin Bentham Bowring (Jain and Murthy 2006; Ramusack 2007). The Lady Curzon Hospital, established in Bangalore in 1890 for women and children was jointly financed by the Dufferin Fund and a grant from Lord Curzon, viceroy of India (1899-1905). Likewise, from the 1830s onwards, charitable dispensaries, important sites of public health provision, vaccination, and curative work, were largely funded by Indian philanthropists, government, commercial organizations such as the Bengal Coal Company, and subscriptions by Europeans (Harrison 1994:88).

Conclusion I

While the neglect of the health and welfare of Indians was a feature of early colonial rule, so too was a colonial effort to displace indigenous forms of power rooted in patronage and replace them with forms of welfare informed by liberal tenets. Providing a colonial “public” with schools, clinics, and roads was in India *not* primarily an act accomplished with the intention of enhancing the vitality of a national society, as is apparent in Foucault’s analysis of biopolitics in France. Rather, provision of welfare and works of public utility served both to prevent social dissolution during famine at the same time as it laid the infrastructural groundwork that was a necessary condition of colonial rule. Charity and forms of welfare, relief, and public works thus appear to have been deeply imbricated in colonial efforts to both make India governable, as well as to acquire the legitimacy to govern in a foreign land that already possessed its own pre-existing forms of sovereignty. Recognizing the power that lay within these forms, the British sought to curtail and replace them with practices they deemed more “civilized.” The rise of nationalist movements in the early twentieth century however effectively served to challenge the British regulation and definition of charity, and is a period marked by a proliferation of voluntary activities managed and directed by Indians, largely outside the realm of formal politics, but also within it.

Part II: Late Colonial Biopolitics

For colonial historians, the early twentieth century marked a period of “late colonial biopolitics”, in which the oft-remarked neglect of the health of Indian subjects gave way to a moment where for the first time, health became “both an object and mode of governance” (Hodges 2008:4). The management of and intervention into population health and welfare again appears as a means of asserting the legitimacy to govern India, although this time not by the colonial administration. Rather, it was a project taken up largely outside the realm of formal rule, by nationalists, voluntary organizations, and business leaders who came to assert a kind of biopolitics in the absence of an independent nation-state. The voluntary provision of welfare outside the domain of the colonial state was accompanied by nationalist critiques of colonialism centered on the claim that a state’s legitimacy to govern a territory rested on its ability to care for the welfare of its population. This critique served as powerful discursive support for nationalist claims for *swaraj*, or self-rule, allowing the Congress, the main nationalist party, to position itself as a more legitimate biopolitical actor than the colonial state. The functioning of late colonial biopolitics in India then thus also departs from Foucault’s emphasis on the nation-state as the site of biopower, which here is instead asserted through associational, nationalist, and commercial groupings of colonial subjects, and partly through formal politics with the institution of dyarchy, or dual rule, in 1919.

Indian Social Service Organizations

The colonial neglect of the health and welfare of colonial subjects eventually came to be addressed not only by Indian philanthropists marshalled into financing clinics for Indians, but also by voluntary and social service associations. Such associations served as important vehicles through which moderates, many unaffiliated with formal politics, could engage in projects of nation- and citizenship-building despite the constraints on political engagement posed by colonialism. Health

was one area of particular concern, appearing as “a site of governance that was at once vital to any future Indian nation, yet, as the colonial state demonstrated by its negligence in the field, utterly neglected” (Hodges 2008:68). The space of the voluntary association thus “animated a relationship between health and governance in which leading Indians were eager to stake a claim” (ibid).

Social service associations, such as the Arya Samaj and the Servants of India Society, began to proliferate in India between the 1890s and 1910s. As Watt (2005:32) notes, such associations were founded by Indian social reformers who been made increasingly aware of the various social problems facing Indians through the rise of print media. Their efforts were also influenced by the growth of voluntary, international philanthropic, and associational organizations in late nineteenth century in Europe, such as the Red Cross (1863) the Boy Scouts (1907), and Rockefeller Foundation²¹ (1913).

As Watt (2005:137-8, 177-79) notes, the British did not overtly support Indian social service efforts, largely due to the threat that greater self-reliance and self-help among an increasingly politicized group of social reformers posed to colonial rule. Support was also tempered by fears that voluntary social service efforts would increase demands on the state for greater investment in social programming, particularly in the domain of education (ibid). At the same time, as Hodges notes, neither did they suppress them: voluntary associations were also generally viewed as “unthreatening to a colonial order growing jittery with a series of nationalist agitations”, which threatened colonial rule in a more overt manner (Hodges 2008:68). Their

²¹ The Rockefeller Foundation began activities in India following the institution of dyarchy. As Kavadi (2007) has noted, the Foundation attempted to undertake a cooperative approach with the Madras government, proposing hookworm and malaria surveys as well as the training of medical professionals, although the shifting political situation during the period of dyarchy and a lack of provincial financing undermined its efforts.

operation was thus generally permitted to continue unimpeded, unlike the indigenous forms of charity earlier targeted for reform. This was likely because, although they drew on “living traditions” such as *dana* (giving) and *seva* (service) they had already been hybridized by the formal and informal pressures to adopt Western liberal and utilitarian forms of charity. Watt (2005:74) notes four specific changes that can be discerned in these new forms of early twentieth century forms of Indian charity: first, they became oriented towards human rather than religious ends; second, they depended on “active” involvement in social action rather than passive giving; third, they became oriented towards a trans-regional “community” or “nation” rather than local sects or castes; and finally, they came to rely increasingly on broad-based fundraising, which succeeded in marshalling funds not from the elite, but also from diverse classes and castes.

Social service associations were thus relatively free to use voluntarism to redress spaces of colonial neglect, and in so doing, to create an associational space outside of the bounds of formal politics and governance. Their activities were varied, including efforts to provide education, famine or health care relief, public health information, and medical and other forms of support at large religious festivals, or *melas* (Watt 2005:202). The activities of reformers through social service also served as an implicit critique of colonialism’s shortcomings while at the same time “asserting their claims to their ability to rule” (Hodges 2008:70). Social service activities can thus be seen as an application of charity towards a kind of nation-building under colonialism, one which served to “deepen feelings of attachment to Indians and Indian institutions rather than more abstract notions of crown or empire associated with a foreign, colonial government” (Watt 2005:179). As Watt argues, social service came to be articulated as what was known as *samaj seva*, a kind of aspirational nation-building project – in the absence of an independent nation – parallel to the colonial state. Colonial subjects refused their subject status not only through the

struggle for *swaraj*, or independent self-rule, but also through the development of associational cultures rooted in the practice of *seva*, or service, an idiom that remains in use today, as I will discuss in Chapter 4 (ibid).

Social service associations also oriented themselves to developing philanthropically-funded educational institutions which could serve as alternatives to limited colonial forms of education²² as much as sites from which the minds and bodies of future Indian citizens could be moulded. In 1916, social service associations coordinated by Congress member Madan Mohan Malaviya also succeeded in fundraising the donations required to found Banaras Hindu University, the first university in India founded through the efforts of a private individual, and the first to offer training in religious education (Watt 2005:77-88, 130-170). Schools for young people in particular were accompanied by hostels which served as spaces where students could be subjected to religiously-grounded “biomoral” citizenship-building projects that operated through rigorous educational, exercise, and diet regimes (Watt 2005:28-36).

At the same time, other forms of late colonial biopolitics were focused more narrowly on caste-specific concerns, as can be seen in Sarah Hodges’ (2008:40-52) analysis of the early twentieth century activities of the Madras Neo-Malthusian League (MNML). The MNML sought to intervene primarily within their own largely Brahmin communities, focusing on proposing the use of contraception as a solution to the problem of child marriage. The traditional practice of child marriage had become a source of much anxiety, given widespread colonial discourses concerning the effects of early parturition on the mental and physical development of children. The MNML thus launched a caste-specific effort at biological improvement by promoting the uptake of

²² Since Law Member of the Council of India’s Thomas Babington Macaulay’s 1835 Minute on Education, colonial educational policy had focused largely on creating little more than a class of Indian colonial clerks, in Macaulay’s words, “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect” (in Anderson 2006:93).

contraception among newlywed child couples as an effort to prevent the birth of weak children to young mothers. The widespread uptake of contraceptives would thus ensure the development of a strong Indian racial stock while at the same time obviating the need for legislative interference into traditional marriage practices that would come along with raising the age of consent. The MNML's actions can thus be seen as an non-state biopolitical effort to negotiate a new form of "urban Brahminical conjugality", a caste-specific effort towards the enhancement of life that was ultimately disconnected from the larger political goal of independence (Hodges 2008:52).

The new forms of voluntarism and charity that appear with early twentieth century social service associations thus constitute a form of biopolitics outside the realm of formal politics under colonialism. This form of intervention also calls a new object of intervention into being: less a colonial *public* and more a nascent *civil society* comprised of populations in need of uplift. After 1919 however, voluntary efforts began to be accompanied by more formal political action into the domain of welfare through the institution of dyarchy, or dual rule, to which I now turn.

The Critique of Colonial Neglect and Dyarchy

As a number of scholars have noted, dyarchy constituted an important modification in the constellation of power within the structure of colonial governance, one that also formed an important component of the period of "late colonial biopolitics" (Berger 2013a; Hodges 2008; Legg 2011). Nationalist agitations mostly led by the Congress under Gandhi and Nehru in the early twentieth century had prompted the British to concede a kind of "partial democracy" intended to gradually permit the "Indianization" of the administration and the exit of the British from India. To this end, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, introduced by the British Government in India during the interwar period with the Government of India Act of 1919, outlined a plan to introduce self-governing institutions to India, beginning with the partial devolution of centralized governing

powers to the provincial level. The provincial departments of government, which came to involve education, public works, prisons, agriculture, and health were thus placed under the control of local Indian ministers responsible to the legislature. Strategic sectors such as finance, revenue, and home affairs, however, were retained largely by British executive councilors nominated by the British Governor.

As Stephen Legg (2011) has argued, the institution of dyarchy was accompanied by a growing nationalist critique of colonialism that hinged explicitly on the argument that care for the health and welfare of the Indian population was an eminent mark of legitimate government, a responsibility that the colonial administration had failed to properly assume through its policies.

Such nationalist critiques challenged the colonial “rule of difference” (Chatterjee 1993:26) described above, a form of rule that justified the “civilized” British control over an inferior and “barbaric” race of people incapable of self-governance. Nationalists turned this justification for colonial governance on its head: how evolved could British rule in India be given its failure to adequately invest in the welfare of the Indian population, and how might the extension of governing powers to Indians serve to rectify this neglect? As Kerala Putra (1928) wrote in his *The Working of Dyarchy in India 1919-1928*, with the changed conception in the function of the state that accompanied dyarchy,

[...] comes the new idea of liberty as the right of man to order his own state, especially as it is an organisation which interferes so much in his life. Liberty now is not freedom from state control but the right to control the state. This, as we have seen, arises from the growth of the functions of executive government. A state which does not educate, which does not enforce sanitation, fight diseases, regulate conditions of work, &c., *will not now be considered civilised*.²³ (Putra 1928 in Legg 2011, emphasis added).

²³ Likewise, investment and intervention into public health was described by nationalist G.N. Gangulee in 1930 as one of the main duties of an “enlightened government” (Arnold 1993:246).

The British thus stood accused by nationalists of collecting taxes without taking on an eminent mark of government; that is, in orienting itself to the enhancement of the vitality of the people. In other words, it was less that Indians were incapable of self-rule due to their uncivilized beliefs and practices, and more that British rule itself was uncivilized in its refusal of its obligation to care for the health of the Indian population; that is, in failing to govern biopolitically.

While the extension of dyarchy ostensibly served as a colonial response to these critiques, placing control over Indian health and welfare in Indian hands, the measure did not give rise to substantive political change. The provincial departments that Indian ministers were given control over were notoriously underfunded, and thus their practical abilities were fairly circumscribed (Legg 2011). Further, members of Congress had respected Gandhi's call to refuse to take public office in protest of colonialism and the inadequate nature of the reforms (Hodges 2008:27-28). The positions available were nonetheless filled by independents and non-Congress politicians, who began to make plans for social reform – and implement them, where possible – from within the colonial administration.

While Congress members had largely refused to engage in formal governance under colonialism, they still sought to involve itself in social service activities. Gandhi's Constructive Work Programme stands out as an important means by which Congress came to assert its ability to care for a soon-to-be independent Indian society. The Programme, inspired by Gandhi's association with social service associations, was most active between 1920 and 1940, and centered around projects oriented towards achieving Hindu-Muslim unity, the removal of untouchability, the promotion of *khadi* and other village industries, village sanitation, basic education, and education in hygiene and health (Dalton 1995:108). It thus provided an important means of

enhancing the image and authority of its leadership in the eyes of both the British as well as the Indian masses through the voluntary sphere (Watt 2011:271).

Formal Late Colonial Biopolitics

Sarah Hodges' (2008) work on contraception in interwar Madras and Rachel Berger's work (2013) on the governance of Ayurveda in the interwar United Provinces explores the ways in which the birth of a late colonial biopolitics was enabled through the activities of Indian provincial politicians. Dyarchy brought several practical changes. For the first time, vital statistics began to be more widely collected and were in turn applied to health planning, whereas the use of statistics under colonial rule had served largely as a means of securing revenue collection, army recruitment, and population control (Hodges 2008:34-37).²⁴ Local ministers published planning documents such as the Bhore Report (1946), which drew on the results of a hallmark three-year epidemiological survey of the health of the Indian population, focusing on addressing high mortality due to lack of sanitation and malnutrition through the expansion of primary health services (Berger 2013a:157-161).

Dyarchy thus permitted newly politicized indigenous elites to intervene formally, for the first time, in favour of the enhancement of the vitality of the Indian population. In a significant departure from colonial discourses on Indian health, and in a similar manner to members of the voluntary organizations described above, local ministers in provincial and municipal government began to frame and approach the health of the population as a "national resource" (Hodges 2008:34-37). For example, alongside the Madras Neo-Malthusian League's efforts to address Indian health described above, debates and legislation in provincial Madras centered around quasi-

²⁴ The history of the census in colonial India has been traced by Nicholas Dirks (2011) in *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*.

eugenic efforts to prevent “human wastage” and promote “intelligent breeding” among Indians by raising the age of consent for marriage (Hodges 2008:32). There were also attempts to open more hospitals and dispensaries, expand medical education, and to legislate for and enforce licensing and registration for doctors. Women’s and children’s health and welfare activities were augmented; free midwifery and perinatal care were made available to women, as well as free milk and baths for children of poor (Hodges 2008:34).

As Berger (2013a, 2013b) has noted, dyarchy also allowed indigenous politicians and bureaucrats in the United Provinces to engage more deeply in questions relating to the governance of the indigenous medical system of Ayurveda, seeking to regulate it as a medical discipline, as well as exploring its practical potential to provide care to the Indian population. Dyarchy brought political interest in questions of indigenous medical education institutions and the regulation of practitioners, and with it the suggestion that Ayurveda could be a cost-effective solution to providing health care to the Indian masses (2013ab). Further, Ayurvedic practitioners, or *vaid*s, came to be reconceived; less as the untrustworthy and unscientific native practitioner dismissed by colonial discourse, and more as legitimate providers of care who could also be mobilized in the promotion of public health messages and the collection of statistics on population health (Berger 2013a; b:59-61).

Budgetary limitations meant that the health of the Indian social body still remained effectively unclaimed as the primary responsibility of the state. But as Hodges argues, these inadequacies themselves “created opportunities for Indians to forge a distinctive politics of self-governance through health”, one that operated through episodic links between voluntary – and also commercial – efforts that were largely off the colonial state’s radar (Hodges 2008:151). I turn now

to these commercial efforts, and the involvement of the Indian business community in late colonial biopolitics.

Nationalism, Industry and Philanthropy

Indian business houses and industrialists were also essential partners in the nationalist struggle for independence. Congress relied heavily on the Indian business community to finance its campaigns (Markovits 2002:8). Financial support was apparently readily provided by industrialists who could gain “social and religious prestige” through their association with the party, particularly with Gandhi (Chakrabarty 2012:67-68).

The Indian business community was also an essential element in Congress’ *Swadeshi* movement, which sought to undermine colonialism and counteract the “drain” of the Indian economy through organized boycotts of British goods and their replacement with domestically-produced counterparts. As Sumit Sarkar (1973) has argued, *Swadeshi* was a form of colonial resistance that imbued mundane commodities with a novel ideological charge. The economy, unlike the political realm, was a domain still open to Indian participation, even if it was one largely dominated by British interests (ibid).²⁵ In holding ownership over domestic means of production, major Indian business houses thus came to be positioned as crucial elements in the provision of goods for Indian consumption. Business leaders in some cases openly expressed their support of nationalist efforts; in 1886, pioneer industrialist Jamsetji Tata’s christened his second cotton mill “Svadeshi Mills”, which was massively supported by Indian shareholders and named to mark the early beginnings of the movement (Lala 2006:13-14).

²⁵ For an analysis of shifts in depictions and conceptions of the Indian economy from the colonial period to the present day, see Satish Deshpande’s (1993) *Imagined Economies: Styles of Nation Building in Twentieth Century India*.

During the nationalist period, large Indian business houses also began to invest more heavily in broad-based philanthropic efforts, spurred by Gandhi's promotion of the concept of trusteeship. Trusteeship fused Hindu spiritual directives with the ideals of a new generation of American industrial philanthropists, and encouraged the voluntary renunciation of wealth on the part of Indian business owners as a kind of soteriological practice (Sundar 2000). Trusteeship refigured the businessman *not* as the rightful and legitimate owner of his net profits, but instead as a mere "trustee" of the wealth that he had accumulated from the people that purchased his products, ethically obliging him to retain just a portion of it and to administer the rest for the good of society.²⁶ Gandhi however also highlighted that this ostensibly spiritual practice had a more profane purpose, potentially serving as a form of self-protection to the business community throughout the social upheaval that was likely to emerge out of the erosion of colonial rule:

The rich should ponder well as to what is their duty today. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For those who wish to follow the latter way, the best and most effective *mantram* is: Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it. Expanded it means: 'Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society.' This truth has hitherto not been acted upon; but, if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who over-power them (Gandhi 1942 in Kelkar nd:2).

The idea of trusteeship was however not one that was translated into widespread practice; it was taken up only among a small group of nonetheless very influential businessmen with whom Gandhi had cultivated close personal relationships²⁷, including Birla, Bajaj and Tata (Markovits 2002:6,

²⁶ Bidyut Chakrabarty (2012:49-66) argues that Gandhi's philosophy of trusteeship was informed by the ideas of John Ruskin, Andrew Carnegie, and Gandhi's reading of portions of the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads. For a discussion of the history of and relationship between Gandhi's and Nehru's divergent political philosophies see Chatterjee (1986).

²⁷ The apparently close association between the Congress and India's large business concerns during the nationalist period belies the significant personal role Gandhi played in fostering and maintaining these relationships. Tata, Bajaj, and Birla were closely associated with the Mahatma, recognizing him as their spiritual leader (Moskovits 2002:6);

Sundar 2000:178). Through these individuals, trusteeship came to serve as a powerful idiom for socially and economically-oriented nation-building under colonialism, particularly as it came to be applied to the development of educational institutions for Indians. Tata's financing and fundraising efforts led to the inauguration of the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IIS) in Bangalore in 1911, an institution intended to redress the colonial educational focus on low-level training for native clerks and bureaucrats as much as to provide research expertise for India's industrial concerns.²⁸ IIS was the first scientific educational institution of its kind in India, one where scientific research was and continues to be conducted not only in relation to problems of industrial production, but also to areas of broader scientific interest.²⁹ Philanthropic funding from business community was also solicited for the construction of educational institutions in Bangalore; indeed, its four largest engineering colleges were all founded by local businessmen and philanthropists, beginning with the University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering, founded and financed by the former dewan of Mysore in 1917.³⁰ The legacies of this era of industrial patronage are of course still apparent today in modified form, as will be discussed Chapter 3, which explores the current CSR activities of the Tata Group.

In the lead up to independence, Indian business leaders were also involved in drafting economic plans that attempted to stake a claim for more space within a soon-to-be independent

indeed, Gandhi was assassinated while staying at industrialist G.D. Birla's home, where he had been resident for the last four months of his life.

²⁸ IIS also benefitted from the donation of land and funds from the maharaja of Mysore, as well as funds from the Government of India (Lala 2006:40-43).

²⁹ While industrialist GD Birla's philanthropic endowments tended to focus on more traditional areas such as temples, he also invested in educational institutes, such as the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, which was built between 1943 and 1947. Some of Birla's temples are noted for their unique hybrid Hindu/modernist style; the Birla Mandir at Pilani, Rajasthan, for example, venerates the goddess of knowledge Saraswati alongside several eminent scientists and philosophers.

³⁰ Sri Jayachamarajendra Polytechnic was founded in 1943; BMS Engineering College was founded by philanthropist Businayana Mukundadas Sreenivasaiah in 1946; M.S. Ramiaiah College was founded in 1962, philanthropically funded. RV Engineering College was likewise co-funded by BMS and philanthropists and educationists Yadalam Nanjaiah Setty and K.M. Nanjappa in 1963.

India, such as the Bombay Plan (1944). They also involved themselves in high-level international economic fora, sending one of the Plan's authors as a representative to the United Nations' Bretton Woods conference later that year (Helleiner 2014:245-260). But despite these activities, following independence, indigenous business elites would be strictly controlled, and their strategic economic importance – along with their responsibility as trustees of social welfare – would be eclipsed by that of the welfarist nation-state.

Conclusion II

Late colonial biopolitics was thus a period when colonial neglect came to be critiqued and redressed both discursively and practically. This was done through informal channels, via the efforts of voluntary, nationalist and business groups, and also through the formal political realm, with the extension of governing power, albeit a financially constrained form of it, afforded through dyarchy. The Indian birth of biopolitics, however, is one that is marked by its own specificities: it departs from Foucault's analysis of France in that it operates not primarily through formal political channels, which were still of course dominated by an extractive colonial state. It thus could not be a totalizing set of knowledge, institutions and practices managed by the nation-state, but rather one that appeared more limited by circumstance, appearing more as an assemblage of opportunities to legislate and plan for an aspired-for independent Indian state (Hodges 2008:150-151). Voluntary and political activities focused on the health of the Indian population can thus be seen as an effort to perform the biopolitical mandate argued to be an essential feature of a just and legitimate state, the very mandate that the colonial state had refused. In involving themselves in such efforts, Indian social service associations and administrators appeared to take on the provision of welfare as a means of both critiquing colonialism as well as asserting their ability to govern better and more justly than the colonial state had been able to.

Part III: Post-independence: welfare and the legitimacy to govern.

With India's independence, the colonial "public" was replaced overnight with a body politic of Indian citizens, governed by a newly socialist state intent on redressing the lack of attention to its welfare that was experienced during the colonial era. An ambitious industrialization-focused economic programme was thus accompanied by an equally ambitious social one, comprised of plans to develop a welfare infrastructure comparable to what could be found in Western welfare states. The role of the private sector in both the economic and social realms was thus marginalized in the decades following independence, and with it its responsibilities for the social. Following the period of liberalization, however, the state's compromised ability to serve as a strong provider of welfare prompted it to enlist the support of the business community through the legislation of CSR, a move that I suggest constitutes the "use" of a neoliberal technique to a social end that ultimately preserves rather than erodes the state's legitimacy. That the neoliberal tendency to privatize and parcel out forms of welfare appears to shore up the state's sovereignty is one of the most surprising conclusions of my dissertation.

Post-Independence Approaches to Economy and Welfare

The Nehruvian socialist state of the post-independence period adopted a highly interventionist role in the economy on the basis of a commitment to the ideals of democratic socialism. The nation-state thus appears not only in the role of what Nayar (2009:30) calls an "economic leviathan", but also in the guise of a "social leviathan", one that took an overwhelming responsibility for society in ways that were oriented to redressing the forms of colonial neglect discussed previously.

The principal goal of the state following independence was to alleviate poverty through largely foreign-aid financed industrialization as a means of launching India's primarily agricultural society on a teleological march towards "civilization", in line with the modernization theories of

the era (Chakrabarty 2009). The state thus implemented an import-substitution model to reduce its reliance on foreign imports, developing a domestic goods market to meet consumer needs. It also created a vast public network to distribute fixed-price essential commodities, and also implemented a comprehensive set of social welfare programs (Brass 1990:249; Nayar 2009:20-21). The economy in India in the post-independence period thus became a vehicle for the generation and redistribution of wealth, with the state's role as the architect of this redistribution even enshrined in India's Constitution (Guha 2008:206)

Key to redistributive social justice was Nehru's comprehensive nationalization of India's heavy industries. The socialist Mahalanobis Model, as it came to be known in India, was deeply inspired by Vladimir Lenin's contention that the state retain control over the "commanding heights" of the economy, a strategy intended to block private monopolistic tendencies, guard the state's strategic interests, and ensure equitable redistribution (Brass 1990:249; Guha 2008; Nayar 2009; Tendulkar 2012:25-27). By 1956, a government resolution had formally decreed state control over vast swaths of the economy: exclusive control was mandated for the sectors of atomic energy, defense-related industries, aircraft, iron and steel, electricity generation and transmission, heavy electricals, telephones, and coal and other key minerals, while partial control was retained over a series of second tier sectors (Guha 2008:210). The companies formed around these industries came to be known as Public Sector Enterprises, or PSEs, and enjoyed substantial growth and domination of the industrial sector throughout the twentieth century.³¹

³¹ PSEs were steadily acquired throughout the post-independence period, from less than 25 holdings in 1951 to 250 in 2001, their industrial outputs dwarfing those of the private sector most of the latter half of the twentieth century (Tendulkar 2012:27). Fifty-eight PSE's constituted the majority of outputs in the industrial sector in 1981, controlling 55% of total output in comparison to 12% for the 42 foreign firms and 33% for the domestic private sector's 150 firms (Nayar 2007:33-35).

The growth of PSEs is widely recognized to have occurred at the expense of the private sector, which was heavily regulated by the state and its bureaucracy through a barrage of legislation passed between 1950 and 1973. This legislation and its enforcement gave birth to the so-called license or “Permit Raj”, a form of governance relying on an intricate network of red tape and government approvals that had to be navigated to open and maintain a private business in India (Nayar 2007:28-35).

It is important to highlight the extent to which the state’s commercial dominion over the economy through the PSEs was one oriented toward a social end. The PSEs, unlike private corporations, were conceived of as a means of providing welfare through redistribution and economic leveling rather than simply as revenue-generating corporations. For example, former Congress editor Sunil Guha, in a 1960 book intended to explain Indian welfare economics to a foreign audience, stated that “India’s low state of economic development and the poor standard of living does not permit her to differentiate ‘welfare’ from the provision of employment and higher incomes” (Guha 1960:vii). In their capacity as welfare-oriented companies, the PSEs generated surpluses for other forms of government investment, produced subsidized goods and services to the population, and reduced regional economic imbalances through the provision of employment (Tendulkar 2012:26). Indeed, the PSEs served an impressive and unparalleled role in generating income through formal sector employment; in 1989, the vast majority - 70% - of India’s 29 million formal sector workers were employed by the state³² (Nayar 2007:36).

³² It should be noted that, unlike in Euro-America, agriculture and the informal sector nonetheless still shadows the formal sector in India; in 1989 less than 10% of the population was employed in the formal sector (Nayar 2007:36). According to more recent statistics, the overwhelming share of non-agricultural employment is still located in the informal sector: a full 75% of usual status employment in rural areas and 69% in urban areas are located in the informal sector (National Sample Survey 2011:ii). The organized sector of the economy – public, private and corporate – employ only a small minority of Indians.

PSEs were of course only one component in a larger social welfare programme. In the post-independence period, extensive planning and practical effort was devoted towards the development of national health and education systems. Social services, including health and education, constituted the majority (25%) of total government spending in the first five year plan in 1951-56³³ (Guha 2008:209). India's constitution planned for free and compulsory education for all children until the age of fourteen, and the development of a national system of government schools was commenced (Drèze and Sen 2002:143-188). In terms of health care, the state strove towards an ideal of primary health care inspired by the Soviet model, implementing a three-tiered national health system offering care at the rural, district, and urban levels that grew exponentially in the decades following independence; the state also made the extension of medical services to the previously neglected rural poor a priority (Berger 2013a; Ma and Sood 2008; Van Hollen 2003:58).

The Fall and Rise of Corporate Philanthropy and CSR (1980s-present)

The independent state's twin monopoly over the economy and social welfare had what has been noted as the effect of discouraging the forms of business philanthropy that had begun to grow during nationalist and immediate post-independence periods.

In addition to the strict regulation of private enterprise, significant increases in private sector taxation³⁴ between the 1950s and 1970s were argued to have caused a disinclination towards private charitable giving that lasted into the 1980s (Sundar 2000:235-37). Increased taxes apparently prompted businesses to divert available funds into working capital development rather

³³ Social services was followed by Transport and Communications (24%); Irrigation (17%); Agriculture and Community Development (16%); Power (11%); and Industries and Minerals (7%) (Guha 2008:209).

³⁴ Tax revenue increased from 6% of national income in 1951 to 15% in 1973 (Sundar 2000:234).

than charity to remain profitable. Further, while the government's incentivization of charity during the same period led to an apparent increase in the number of charitable trusts, a significant proportion of these were later discovered to have been used for the purposes of tax evasion (ibid).

Pushpa Sundar (2000:236-237) attributes the private sector's exit from social welfare and charity to a growing recognition of what we might see as the state's increasingly hegemonic biopolitical role:

As the government became the biggest donor to social welfare organizations through the Central and State Social Welfare Boards set up after Independence, the private sector felt *absolved of its responsibility*, in contrast to the pre- and immediate post-Independence period when charitable organizations relied greatly on private donors. Significant state investments in directly provided social welfare, as well as in the form of millions of rupees in grants to voluntary organizations, meant that *social action [...] came to be perceived as government's responsibility and the problems as too vast to be tackled by private charity* (my emphasis).

The responsibility for the social, then, was taken up largely by the state in the post-independence period, to the general exclusion of the private sector. However, the state's ability to adequately take up the responsibility for society that was the basis of its governmental legitimacy was compromised throughout the twentieth century, creating – and later mandating – a place for Indian corporations in the provision of welfare.

The return of business philanthropy

The 1970s brought a revival in interest in private forms of charity and voluntarism. This revival, which took place against a context of political and economic turmoil, has been explained as having arisen in response to the government's failure to remove poverty and bring about social change at the pace required to remove the widening gap between rich and poor (Sundar 2000:250). This gave birth to a form of business philanthropy that was premised on a revival of the Gandhian notion of trusteeship. Business philanthropy was this time argued to be in the best interests of Indian businesses not because of the risks to the social order brought colonialism and its potential

replacement by an independent state, as it had been earlier, but instead by those posed by increasing levels of poverty and growing numbers of educated, unemployed, and disaffected youth (ibid).

Corporate giving apparently increased further during and following the economic reforms that came with liberalization and the upswing in business fortunes it allowed (Sundar 2000:13). India's reliance on expansionary public spending to finance growth in the decades following independence resulted in the country's near-default in 1991. Its bail-out by the World Bank and the institution of Structural Adjustment Programs was conditional in part on cutbacks in social welfare programming. This is particularly clear in the case of health, where the World Bank required cuts in national health investments, the encouragement of the private health sector, and the institution of user fees (Ma and Sood 2008). The government was thus induced to reduce its health budget and to commit to offering only selective primary health care³⁵ to the population, while the private sector would assume responsibility for for-fee specialized forms of care (Prabhu 1994; Purohit 2001). In parallel, the emerging middle class and private practitioners, dissatisfied with the lack of services and opportunities available in the public sector, worked with international donors to push for the establishment of high-quality privatized health institutions (Qadeer 2000). The private health sector has since eclipsed the public health sector in India: approximately 70% of hospitals are private, employing 60-79% of qualified doctors, while the public sector suffers from widely-noted problems of staffing, quality and access (Banerjee, et al. 2008; Chaudhury, et al. 2006; Das and Das 2006; Ma and Sood 2008). Likewise, the establishment of private educational systems has led to a similar bifurcation in access. Although there has been encouraging progress in schooling participation and other educational outcome indicators in recent times, as

³⁵ Selective primary health care promoted the provision of targeted, low-cost preventative health efforts and limited acute care in place of universal access to care promoted by proponents of primary health care. See World Bank (1993) and Sachs (2001).

well as the implementation of the Right to Education Act (2009), which provides government vouchers to allow parents to send their children to private schools, today the goal of universally accessible education remains, as yet, unfulfilled³⁶ (Kingdon 2007). Consequently, the national health care system, similarly to the state education system, today almost exclusively targets the poor.

Liberalization is thus a key moment where external limits come to be placed upon the welfare-providing role of the nation-state as it was enshrined within India's constitution. One might say that it is also a moment where its role as a "social leviathan" comes to be eroded. At the same time, as Nayar (2007:86-89) notes, the state's social investments have not declined absolutely with liberalization, but have rather steadily increased, though spending and outcomes remain inadequate due to what he refers to as "government failure in delivery mechanisms." Despite these failures in the formal provision of welfare, its informal provision has become an important means of asserting governmental legitimacy, particularly in municipal and state politics: Public Distribution Systems and Subsidies for food and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) canisters necessary for cooking remain massive and important to generating political loyalty, constituting 14.4% of GDP in 1994-5 (Nayar 2007:105). Cash handouts in exchange for votes are particularly common before Indian elections, as has become the practice of cash handouts and "giveaways" of luxury items such as televisions and cars to residents of poorer districts as a condition of a candidate's successful election to office (Magnier 2011; Miglani 2014). Business leaders today too seem to be recognized as occupying the role of potential patrons; the richest woman in India,

³⁶ According to the most recent statistics, 93.4% of elementary school age children (age 6-14) were enrolled in school (Kingdon 2007:171-172). However enrolment tends to drop off in later years, with only 61% of children in grades 6-8 actively enrolled.

biotech magnate and philanthropist Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, reports that villagers routinely show up at the front gate of her estate on the outskirts of Bangalore in search of help (Levy 2012).

Contemporary CSR: Legislating Shared Responsibilities

In the past ten years, the growing wealth disparities concurrent with liberalization have prompted the Indian state to work towards the formalization and regulation of the practice of CSR as a means of marshaling the involvement of the private sector towards the provision of welfare.

Public debates through the first decade of the 2000s began to center around the increasing wealth disparities in the country, as well as the role of the private sector in both causing and redressing them. Manmohan Singh's 2007 speech and his ten point plan for business, as well as Sonia Gandhi's 2011 contention that businesses should "share" the responsibilities of government, discussed in the Introduction, were later backed by legislative change in this direction on the part of government.

Preliminary CSR legislation passed in 2009 was supplemented in July 2011, when the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) released the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental, and Economic Responsibilities of Business (ESG Guidelines). The Guidelines outlined nine core principles by which businesses operating in India should adhere to, such as respect for the environment and human rights. Initially intended to be mandatory, by the time of their passage in 2011 they were made voluntary, allegedly following pressure from the business community (Pramar 2011).

When I met one of the authors of the Guidelines at a CSR conference in Bangalore in August 2011, I asked him if he thought the fact that the guidelines were voluntary would mean that businesses would be under no obligation to take note of them. He replied, "don't be distracted

by the world ‘voluntary’ – that was put there just to make business more comfortable. The government will ensure that CSR reporting will be integrated with financial reporting [...] we’re not sure yet, but there will be a reporting mechanism of some kind.”

Indeed, the voluntary guidelines soon began to be accompanied by increasing legislative requirements for reporting. In August 2012, the Securities Exchange Board of India issued a circular mandating that the top 100 listed companies submit Business Responsibility Reports (BRR) in relation to the above guidelines, which made reference to vague “penalties” for companies that did not comply (Afsharipour and Rana 2014:5).

But it was the amendment and passage of a revised Companies Act (1956) by the Rajya Sabha, or Indian Parliament, in 2013 that has most recently made CSR activities and reporting mandatory for an estimated 6,000 Indian companies. The new Companies Act (2013) requires all companies with a net worth exceeding five hundred crore rupees (\$81 million USD) or a turnover of one thousand crore rupees or more (\$162 million USD), or a net profit of rupees five crore or more (\$811,400 USD) to engage in government-mandated forms of CSR. This requires companies to form a CSR committee charged with developing a company-level CSR policy. The committee must ensure that “the company spends, in every financial year, at least two percent of the average net profits made by the company during the three immediately preceding financial years, in pursuance of its Corporate Social Responsibility Policy” (Afsharipour and Rana 2014:6). Companies are required to invest within a specific scope of activities defined within the Act, which include eradicating hunger and poverty, promoting sanitation and preventative health care, education, and rural development. Companies can also elect to give directly to the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund, which works towards the welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes,

and Other Backward Classes, government-defined marginalized groups entitled to certain forms of uplift.³⁷

The Act requires all companies to report on its CSR activities; those failing to do so are subject to fairly stringent financial penalties, up to a maximum of \$46,000 USD (Afsharipour and Rana 2014:6). It should be noted however that there is no penalty for failing to spend on CSR; a company that does not contribute financially to CSR but reports on and explains its lack of activity is not subject to any penalties.

Interestingly, similar CSR guidelines were also developed in 2013 specifically for Public Sector Enterprises. While PSEs were earlier conceived of largely as redistributive and welfare-providing enterprises, their activities, at least in part, are today being reconceived as a form of CSR. It is now mandatory for federally-owned PSEs to invest up to 5% of their net profits in a development project targeting one of India's so-called "backward", or underdeveloped, districts, to demonstrate efforts towards sustainable business practices, and to engage in reporting on all CSR activities.³⁸

The guidelines for CSR in PSEs note that in developed countries, where comprehensive social welfare systems take care of the basic needs of society, CSR tends to orient itself towards stakeholders directly impacted by business activities, such as employees and consumers. In India, where disparities are "glaring" and where social security is not available to all, the "responsibility of public sector enterprises gets enlarged to cover a wider spectrum of stakeholders", such as NGOs, communities, and the society at large (Department of Public Enterprises 2013:45). The

³⁷ These groups are also the target of affirmative action policies, or "reservations" for jobs in the public sector, a policy which the government sought to extend the private sector, though it abandoned these efforts following a strong backlash from the business community.

³⁸ In contrast to the private sector's CSR guidelines, those covering PSE's allow their employees to benefit from their CSR activities (Department of Public Enterprises 2013:7).

report thus calls for a recognition of international variations in the perception of CSR and sustainability because “different stakeholders in different socio-economic situations have different expectations from business and the way it should be conducted” (ibid).

The contemporary legislative approach to CSR in India thus complicates the claim that CSR is a distinctly “neoliberal” phenomenon evidenced by a decline of the state, one that also serves as a smokescreen for corporate misdeeds, a corporate effort to secure the loyalty of consumers or the secure consent of communities through benevolent coercion. While it is one that can be situated within the liberalization of the economy and the resultant rise in income disparity, it is also an initiative spearheaded by the state, a state concerned with addressing many of the same issues that it sought to address following the country’s independence. In James Ferguson’s (2009) words, the government’s approach to CSR might be categorized as one of the many “uses” of neoliberalism, one in which a typically neoliberal technique such as CSR is being applied towards presumably “social” ends.

This becomes clear when considering just how unique India’s approach to CSR is: its Guidelines are in fact the first instance of a government *anywhere* mandating the practice of CSR through legislation. Since most definitions of CSR highlight its voluntary nature, India’s guidelines trouble the very conceptual coherence of CSR, putting its role as a typically neoliberal response to the retreat of the state into question.

The Indian state’s welfare infrastructure is widely recognized to be insufficient to meet the needs of the population. But it is difficult to conclude that the state’s insufficiencies in this respect necessarily means that it has retreated from the provision of welfare, requiring corporations to intervene and provide “filler” for “[...] the cracks left by the lack of a comprehensive welfare state”, as has been said of the role of CSR in the United States (Kinderman 2011:2). If corporations in the

US are indeed providing social filler, it is important to recognize that they do so according to a liberal philosophy that codes CSR as a discretionary private contribution. Unlike in the Indian context, CSR in the US is thus necessarily voluntarily and never regulated, an action that arises naturally out of the “fellow feeling” the businessperson is assumed to have towards her less fortunate contemporaries (Smith 1999 [1776]). In India, the regulation of CSR instead is a mandatory effort made by a state that is unable to expand its welfare financing, but still apparently striving to maintain the legitimacy that has accompanied the provision of welfare in India.

From the standpoint of business, the guidelines have been discounted as simply “another tax on companies”, one that is argued to be problematic considering already low levels of adherence to tax regimes in India (Sundar 2012). Others charge that the laws constitute a revival of the “Permit Raj in the 21st century”, and risk making India an already less welcoming environment for business than it already is³⁹ (Binda 2013). Others highlight that the lack of adequate enforcement mechanisms means that CSR will policies will not translate into practice, and that companies are likely to resort to “greenwashing” to falsely demonstrate adherence to the guidelines (Karnani 2013).

Most often seen, however, is the criticism that the state is coercively privatizing and “passing on its responsibility” for social welfare to NGOs and the private sector (Sundar 2012). Indian philanthropist Rohini Nilekani (in Afsharipour and Rana 2014:10) has called the provision an “outsourcing of governance” that is “taking the failure of the state and the corporates and trying to create a model out of it.” CSR commentator Manish Sabharwal (2013) has labeled India an “absconding state”, one in which “entrepreneurs have to generate their power, provide their

³⁹ For example, in 2013, India ranked as 134th out of 189 countries on the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index, three spots down from its 2011 rating.

transport, dig for their own water and often manufacture their employees”, and where steel and aluminum companies run schools and hospitals. Sabharwal calls such forms of corporate intervention “dysfunctional”, arguing that “mandatory CSR over and above taxation forces companies to do the government’s job. And trying to outsource the state’s primary job is a bad idea” (ibid).

Still, companies in India appear to be increasingly taking on the government’s job, particularly in the domains of health and education. Particularly in Bangalore, the lack of high-quality educational institutions offering training in domains such as information technology has meant that companies there have invested significant resources in employee training. These have culminated in the construction of corporate “campuses” where prospective employees are trained for significant periods of time, in many cases housed in on-campus residences. For example, the Infosys Campus, founded in 2005 in Mysore, is the world’s largest corporate university. The campus has the capacity to accommodate 14,000 “Infoscions” in 147 classrooms over its 23 week training periods, and has trained over 100,000 students to date (Pravasi Mathrubumi 2012; Sharma 2013). Such forms of CSR, if they can be identified as such, constitute notable departures from the forms of corporate investment in education seen in the post-independence period, which saw the construction of educational institutes by businessmen that were open to all. At the same time, older forms of business patronage of the educational sector are also re-emerging in modified form, as can be seen with the recent founding of Shiv Nadar University in Uttar Pradesh (2011) and of the Azim Premji University in Bangalore (2010), both financed by the eponymous foundations of prominent Indian business men. Similarly, Ashoka, a global foundation that supports changemakers and social entrepreneurs around the world, founded its eponymous university, financed by over 100 eminent Indian industry leaders, in 2014 outside of Delhi.

Conclusion III

The contemporary rise of non-state actors in the provision of welfare globally has raised important questions concerning the legitimacy of these entities to perform functions that have long been seen as the responsibility of the state. This chapter has responded to these analyses by attempting to historicize the role of the nation-state as a provider of welfare in India, examining the various ways in which welfare has also been provided by a shifting assemblage of non-state entities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It further asserted an enduring link between the provision of patronage and welfare and the acquisition of the legitimacy to govern populations.

Clearly there are serious concerns about the apparent outsourcing of the functions of government to private corporations in India. Corporate welfare endeavours are necessarily limited, lacking the universalism of the state's welfare approach. They often appear, as we shall see in later chapters, as geographically localized around a company's environs, targeting not "society" at large, but generally more circumscribed groups: its stakeholders and shareholders, nearby communities, or workers, for example.

Whatever CSR is, it is clear that its proponents do not see it as an activity to be mandated and regulated by the state. And yet CSR is today mandated and regulated in India, an interesting reconfiguration or "use" of a neoliberal technique to what appears to be a very social end (Collier 2011; Ferguson 2010:173). Although the Indian state's position as both economic and social leviathan has declined, this does not mean that it has forsaken the imperative to care for the welfare of its population, and with it, its legitimacy. It is thus difficult to make claims about the retreat or failure of the state from the provision of welfare and a consequent loss of legitimacy portended by CSR in the Indian case. While it is clear that the state's role is shifting towards that of a typically "neoliberal" delegate and manager, it is taking on this role in unique ways that seek to enlarge the

sphere of responsibility for the social beyond the state, responding to a context of state incapacity and growing inequality and need. Its regulation of CSR demonstrates its power to set the terms by which welfare provision will function in contemporary India, even if it is not the sole provider. The state thus positions itself as a potential intermediary between the corporation and society, defining appropriate forms of intervention and the kinds of populations that should be targeted, and setting penalties for corporations which fail to comply with its directives. In doing so, the state challenges the very definition of CSR as a voluntary and charitable activity, reframing it as an ethical and mandatory responsibility that comes along with conducting business in India.

The ethnographic chapters that follow will explore the ways in which corporations in India take responsibility for society, with recourse to specific kinds of logics, justifications, and interventions, and through the promotion and expression of specific humanitarian affects and sentiments on the part of volunteers and interveners.

CHAPTER 2: CREATING “SHARED VALUE” FOR WOMEN WORKING IN BANGALORE’S GARMENT SECTOR

My first introduction to garment-factory based CSR programs in Bangalore happened in Washington, DC in June 2010, at the international conference of the global advocacy organization Women Deliver. Its founder, Jill Sheffield, had wanted to form an organization specifically focused on meeting the two UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) specifically relevant to women in advance of the 2015 deadline: namely, Goal 3, Achieving Gender Equality & Empowering Women and Goal 5, Improving Maternal Health. Women Deliver’s global conferences, which have happened annually in cities around the world since 2007, have sought to catalyze and generate various forms of individual and institutional commitment in an effort to meet these goals. The four-day conference is a hotbed of frenetic activity, power-fuelled by celebrity presence: UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon shyly offers a welcome speech to participants that aims to generate urgency around meeting the Millennium Development Goals; there is an ice cream social attended by former supermodel Christie Turlington; a Norwegian princess greets a troupe of dancers from Mali to the delight of photographers, and Arianna Huffington moderates a panel discussion with musician Ashley Judd and former Chilean president Michele Bachelet centered around the assertion that women wielding power is not a “four letter word.” At the close of the conference, a surprise pre-recorded video announcement is made by Bill and Melinda Gates, whose foundation commits to earmarking 1.5 billion dollars in funding for projects addressing women in developing countries, to resounding audience applause. A heavy media presence reports on all the activity.

I am waiting for the panel sharing the name of the conference’s theme – *Invest in Women, It Pays!* – to begin, as four women speakers in black and charcoal suits link arms and smile for flashing cameras before the commencement of the session. The panel has brought together these

four women, representatives of Exxon-Mobil, Goldman Sachs, Avon, and Gap, to present information about the programs and interventions their companies have developed to uplift and empower women around the world.

I am here specifically to listen to Dotti Hatcher, director of Community Involvement for American clothing company The Gap, speak about the Personal Advancement, Career Enhancement (PACE) program, a health and empowerment initiative implemented by Gap in the global factories that produce its clothing. Hatcher opens her presentation with the assertion that, contrary to popular opinion, corporations too can play a role in helping women in developing countries. “In the past, we looked solely to governments and NGOs to address needs. But the reality is that today, corporations are sometimes larger than governments, and can also be better-positioned”, she says. In light of this shift, she sees an opportunity for an expansion of the role of the transnational corporation as solely an employer in developing countries. “I believe that businesses today can contribute to economic development *beyond* simply the provision of jobs and employment for women”, she asserts.

The PACE program has been designed to allow Gap to do precisely this, to “contribute to economic development” by targeting workers across global “supply chains⁴⁰” that provide the materials and manpower for globalized garment production. They might include the mills that produce fabrics used to make clothing, thread makers, suppliers of machinery, logistics and shipping companies, and of course, the locally-owned factories where garments are cut, sewn together, and packed for shipment. Here, Hatcher focuses specifically on the largely female

⁴⁰ For example, the mills that produce cotton or other fabrics used to make the clothing, thread makers, suppliers of machinery, logistics and shipping companies and their employees, and even the cooks in a factory cafeteria would be considered part of an apparel brand’s “supply chain.”

workers who are employed in the global garment factories that are contracted out by Gap to produce and export its clothing to Western markets.

PACE focuses on developing women workers' life and workplace skills through a six month factory-based training course. The course provides workers with training in areas such as reproductive health, communication skills with family members and supervisors, sewing machine skills, time and stress management, as well as country-specific information about legal literacy and social entitlements (UNDP 2010). The Gap piloted the PACE program in India in 2006, and plans to expand the program to cover its entire garment workforce of more than 40,000, spread across Bangladesh, China, Vietnam, and Cambodia (ibid).

Hatcher stresses that Gap's CSR programs are *not* a simple expression "of a humanitarian or charitable sentiment." This was a notable clarification in a conference otherwise marked by intense efforts to assert that commerce too had a heart; that businesses could be as charitable as NGOs, or as concerned with social welfare as governments were. Audiences were noticeably skeptical of such propositions, and question periods were filled with efforts to drum up evidence of the insincere or duplicitous nature of corporate charity. One question was ubiquitous, reappearing in various forms throughout the CSR panels I attended. In its most direct form, it asked: "*what's in it for you?*" Stated otherwise, audience members seemed to be asking, "Why should a profit-making entity concern itself with charity or humanitarianism? Where is the profit motive that lies behind your apparently charitable endeavours?" The question belied the logical incongruity inherent in the proposition that corporations could assume responsibility for apparently non-profit-oriented social domains while at the same time maintaining the imperative for profitability that necessarily lies at the heart of any commercial endeavor.

Most often, the answers of corporate representatives skillfully deflected these insinuations concerning their sincerity – the simple answer was that there was nothing in it for them; their CSR activities were presented as wholly charitable, and unrelated to their profit-making activities. When asked the “what’s in it for you question” at a panel on public-private partnerships, a representative from Johnson & Johnson Company had positioned its sponsorship of the Fuyang AIDS Orphan Salvation Association in China, as a strictly “humanitarian” project: “Our business is *separate* from our social interests”, she said. “We are dealing with NGOs that work on issues that governments are not working on”, in this case providing support and schooling for AIDS orphans. Her answer appeared to stress a distinction between Johnson & Johnson’s non-instrumental philanthropic gifts to Chinese orphans – a population clearly in no position to act as consumers, and from whom nothing could presumably be economically gained – and its profit-oriented sales of personal care products in the market. In these formulations, altruistic charity and self-interested commerce appeared as mutually exclusive pursuits. The answer was simple – a corporation could give charitable and non-instrumental gifts with one hand while engaging in instrumental profit-seeking with the other.⁴¹

Hatcher’s logic is notably different – she appears to efface the distinction between gift and market exchange entirely. Refusing to position herself as a purveyor of a corporate-humanitarian gift, she continues with her justification: “we believe it is essential to invest in women because it is a well-known fact that investing in women makes communities and society *more productive*”, she says. She explains that investing in women is an “enticing value proposition” given that nearly 80% of garment workers worldwide are women. Project evaluation results appear to be

⁴¹ While Western corporate giving rarely remains secretive (although much of Indian corporate giving still does) this separation recalls the oft-quoted Christian Instruction about Giving found in Matthew 6:3: “But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

encouraging, demonstrating that PACE has improved women's health knowledge and life skills, as well as their self-esteem, confidence, peer relationships, ability to engage in team work, and sense of self-worth. Not only that, but Hatcher presents preliminary data from a Return on Investment (ROI) study reporting that PACE has succeeded in improving both worker retention and their advancement into higher positions in the factory, contributing to considerable costs savings and increased profits for garment manufacturers. "What's good for women is good for business", asserts Hatcher. In other words, her data reveals that being charitable is itself profitable; there is no inherent or necessary opposition between the two.

Hatcher emphasized a specific justification for CSR in her approach, one shared with other similar garment factory-based CSR programs. American clothing companies were not justifying their investments in women with recourse to arguments that it was simply the right thing to do morally, or out of charitable or religious sentiment, as a feminist project of solidarity, or to advance human or women's rights. Rather, investments in women were made compelling through the mobilization of return on investment data that sought to demonstrate that investments in women could provide joint "returns" to both society *and* business. In other words, these programs constituted a "win-win" situation, one in which business and society could jointly gain by intervening in a space in which "shared value" could be created. This space was thus framed as the most appropriate site of profit-oriented corporate interventions into the social. Such a narrative appears both rational and compelling in its assertion of meeting multiple interests and creating multiple forms of value, both economic and social. How can the claim that corporations are able to generate such diverse forms of value be understood?

Introduction

If I had been given access as a researcher to these programs, I might be able to say something about how they functioned on the ground. But I was largely denied entry to most of the factories where these programs are run, due to a formal and informal adherence to confidentiality that effectively shielded the programs from scrutiny by outsiders.⁴² Likewise, my requests to interview the staff at NGOs that implemented programs and measured their efficacy were also denied. This was because the corporations that employed them had required program collaborators to sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) that prevented them from speaking about the programs to outsiders, a problem I encountered in discussions with other CSR representatives in Bangalore concerning the possibility of conducting research on their programs. I was likewise refused permission to participate in multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the 2012 Garment Sector Roundtables (GSR) in Bangalore, which brought together brands, factory managers, and activists over a series of meetings charged with addressing the topics of labor shortage and high labor turnover, freedom of association and wages in the industry. Even if I had been permitted to attend, all participants were required to sign agreements that enforced a strict code of confidentiality, which obliged them not to share anything of what was discussed at GSR meetings with anyone who was not present. Many people who I did interview requested that the verbal or documentary forms of communication they shared with me remain off-record. It seemed strange to me that finding information about women's empowerment programs required hushed conversations in hotel restaurants and documents uploaded to USB keys with the promise I wouldn't talk about them. I was never given a specific reason for why the content of these programs had to remain so

⁴² It should be noted however that I was invited however to visit several of the factories where BSR's HERproject was being implemented in several Bangalore-area garment factories and subsequently observed the implementation of several training programs on domestic violence and women's health, run by doctors and nurses at Bangalore's St. John's Medical College. However it was difficult to negotiate more sustained research within factories with local garment manufacturers and individual brands, and so this line of field research was largely abandoned.

shielded from being viewed by outsiders. As will be discussed later in the chapter, one person suggested to me that some of these programs had recently been patented, making their content “strategic”; opening it to outsiders who might make it public might undermine company competitiveness. In my visits to other garment factories, it became clear that the efforts that international brands put into ensuring that manufacturers adhere to labour rights was a process that was negotiated and partial; factories were often places where labour standards were not consistently adhered to in the ways that rigorous brand codes of conduct and international labour rights certificates required. Inviting a researcher who might write about such issues, as have many activists and journalists concerned with the effects of the globalization of production, was also obviously a risk to corporate profitability.

It seemed then that the field, usually presented as domain that is difficult to gain access to, but eventually, with a combination of a persistence, some failure, the passage of time, the acquisition of more experience, and a heavy dose of fortuity, the anthropologist breaks through (Geertz 1973; Lee 1969). This anthropological trope was however one that was unavailable to me in this specific instance, and so prompted me to develop a means of thinking and writing anthropologically in the absence of the “deep hanging out” (Geertz 2001) that usually ends up constituting the bulk of one’s data.

This chapter then is an effort to contend with the limits posed by restrictions in access to one’s object of study, an increasingly common issue as anthropologists branch out to examine objects “beyond society and culture” (Rees 2010), such as businesses and corporations (Urban and Koh 2013). To create a field then, my inquiries into CSR had to become oblique rather than direct. I approached these programs by seeking to situate them within broader histories of global development thought that have recently come to target women as agents of social change. My

inability to study the practice of garment factory-based CSR programs in any great detail also necessitated a shift in focus to an examination of the *logic* animating these programs, which could be apprehended through the repertoire of textual and visual information about them that is produced and shared publicly by corporations. Presented as disembedded and exportable global programs within these texts, I re-embed them here within the history and contemporary context of the garment industry in Bangalore, as I apprehended these contexts through texts and the narratives of individuals working within government, international standards organizations, activist organizations, unions, and mediators. It should be underlined that this chapter does not focus on the experiences and lives of garment workers themselves; the reader is however encouraged to consult Narendar Pani and Nikki Singh's (2012) and Yamini Atmavilas (2008) excellent ethnographic accounts of Bangalore-area garment workers. While this research is marked by a kind of failure then, it is one that I have attempted to circumvent. But I want to the reader to recognize and hang on to the failure at the same time as I sidestep it analytically, so that a space can be made for reflecting on the limits of contemporary anthropological fieldwork-based inquiry into strategic spheres, one where failures and successes in gaining access can be equally fraught.⁴³

In this chapter, I focus on the socially-minded economic logic of one specific form of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) called Creating Shared Value (CSV), one that encourages corporations to limit their engagement in socially responsible activities to a zone where the apparent interests of society and business converge with one another; that is to say, where the corporation can make a profit at the same time as it provides benefits to society. While I open this chapter with a focus on the Gap's PACE program, and return to it throughout the chapter, it is

⁴³ For example, in its 2007 statement on anthropological involvement in applied military research, namely the US Military's Human Terrain System (HTS) Project, the American Anthropological Association's (AAA) stated clearly that such research constituted a violation of the AAA's code of ethics, posing a danger both to anthropologists as much as those that they study.

important to highlight that is not the only CSR program of its kind in Bangalore. PACE is but one program in a larger set of efforts, largely by American clothing brands, to invest in female garment factory workers across global supply chains. PACE is joined by San-Francisco-based Business for Social Responsibility's (BSR) HERproject, or Health Enables Returns, a health information program for garment workers that it implements on the behalf of brands such as Levis and Abercrombie & Fitch. Wal-Mart's Women in Factories Training Program also focuses on health and empowerment and was being piloted in Bangalore during my fieldwork.⁴⁴

Such programs can be situated within what have been elsewhere described as neoliberal efforts to govern by "getting people to govern themselves", by empowering individuals and transforming them into more autonomous, enterprising, and effective agents of choice (Cruikshank 1999; Rose 1998; 1999; Rose and Novas 2004). Of course these programs are being run not by governments which apply a cost-benefit analysis to apportion social welfare to citizens in a presumably efficient and effective manner. They are rather designed and financed by transnational corporations, which adhere to a presumably different regime of value, one that I seek to make visible throughout this chapter.

So how can we apprehend the specificity of corporate logics of social responsibility as distinct from those stemming from government? How does the corporation, in this instance, justify its responsibility for the social, and what is the social into which it intervenes? Since I cannot delve deeply into its techniques, I focus on the corporate deployment of the idiom of value: what are the specific kinds of value corporations claim to create and share, and with whom? How are the multiple registers of "value" generated by the corporation (for itself and its stakeholders)

⁴⁴ The Women in Factories program is also presently being implemented for Wal-Mart by BSR in China (Business for Social Responsibility 2014).

alternatively made visible or obscured? And finally, what does the notion of creating shared value tell us about important shifts in “values” concurrent with neoliberalism and its economization of the social?

The first part of the chapter begins by presenting the ways in which corporate justifications for investments in women rely heavily on two kinds of data that construct women as repositories of certain kinds of value. The first kind is produced by economists who have contributed to making a global case for channeling development investments towards women because they are highly effective generators of *social value*; that is, value that is defined in terms of the benefits that accrue to their children, families, and communities as a result of corporate investments in their empowerment and the development of their knowledge. The second kind of value, measured through the impact evaluations and return on investment studies produced by corporations and their NGO and research partners, makes the case that investing in women through CSR generates not only social value, but also additional *economic value* for business in the form of increased labour productivity. Both kinds of data forward the claim that investments in women are an efficient means of rectifying gender inequalities and meeting development goals without additional state financing, while at the same time enhancing the ability of business to generate profits; this is the so-called “business case”, one that centers on the ability of a CSR program to “create shared value.”

In the second part of the chapter, I examine the kinds of value generated both through CSR programs and in the operation of business that must be obscured or omitted for such a narrative of benevolent efficiency through investment in women to remain coherent. To do so, I contextualize the rise of CSR within the feminization of garment factory labour and modifications to international export agreements in the 1980s, two related means by which the profitability of

apparel brands was increased by tapping into the value inherent in women's lower cost and more "docile" labour across the global South. At the same time, the economic gains brought by the value of women's labour began to be undermined in the early 2000s, as NGOs mounted efforts to publicize widespread labour rights violations in the industry and implicated specific brand names therein. In doing so, NGOs made an important association between the value of the lives of women workers and that of the reputation of brands, one that gave rise to CSR. Where women's labour was earlier purposely chosen by brands and manufacturers for its value in terms of its docile and lower paid status, it is now claimed to be valuable for very different reasons, elevated for its apparent potential to transform developing societies. While the savings and profits that accrue to corporations through the preference for lower paid female labour is necessarily obfuscated, the faces, bodies, and words of women workers might be said to generate uncalculated reputational value for the corporation through affective means: the photographs, short films, and worker narratives of gratitude that bolster return on investment data and provide a different kind of attestation of the corporation's benevolence, albeit one that is never overtly measured. Such affective efforts appear oriented to convincing consumers that a corporation can be at the same time benevolent, socially responsible and economically efficient, that the clothes we buy can embody the resolution of a long-standing divergence in often opposing registers of value between the economic and the ethical, between the corporate pursuit of profit and the consumer desire for cheap and yet also ethically-produced clothing.

The third part asks how these attempts to fuse regimes of social and economic value through the practice of "creating shared value" might index a broader shift in philanthropic and charitable values under neoliberalism. Bringing the notion of creating shared value and other similar neoliberal techniques of welfare provision into conversation with anthropological

theorizing on the gift and market exchange makes visible a broader shift in our conceptions of market and society, and the kinds of behavior considered appropriate to each sphere. If, following Foucault, neoliberalism erodes the conceptual distinction between market and society, a similar and related erosion in the distinction between altruistic philanthropy and self-interested exchange also becomes apparent, indexed by the rise of hybrid forms of self-interested philanthropy, such as CSV.

The Girl Effect

What is clear from the promotional materials of garment factory-based CSR programs is the deployment of a rising current of global development thought, increasingly supported by empirical research, that asserts that women constitute the most effective and efficient means of addressing poverty in developing countries (Business for Social Responsibility 2010:4; Nanda, et al. 2013:6). As the argument goes, this is largely because when women are provided with education and/or a means of access to finances, whether through loans, cash transfers, or wages earned through their own employment, they become generators of social value in ways that men do not. As Gap explains the rationale behind its PACE program,

Women's learning – whether about their rights, the value of savings or reproductive health – spreads to others, including husbands, children, in-laws and – in tight knit communities – beyond the family as well. Moreover, when women are promoted, they earn more. And when women earn more, they tend to invest more time and resources in their children, helping them grow into healthier and better educated adults who can contribute to the well-being of their communities. (Nanda, et al. 2013:6)

The positive – and also importantly cost-effective – impact on development that can be unleashed through economically empowered women is today referred to as the “girl effect” or the “double x solution” (Kristof and WuDunn 2009; Nike Foundation 2010) and has generated broad-based support among a varied group of developmental and corporate actors, including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, former World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick, the Bill and Melinda

Gates Foundation, McKinsey, the Nike Foundation, and UN Women, among a growing number of others.

Efforts to justify investments in women on the basis of efficiency grounds as a development technique can be traced to the World Bank's application of human capital theory to women in the 1990s, which demonstrated several important "social" effects that could be shown to result from investments in women. In a 1994 policy paper, Lawrence Summers, then-Vice President of Development Economics and Chief Economist at the World Bank, singled out expanding girls' schooling as "quite possibly [yielding] a higher rate of return than any other investment available in the developing world", capable of breaking the "vicious cycle"⁴⁵ wrought by uneducated and disempowered women rendered unable to prevent their daughters from meeting similar fates, particularly in South Asian societies (Summers 1994:1-5). This was because female schooling not only provided economic benefits in terms of raised wages and productivity of women, but more importantly because educating women provided "nonpecuniary", or largely *social* benefits that were not apparent with investments in the education of boys (Summers 1994:8).

For Summers, the social benefits provided by women were defined in terms of the effect that earning wages would have on improving women's education, health and longevity, which in turn would contribute to healthier, better educated, and more productive children. Summers theorized that educated women would be more likely to invest in their children's health and more likely to possess knowledge about medicine and sanitation, resulting in reduced child mortality; because they were knowledgeable about birth control and were able to secure market wages, they would have fewer children; due to decreased fertility, maternal mortality was lowered; because

⁴⁵ The economic trope of "vicious cycle" to "virtuous circle" is one that appears often in justifications relating to investments in women. See, for example Kristof and WuDunn (2009:209), Lawson (2008:2), and King and Hill (1998:vii).

fertility was lower, the environment benefitted; and finally, because educated women were more likely to seek out stable marriages and look out for their health, the transmission of HIV was reduced (Summers 1994:8-15). Further, educated, wage-earning women who had fewer children were more likely to be able to invest more in each individual child's health and education, leading to better health and educational outcomes across generations, which would also importantly reduce the burden of public health spending on health and education (Summers 1994:6). Summers argued that investments in women could thus spur what economists refer to as an economically "virtuous cycle" across generations, one that was also compellingly cost-effective.

The World Bank's theoretical case for such targeted investments has more recently been bolstered by empirical research that applies a randomized control trial methodology to measuring the efficacy of specific development interventions, a method pioneered by economist Esther Duflo's team at the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) at MIT.⁴⁶ RCTs are vaunted as a "gold standard" method, a means of forwarding "evidence-based" development policy apparently untainted by "ideology" (Banerjee, et al. 2011; Duflo 2010). RCT findings have thus made a strong case for targeted investments in women. Like Summers' study, recent RCTs have likewise enumerated the broader benefits to families and society that result when women are provided access to resources.⁴⁷ RCTs have demonstrated that women are more likely than men to invest into the health, nutrition, and education of their children, which itself is argued to lead to better child survival rates, improved intellectual development, and improved future economic outcomes (Duflo 2003; Herz and Sperling 2004).

⁴⁶ Gedeon-Achi's (2014) work examines the conceptual and practical implications of the application of RCTs to solving development problems.

⁴⁷ This might be accomplished directly, through cash transfers, or indirectly, through education and employment initiatives.

As research increasingly contributes to making the case for investments in *femina economica*, an altruistic *and* economically rational actor who channels her resources into investments into her children, men in developing countries have come to be increasingly maligned by policy makers.⁴⁸ They appear as woman's economic and social "other", as the selfish, wasteful, and utility-maximizing *homo economicus*, that quintessential subject of neoliberal governmentality (Foucault 2010).

As I have discussed elsewhere (Rigillo 2010), the notion of the Girl Effect and its corollaries constitutes a significant departure from earlier development approaches involving women. Such approaches were largely justified through the idiom of rights, comprising efforts to extend universal rights to women and, more broadly, universal forms of welfare to citizens. In contrast, the Girl Effect is rooted in the idioms of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. It operates largely through the technique of targeting, which arose out of the World Bank in the early 1980s, and promotes the extension of limited rather than universal forms of social welfare. Proponents of targeting promote investments in programs focused not on a universal body of citizens, but rather solely on those individuals assumed to be most in need, and through programs designed to have the potential for the greatest impact⁴⁹ (Mkandawire 2005).

⁴⁸ As Kate Bedford (2009:28-34) has noted, the World Bank has been a particularly strong force in redeploying colonial claims that men in developing countries are lazier and more oppressive towards woman, which has come to serve as a partial explanation for the levels of poverty seen there. As Barbara Hertz, head of World Bank's WID unit said in 2000, "I would like to see the Bank zero in on key messages econometrically that women do not spend their money on beer and other women" (World Bank 2000 in Bedford 2009:88). The World Bank thus proposes interventions that seek to "adjust" heterosexual relations in the family. Not only should the more fiscally responsible women of developing countries work more, as advocates of the girl effect recommend, but men should also "care better", taking on a greater burden of domestic work at home (Bedford 2009:21-22).

⁴⁹ Targeting was used as a major justification in the promotion of selective primary health care by the World Bank beginning in the early 1980s. Targeting relied on the use of metrics like QALYs and DALYs, as well as selective and targeted investments in population health and welfare, such as UNICEF's operationalization of Selective Primary Health Care in the promotion of the GOBI strategy, which channeled health investments not into universal primary health care, but into interventions targeting children: growth monitoring, oral rehydration, breastfeeding, and immunization. At the same time targeting is also accompanied by a resurgence in efforts that target a universal social

The Girl Effect thus constitutes an effort – taken up by development agencies, nation-states, and also corporations – to promote investments in women largely justified on the grounds of *efficiency* in a context of scarce development resources. While expanded rights and gender equality remain expected outcomes, its justification relies principally on an unambiguous instrumentalization of women’s “value” in reducing the costs of development efforts: as repositories of a kind of added *social value* that men lack, a value which comes to compensate for the general lack of comprehensive national health and educational systems in many developing countries.⁵⁰

Creating “Shared Value”

Research contributing to justifications for the adoption of woman-targeted development efforts by states and development agencies, as described above, make a case for investing in women on the basis of the costs-savings argued to accrue to states and development agencies through investments in programs that economically empower women, because women’s families also benefit. While corporations also tap into this research to justify their interventions, their interests of course diverge in significant ways from those of nation-states. In justifying their investments in social welfare, corporations increasingly require that a “business case” be made for a corporation to legitimately engage in the provision of welfare; that the generation of social value always be accompanied by a parallel generation of economic value to businesses. Investments in women are

body, though this is largely done also on the grounds of efficiency; for example, South Africa’s basic income grant (BIG) provides small “grants” to all citizens in an effort to save on administrative costs (Ferguson 2010).

⁵⁰ Needless to say, most proponents of the economic fetishization of women’s social value do not engage with the notions of women triple burdens (domestic, work and community) of labour, as have been examined in feminist development thought, nor with the earlier (and still relevant) critique that that woman’s economic participation alone is insufficient to increase her status and equity (Moser 1993:69-70).

thus argued to constitute a space where a “convergence of interests” between business and society becomes possible, creating what CSR professionals refer to as “shared value” for each.

The notion of “Creating Shared Value” (CSV) has in fact become a topic of much theorizing in the business world, and appears poised to become the dominant form of CSR globally. CSV involves an apparent expansion in the corporation’s role and interest in generating “value” not only for itself, but also for other entities with which its interests can be said to “converge.” The concept of CSV was first elaborated upon in *The Competitive Advantage of Corporate Philanthropy*, a 2002 Harvard Business Review article co-authored by Harvard Business School professor Michael E. Porter and CSR consultant Mark R. Kramer. In this piece, the authors present CSV as a means of circumventing neoliberal critiques of the practice of CSR, such as those of the late economist Milton Friedman, who discounted CSR as a “socialist” and economically irrational expansion of what, according to him, was the sole responsibility of business: “to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud⁵¹” (Friedman 1970). Friedman charged that businesses engaged in social programming were moving out of their legitimate sphere of operation, the market, into the social; the latter sphere was *not* the responsibility of business, but rather that of elected government officials.⁵² For Friedman, businesses simply had no place in undertaking formalized charitable activities financed by its revenues – this was the responsibility of private individuals and the state.

⁵¹ Friedman (1970) himself critiqued insincere forms of CSR that were used as “window-dressing” intended to increase profits, though he realizes it is “inconsistent” of him to denounce such practices. He instead chose to express “admiration for those individual proprietors or owners of closely held corporations or stockholders of more broadly held corporations who disdain such tactics as approaching fraud.”

⁵² Friedman (1970) likened the CEO who financed social programs to an unelected official guilty of extracting “taxation without representation”, spending profits owed to shareholders on activities that had nothing to do with business. Friedman argued that on the level of political principle, the imposition of taxes and the expenditure of tax proceeds were “governmental functions.” Doing CSR was akin to the “socialist” belief that political mechanisms, and

Porter and Kramer dismissed Friedman's earlier critiques of CSR, arguing that the distinction between economy and society⁵³ that confined the activities of business to the market was a "false dichotomy", one that is no longer – and perhaps never was – reflective of reality. This is because in a world of "open, knowledge-based competition", corporations were deeply integrated within and dependent upon the societies that surround them (Porter and Kramer 2002:7). Social and economic objectives were thus *not* distinct and competing, but rather congruent and mutually reinforcing. Social issues, such as education for example, were relevant to a firm's ability to secure trained manpower. Education then was also an *economic* issue, having a potentially substantial effect on a company's competitiveness, and was thus an appropriate area for a corporation to intervene.⁵⁴ Porter and Kramer thus suggest that corporations invest in sites where the interests of society and business overlap; where there is what they call a *convergence of interests*⁵⁵ (2002:7). While the authors enumerate many such sites, the one most relevant here is investing in workers in ways that make them more educated, happier, or healthier, while at the same time improving productivity. In contrast, charitable investments that did not jointly provide gains to business *and* society should not be pursued. Creating shared value, in an important

not market ones, were the most "appropriate way to determine the allocation of scarce resources to alternative uses." For Friedman, unfettered individualism and free enterprise were the keys to securing a better future for all; various forms of taxation, some targeting the poor with reduced tax burdens, combined with philanthropy given freely by individuals would take care of any social shortfalls that remained.

⁵³ The market/society dualism is one that has its own genealogy in the social sciences that can be traced from Marx through to Weber, Karl Polanyi, and beyond. An engagement with the historical or contemporary conceptual or ontological relevance of this distinction is beyond the scope of this present work though it is approached obliquely through an engagement with the gift/exchange dualism later in this chapter.

⁵⁴ Competitiveness in turn, depended on "the productivity with which companies could use labour, capital, and natural resources to provide high-quality goods and services" (Porter and Kramer 2002:7)

⁵⁵ This notion of a convergence of interests appears to draw inspiration from various sources: there is the classical liberal tenet that the market functions on the basis of mutual self-interest: As Adam Smith famously remarked, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our necessities but of their advantages" (Smith 1999 [1776]:7). There are also traces of the human capital theories of the Chicago School economists, which highlighted the role of the firm in investing in workers in order to secure productivity gains (Becker 1975 [1964]).

departure from the responsibility towards society generally assumed by nation-states, thus clearly limits the social responsibility of business to areas which enhance its own competitiveness and generate profits for *itself*.⁵⁶

Measuring Shared Value: Social and Financial Returns

The shared forms of value argued to stem from apparel brands' CSR investments in women are not simply theorized; they are also enumerated through the implementation of Return on Investment (ROI) studies and impact evaluations, which are conducted in collaboration with NGOs or other researchers and are freely available online.⁵⁷

“Social” returns are generally conceived of and measured in a fairly limited manner, and do not appear to offer as conclusive a social case for investments in women. For PACE, social returns are measured with the measurement of changes in women's self-efficacy, or the “belief in one's ability to take action to get the results desired” and in their self-esteem, or the “perception of one's own self-worth in professional and personal life” (Nanda 2013:14). Surveys measuring women's self-reports of behaviours and actions thought to serve as proxies for social change (family's respect of a woman's opinion; ability to give feedback to others) are measured before the commencement of the program and again at its end; Gap has reported improvements in these indicators from 2% to 133%. Business for Social Responsibility (Yeager 2013) similarly measures improvements in women's knowledge about topics such as personal and menstrual hygiene,

⁵⁶ Though Porter and Kramer make no mention of this, CSR professionals in Bangalore often said that generating a profit through CSR was one means of ensuring that CSR programs would remain sustainable – if they provided no return at all, continued funding could not easily be justified, and might eventually be cut if the corporation could no longer provide adequate justification for such investments.

⁵⁷ Gap's evaluation of PACE was generated by the Delhi-based International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), based on data from factories in six countries: Two in India, and one each in Cambodia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and China. BSR's evaluation of HERproject was undertaken in collaboration with USAID-affiliated Extending Service Delivery and focused on factories in Pakistan and Bangladesh. See (Nanda, et al. 2013:14) and Yeager (2011) for details.

nutrition, family planning, sexually transmitted infections, and pre- and post-natal care, as well as their self-reports of engaging in behavioral change, such as washing hands before cooking, for example. Relying only on surveys and self-reports however means that whether or not women's improvements in knowledge actually translate into behaviour change remains unknown, an important question given the mitigating factors associated with poverty that might prevent women from acting on what they know. Broader program outcomes thus remain assumed and unmeasured, such as improvements in women's health status, or the health of their families.

The claim that wage earning women are capable of unleashing a “virtuous cycle” throughout developing societies likewise remains un-interrogated in these studies, one that merits further attention. As Atmavilas' (2008) ethnography of women working in the garment industry illustrates, young unmarried women in Bangalore routinely work in the industry to save money for their own dowries, while those who are married often relinquish their salaries to their husbands, who control household finances. A common refrain of the workers I spoke to, in stark contrast to the enthusiasm of the Girl Effect, is that they would prefer not to work at all, to stay home and care for children while their husbands worked outside the home (see also Pani and Singh 2012:27-28, 42).

The corporate “social” that is intervened upon by apparel brands then appears circumscribed, focused only on fostering and measuring modifications in the minds of the workers contained within the walls of the factory.⁵⁸ Whether women are able to translate knowledge into action, whether their wages generate the kinds of value they are expected to for children, or

⁵⁸ As Pani and Singh (2008:148) note, consumer expectations of brand responsibility are likewise limited in this respect: “Western consumers were only concerned about labour used in the production of the garment” – they too perceived the responsibility of brands to end at the factory gates.

whether programs have broader effects on families or communities at all are not part of the assessments of social returns.

Financial returns to business are enumerated in greater detail, and it is these that I wish to focus on here. In doing so, I want to highlight an important omission: despite the imperative to create shared value that serves as a justification for the involvement of business in the social, the returns to the brands that have designed and financed these programs are never enumerated or referenced overtly.

BSR explains clearly the need for making the so-called “business case” through an ROI study it conducted on HERproject programs in Egypt and Pakistan:

Why does the business case matter? Most of all, it matters because it helps make women matter—to their supervisors, to their peers, and to themselves. If money is saved through the betterment of women’s lives, and we’re able to prove those savings over time, such findings should create a ripple effect to encourage investments in women’s health along global supply chains around the world (Yeager 2011:4).

The BSR study reported a \$4.00 ROI to manufacturers for every dollar invested in the Bangladesh factory’s program, due to reduced absenteeism and turnover, which it argues “creates a multiplier effect, generating numerous quantitative and qualitative business benefits”⁵⁹ (Yeager 2011:9). The ICRW report in contrast does not calculate a dollar return on investment, but rather infers “returns” through the measurement of two variables: *retention*, or remaining employed in the factory at the end of the year following the program, and *advancement*, which is defined by the vendor, and can include new skills or a wage increase, for example (Nanda, et al. 2013:21). Retention and

⁵⁹ It should be noted that these studies suffer from data limitations that make assessments of the significance of their findings difficult. For example, the authors of the BSR study were only able to gather enough evidence from one Bangladeshi factory to arrive at its ROI figure due to problems in data collection. This figure is presented as an estimate that assumes that somewhere between 50 and 75% of the improvements seen can be attributed to HERproject, although it is unclear what confounding variables, such as the existence of concurrent programs, wage increases, or broader legislative changes, might also have contributed to improvements in the variables measured.

advancement provide returns to factories in terms of savings stemming from reduced training costs, and are shown in the report to have increased following the implementation of PACE, although only a partial subset of data is provided.⁶⁰

Whether corporations report on the specific dollar value of returns to business or infer them by proxy, what is notable here is that the business entity which is apparently accruing financial gains through CSR is curiously *not* the American brand or business association that develops, finances, and implements the CSR program. Rather, returns are enumerated only for the factory where production is being outsourced, and *never for the brand*. Despite the insistence of a focus on creating evidence-based and measurable forms of “shared value”, and the corollary imperative that businesses must gain from their charitable investments to justify them, there is apparently no overt “business case” that can be discerned for brands.

While the value that accrues to brands is not referenced overtly, one might say that it is instead generated affectively, in the same documents that present data concerning the financial returns to manufacturers. The empirical data demonstrating the business and social cases for PACE, for example, is accompanied by full-page photos of smiling women workers (Nanda, et al. 2013:1-2). Women from Gap’s global garment supply chains are shown at work in front of sewing machines, wearing dust masks, but also at rest, as with a group of smiling young women reclined in a circle on a rattan woven mat wearing identical pink Gap T-shirts emblazoned with the PACE logo. Beneath these images, the words of unnamed PACE graduates attest to the important role

⁶⁰ For example, retention among PACE graduates varied from 9% greater retention in Vietnam to 66% greater retention in Cambodia. In India, 38% of PACE graduates “advanced” in their position, while only 24% of non-graduates did. In Cambodia the figures are much lower: only 3.1% of PACE graduates advanced, while 1% of non-graduates did. Data for Vietnam was not listed in relation to advancement, while data for China was not listed neither for retention nor advancement, though self-reports of work efficacy in Vietnam were reported, as well as self-reports of self-efficacy in China (Nanda, et al. 2013).

the programs have played in their self-development: “Before joining P.A.C.E., I didn’t have goals or very much confidence. Now I have lots of dreams in my life.” – PACE Graduate, India (Nanda, et al. 2013:2). Attractive short films likewise recount individual stories of worker advancement in both personal and professional lives that has been made possible by their participation in the programs.⁶¹ It thus seems necessary to consider the kinds of value created by these accounts, which present both less and more than a data-driven “business case” demonstrating the creation of shared value in garment factories. These accounts appear to do double duty, then not just as a presentation of empirical data, but also as forms of advertising that signal the trustworthiness, benevolence and high ethical standards of apparel companies to potential consumers. While the value accruing to apparel brands is not enumerated, it presumably lies in the enhancement of the value of the brand’s reputation offered by the photos and words of women. These tell consumers that brands do value the lives of their outsourced workers, and that the clothing they produce is done so willingly and under good working conditions, thus imbuing the brand, and by extension, the clothing that bears its mark, with a kind of affective value that attests to its ability to deliver consumers with clothing that is presumably ethically produced, and that they can feel good about wearing.

A final form of value that remains largely de-emphasized in documentation relating to these CSR programs is that derived from their transformation into potential products in their own right. Some of these CSR programs are protected by trademark, thus comprising part of the intangible asset portfolio of a corporation. For example, in 2009, Gap filed a federal trademark registration for PACE in the category of “Insurance and Financial Services” with the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). The description provided to the USPTO classifies PACE thusly:

⁶¹ The following films on Gap’s PACE and Primark’s HERproject programs in India and Bangladesh are available online: *Gap Inc. P.A.C.E. – Advancing Women to Advance the World*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oenZ2aT0-Z8> and *Primark - HERproject*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O587xl3LiKI>

Charitable services, namely, the financial sponsorship of educational, self-improvement and vocational services in the nature of managerial, life-skill, and technical training for garment workers and sensitization training for managers to enable personal and workplace advancement (Gap Inc. 2009).

The “charitable services” constituting Gap’s CSR program, thus trademarked, hold the potential to generate additional value, as a product exclusively associated with the brand in question, and also one capable of being “shared” (for a price or not it is not clear) with other apparel companies wishing also to be “socially responsible.”⁶² The CSR itself program thus serves as a metonym for the eroded dualism between market and society, between charitable gift and market exchange, although it too is obscured; PACE is never listed by name among Gap’s trademark holdings in any of its recent annual reports from 2009 to 2013.

The value that accrues to the brand itself via its engagement in CSR thus remains largely unmeasured and unremarked upon. Creating shared value thus appears to de-emphasize the numerical value that CSR generates for brands, while at the same time transmuting the programs into generators of financial value as products, and their targets into potential generators of affective value. Certain kinds of value are intended to be “shared” with others – seen and heard sensorially and experienced affectively – while the processes by which other forms of value are generated – the feminization and casualization of labour to which I now turn – remain necessarily muted.

Part II: Hidden Value: Feminization, Reputational Capital, Patents

The presentation of factory-based CSR programs as voluntary, calculated, rational, and benevolent efforts on the part of brands to invest in women tends to misrepresent the role of brands in several key processes which I seek to highlight here. First, the overrepresentation of women working in

⁶² In an interview in a Special Advertising Section entitled *The Business of Giving* in the February 7, 2011 issue of Fortune Magazine, Dotti Hatcher mentions the potential for scaling up PACE: “Even more promising, notes Hatcher, is the development of a P.A.C.E. toolkit that other companies and vendors can use to implement the program. ‘There is opportunity to scale up,’ declares Hatcher. ‘P.A.C.E. has the potential to help many thousands of women, their families, and communities to advance and thrive’” (Fortune Magazine 2011:S4).

the industry is itself a process that grew out of the global outsourcing of garment production in the 1980s and efforts to enhance competitiveness through the outsourcing of employment to lower-paid, non-unionized women workers in the global South. In other words, the lower cost of women's labour in comparison to men's labour, and not their ability to unleash socially virtuous cycles, has to date been the eminent source of their value for apparel brands. Second, CSR in this industry emerges precisely at the moment when NGOs intensified their campaigns to bring to light the labour rights abuses that accompanied the global outsourcing of garment production to locales with weak regulatory environments. As apparel companies began to be "named and shamed" by activists and NGOs, the value of their brands began to be associated with the lives of women workers; this association prompted the assumption of various kinds of responsibility for these workers, which I discuss below.

Feminization or Empowerment?

In Bangalore, like in other centers of globalized garment production around the world, the majority of workers in the garment industry are today women. In contrast to what transnational apparel companies seem to imply, this gender imbalance is *not* one that was arose out of brand efforts to facilitate women's empowerment through the provision of employment. Rather, in the garment and other manufacturing industries, pressures to reduce the cost of production while at the same time increasing profits led to the widespread replacement of higher-paid male labour, which was generally the mainstay of garment and textile industries in many developing countries, with more "docile", non-unionized, and importantly, lower paid female labour⁶³ (Haraway 1990; Ngai 2005; Ong 1987; Prentice, et al. 2007).

⁶³ While being non-unionized is one reason why women are paid less than men, it is also apparently because they demand less (Babcock and Laschever 2009). Further, the "natural attrition rate" that stems from their periodic exit

These processes too were mirrored in Bangalore, which since pre-colonial times has been a center of cottage textiles production (Balakrishna 1940:35). Colonialism brought British-owned industrialized production to the city in the late nineteenth century⁶⁴ and the industry grew with increased demand for silks and woollens required for the production of parachutes and blankets during the first and second world wars⁶⁵ (Arnold 2000:93; Balakrishna 1940:35; Datta, et al. 2005 :18). Unionization drives of the largely male workforce began in the first half of the twentieth century and were led by Congress, serving as important vehicles to politicize and mobilize large numbers of Indians towards the struggle for independence⁶⁶ (James 1958:564-565; Nair 1998:275).

Beginning in the 1980s, however, local and global forces began to foster changes in the composition of the garment and textiles workforces. By 1985, Rajiv Gandhi had commenced the partial deregulation of the Indian textiles market, and by 1991, the economic crisis and IMF loan conditions required a shift to an export-oriented model of garment production (Tewari 2006).

from the labour force for marriage and childbirth means that their retention rate is lower, obviating the need for the progressive pay raises generally required to be paid to longer-term employees (Tewari 2001:49)

⁶⁴ In Bangalore the largest among these were Binny Mills (1877), Mysore Mills (1887) and Sri Krishna Spinning and Weaving Mills (Nair 1998:192). The colonial history of textile production in India, particularly the mid-nineteenth decimation of small-scale *khadi* (hand-spun cotton) production with British imports of Lancashire cottons, as well as the eventual arrival of industrialized cotton and silk mills to India in the late nineteenth century are themes that have been well explored in the literature (Arnold 2000:93-97; Chakrabarty 2000; Tarlo 1996; Tomlinson 2013:104-123).

⁶⁵ By 1931, textiles and garment production thus constituted a substantial source of employment in Mysore state; at the time, sericulture and silk weaving alone employed nearly 117,000 families, or one-sixth of the total population of Mysore state, while cotton spinning and weaving employed 23,000 men and 700 women, and wool production 19,298 persons (Balakrishna 1940:31, 34, 36).

⁶⁶ With the rise of the nationalist *swadeshi* (“of one’s own country”) movement in the early twentieth century, the production of local goods – particularly *khadi* – was promoted and widely produced as a potential challenge to the political, economic, and cultural dominance of the British over India, and venerated by Gandhians in terms of its potential for building a non-industrial, village-based economic system in independent India (Bayly 1997; Cohn 1996; Tarlo 1996). Gandhi’s support of textile workers also led to the development and spread of the influential Textile Labour Association (TLA) in the early twentieth century, following his 1918 “fast unto death” in support of textile workers in Ahmedabad, which also served as an inspiration to the first mill workers’ strikes in Mysore in the 1920s (Nair 1998:249, James 1958:564-5). Textiles production was a central focus of Congress politics in the early twentieth century, apparent in Gandhi’s well-known promotion of economic self-sufficiency through the valorization of *khadi* production and boycotts of British textiles, as well as in the intense efforts of Congress to use unionization as a means of politicizing India’s vast numbers of textile workers.

Alongside these developments, beginning in the 1980s, local manufacturers began to compete for export contracts. To lower production costs, urban factories were closed down and relocated to outlying areas of the city; this meant that unionized male labourers could be let go and replaced with unorganized labourers, mostly women, willing to work for lower wages⁶⁷ (RoyChowdhury 2005:2251-2252). Bangalore's garment export industry grew between 1995 and 2005, with the phase-out of quantitative restrictions on garment imports under the World Trade Organization's Multi-Fibre Arrangement⁶⁸ (MFA), a policy change that made it possible for apparel brands to source clothing in any amount from any country. The expiry of the MFA led to an almost total outsourcing of garment production to locations in the global South, including Bangalore, as brands engaged in a "race to the bottom" to secure the most competitive pricing (Pani and Singh 2012:11-14). The outsourcing of garment production has also been accompanied by a remarkable and progressive decline in the cost of clothing globally over the past three decades, which can largely be attributed to the added value provided by women's casualized labour.⁶⁹

Weak Regulation

As has been the case across global supply chains, the intersection of the lack of union representation with India's lax enforcement of labour laws⁷⁰ has permitted and continues to permit

⁶⁷ One high-profile strike in 1996 organized by CITU led to the closure of a Bangalore garment factory employing 10,000 workers, frustrating further organizing efforts (Roy-Chowdhury 2005:2252).

⁶⁸ In 1995, the World Trade Organization began to transition out of its twenty year Multi-fibre Arrangement (MFA), which permitted selective quantitative restrictions on textiles and clothing imports when surges in imports of particular products threatened to damage the industries of importing countries (World Trade Organization nd). The expiration of the MFA in 2005 meant that buyers were free to source textiles and apparel in any amount from any country; suppliers were similarly free to export as much as they were able to, subject only to a system of national tariffs (Abernathy, et al. 2004). This development led to an increase in India's output that year (Saggi 2006).

⁶⁹ For example, longitudinal spending data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics published in 2006 shows that the average percentage of household income spent on apparel has declined from 14% in 1900, to 12% in 1950, to a paltry 4% in 2003 (Thompson 2012). As the cost of clothing has fallen, clothing consumption has increased, causing significant environmental issues relating to recycling and disposal.

⁷⁰ For example, the Indian Factories Act (1948) and the Karnataka Factory Rules (1969) mandate labour rights such as limited working hours for women, the construction of factory daycares, bathrooms, canteens, provision of clean drinking water, and the maintenance of an ambulance room staffed by medical personnel in accordance with the size

wide ranging and well-documented abuses in garment factories catering to the export market, which have included sexual harassment of workers by management, child labour, excessive overtime hours, wage discrimination, and long-term contracts that employ women in quasi-bonded forms of contract labour in exchange for lump sum payments intended to appeal to poorer families looking to amass dowries for their daughters' marriages (Cividep 2008; 2010; Singh 2009; SOMO/ICN 2011).

Activists in part blame the government for these abuses, citing endemic corruption and a lax approach to regulation only compounded by a lack of resources; only two full-time inspectors are responsible for monitoring labour rights in Bangalore's thousands of manufacturing units. When I visit the Joint Directorate of Factories and Boilers, the office charged with enforcing labour law in Bangalore, he raises a different set of concerns. When I meet the Director, it was just after *Ayudha Puja*, the festival that consecrates tools and weapons, worshiping the divine force that animates them in an effort to secure the blessings required to ensure productive and prosperous work. The computers and massive file-containing *almaris* (steel cupboards) in the Directorate's office are freshly anointed with sandalwood and red vermilion paste and decorated with stickers of a radiant and smiling Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of prosperity. One of Lakshmi's many appellations is *Chanchala*, or the "restless one." This is because Lakshmi is a notoriously fickle goddess; various rituals are routinely undertaken encourage her to remain in one's home, though the fortunes she brings must inevitably move from hand to hand. It is in part the Director's job to

of the factory. Factory workers and employers are required to jointly contribute to various health insurance and pension funds, which provide a range of benefits to workers and their families. It is compulsory for workplaces employing women to convene sexual harassment committees, following the 1997 ruling of *Vishaka v. Rajasthan*. Brand codes of conduct often stipulate the addition of other committees as well (e.g. canteen committees), though activists charge that committee members are often chosen by management and exist largely on paper, if at all (see Cividep 2010:25-27).

ensure that Lakshmi continues to smile upon and reside within Karnataka, presently one of India's wealthiest states.

The director tells me that over the past few years, several modifications have been made to the inspection process. In 2002 the Karnataka Industries Facilitation Act was passed, an effort to streamline and rationalize the protocol for factory inspections. "We don't want to promote the image of an 'Inspection Raj.' We want to be friendly with management", he tells me, gesturing to pre-liberalization modes of highly regulated bureaucratic governance in India, such as the License or Permit Raj that characterized the Indian government's red-tape relationship to business between 1947 and 1990. Revisions to the 2002 Act ensure that factories are randomly selected by computer for inspection, issued inspection notices, and informed in advance of the date and time of their inspection. Inspections are coordinated with other government bodies, such as those of the poll board, the labour department, and the tax department, in the interests of efficiency. "In this way management will be well-prepared to show documents and so on", he explains. I ask if pre-notified inspections don't encourage manufacturers to prepare ahead to hide any potential violations. He pauses and shakes his head. "With these measures, the government wants to encourage industry. Unless we attract industry here we will perish."⁷¹ The responsibilities of government today clearly also include efforts to prevent capital flight in a context of globalized production.

The Rise of CSR

Apparel brands have profited immensely from the lower costs of Southern women's labour and weak regulatory environments brought by the global liberalization of apparel production. But

⁷¹ The Director was perhaps consciously echoing the well-known words of Mysore *dewan*, or prime minister, M. Visvesvaraya, spoken nearly 100 years before in support of his beliefs concerning the only path Mysore State could follow to achieve modernity under indirect colonial rule: "Industrialize or Perish."

beginning in the mid-1990s, these apparently value-generating contexts were the very same ones that came to undermine the profitability of apparel brands. At this time, NGOs and journalists came forth (and continue to come forth) with various allegations implicating major apparel brands in labour rights abuses taking place in sweatshops around the world, leading in many cases to organized international consumer boycotts of specific brands (Ansett 2007; Klein 2000).

In Bangalore, the practice of “naming and shaming” of apparel brands by local NGOs has since the early 2000s sought to alert consumers to the abusive labour conditions in Indian factories in an effort to pressure brands to ameliorate these conditions. In 2006 and 2007, three deaths at or near the premises of Shalini Creations, a unit of the Texport Overseas group which makes clothes for the Gap, became the topic of much media and NGO attention, particularly the case of a woman worker who was allegedly denied permission to leave the shop floor when she went into labour, giving birth to a stillborn baby outside the factory gate (Cividep 2011; McVeigh 2007). Manufacturers are also a politically powerful group capable of defending their own interests. In 2009, Bangalore’s garment manufacturers were accused of working through their business association to lobby against the state government’s minimum wage increase, which, according to the Worker Rights Consortium (2010c), was later suspiciously repealed. In March 2010, the Karnataka Labour Department announced that the minimum wage had been set too high in 2009 as a result of a “clerical mistake”, and was to be partially adjusted downward.⁷² NGOs argued that the repeal had resulted following an intensive lobbying effort on the part of manufacturers, who had anyway refused to pay workers the increase for over a year before it had been repealed. NGOs charged that this had occurred with the “tacit acceptance of brands”, and mounted campaigns to

⁷² The minimum wage for the lowest-paid classifications of worker, at 126.97 rupees (USD 2.75) per day, was adjusted downward to 122.26 rupees per day. Workers reported earning between 3300 and 5000 per month, with overtime.

pressure brands to demand that manufacturers pay back wages to employees who had been denied the partial increase (Worker Rights Consortium 2010a). The continuing efforts of NGOs to hold brands accountable to their own codes of conduct was eventually successful, however, and by December 2010, 110,000 workers in Bangalore were paid the wages owed to them (Worker Rights Consortium 2010b).

Activists who attempt to raise questions concerning labour rights have been intimidated by manufacturers. For example, in 2007, Bangalore-based manufacturer Fibres and Fabrics International (FFI), which produced for Gap, among other brands, brought a slander lawsuit and international arrest warrant against seven Dutch labour rights activists at the Clean Clothes Campaign and the India Committee for the Netherlands in response to their accusing FFI of labour rights violations. In 2008, following international NGO action and campaigns denouncing the manufacturers efforts to silencing the activists through litigation along with the brands that produced clothing in the unit, FFI had dropped the lawsuit and committed to improving labour conditions (GATWU 2006; Labour Behind the Label 2007; 2008).

In naming and shaming the brands producing clothing with manufacturers accused of labour rights abuses, NGOs were consciously and strategically putting brand reputations at stake in an effort to improve local labour conditions. Brands eventually responded to this shaming by assuming an expanded responsibility for monitoring and curtailing labour rights abuses through various efforts, beginning in the early 2000s.⁷³ The most common of these was requiring that their suppliers adhere to and submit to regular audits that enforce third-party⁷⁴ or brand-specific Codes

⁷³ The Gap is one company that is said to have come particularly far in responding to these critiques and developing new policies and procedures in relation to sustainability and social compliance (Ansett 2007).

⁷⁴ Examples of third-party standardized auditing systems include Social Accountability International's SA8000 code. SA8000 has been a particularly important tool in the global garments manufacturing industry, which constitutes 16% of SA8000 certified facilities, and has its strongest global presence in India, covering a total of 467,340 workers.

of Conduct (COCs) to ensure that labour laws were being respected. Manufacturers today complain about having to open their factories to a nearly endless stream of largely brand-employed COC auditors wielding distinct checklists to demonstrate their adherence to various codes based on a combination of international and Indian labour law. While these activities were widely recognized as having led to improvements⁷⁵, auditors in Bangalore nonetheless complained about the increasingly sophisticated techniques used by manufactures to evade detection of code violations: one common tactic was for a manufacturer to play specific kinds of music in the factory when an auditor arrived for an unscheduled visit, so as to alert workers to put on masks or other safety equipment.⁷⁶ At one audit that I participated in, the auditor found that management had provided workers with double copies of log books enumerating the hours worked by employees in a particular unit: the real one, which offered evidence of excessive overtime hours over a seven day work schedule, and a fake one with hours conforming to the limits stipulated by Indian labour law.⁷⁷ At the same time, auditors also reported that conditions in export-oriented factories were

SA8000 had (as of 2011) certified 23 garments producing units in Bangalore (Social Accountability International 2011).

⁷⁵ Auditors highlighted that these improvements were largely limited to factories that produced for export; many acknowledged that the factories that produced for the domestic market did not face the same international critical mass of consumer concern with workers' rights that had prompted the adoption of CSR among the larger international brands.

⁷⁶ Auditors reported that workers often did not wear personal protective equipment (PPEs) such as dust masks or eye guards either because it was uncomfortable or because it hampered their ability to work quickly in fast-paced production lines where they are also under intense pressure to meet production targets.

⁷⁷ While it might seem that manufacturers risked the loss of contracts with these pantomime performances of compliance, auditors said that this was rarely the case; audits were said to continue at fixed intervals and pressure and negotiations continued as part of what was a lengthy and negotiated process towards securing compliance, one that some brands willingly engaged in because of the significant risks posed to brands by switching suppliers. Auditors reported that while brands would often cancel contracts with suppliers guilty of particularly egregious abuses, they were generally reticent to cancel production contracts with known suppliers to work with unknown ones which might be unable to meet standards for quality, fast turnaround, and a concern for worker's rights. Auditors were thus often charged with the task of cajoling manufacturers into rectifying code violations. While audits are thus emblematic of a kind of power relation between brands and manufactures (De Neve 2009), they also embody processes of negotiation and deferral in which manufacturers exert a kind of power over brands.

vastly superior to the conditions in those that produced for the domestic market; the majority of them attested that codes and audits made a significant difference to working conditions.

By drawing attention to the audit, I wish only to highlight its status as a quotidian form of CSR in Bangalore, one that arose at a moment when weak regulatory enforcement, which itself contributed to the further disempowerment and lowered costs of labour, was no longer a context that provided added value to brands. Rather, the lack of regulation was now something that could undermine rather than enhance a brand's value; it was in this manner that the regulatory responsibilities of government, which it was unable to fulfil, whether due to a lack of resources or will, came to fall within the sphere of responsibilities of corporations.

The COC audit is the lynchpin of CSR across global apparel supply chains, required of every factory where production is undertaken, and constituting a major outlay on the part of apparel brands. And yet these CSR efforts, along with the reasons why they emerged – not necessarily as an unprompted choice by brands, but rather as a result of NGO pressure tactics and consumer boycotts – are largely obscured. Apparel brands rather seek to position their programs as benevolent and economically rational business choices taken up presumably of their own accord. The quotidian COC audits that are oriented towards the maintenance of worker rights recede into the background, while health and empowerment programs, which only ever target a subset of workers in a handful of selected factories around the world, are those most heavily advertised. In both of these cases though, CSR orients itself to enhancing the value of the brand.

Part III: Gift and Exchange

In this final section, I would like to consider what is conceptually new about the notion of shared value. To do so seems to require, rather artificially, considering it as something that has a conceptual valence apart from concrete efforts to operationalize it in practice. Looking at creating

shared value in this manner requires drawing attention to the ways in which it comprises only one manifestation of a variety of similar contemporary neoliberal techniques of welfare provision, all of which share the common feature I highlighted in the beginning of this chapter: the denial of a long-held dualism between market and society, gift and market exchange.

In her research on the CSR programs run by a large South African mining company, Dinah Rajak (2011:9-10) has noted that the logic of CSR “disrupts an assumed dichotomy between gift and market exchange”, reconnecting the “apparently modern and depersonalised world of commerce with the moral discourse and social politics of giving.” Rajak demonstrates how the corporate admixture of gift and exchange allows corporations to secure increasing profits under the guise of paternalism, creating relations of obligation by giving gifts that cannot be reciprocated. Departing from an analysis of the apparently depoliticizing effects that the admixture of gift and exchange has on the targets of CSR programs, I would instead like to examine what this admixture might tell us about the relationship between broader shifts in economic conceptions of the human associated with neoliberalism and in the concept and practice of philanthropy.

Creating shared value (CSV) is but one of a panoply of techniques that have recently marshaled the involvement of business in the amelioration of “social” issues: philanthrocapitalism (Bishop and Green 2010), venture philanthropy, strategic corporate philanthropy, socially responsible investing, and social businesses, for example. All of these techniques share the key condition of the practice of creating shared value: to intervene only in areas where a “business case” can be made; that is, where social interventions also result in returns for businesses.

This process also appears to be working in the opposite direction: founders of charitable organizations are now also challenging the deeply held distinctions between philanthropic gifts and market exchange, calling for the infusion of charitable activities with business principles.

American humanitarian and entrepreneur Dan Palotta (2013), for example, argues that philanthropy should be seen in economic terms; like other markets, philanthropy is a “market for love”, one for those people for whom “there is no other market.” In a recent TED talk entitled *The Way We Think about Charity is Dead Wrong*, he asks us to interrogate the Christian values that continue to inform philanthropic practice, and in particular require charity to be nearly completely absent of self-interest:

We have a visceral reaction to the idea that anyone would make very much money helping other people. Interesting that we don't have a visceral reaction to the notion that people would make a lot of money NOT helping other people. You want to make 50 million dollars selling violent video games to kids, go for it, we'll put you on the cover of Wired Magazine. But you want to make half a million dollars curing kids of malaria and you're considered a parasite (Palotta 2013).

Palotta argues that these kinds of distinctions make it difficult for philanthropic organizations to attract the kinds of talent and resources required to mount large and effective interventions; what is required is that charities be permitted to act more like businesses, in the interests of efficiently serving human needs. What Palotta and others like him seem to be challenging, as I will show below, is the utility of the very distinction between charitable gifts and market exchange in Western thought, one that has been extensively theorized by anthropologists.

Anthropological theorizing on gift and exchange relations began with early twentieth century efforts to understand economic behavior in “primitive” societies, which had generally been depicted as indolent and selfish. Malinowski's ([1922] 1984) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, which examined the Kula form of exchange among the Trobriand islanders of New Guinea, countered such assessments of so-called primitive peoples by demonstrating how primitive economic behavior was heavily dependent on the exchange of gifts and the imperative for reciprocity, practices essential to generating prestige and fostering social relations. Malinowski organized the types of exchanges he observed into a continuum ranging from “pure gifts” to “trade,

plain and simple”, recognizing that the Trobriand practices were less marked by a dualism between the two that was characteristic of Western societies, and more by a series of transitions and gradations (Malinowski 1984[1922]: 177-191).

It was Marcel Mauss’s theorizing in *The Gift*, however, that gave rise to the notion that gift relations were fundamentally and *universally* different from market exchanges, although as Jonathan Parry (1986) has argued, this constituted a fundamental misreading of Mauss. As Parry notes, the apparent misreading of Mauss furthered by most anthropologists ended up constructing a false and universal dualism between gift giving and market exchange: the former appeared as always and everywhere disinterested, obliging a reciprocal return, and constitutive of social solidarity. In contrast, market exchange appeared as “other” to the gift: always and everywhere self-interested, premised on exchanges requiring an immediate rather than a deferred return, and hence incapable of building social solidarity (ibid). While gift-giving reciprocity of the kind that was long-term and deferred was portrayed as an essential element of building social solidarity by fostering mutual forms of obligation, charity appeared as an outlier form, framed as an illegitimate “free gift” that was “wounding” precisely because it forbade a return (Douglas 1990 [1950]:vii; Mauss 1990 [1950]:65).

Parry goes on to argue that asserting a dualism between gift and market exchange was never part of Mauss’s argument; gifts appeared as hybrid forms that were both interested and disinterested. This was because they were at the same time forms of status acquisition as they were means of exchange and the redistribution of wealth (1986:456). Mauss’s interest in gift exchange, according to Parry, centered around doing a prehistory of the modern economic legal contract (1986:457). Gifts, for Mauss, were interesting to the extent that they could be shown, through the forms of solidarity through reciprocity they enabled, to embody a kind of “primitive analogue of

the social contract.” It was for this reason that Mauss gave his greatest attention to gifts which required a return; at the same time, this focus by no means implied that reciprocity was an inherent and universal feature of all gifts, nor that unreciprocated charity was necessarily wounding – ethnographic and historical studies of Indian modes of giving, such as *daan*, have demonstrated that gift-giving is a non-reciprocal activity linked to the acquisition of merit and the discharging of polluting substances (Parry 1986:454-457; Raheja 1988).

Parry makes clear that there is no inherent universal dualism between gift and exchange; rather, it is one peculiar to specifically Western values and socio-economic arrangements. The primitive hybrid forms of disinterested/interested gifts/exchange give rise to a purification in Western advanced societies that separates these categories into a clear dualism, confining “purely interested” economic exchanges made with the medium of depersonalized money to the domain of the market, while disinterested and solidarity-forming gift relations were confined to the domain of society:

Those who make free and unconstrained contracts in the market also make free and unconstrained gifts outside it. But these gifts are defined as what market relations are not – altruistic, moral and loaded with emotion. As the economy becomes progressively disembedded from society, as economic relations become increasingly differentiated from other types of social relationship, the transactions appropriate to each become ever more *polarised* in terms of their symbolism and ideology. We might therefore argue that an ideology of the ‘pure gift’ is most likely to arise in highly differentiated societies with an advanced division of labour [...] (Parry 1986:466-7).

In Parry’s framework, then, the market appears as an autonomous domain disembedded from society, one in which “self-interest rules supreme.” Philanthropy thus comes to assume the responsibility denied by the market, conditioned by Christian belief systems that stress the merit of gifts and alms given secretly and without expectation of worldly return (1986:469).

The practice of CSV and its associated forms of business philanthropy, however, characterized by a melding together of market and social values, bears little resemblance to this

older conceptualization of philanthropy. How might this erosion of the dividing line between market and society be understood?

As Foucault has argued in the *Birth of Biopolitics*, the appearance of American neoliberalism and the generalization of a market logic throughout the social body appears to have contributed to the erosion of the distinction between market and society at the same time that it appears as a novel form of governmentality (Foucault 2010:240-41). According to Foucault, the rise of American neoliberalism in the 1970s gives rise to a form of governmentality that subsumes “the whole social system not usually conducted through or sanctioned by monetary exchanges” into a market logic, which comes to be revealed as an underlying principle of intelligibility and decipherment of the human (2010:243). Relations which were earlier considered “social” and governed by non-economic principles come increasingly to be defined economically. For example, parent-child relationships come to be understood as governed by an underlying economic logic of parental “investment” and psychical “income” rather than love and obligation⁷⁸ (2010:244).

Foucault notes too that neoliberalism brings with it a refiguring of the figure of *homo economicus*, or economic man: from a man of exchange who pursues his self-interest to one of competition who responds to systemic changes in his environment (2010:270). While exchange was limited to the market, competition was a behavior that could be generalized outside of it into everyday social life as well. Alongside the activity of competition, the sphere of economic rationality thus grew to encompass “any purposeful conduct which involves, broadly speaking, a

⁷⁸ Another can be seen in economist Gary Becker’s New Home Economics, where the household becomes conceived of as an economic unit, the relationships within it also coming to be revealed to be governed by an economic logic. The male head of the household is argued to “altruistically” engage in forms of redistribution to guard family members against economic shocks (Becker 1974a:253; 1981b:3). But this altruism is now seen as stemming from a kind of economic rationality, as he is argued to redistribute and protect family members because he “derives positive utility from increases in another’s consumption” (Becker 1981b).

strategic choice of means, ways, and instruments: in short, the identification of the object of economic analysis with *any rational conduct*.⁷⁹” (Foucault 2010:268-9). According to Foucault, economics can therefore be defined as “the science of the systematic nature of responses to environmental variables” (ibid).

The enlargement of the sphere of economic rationality beyond the market means that a self-interested human actor who maximizes his utility in a strictly *financially* rational sense – that is, by striving towards the accumulation of wealth – is no longer one of its defining features. In the words of Gary Becker, “...individuals maximize welfare as they conceive it, whether they be selfish, altruistic, loyal, spiteful, or masochistic” (Becker 1993:386). Under neoliberalism then, *homo economicus* makes use of a variously maximizing rationality not only in the market, but everywhere. Even if he was “self-interested” in maximizing his economic utility in the market, it was recognized that moral and presumably “selfless” qualities, such as altruism, could *also* be evidence of a “rational” economic behaviour; that is one that was oriented towards maximizing utility, broadly defined.

Interestingly, in his 1979 lectures, Foucault asserted that the definition of economic behaviour provided by Gary Becker above was “not recognized by the average economist, or even by the majority of them” (2010:269). But today, Becker’s ideas are no longer marginal to the discipline of economics. Particularly in the sub-field of behavioural economics, the notion of a rational, purely self-interested economic actor has practically disappeared. Economic choice can also be presumably economically “irrational”; such choices are not even required to maximize

⁷⁹ Foucault notes that Becker’s definition is *even more* expansive than this one, coming to include “non-rational conduct” as well, that is, “conduct which does not seek at all, or at any rate, not only to optimize the allocation of scarce resources to a determinate end” (2010:269). Economic conduct, for Becker, is then “any conduct which responds *systematically* to modifications in the variables of the environment”; in other words, as Becker says, any activity which “‘accepts reality’ must be susceptible to economic analysis.

one's returns absolutely. Rather, economic rationality is simply the ability to choose among different options, and to make a choice that makes sense to the economic subject, according to whatever criteria he holds dear.⁸⁰ Giving too now routinely appears as an economically rational behavior, where “givers” are argued to be not only more successful than “takers” in their personal lives, but also professionally (Grant 2013).

The economist Paul Samuelson asserted in 1948 that many economists “would separate economics from sociology on the basis of rational or irrational behaviour, defined in the penumbra of utility theory” (1948:90). With the erosion of a distinction between market and society enabled by the extension of an economic calculus to explaining the full spectrum of human choice, there is now little that remains outside of its purview. Described by some as an “imperial” discipline, economics now “invade(s) intellectual territory that was previously deemed to be outside the discipline’s realm” (Lazear 2000). One might even say that economic logic is effectively being universalized as a kind of biological grammar of human nature, particularly within the recently developed discipline of neuroeconomics, which positions economic rationality as the driving force behind natural selection (Glimcher 2009).⁸¹ Altruistic behavior then, today at least, can also be considered economic, or maximizing, in a way that it could never have been earlier.

It thus appears that Parry’s contention that the separation of market and society – the one that gave rise to the West’s separation of pure gifts from market exchanges – may have by now broken down. Viewed in light of Foucault’s observations concerning the viral replication of a

⁸⁰ Behavioural economists admit that choices may be “irrational”, and not maximize in reality, determined as they are by context and the range of options available (Ariely 2009).

⁸¹ Animals that are more rational (i.e. maximizing) than others are thought to attain a higher level of fitness and are thus better able to propagate their genetic material within an environment of scarce means (Glimcher 2009). Here, Spencer’s applications of Darwin’s theories of natural selection to the social realm (1851) appear to have been transplanted back into the natural world, where the most “fit” organisms are indeed those who make rational economic choices, rather than those whose genetic endowments are most appropriate to survival in a given environment.

maximizing economic logic through society and the individual, humans are no longer seen as self-interested economic actors in the market and potentially altruistic social beings outside of it. After all, if there is no longer any “outside” to the market, then altruism might be said to lack a space to dwell in. Actions that earlier would have been defined as philanthropic and charitable, earlier conceptually cordoned off and made exempt from an economic calculus, are today embraced within the arms of a hybridized market society.

Conclusion

I have examined an instance of CSR that defied a sustained anthropological engagement with it in the field, and so I turned to an examination of its logic and its conceptual relevance. What is notable is that techniques of CSR such as Creating Shared Value appear to index a shift in our very conceptions of what philanthropic activity is, or can be. The extension of a maximizing economic logic to nearly the totality of human experience means that philanthropy is no longer defined by its wholly altruistic quality, as a sentiment or practice that is distinct from self-interested market exchanges. Rather, as Gap’s efforts to meld the philanthropic and the profitable with the creation of the apparently mutually beneficial PACE program suggest, these categories are no longer considered as separate and mutually exclusive spheres.

The logics used to justify these programs are however multiple and somewhat difficult to reconcile with one another. Even though CSV apparently permits corporations to unselfconsciously make profit-seeking the basis of its interventions into the social, this justification is not one that is most loudly announced in practice. Instead, the logics of the Girl Effect and Double X Solution are highlighted, which justify investing in women because they are valuable allies in development, as efficient and virtuous economic subjects. But the use of this logic as a justification for garment factory-based CSR programs appears as an imperfect fit. Women are not

being employed by global apparel brands as a conscious development strategy rooted in an affirmative action framework; rather, the use of women's labour was undertaken long before these programs arose, a means of costs-savings concurrent with the liberalization of garment production in the 1980s. CSR programs here thus appear as a benevolent, rational, and voluntary instantiation of corporate philanthropy, while the history of feminization and the kinds of value that could (and continue to) be generated through the use of women's labour, as well as the role of NGOs in highlighting labour rights abuses and linking the lives of workers to the value of the brand remains de-emphasized. This dehistoricized affiliation of wage labour, women, and business-led development programming refigures transnational precarious labour regimes as "empowering" rather than oppressive; as Nicholas Kristoff (2009) argues in a recent book, the "Double X Solution" can apparently turn "oppression into empowerment for women worldwide." It appears that jobs can themselves be presented as gifts in a world where existing outside "the market" in the absence of social welfare is the height of precarity.

Examining the studies that measure the effects of programs likewise illustrates that the "social returns" that Lawrence Summers and others have asserted that can be gained from investing in women are never measured by brands. Claims of a "virtuous cycle" for women and their families are therefore only ever inferred by the available data, which focuses only on asserting that women have learned the information provided to them throughout their involvement in CSR programs, but not their ability to operationalize it in their lives. Apparel brands never measure the value CSR generates for them, but only for their supplier factories, and don't draw attention to the patents that protect the program and make it a repository of further value.

I have suggested then that the numerous photos, films, and ROI data meant to be shared on social networking sites that are found on the program's websites generate another kind of value

out of women workers, one which serves to drive home a clear message to global consumers: that brands are caring for garment workers in empowering and economically rational ways. These materials gesture to the ways in which CSR appears increasingly as a necessary accompaniment to transnational capital accumulation in global markets where consumers, far removed from the clothing they purchase, make the perhaps unreasonable demand that these commodities are produced both cheaply *and* ethically. More than the intervention itself, the alternating invisibility and hypervisibility of CSR appears to be central to generating “value” for the corporation.

The logic of a form of CSR focused on converging interests and shared value, its parameters of course defined entirely by the corporation, also necessarily ignores and minimizes the forms of conflict and opposition that might arise between workers and the transnational corporations that employ them. Though I haven’t discussed it in detail above, CSV’s focus on converging interests might also index a broader shift away from idioms of managing and mitigating the conflicts encountered in the course of business operations, and one towards a focus on “win-win” scenarios.⁸² It is interesting to consider that just a few decades ago, economic game theory was routinely applied not only to manage the diverging interests of the Soviets and Americans to avoid total nuclear destruction during the Cold War, but also by businesses seeking to avoid costly worker’s strikes (Schelling 1980). Today, for reasons that cannot be fully expanded upon here, a focus on mitigating *conflicting* interests between businesses and the various entities with which they engage has given way to one centered on converging ones, as seen not only in

⁸² Beyond the varied programs that draw on Girl Effect and the Double X Solution, the win-win discourse appears pervasive in many aspects of early twenty-first century life. The late C.K. Prahalad, for example, questions the failure of the development apparatus to eradicate poverty, calling on corporations to sell goods and services that are either unavailable to the poor or priced beyond their reach in his book *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid*: “What is needed is a better approach to help the poor, an approach that involves partnering with them to innovate and achieve sustainable win-win scenarios where the poor are actively engaged and, at the same time, the companies providing products and services to them are profitable” (Prahalad 2006:27).

processes such as CSR, but also in multi-sectoral forms of consensus and collaboration, institutional shifts clearly enabled by the global decline in union activity. The ascendancy of a “win-win” logic in CSR appears to somewhat problematically suggest that conflicts between businesses and their workers or surrounding communities is a thing of the past. At a January 2013 presentation at McGill University on a Creating Shared Value initiative focusing on job creation in South American villages run by Montreal-based engineering company SNC-Lavalin, I asked their corporate representative if there were ever cases in which the company’s interests *diverged* from those of the communities in which it worked. I found his answer equal parts provocative and troubling: “What do you mean?”, he replied. “Can you give me an example?”

CHAPTER 3: “ISLANDS OF EXCELLENCE”: THE GOVERNANCE OF SPACE IN AND AROUND A COMPANY TOWN

Three Spaces

There is a vacant lot next to the home in which I rent a room from a retired couple from Kerala. My neighbour Akanksha, who has recently secured a job as a lab technician at India’s largest biotech company, joins me on a walk past the lot one day, which is dug up in places and filled with dried mud, piles of stones and bricks, and sometimes smouldering heaps of trash which street dogs and cows occasionally gather around to feed on. In evenings, the lot serves as an outdoor urinal for the men who frequent the bar located next to it. I comment on the out of place character of this lot in a neighbourhood like Koramangala, which was an agricultural village until the 1980s, when it began to transform into a sleepy retirement suburb for former members of the Indian Army, whose credentials remain inscribed on shining nameplates at the entry gates to their homes. The neighbourhood has more recently become an up-and-coming settlement for wealthy Indian nationals as well as non-resident Indians (NRIs), the government’s partial-citizenship designation for members of the Indian diaspora holding foreign passports. Public opinion on these acronymed beings remains undecided: they were once referred to as “never returning Indians” who migrated in waves beginning in the 1960s, unleashing a brain drain on the country. Currently, more derisively, they are popularly known as “now returning Indians”, following the growth of the economy and increasing opportunities to start business and social enterprises following economic liberalization in 1991.

In Koramangala one now finds expensive restaurants, boutiques, bars, and nightclubs that have opened to serve its residents in the past few years. I ask Akanksha, also an NRI, what she thinks about the lot as we walk past it one afternoon and she says, “You know, it’s only that way because nobody owns it.” A few months later I return to the neighbourhood to visit after having

moved closer to the city's centre, and notice that the lot is now enclosed by a barbed wire fence upon which hangs a "No Trespassing" sign erected by the Koramangala Resident's Welfare Association. The lot has been cleaned and is clearly now off-limits.

*

I'm in a cab returning from an interview at a garment factory in Bangalore's Peenya Industrial Layout. The driver is tired; he tells me he is coming off of a twenty-four hour long shift. And so I start to ask him about his family to keep us both awake while the car inches through a typical afternoon traffic jam. He speaks about them with a combination of anxious fondness, worrying that his young daughter isn't learning English quickly enough. His wife speaks only Kannada, Bangalore's vernacular; he has been trying to convince her to take up English lessons, but says that she has never excelled in studies, having failed out of secondary school in her final year. He, on the other hand, works long hours driving taxis in the city to afford his daughter's private English school fees and so is unable to help her to learn the language that he speaks with ease. He feels his daughter is being put at a disadvantage because of his wife's inability to train her in a language that is increasingly becoming a prerequisite to an upwardly mobile life in Bangalore. "She is the one who is spending time with the children, not me. She is there with them all day. I come home in the evening, I am tired. I try to speak to them in English but it is not enough. The mother is who is most important to the upbringing of the child. It is she who should be helping them." As he recounts his frustration over this linguistic conundrum, a small sign catches my eye, lodged in the sandy coral-coloured soil of the concrete-bounded meridian, bereft of flowers, that separates one side of the road from the other: "This Meridian Seeks Patronage." Out of either puzzlement or inattention, I don't take note of the author of plea.

*

The end of the monsoon season in September 2012, which a few months earlier had transformed the Bangalore's streets into knee-deep rivers, now brings with it a garbage crisis. The entrance to Bangalore's last remaining official landfill, near the village of Mandur, has been blocked by its residents, who complain of grave health issues caused by the polluted ground water that is attributed to the seepage of the landfill's waste. Bangalore's trash haulers too are ready to go on strike, complaining of not having been paid for months by the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore's municipal governing authority. Committed to their employer until then for some unknown reason, they had continued to work without pay for months til the strike. The five thousand tonnes of garbage that is produced daily by the city now remains trapped within its borders, serving as an uncharacteristic barometer of the level of human consumption that undergirds urban life. Those levels are in Bangalore still of course considerably less than those typically (un)seen in the cities of most "developed" nations, where greater purchasing power combined with lax regulation concerning the waste arising from consumption has resulted in steady increases in waste production.⁸³ Our apparent inability to sustainably manage the impact of our own consumption has prompted journalist Dayo Olopade (2014) to somewhat controversially propose renaming developed countries as "fat" and developing countries as "lean", because the latter are argued to be better able to "approach production and consumption with scarcity in mind." Bangalore is indeed still "leaner" in its waste generation than North America; it's only that its trash

⁸³ For example, a recent report states that Canada's municipal waste production has been increasing steadily since 1990. Out of seventeen developed countries surveyed, Canada ranks in last place, generating 777 kilograms of waste yearly per capita in 2008, twice as much as the best performer, Japan (Conference Board of Canada 2013), and significantly more than the estimated 164 kilograms yearly per capita produced in Bangalore in 2011 (Annepu 2012:129). Waste production has however not increased uniformly across the OECD; while urbanization and disposable income are also high in Japan and Norway, sustainable approaches to waste management has resulted in much lower municipal waste per capita in these countries (Conference Board of Canada 2013).

today has begun to accumulate more than usually does, on roadsides, in empty lots, and in large and mounting piles outside the iron gates of the Shantinagar Cemetery in the center of town, perhaps because it is one place where the residents won't protest.

Local and international newspapers report on the degeneration of the former Garden City into a "Garbage City", and fears about a dengue fever outbreak loom as the city's mosquitoes begin to multiply in the murky pools that accumulate around the garbage. Nearly a month later, the dump at Mandur is somehow reopened, and most of the trash is cleared away. The municipality lays ambitious plans for the segregation of garbage and recycling, and Bangalore breathes relatively easily once again.

Introduction

Among other things, the three vignettes above might gesture to some of the prosaic ways in which the responsibility for the maintenance of space is enacted in Bangalore. While the city has borne many titles throughout its history – the Silicon Valley of India, Pensioner's Paradise, Air Conditioned City, Biotech City, and Horticultural Capital – one of its most enduring is the title of Garden City, formally bestowed during the early twentieth century to anchor British colonial aspirations for a city of gardens and sprawling bungalows well-suited to the city's "temperate and salubrious" climate (Mathur and Da Cunha 2006:1). And yet, over the past twenty years, the steady erosion of municipal infrastructure and services has led to a new epithet, that of "Garbage City", undermining aspirations for Bangalore's rise as one of the world's urban centres.

But as Jonathan Goldman (2011:235) argues, Bangalore's civic problems, particularly in the areas of waste management and infrastructure, arose precisely *because* of its transformation in the mid-1990s into a "global city", an outsourcing hub for the "back office" needs of Western corporations as much as a leader in information technology itself. The exponential rise in

population growth that accompanied these developments exceeded the capacity of existing infrastructure, as well as the municipal authority's ability to meet the needs of the growing population. In Bangalore's middle class circles, one commonly hears concerned conversations about the city's rapid population growth, grinding traffic jams, insufficient transportation and sanitation infrastructure, air and water pollution, and persistent water and electricity shortages. The question of who exactly should take responsibility for the maintenance of urban planning, aging infrastructure, and deteriorating public spaces is central to these debates, as Bangalore's municipal corporation, the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), continues to fall short of expectations that it should act as a responsible caretaker of public space.

One might say that Bangalore's global city problems have outgrown the state-centered modes of governance that have, in the post-colonial era at least⁸⁴, been charged with the responsibility of managing urban spaces. Alongside the BBMP, an assemblage of actors have recently assumed a largely middle-class based "responsibility" for urban spaces – an exercise of government through nongovernmental forms that Ferguson and Gupta (2002:990) have called "an emerging system of transnational governmentality." Such forms of transnational governmentality in contemporary Bangalore are managed by a diversity of actors – not only local and transnational corporations and NGOs, but also local community associations, citizens groups, resident's welfare associations (RWAs), and children's civic groups, for example, each of which conceive of and enact their responsibility for the governance of space in unique ways.

Many of these movements appear to be structured more by class concerns than a universal notion of citizenship or social justice; it is what K.C. Smitha (2010:73) refers to as the "hitherto

⁸⁴ Colonial conceptions and management of space of course entailed a different set of responsibilities and techniques, many of which were based on the pre-eminence of the *cordon sanitaire* and the mapping, segregation, policing, and other forms of discipline intended to foster territorial and social control (Legg 2007).

apolitical” middle and upper classes (often with support or guidance from their workplaces or resident’s welfare associations) that largely orchestrate such efforts, sometimes to the exclusion of the poor and their concerns, as recent studies on middle-class civic movements centered around urban space in Bangalore and Mumbai suggest⁸⁵ (Anjaria 2009; Kundu 2011; Zérah 2007; 2009).

Their middle class status however does mean that these are necessarily “fringe” movements. According to the 2011 census, less than 8.5% of urban Bangalore households were located in a slum (Government of India 2011b), making it one of the most “middle class” cities in India. Middle class activism over space in Bangalore is a significant issue, though it is perhaps one somewhat distant from the subaltern concerns usually focused on by anthropologists. The growth of an upwardly mobile middle class and mounting engagement by global and local forces in the governance of space are thus highly relevant to the development of Indian cities, shaped as they now are by World Bank urban planning forums, transnational policy networks, infrastructure financing by global private investors and other forms of speculative investment, public-private partnerships, and also corporations (Goldman 2011). Such projects attempt to reform emerging mega-city problems that stall the functioning of government and economy, at the same time as they are redefining the meaning and practice of governance and citizenship, and the responsibilities of each.

In this chapter, I explore how the Titan Company, a joint sector watch company formed as a collaborative venture between the Tata Group and the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO), takes responsibility for certain kinds of spaces and the inhabitants contained therein – providing infrastructure, housing, sanitation services, transportation, and education, for

⁸⁵ Urban space is also a site for movements centered around assertions of various forms of identity and the right to freely inhabit and occupy public space, particularly on the basis of religion (Hansen 1999) and gender (Phadke, et al. 2011).

example – in ways that might depart from the ways in which the state and its municipal bodies do. Much like contemporary global forms of humanitarian intervention, corporate responsibility for certain communities appears to be articulated at what are often described as the limits or breaking point of the state’s responsibility. Such relations of responsibility for space and the communities contained therein might gesture to a novel form of governance, one that calls into question the analytical purchase of the notion of citizenship, premised as it is on a universalizing and presumably biopolit

ical nation-state charged with expanding its governmental authority over an expansive national territory. Instead, corporate responsibility for space and the communities contained therein appears both delimited and expansive, operating through practices of semi-permeable enclaving or islanding that limits a corporation’s CSR efforts to a specific, often spatially-defined area of intervention.

Humanitarianism has been theorized as an expansive (yet also minimalist) practice, targeting the global “human” as it is affected by specific (and often neglected) biological vulnerabilities (Nguyen 2010; Petryna 2002; Redfield 2012; Rees 2014a). Similarly, Partha Chatterjee’s (2013) conception of the heterogeneous social, discussed in the Introduction, reconceives of society in India *not* as a homogenous and universal body of citizens whose members have entered into in a social contract with the state. Rather Chatterjee contends that the social in India is a bifurcated and heterogeneous entity, which separates the middle class from the poor. The poor is not a homogenous grouping either, but is rather one comprised of the variegated groups – slum-dwellers, working mothers below the poverty line, inhabitants of economically “backward” districts or members of scheduled castes and tribes – that constitute the targets of the state’s multiple and flexible developmental policies.

I use the case of Titan's company township and its approach to CSR in the district in which its watch factory is located to examining the ways in which the *scale* of CSR departs both from humanitarian modes of governance as much as from the Indian state's presumable focus on a heterogeneous social. Neither seeking to ameliorate the biological futures of a *global humanity* as global health and humanitarian agencies do, nor assuming the state's responsibility for a territorially-bound *social body* of citizens, the corporation discussed in this chapter targets largely its own workers along with the inhabitants of the surrounding government-classified "backward" district, a spatially-delimited sphere of intervention that is a common feature of CSR programming in India. Chatterjee's application of the descriptor "heterogeneous" to describe approaches to welfare in India, then, appears to be extensible beyond only the social. What is apparent is also a parallel bifurcation and multiplicity in those entities that are taking *responsibility for the social*, whether corporations or other non-state entities. It appears then that the governance of spatially-delimited populations is a principal feature of non-state variants of biopolitics in India today. While the spaces targeted by CSR programming are circumscribed, the case of Titan's township also demonstrates the extent to which the delimiting of spaces of intervention by corporations are not necessarily premised upon a strict closing off of these spaces to outsiders. Rather, corporate-governed spaces can also strive towards a certain measure of permeability and extensibility, features that are apparent in both Titan's approach to CSR and in the design of its company township.

Islands of Excellence

"Titan's philosophy can be summed up in the following phrase", says Manoj Chakravarti from behind his desk, amidst several piles of neatly piled paperwork. "A company cannot be an island of excellence in a sea of deprivation." We are sitting in his office at the Indian Institute of

Management in Bangalore (IIMB), where Manoj, former head of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at Indian watch company Titan (formerly Titan Industries Ltd), currently works as Chief Operations Officer of IIMB's Centre for Corporate Governance and Citizenship. IIMB's lush campus is perhaps too a kind of island of excellence, located on the outskirts of Bangalore, a one-hundred acre oasis fragrant with jasmine flowers and populated by swaying coconut trees. Recalling features of South Indian temple architecture, its all-stone open-concept design defies a clear distinction between inside and outside. Vines stretch determinedly yet effortlessly upward along majestic pathways upheld by stone pillars, seeking the sunlight that filters in from above, while warm breezes meander gently through the open walls.⁸⁶ Outside IIMB's gated security checkpoint, the usually congested Bannerghatta Main Road ferries people along in cars, air conditioned and non-air conditioned city buses, and autorickshaws. In the distance smoke from a fire at an informal dump is visible, the acrid smell of burning plastic lingering in the air. The footpath (sidewalk) outside IIMB's gate is missing several of its concrete slabs, leaving dark holes leading to the sewer and storm drains below, while piles of fallen live electrical wires and other debris block the footpath at other points ahead. Pedestrians choose instead to walk on the road as they pass IIMB, as they do in many parts of the city.

Manoj is telling me about his former employer's approach to CSR and the company township Titan built near its watch factory in Hosur, an industrial town located in the Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu. Titan was India's first privately-owned watch manufacturing company, and is part of the Tata Group of companies. The company was formed in 1987 as a collaboration between the Tata Group and the Government of Tamil Nadu's Industrial Development Corporation

⁸⁶ Homes adhering to the principles of *vaastu shastra* similarly bring the outside in through the use of open sky courtyards at the *brahmasthan*, or central point of the home, built for their temperature regulating role as well as for their energizing and harmonizing effects.

as a public-private partnership intended to encourage development in Dharmapuri. Titan Company is today the world's fifth largest watch manufacturer, operating in over 30 countries. Competing with a significant black market, it is the leader in the Indian formal market for timepieces, and has successfully branched out into areas such as precision engineering, jewellery, fragrances, and accessories.

The Tata Group, the present incarnation of India's oldest industrial trust, is today India's biggest private sector employer and one of its most trusted and recognizable brands, selling everything from table salt to satellite television subscriptions to most of the country's transport trucks. The Group comprises over 100 operating companies in seven business sectors, including engineering and IT (Tata Group 2013). It has operations in more than 100 countries, employing over 540,000 people worldwide. Its total revenue was \$96.79 billion in 2012-13, with 62.7 percent of this coming from business outside India (ibid).

Founded in 1868 by the Zoroastrian merchant Jamsetji Tata, the philanthropy of the Tata Group, as was discussed briefly in Chapter 1, was historically motivated by a combination of anti-colonial economic nationalism, the Gandhian ideal that businesses should act as "trustees" for the wealth of society, and Zoroastrian religious values. This latter influence is perhaps most neatly expressed in the Zoroastrian injunction towards the expression of "good thoughts, good words, good deeds" (*humata, hukta, huvarsta*), which are believed to contribute to the triumph of good over evil in the ongoing universal battle between the two forces that characterizes Zoroastrian cosmology.

The continuing importance of philanthropy to the Tata Group is apparent in its form and structure – employees would often refer to philanthropy as being part of Tata's very "DNA." About 66 percent of the equity capital of Tata Sons, the promoter holding company of the Tata Group, is

held by philanthropic trusts endowed by members of the Tata family. Tata Sons redirect profits through these trusts towards various philanthropic projects; in 2010 such investments totalled more than \$170 million dollars, equivalent to nearly 3% of the aggregate net profits of the Group's companies (Thomson 2011:9). Additionally, members of the Tata Sphere (i.e. the Group and Trusts) are bound by the rigorously enforced Tata Code, which specifies, among other things, that Tata companies must "benefit the countries and communities in which they operate, support competitive open markets, provide equal opportunities to all employees, strictly avoid corruption and maintain political alignment, supply goods and services of world class quality and be committed to shareholder value" (ibid). The Group's CSR initiatives are designed and measured through the Tata Council for Community Initiatives, which provides a structure for the implementation of a range of sustainable development initiatives within the Group, such as "community outreach, environmental management, biodiversity restoration, climate change initiatives and employee volunteering" (Tata Group 2014).

While continuing to draw on religious values, the Tata Group's CSR activities are also increasingly defined and structured according to locally and globally defined indicators for socially responsible business activities: as an active member of UN Global Compact, it measures its CSR activities with tools developed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the UN Development Programme. It also follows the reporting frameworks developed by India's National CSR Guidelines. As a subsidiary of Tata, Titan too is heir to its philanthropic legacy, bound by its Code to invest a specified amount of its profits into CSR.

Manoj's quote on the island of excellence referenced a common approach to spatial organization in contemporary India, one that Titan was trying to work against. Often strictly patrolled islands of excellence – corporate or otherwise – are ubiquitous in India today. Entry to

malls, universities, and metro stations is often regulated by security guards and bomb detectors, for example, a response to concerns about safety against various internal and external threats.⁸⁷ Other kinds of islands are specifically restrictive on the basis of class or religion: “Prestige” apartment buildings entice potential residents with seductive taglines such as “breathe the freshest air in your own backyard”, while Hosur’s Sri Shankara Colony, a gated housing colony “for the spiritually inclined”, aims to facilitate a “rebirth of the traditional Hindu way of life.”

Residential and corporate islands of excellence, widely referred to in India as “enclaves”, are often explained as having arisen as a means of circumventing contact with and reliance on what lies outside them, namely the municipal services and infrastructure provided by the state. A recent New York Times article on residential enclaves in Bangalore notes that they are widely referred to as “Little Republics”, where water, sanitation, and security have come to be managed by private contractors hired and paid for by residents, to obviate the need for engagement with the unreliable and sporadic municipal services provided by the state, such as water and electricity (Rai 2012).

Some of the largest and most conspicuous islands of excellence in India are those that have been built around the information technology (IT) sector. Bangalore and its environs is home to several such lush and expansive private “campuses” that appear as futuristic oases that stand in stark contrast to the municipal and public spaces that exist outside of them. One particularly striking example can be seen in the IT company Infosys, its headquarters located on another “island of excellence”, in the enclaved Electronic City between Hosur and Bangalore (see Figure 1). A 2012 New York Times article explains how enclaving has been credited with permitting Infosys and other large Indian companies to flourish, by taking control over the management of

⁸⁷ Malls and coffee chains similarly serve as open yet “global” and regulated spaces where middle class women feel comfortable bypassing “local” cultural norms concerning appropriate female conduct because they are both “public” yet also private and hence, “safe” (Phadke, et al. 2011:45-46).

infrastructure and physical space in ways the Indian state was unable to – the numerous backup generators the company had purchased to insure itself against the government’s unreliable power supply, the laying down of fibre optic cables to permit for high-speed internet access, and the manicured campus intended to present India’s modern and efficient face to investors and clients. In the article Infosys executive co-chairman S. Gopalakrishnan gestures the necessity, but also the limits, of cordoning off one’s business from the apparently “dysfunctional” and largely state-managed spaces that lie beyond its gates:

In the past, private sector companies grew like gangbusters in part by shutting out the rest of India and avoiding interactions with a dysfunctional and corrupt government. But top executives here now say they can no longer turn their backs on the chaos that surrounds them. ‘Building these islands, or expanding them to become the whole of India, I don’t believe will work,’ said S. Gopalakrishnan, executive co-chairman of Infosys, India’s leading technology giant. He gestured out the window at his company’s immaculate campus, which included a glass pyramid, food courts, basketball courts and gardens. “At some point, the resistance from the outside world will overwhelm them.” Indeed, India’s dysfunction is now taking a toll on Infosys’ well-known productivity, Mr. Gopalakrishnan said. His employees’ commutes are longer, their fights with schools more intractable. “If you have just 100 employees, the impact is not so much,” he said. “But with 150,000 employees, more and more the environment affects us as individuals, and, yes, it slows things down. At some point, you can’t shut your mind to what is happening around you” (in Harris 2012:2).



Figure 1: Infosys Campus, Electronics City, Bangalore (Amit 2007)

Corporations engaged in CSR in Bangalore similarly tended to limit their spheres of social responsibility to enclaves of various scales. For example, one multinational Bangalore-based manufacturing company invested only in social programming for impoverished residents living within a 3.5 kilometre radius of its factory, which a pre-impact assessment had found to be one of the poorest areas in Bangalore. Another manufacturer in Hosur provided free medical care at its factory clinic and loaned out its private ambulance services to the villagers surrounding their factory. Gap Inc.'s PACE program, discussed in Chapter 2, also limited its sphere of intervention to the space of the factory and its female workers, not engaging further outside of this sphere, neither in terms of its CSR programming nor in terms of measuring its presumed effects on women's families. The patronage-seeking meridian described at the opening of this chapter is perhaps the smallest – and effectively unpopulated – manifestation of such islanding tendencies.

Titan's approach to CSR appeared both to be congruent with and constitute a departure from these forms. Company townships have historically been a common response to housing issues in India throughout the twentieth century. As Janaki Nair (2007:89) notes, "with the establishment of large public sector units at the edge of the city, the model of the low-rise spacious township gathered support, and housing styles became the basis for instituting new modes of citizenship, as workers produced for the nation." The epitome of "good planning", company townships were also generously provided with new infrastructure, facilities for recreation, education, healthcare and shopping complexes (ibid). Titan's township thus was a modern instantiation of a much earlier involvement of the business sector in solving housing problems.

How might Titan, within and beyond its township, define and intervene within the sphere of its "social" responsibility otherwise, in ways that refuse the paradigm of the enclaved island of excellence? Before turning to an examination of how Titan sought to avoid becoming an island of corporate excellence in a wider sea of deprivation through the practice of CSR, I first turn to a deeper examination of its history, and that of its township.

History of Titan

Titan's genesis itself gestures to the ways in which it might be seen as a hybrid form, a corporate-government entity whose social responsibilities embody *both* those of a corporation to its customers and workers, and a state to its citizens. Titan commenced operations in its factory in the satellite industrial town of Hosur in 1987, forty kilometres southeast of Bangalore in the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. Before this, watchmaking was a state monopoly in India, the market controlled by the government-owned Hindustan Machine Tools, which until Titan's incorporation produced only wind-up timepieces in the interests of making watches widely

available to both urban and rural consumers.⁸⁸ When the Indian watch market was deregulated in 1984, the Indian government permitted the formation of Titan as a joint venture between Tata and the Government of Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) as a means of encouraging industrial development in the economically underdeveloped (or government-classified “backward”) Dharmapuri district in which Hosur is located. Tata holds approximately 25% of the company’s shares, while TIDCO holds about 27%, the remainder being held by foreign investors and individual shareholders. Titan is thus not strictly a corporation, but rather a public-private partnership, a hybrid project of industry and government formed to serve not only the needs of capital, but also “social” needs. These needs were jointly identified by Titan and the state government in the form of education and job creation for the inhabitants of the formerly rural town of Hosur, where its factory is located, in one of two special economic zones developed by the Tamil Nadu government beginning in the 1980s.

Nearly 60% of Titan’s CSR programs are directly integrated into the company’s business processes, which means that many of its interventions target employees directly, or seek to economically empower marginalized groups via employment within the company. The very first community initiative was a scheme for providing scholarships for further education from among children graduating from the school system in Dharmapuri District. There are initiatives that have created jobs intended to empower and uplift women and people with disabilities, and one that employs members of the *Karigar* goldsmith caste, paying a higher than market salary while also providing safer and more hygienic working and living spaces (Baxi and Prasad 2005). The Management of Enterprises and Development of Women (MEADOW) program is an effort to

⁸⁸ Wind-up watches required less servicing and did not require the costly replacement of batteries, as quartz watches do.

economically empower poor women in the region by providing them with access to employment. In 2011 MEADOW employed 467 women in co-operatively managed, woman-only vendor units that supply watch assembly and jewelry finishing services to Titan.⁸⁹ An impressive twenty-five percent of Titan's employees are differently-abled, a conscious hiring strategy oriented towards addressing discrimination in the job market (Tata Group 2009). Titan also provides broader support within Hosur's Dharmapuri district (as it does in the district surrounding its second factory in Dehradun) through specific CSR programs, adopting and providing education, transportation, and infrastructure support to district schools and villages and spearheading a girl's education and empowerment initiative. Approximately thirty-five Titan employee volunteers meet monthly as a part of Titan's Community Development Forum, where many of its CSR programs are proposed, planned and implemented. As I will discuss further below, it has also become involved in the development of waste management solutions in the town of Hosur.

Perhaps its most enduring CSR effort is a planned company township in Hosur that presently houses 2,000 people, two-thirds of whom are employees of Titan, the remainder comprising residents from the broader community. Residents of the township are referred to as "Titanians", regardless of their place of work. I turn to a discussion of the Titan Township, itself partly inspired by early nineteenth century British and American company townships⁹⁰ but also having its own local influences, and the particular ways in which a corporate responsibility for communities within spatially delimited areas might be apprehended.

⁸⁹ A common barrier to women's employment outside the home in India is a lack of gender segregated workspaces. Such workspaces, though rare, are desired by both women and their families for reasons of safety and to maintain religious and cultural standards of female propriety, such as *purdah*, even while working outside the home. For a case study of MEADOW, see Fitzgerald (2008).

⁹⁰ For histories of British and American company townships, see Green (2010) and (Tone 1997); for a discussion of corporate "government by proxy" in Ecuador's cut flower industry, see Krupa (2010).

Employee Recruitment and Housing

The Titan Township was planned and constructed between 1991 and 1999, a corporate-planned and financed community designed to be an “oasis of comfort and convenience” that is, according to the Tata Group, “aimed at encouraging a vibrant communal life” (Tata Group 2001).



Figure 2 Titan Township Inner Road (author's own)

To learn more about the township, I meet with Xerxes Desai, the founding managing director of Titan between 1986 and 2002, as well as the founder of the township itself. Desai's history with the Tata Group is substantial, spanning more than a half century. Following his studies at Oxford in 1961, which were themselves funded by a J.N. Tata Fellowship, Desai was recruited into the Tata Administrative Services. Over the next twenty years, he moved through numerous appointments at Tata subsidiaries across India. In the 1980s he briefly left the company when he was recruited by the Government of Maharashtra to participate in the relief of urban congestion through the planning of New Bombay (now Navi Mumbai), today one of the world's largest planned townships.

Desai returned to the Tata Group when he conceived of the project in another Tata Company and then went on to found Titan Watches (as it was then called), leading it as its first CEO in the mid-1980s. As the first domestic producer of battery-powered timepieces for the Indian market, Titan needed to make significant investments into the material and human resources required to commence production. Specialized machinery was imported from Switzerland to forge the precision components required to produce quartz timepieces; workers today continue to operate these machines, out of which glittering cascades of silver gears and pivots flow through torrents of oil to be collected into the copper wire basins below, where they are later inspected for quality under microscopes.

Assembling a skilled workforce from the ground up was also one that had to be assumed by the company, and appears to have in part generated a particular kind of relationship of between Titan and its workers. The town of Hosur was too small to provide a ready labour pool, and it was unlikely that Bangalore-area workers would readily relocate to Hosur. Trained workers thus did not exist for the product Titan was ready to produce, and so had to be produced by the company too. As one representative put it, “we had to create our own technicians, rather than relying on the market to create them.” Titan’s factory workforce was thus recruited from small towns and villages across Tamil Nadu. Only a small number of potential recruits passed the aptitude tests that were administered, but the few who did found employment with a company that had a reputation stemming from a lineage of commitment to taking responsibility for workers and their welfare in various ways. Desai explains further below:

I was determined that we try and make a new life for them. We were really snatching them, taking them away from the school system at age sixteen or seventeen, before they had finished 12th standard; we paid them very well. We also had dormitories for them, because we found that they were young, and really didn't know how to manage their own lives, or what to do with their money, how to relate to the other sex, and also not to forget their responsibilities to their parents back home. So we started dorms, and had foster

fathers, mothers, to teach them not only to make watches, but also how to live, and how to make the best use of their money.

Desai's account recalls early twentieth century Fordist forms of industrial paternalism oriented towards the pastoral care of workers and company efforts to shape their minds and bodies outside the workplace, forms that today appear almost anachronistic in an era of flexible labour and capital.⁹¹ He appears to have seen his and his company's responsibility, partly determined by context, as not only limited to training workers for the technical skills required for their jobs, but also to training oriented towards adaptation to life in an industrial satellite town – providing not only a job, but also teaching workers *how to live*. Titan became responsible for creating the social and physical infrastructure for a “new life” for workers unmoored from their villages, albeit one that would also allow them to maintain their own responsibilities to their parents back home. The company also selected and assigned higher ranking employees to serve as “foster fathers” to the young male workers. Balaji, one of the former foster fathers, described some of the kinds of training he provided: “We taught them everything: how to write letters, how to use sanitary facilities, how to move in public places – social etiquette. All of them excelled and were good, it was just a lack of opportunity. Some didn't know how to wear a shoe even. We taught them the basics – and then put them on the job.” He remembers too the wariness of the parents of a few workers; some, Balaji ventures, perhaps mistrustful of city people, later visited the watch factory to see if it was really there. Balaji says that the Tata brand itself was a “blessing” throughout the recruitment process and beyond. Being one of the most trusted companies in India “really helped break those walls”, he says.

⁹¹ Henry Ford famously employed his own “Sociological Department” to conduct home visits within his worker townships to determine which of his workers met the moral criteria that would make them eligible for his coveted five dollar day wage. For an account of Fordist paternalism, see Meyer's (1981) *The Five Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company*.

Rationale for the Township

The increasing numbers of workers in Hosur were however putting a strain on the town's scant resources; Titan's employees alone added two to three thousand inhabitants to the town's population, which at the time comprised only 20,000 people, significantly less than its current population of 116,821 (Government of India 2011a). Desai described the problem this way: Titan's factory workers "were in a way building up the price of accommodation, rentals were going up steeply; they were also making a bit of a nuisance of themselves, the new kids on the block with a bit of cash in their pockets." Teenaged workers were initially housed in a company hostel, but as they began to mature, the company felt a need to provide for more permanent housing, as well as an elementary school for their soon-to-be formed families. As Desai, smiling ironically, put it, "we expected large numbers of children to be brought into the world as well as watches." Cognizant of the lack of available housing in Hosur, Titan's administration concluded that the "most appropriate" course of action would be to build a township for its workers, a practice with a long history in Bangalore's Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs, or government-owned corporations). Balaji later added that the decision to build the township was also an effort to create a "fixed asset creation process" for workers, who had no previous experience with formal sector work and might have squandered their earnings. The company's construction of the township made this process easier, and was further facilitated by interest subsidies paid to workers requiring mortgages.

The Tata Group's orientation to a form of CSR that hinged on the needs of its workers and the "community" more broadly appears to have been central in providing a rationale for the development of the township. Desai's rationale for this form of care recalls that of Tata founder Jamsetji Tata, whose own township-building legacy remains in the eponymous Jamshedpur in the state of Jharkhand, a township designed for Tata Steel employees by American architects hired by

Tata in 1908. Jamshedpur is today the only million plus city in India to lack a municipal corporation, governed as it is entirely by the Tata Group.⁹² Desai's orientation towards the welfare of Titan's factory workers, as well as his desire to ensure that they were the best paid in Hosur, recalls one of Jamsetji Tata's most oft-repeated quotes: "in a free enterprise, the community is not just another stakeholder in business, but is in fact the very purpose of its existence":

The most important stakeholder was my employees. In fact, then came the business people from whom I bought or sold, my customers, the community in which the factory was located, society in general...and really at the end of that list came the shareholder.

Construction and Planning

The planning and construction of the township were lengthy processes, owing both to the care taken in its design as well as the bureaucratic red tape that held up the project. Balaji tells me that one of the reasons for the eight year long process of design and construction was related in part to Titan's refusal to pay bribes requested by government officials to expedite the permissions process, an act forbidden by the Tata Code of Conduct. Titan also eschewed its entitled recourse to the Government of India's colonial-era Land Acquisition Act (1894), which until its revision in 2013 required the mandatory sale of privately-owned lands for infrastructure or economic growth initiatives, choosing instead to negotiate with individual landowners in order to pay above fair market price for the lands acquired.

Once the land was acquired, the layout of the township was meticulously planned by the renowned Indian architect Charles Correa, who Desai had befriended during his work on Navi Mumbai. Correa's architectural inclination is one that emphasizes a fluidity between inside and

⁹² It is also the only city in Asia selected to take part in the UN Global Compact's Cities Programme, which aims to enshrine business principles into municipal management by promoting collaboration between government, business and civil society to face complex urban challenges (UN Global Compact 2014). For an ethnographic account of Jamshedpur, see Sanchez (2009).

outside in an effort to design homes suited not only to South Asian climates, but also to communal living. Such an inclination may be seen in Correa's emphasis on incorporating what he calls "open-to-sky" space in his designs, which serves as "a nexus for the creation of symbolic public space" (Frampton 1996:8 in Correa and Frampton 1996) Such spaces, adapted by Correa for modern living, draw inspiration from South Asian architectural features such as the inner courtyards of traditional homes, built according to the Hindu spatio-religious-aesthetic science of *vaastu shastra*, believed to facilitate domestic harmony through an ideal flow of energy in the home. They are also found in the design of shared public and semi-public spaces, such as verandas and *maidans*, or public squares. Reviving the inherent fluidity between inside and outside that Correa sees as an essential element of traditional South Asian architecture is a conscious effort to build homes designed for community life, as well as a reaction against what he sees as the "simplistic architectural equation" of the "box" house form common to architecture of cold climates, one that he notes has been unfortunately replicated in modern architectural forms in India:

One is either inside this box, or outside of it. The transition from one condition to the other is through a precise and clearly defined boundary: the front door. Inside and outside co-exist as opposites, in a simple duality (Correa and Frampton 1996:25).

Correa argues that the climatic and community contexts of South Asia require not a box form, but rather architectural forms that permit a permeability and fluidity between inside and outside. Facilitating a fluidity between inside and outside is thus apparent not only in the architectural design of individual homes of the township, but also in its overall plan, which incorporates this fluidity into its very boundaries.

For example, Correa gestures to the ways in which his project, under the direction of Titan, sought not to build "an isolated company town (with the privileged ghetto mentality that it usually breeds), but decided instead to create workers' housing that is an organic part of the urbanisation

taking place outside Bangalore” (Correa 2000:52). This meant that the roads serving the township were designed to be integrated within the urban fabric of the area, and that sites and houses would be open for purchase by outsiders, intended to ensure “a natural mix of population, right from the start (ibid). The central feature of the township is the shared courtyard, a semi-public space shared by clusters of two to three bedroom row houses, a mode of organization intended to promote community living as well as providing a means of laying down high-density underground infrastructure such as television and electricity lines in order to reduce costs (Correa 1999:52). The courtyards connect clusters of homes together through a network of regulated pathways where entry is permitted only through gateway entrances at public amenities (kindergartens, community centers) at one end, and to public roads at the other (see Figures 2 and 3 below). Such forms of organization at the same time draw on Correa’s reapplication of the pathway, traditionally present in South Indian temple architecture and representative of a *pradakhshina*, or pilgrimage, but is also intended to “facilitate easy and informal control” of individuals moving within the township, as well as providing an interface with the “outside” via connections to public roads (Correa 2000:53, Correa and Frampton 1996:18). While the township planners wished to maintain the courtyard model throughout the building of later phases, it was later abandoned in response to the expressed desires of potential homeowners to design and build their own homes, a common sign of middle-class upward mobility in India.



Figure 3: Titan Township Courtyard Pathway (author's own)



Figure 4: Titan Township Layout (author's own)

Township Organization

Visiting the township, one can experience the ways in which its management and organization differs not only from the surrounding town of Hosur, but also from the city of Bangalore. The township is quiet; a few children ride bicycles in the streets, two women go for a stroll as afternoon turns to evening, but there is hardly anyone else outside on this weekday afternoon. Each home has a well-manicured garden of green grass in front of it, while trees sway along with drying laundry hanging on lines in the breeze of the shady courtyards behind people's homes. A small dog jumps out from a backyard to bark at me, though it's not a stray. There is no visible litter, no unofficial neighbourhood dumps. Neither is there any commercial area, aside from a small tuck

shop managed by the resident's association, a *dhobiwallah* (laundry worker), and a hair salon. There is a Hindu temple too; a Titan-brand wall clock ticks mechanically above a deity nestled deeply in its shaded *garbhagriha*, or inner shrine. Just at the margin of the township is a Ramakrishna ashram which venerates the guru of Swami Vivekananda, funded in part by donations from Titan employees; the orphaned boys who are housed and educated by the ashram play cricket raucously in an adjacent field.

An air of organized airiness permeates the township; nearly half of its 84 acres is reserved for green spaces. Large maps on billboards provide a means of orienting oneself through the township's three successively planned and built "phases", and signs point the way to various clusters of homes located on clearly labeled streets. Not only streets, but yet-to-be developed spaces too are labeled with neatly hand-painted signs, black-lettering contrasting against yellow backgrounds announcing their potential futures. "Plot Number 42" is empty, awaiting a purchaser to build a house upon it, while a field foregrounded by a rock formation is declared as an "Open Space."

Street names elsewhere in India are slightly more capricious than those of the township; they are wont to frequent re-naming through processes of post-colonial re-indigenization, or for a price after patrons of public space, if they have a name at all – an estimated two-thirds of the streets in India are said to have no name (Goel 2012), while many in Bangalore have more than one; old colonial-era street names or colloquial place names are still in some cases more commonly used over official versions, or even alongside them.⁹³ Difficulties of spatial orientation such as those

⁹³ The Government of India has forbidden street-level image mapping by Google due to fears that terrorist groups might use such maps to target defense and scientific institutions (Goel 2012), while standard maps often list "official" street names that are relatively unknown in practice. For example, the road named after former Chief Minister of Karnataka, Kengal Hanumanthaiah (K.H) Road, is still known to most Bangaloreans as Double Road, the thoroughfare that in colonial days cordoned the British Cantonment off from the native settlement, or *pete*. Indian streets are hence

sometimes encountered in Bangalore are apparently obviated in Titan's township, which, in stark contrast, has been standardized and made "legible", as were the streets of Paris by Haussman in the post-revolution restructuring of the city (Rabinow 1995; Scott 1998).

Titan School

The township also has its own school for the children of residents, which might be seen as an island *within* an island of excellence, an alternative to both India's oft-maligned public education system as much as its expensive privatized counterpart. Across India, government schools were formed in the post-independence era in an effort to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to age 14, although as was discussed in Chapter 2, government schools, like government hospitals, are today attended almost entirely by the children of the poor. Teachers are accused of frequent absenteeism, the medium of education is usually in a vernacular language, basic infrastructure such as toilets are often lacking, and pedagogy tends to center around rote learning and examinations, skills that have become uncompetitive in Bangalore's ever-evolving high technology economy.⁹⁴ Even among the poor, resources are often marshalled to send at least one child to a private English medium school as an investment in the financial future of the family⁹⁵; it is hoped that such an education might lead to a career in one of Bangalore's call centers or one of its many IT companies. While the quality of private schools is variable, and although the fees they are able to charge are limited by India's Right to Education Act, private schools also often

– for outsiders, at least – notoriously difficult to identify without the help of locals. Suketu Mehta (2009:129), who in *Maximum City* recounts an adult move back to his childhood city of Mumbai after a decades-long absence, notes with a mixture of pride and frustration that "the names of the real city are, like the sacred Vedas, orally transmitted."

⁹⁴ For a discussion of India's education system, see Drèze and Sen (2002:143-186).

⁹⁵ These aspirations have led to fairly intense growth in private schools, particularly in villages: In 2003, only 28% of India's villages were covered by private schools, whereas in 2012 over 50% of villages are reported to have a private school footprint (Chakravarty 2012).

require families to pay large “donations” as a condition of their child’s entry to the school, making private education largely inaccessible to the masses.

In contrast, the Titan School, founded in 2001, is an English medium elementary school where all residents are able to send their children free of charge. The school uses an innovative pedagogy based on current theories of teaching and learning, one that was developed by a panel of experts directed by Xerxes Desai’s sister, Armaity S. Desai, who had taken early retirement from the prestigious Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai to become the Chairperson of the University Grants Commission in India.

It was decided that the school would forego the more widely-used Tamil Nadu state curriculum in favour of the more rigorous one set out by Delhi’s Central Board of Education. Xerxes Desai says that the Titan school is unlike private schools because it cannot select its students; the fact that all children of the township are welcome makes for a “diversity in terms of learning ability” that required the use of innovative pedagogies. Desai says that the goal was not to cram students with information, as is common in government schools, but to teach students

[...] how to think, how to work efficiently, and how to learn. And not just in academics, but in terms of total personality. Because what we want to produce are leaders. They may be leaders in very different aspects of life, but they should have leadership qualities.

The school is an architectural beauty, where natural light enters through its courtyard auditorium, and the entry hallway is lined with display cases featuring the various achievements of students. Titan employees tell me that the graduates have done remarkably well both academically and in other activities; the teachers say that nearly 80% have gained admission to top professional colleges. Desai says he doesn’t want the Titan School to be an “island of excellence”

either, and speaks of plans to “reach out to other schools in the district” in order to introduce them to the school’s pedagogies and encourage their wider adoption.

State vs. Corporate; Inside and Outside

The island of excellence that the township seeks to avoid becoming is a striking example of a cordoned-off space which consciously circumvents the need to make use of the state’s welfare and municipal services, which are here replaced by more efficient and sustainable corporate analogues. At the same time, the township strives to remain permeable to what lies outside its borders in various ways.

In exchange for an approximately Rs. 500 (\$10 USD) monthly maintenance fee, Titan provides residents with sanitation and waste management services, roads, visits from the factory clinic doctor, a free elementary school, temple, and recreation facilities. For a nominal fee, the Titan Bus brings residents to and from the factory for three shifts during its 23 hour production cycle, a service commonly provided by employers across Bangalore so that workers need not rely on slower and more circuitous (though also well-developed and well-used) public forms of transportation.⁹⁶

There are no open sewers in the township, which are common across neighbourhoods in Bangalore. Instead, Titan has built a state of the art sewage system, where water is quietly purified using natural filtration methods. Balaji points out a school of fish that live in the former waste water that are intended to serve as proof of the ability of the purification process to derive water out of human waste that is clean enough to sustain life. Rainwater too is harvested through a series

⁹⁶ The recent construction of a metro line in Bangalore might change the transportational landscape in the years to come, though to date only a handful of stations have opened and the majority of the city’s neighbourhoods remain reliant on other forms of transport.

of underground drains in the courtyards, and a small artificial lake has been built for long-term ground water preservation.

Balaji had earlier told me that Titan managed all roads in the township; on one of my visits to the township in September, the main entry road is being repaved by a group of workers. Still, the company has “gifted” the public roads that pass through the township to the *panchayat*, the village-level body of government, through a legally-binding title deed in an effort to make clear that the road is open for use by all, that the township is no island enclave intended to keep others out. As mentioned, residence in the township is no longer limited to Titan employees; anyone can live there, provided they have the means to purchase a plot and build a home of their own.

Residents of the township are also protected from engagement with the municipal bureaucracy, widely disdained for its sluggishness and the necessity to pay bribes in exchange for basic services. Titan manages the process of securing municipal electricity and water connections, processes that Balaji says can take up to a year when undertaken by individuals. He describes the process at Titan Township, in contrast, as “hassle free.”

Electricity is the only service supplied by government in the township, although Titan also produces wind-generated electricity elsewhere in Tamil Nadu for use by their watch factory.⁹⁷ Although the government provides electricity posts and lines along with its power supply, in the township Titan has chosen to supply its own electricity posts and lines, made of more durable materials than those provided by the municipal government. Balaji tells me that the materials provided by government are inappropriate for the township, designed as they are to meet “basic needs” in village contexts.

⁹⁷ 52.46% of Titan’s electricity consumption is generated by its own wind powered turbines (Titan Company 2013).

Streetlamps are also designed and installed by Titan; a series of older lamps were recently replaced to permit the use of induction bulbs, which reduced the cost of lighting by nearly fifty percent. Balaji interprets the significance of these cost-savings not primarily in terms of efficiency and their benefits to the company – he makes it clear that the township was not designed as a profit-making enterprise. He suggests instead that Titan’s approaches are cognizant of an environment of perpetual electricity scarcity, where power outages are common and those who can afford it use back-up diesel or battery-powered generators in times of blackouts. “What is saved still remains”, he says. “And that way we’ll contribute to society. That much of power, somebody else can use it. That is our idea.” There are plans to increase the use of solar power in the township to save resources; many of the residents have already installed solar panels on the roofs of their homes, gently “nudged” to do so by an installation subsidy provided by subsidiary Tata BP Solar.

Entry to the township is regulated by a security gate at one end, and private security guards roam the premises in the evenings, though visitors such as representatives of political parties and door-to-door fruit and vegetable vendors are permitted entry upon signing in at the security gate. Its partial cordoning off from the outside via these mechanisms is also intended to spare it from some of the difficulties of urban life elsewhere in India, difficulties that are often explained, in middle class conversation, in terms of the state’s widely perceived inability to apply the law towards the protection of the middle class against their poorer counterparts. One of the township residents mentions that illegal electricity tapping and land encroachment are two trenchant problems in the area, and that claims are often tied up for years in the courts, rendering the assertion of property rights problematic. In the managed space of the township, these two problems are obviated: the power supply is described as being “under lock and key”, making it impenetrable to outsiders, while illegal squatters are also kept out:

People are paying so much money, they should have the freedom to have their own space. If somebody is occupying and putting their own tent, the fear will kill you. And if there is a political backstory, there is a problem. There are many cases... for example, if you mark your boundary [of your property], somebody will encroach, build on to your land. If 60/40 is the normal size of ground, and somebody will put one foot on your side. How will you fight that?

The State's Failures

Titan representatives explained that their control over infrastructure and various forms of welfare in the township was necessary in a context in which the state was simply unable to provide what was required to allow corporations to operate competitively. As Desai explained,

For what could we turn to the state? The two things that we wanted were power and water, because 20 years ago you weren't free to generate your own! And in fact, power is not too bad...but water supply was a big let-down...they had developed a dam near Hosur, a storage facility, but unfortunately that water was polluted from the effluent from Bangalore, not from industries in Hosur [...] so we've had to rely on our own borewells for water.

Rarely though did Titan representatives express a sense of frustration at this situation, or make the argument that things should be otherwise. As Balaji said of their relation to government:

Unnecessarily blaming [of government] is of no help, it does not serve the purpose. So putting additional effort to clean, if it is giving satisfaction, why can't we do that instead of depending on government for everything? We want to be self-sufficient, and this model is working.

And so at nearly every turn, the infrastructural foundations and the forms of welfare provided inside the township might be seen as an inversion of what is to be found outside of it, largely in the form of government-financed forms of infrastructure and welfare, but also as compared against their fully privatized counterparts. While reliance on the state's bureaucracy and its public services has been nearly completely effaced in the township, it is of course still a space governed by the state at the municipal level. But even in this case, it is an employee of Titan that has won the last municipal elections, serving as a ward-wise councillor (municipal representative) for the "Titanians" of the area comprising the township as well as for the six villages that surround it, although management make clear that he ran independently and not on behalf of the company.

Outside and inside become muddled further, as municipal politics itself becomes a task undertaken by representatives of the company.

Still, the township planners have clearly made efforts to avoid the replication of the island enclave form, efforts apparent in its very design as a space meant to be permeable to the outside: publicly titled roads weaving through it, a security gate that selectively allows non-residents in, plots made available for sale to non-residents, and a school that seeks to share its pedagogies with the wider community. But islanding tendencies are not only challenged by letting what lies outside the township in. They are also challenged in ways that extend the reach of the corporation outwards beyond the borders of the township, such as its responsibility for the uplift of marginalized communities within the government-classified “backward” Dharmapuri district within which Hosur is located. Another more comprehensive form of community responsibility can be in Titan’s long-term plan to restructure the process of municipal waste management in the town of Hosur itself, which began in December 2011 with a cleanup of the entire city, conducted in partnership with several other local corporations and NGOs.

Outside the Enclave: Cleaning Hosur

Inspired by a nation-wide citizen-managed cleanup of Estonia in 2007, the Clean Hosur project sought to mount a cleanup of the city without the direct intervention of the state. At the pilot meeting of Clean Hosur, Anand G. Rao, CSR Manager at Titan, presents the audience, comprised of corporate and NGO partners, with data relating to the implementation and outcomes of Estonia’s *Let’s Do It!* project on a Power Point presentation stamped with his project’s tagline: “Industrial City to Elegant City.” Anand tells us that *Let’s Do It* rid Estonia’s territory of 10,000 tonnes of illegally dumped garbage with the involvement of 50,000 volunteers over only five hours with an investment of five million euros. The project organizers estimated that if cleanup were managed

by the Estonian state, it would have taken three years and 22 million euros. A similar approach is proposed for cleaning Hosur; there is not a single government representative to be found at the event. Titan's approach is one contiguous with what has become a broader middle-class concern with cleaning up urban spaces in India, one that is largely being taken up by individual citizen groups and associations⁹⁸, although in October 2014 Prime Minister Narendra Modi mobilized government employees and students in the *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, or Clean India Mission, focused on cleaning and repairing India's streets, roads, and infrastructure.

Anand presented results of a GPS survey of waste distribution in Hosur, undertaken by Tata Group subsidiary Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). For the pilot cleanup, six GPS-mapped quadrants were plotted to test the feasibility of a full-town cleanup that would likewise rid Hosur of its estimated 2,000 tonnes of illegally dumped waste. Titan had assembled various statistics and information on Hosur's municipal waste management process, discovering that the city produces 70 to 75 tonnes of garbage daily, while only 45 tonnes are actually cleared. Waste was not segregated by municipal authorities, but instead taken *en masse* to Hosur's Dharga Lake for disposal by truck, where 25% of waste was estimated to fall off the garbage trucks along the way. The municipal government has secured nine acres of landfill, but it was not sufficient for the amount waste generated; much of it was being burned as a result, creating air pollution issues. Titan planned a few initiatives to follow the cleanup: processes were designed for waste segregation, composting, and educational campaigns.

⁹⁸ One such group is The Ugly Indian (TUI), founded in 2010 by anonymous senior Bangalore-area corporate leaders. TUI's major activity involves assembling volunteers to clean up what they call "Black Spots" in the city; urban dumps, urinals, or spaces where municipal infrastructure has been destroyed. TUI is also involved in convincing corporations to "adopt" and clean up Black Spots that lie outside and adjacent to corporate islands and campuses, often with the use of employee volunteer labour and the support of local street merchants.

I attend the Clean Hosur pilot at 7:30am on December 4, 2011, joining 393 volunteers, 140 from Titan, assembled in the grounds of a local school. Involved in the event were also some twenty men in green police uniforms and berets, silver nameplates on their shirt pockets, waists cinched by red belts and golden buckles, some carrying bamboo sticks. This was Hosur's volunteer traffic police force, comprised of Titan employees who are provided with uniforms by the company, and who voluntarily direct traffic in their off-hours to compensate for the lack of traffic police in the city.

Each volunteer is promptly stamped with a team letter from A to F upon their arrival, with custom-made stamps encircling the letters with the Clean Hosur logo in green ink. Each team was provided with the necessary cleaning implements: shovels, pickaxes, gloves, dust masks, and plastic bins. The weather is hot and the work tedious. We clean baby diapers and sanitary napkins out of open drains, pick up hundreds of tiny foil sweet wrappers that seem to be embedded in every crevice of earth. Paper waste, plastic, broken and discarded *chappals* (sandals), marbles, food waste (which we are told to ignore), potato chip bags, plastic bags, nearly every sort of waste is collected as we walk through our route, which winds through a residential neighbourhood. The volunteers work together, mostly in silence, some of them workers at the Titan headquarters in Bangalore, some of them young boys and housewives from Hosur. As we walk through the neighbourhood, people look out their windows and smile. One woman calls out: "what are you doing?" One volunteer chimes in: "we're cleaning up this mess! Please be so kind as to keep it this way!" Oh! You're from Titan! She says. I read about this in the paper yesterday. Please come have some chai!" We decline her offer, and again one of the volunteers says that she should make an effort to keep her neighbourhood clean instead. Titan sends an email to volunteers a few days later offering stats on the cleanup: the volunteers cleaned up eight tonnes of garbage over five hours

that day, while tractors and trucks cleared over 220 tonnes of larger accumulations of garbage elsewhere in the quadrants. The email thanks us for our participation, telling us that the project was “executed successfully and many objectives met.”

Inner and Outer, Public and Private

The trope of inner and outer, whether relating to the home or the individual body, and the importance of maintaining boundaries between the two, is one that has been well-explored in ethnographies of South Asia (Daniel 1987; Dickey 2000; Dumont 1988; Majumdar 2013). Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002:66) has used these categories to draw attention to how shifting forms of seeing, knowing, and managing the relationship between inner and outer are essential to the language of modern governance, colonial and postcolonial alike, as well to South Asian imaginaries of space.⁹⁹

In contrast to the inside of the home, the outside, exemplified in the bazaar,

[...] has a deeply ambiguous character. It is exposed, and therefore, malevolent. It is not subject to a single set of (enclosing) rules and rituals defining a community. It is where miscegenation occurs. All that do not belong to the inside (family/kinship/community) lie there, cheek by jowl, in an unsorted collection, violating rules of mixing: from feces to prostitutes. It is, in other words, a place against which one needs protection (Chakrabarty 2002:74-75).

Concerns with cleanliness and the management of waste too can be seen as a problem of managing a boundary between the inside of the home, a space of intimate relations symbolically enclosed for the purpose of protection against the impure, unknown and dangerous forces that reside outside of it (2002:69-71). And yet, the dichotomy is of course never absolute; the inside must remain permeable to outside entities, such as domestic servants, whose “polluting” presence must be managed by various forms of gatekeeping within the space of the home (Dickey 2000). The outside too may on occasion be brought within the sphere of the inside through rituals of enclosure and

⁹⁹ The unpredictable and dangerous qualities attributed to the “outside” of the bazaar and *mela* (festival ground), the boundary policing roles of village goddesses, and notions of inauspiciousness linked to entities that are distant or outside or distant to an individual are just a few examples (Chakrabarty 2002).

maintenance, by shopkeepers for example, who treat their workplaces as modified homes. This can be seen in the worship of Ganesh rather than Lakshmi as a commercial deity in many shops (for he is the remover of obstacles), or in the common practice of sweeping and maintaining the area of the street immediately adjacent to one's storefront, which comes to be seen as a part of one's shop space (Chakrabarty 2002:71). Still, the outside remains a space that is not subject to a single set of communal rules, as the home is; it is therefore malevolent, unpredictable, and "other", features which Chakrabarty suggests are responsible for its neglect.

I see a likeness here in Titan's approach to its township, which cordons it off from the government-managed spaces that lie outside of it at the same time as it ensures it remains semi-permeable to them. The management of the township stands in stark relief to much of the space that lies outside, for which the nation-state has been looked to as legitimate governing body and caretaker. At the same time, the company seeks to temper the elite and middle-class tendency towards the replication of the enclave form. It thus also extends its influence outside of the township, targeting the members of the broader community in the district in which its factory is located as well as its physical environs in an effort to create clean, efficient, and well-functioning spaces for workers and residents. Such spaces too enter into Titan's sphere of responsibility, joint ownership, adoption and care, through their patronage escaping treatment as an "outside...which can be rubbished" (Chakrabarty 2002:71).

Conclusion

Titan's approach to CSR, while contiguous with earlier efforts of public and private corporations to construct townships as a condition of securing employment, and resembling other similarly privatized enclaves, nonetheless reveals a specific orientation to the governance of space. Titan's township effectively obviates the need of its residents to rely on the services of the state:

education, health, sanitation, transportation, and infrastructure services are provided efficiently and for a nominal fee by Titan to the inhabitants of the township. Inhabitants of the township and employees of the company alike are referred to as Titanians, their spaces designed and managed by Titan; they are even governed by one of their own at the level of municipal politics. In this sense, the township appears as a response to the state's persistent inability to provide the necessary infrastructure and services required to permit Indian companies to operate effectively, necessitating the creation of a cordoned off space which can be governed with the absence of state intervention.

At the same time, as Manoj suggested, Titan strives not to create islands of excellence in a sea of deprivation. While its efforts are most comprehensive in the routinized forms of responsibility it has taken for the Titanians residing in the township, it claims to avoid creating an isolated company town, gifting the roads to the local body of government, making the township accessible to non-employees, and striving to bring the pedagogical innovations applied in the Titan School to other schools in the district. Titan also manages extensive CSR programs in the Dharmapuri district, devoting significant resources to the uplift of the communities that lie outside the boundaries of its factory and township. Still, it is clear that the corporate governance of space through the provision of CSR is necessarily circumscribed, unable to attain the scale of national welfare programming. One might ask, then, what becomes of the social when it becomes fragmented spatially, when it is no longer held together by the universalizing and territorially-rooted form of biopolitical governance of the nation-state, but when care for populations comes to be confined to various enclaves managed by diffuse centers of power managed by corporations and other non-state actors? Does this approach itself foster an archipelago of islands of excellence

surrounded by vast seas of deprivation comprised of communities lacking – and perhaps also seeking – patronage?

While I cannot offer a conclusive answer to this question, and while the implications and effects of enclaving processes remain to be seen, what is clear is that the enclave may not portend a dystopic world structured by the exigencies of self-interested corporations. It should be asserted again that Titan itself is also a partly governmental form, a corporation brought into being for the ostensible purposes of development, a large proportion of its shares owned by the Tamil Nadu government. The Titan Township resembles neither a special economic zone, that quintessential corporate-governed space, nor a heavily gated community, at least no more so than any other middle class Indian residential enclave. Nor does Titan appear to be offering services as a means of establishing relations of patronage in order to gain the consent of marginalized communities, as has been observed in deployments of CSR in Ecuador and South Africa (e.g., Krupa 2010; Rajak 2011). Titan's corporate responsibility is neither focused solely on its employees as a means of providing measurable "returns on investment" to business, as in the case of Gap's and BSR's PACE and HERproject programs, described in Chapter 2. Its representatives did not appear to instrumentalize their CSR investments in this manner, instead positioning and justifying their social responsibilities in light of the history of the Tata Group's philanthropic mission. I do not mean to imply that their interventions were not at all self-interested – it is just that they were not measured and overtly justified in this manner, as they so clearly were in the case of the ROI studies and impact evaluations of garment worker empowerment programs.

The enclave form includes a diverse array of privatized and semi-privatized spaces, many of which are managed by corporations. It includes not only those spaces for which a corporation manages formally, as in the case of the company township, but also appears to constitute a means

by which limits are placed on a corporation's social responsibility – a village, the 3.5km radius around a factory, a park or meridian, although in the case of Titan an entire district is brought under the ambit of its responsibility. I have suggested that the spatially-delimiting of responsibility constitutes a defining feature of corporate governance of the social. The broader political effects of the replication of such forms of governance, in challenging the legitimacy of the state, for example, remain to be seen.

CHAPTER 4: THE INDEBTED LIFE: INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A CORPORATE-PARTNERED VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION

I am at a monthly meeting of the volunteer platform Youth for Seva (YFS), where volunteers have assembled at a neighbourhood yoga school on a quiet Sunday morning to discuss their experiences engaging in various forms of *seva*, or service. YFS and its volunteers aim to redress certain gaps in government-funded services: providing free English lessons or health checkups and medication to children attending government schools, or organizing waste-segregation in their own apartment complexes, for example. YFS also partners with many Bangalore-area corporations, leveraging their funds, areas of expertise, and large pools of employees willing to serve as volunteers to implement its programs. At the meeting, the volunteer coordinator, Akshay, turns to the ten or so assembled volunteers and begins to explain what volunteering means for YFS: “What is volunteering? It’s a responsibility of citizens to society, to the nation; it gives a good feeling in return, but a return is not expected.” The volunteers nod silently in agreement.

The discussion turns to us, the volunteers, and we pass the rest of the meeting describing their successes and failures with the various programs to which we are assigned, while Akshay interjects with practical advice, underlining that long-term volunteer commitment is a key element in ensuring change. As the meeting comes to a close, Akshay reverently pulls out a handful of orange *rakhis*, or thread bracelets, out of a small paper bag. As everyone at the meeting likely knows, last night’s full moon marked the Hindu ritual of *raksha bandhan*, a celebration of the love and relations of mutual obligation between brothers and sisters. Girls and women tie a red thread, called *rakhi*, around the wrists of their brothers or other men from whom they seek filial forms of protection. Akshay asks each of us to tie one of the orange *rakhis* around the wrist of the volunteer to our right, as a pledge to repay what he calls our “debt” to society. As Krishna vowed to protect

Draupadi after she had torn off a piece of her sari to bandage his bleeding finger, so we pledge to protect each other, and society as well, by repaying the debts and obligations we owe it through our volunteering with YFS, with the goal of securing its betterment through our voluntary *seva*.

*

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which Hindu concepts are adapted and used by Bangalore-based volunteering organization Youth for Seva (YFS) to provide a framework for the development of forms of ideal middle-class voluntary selfhood directed towards the amelioration and support of government-funded forms of welfare. As responsibility for the social in India is today parceled out amongst multiple actors working with one another in partnership – corporations, NGOs, government, and individuals – what becomes apparent are the ways in which forms of responsibility that are presumably shared between partnered organizations are nonetheless conceived of and justified in varied and sometimes divergent ways. As I argued in Chapter 1, the responsibility for the welfare of populations in India has been taken up by varied actors in different ways throughout history, though it can also be seen as an effort to acquire the legitimacy to govern those same populations. This legitimacy was comprehensively acquired by the nation-state following independence, which positioned itself as a “social leviathan.” In Chapters 2 and 3, we saw how a corporation’s logic of CSR and its delimiting of various spheres of responsibility necessarily limited corporate interventions to various “stakeholders” with a potential to impact their profitability, such as workers and nearby communities, in ways that were both measured and unmeasured. This chapter instead turns to the ways in which YFS, a voluntary organization that helps corporations implement their CSR programs, defines a different sphere of responsibility, one that centers around a conception of each individual’s ethical responsibility to

five distinct human and non-human entities as a congenital debt (*runa*) which must be discharged through volunteering, here reconceived as worship or sacrifice (*yajna*).

The case of YFS can be used to think through two questions relevant to an analysis of contemporary forms of humanitarianism: First, how might welfare and its object – that is, society – be reconceived when corporate-NGO partnerships arise as a novel technique to addressing trenchant “gaps” in state provided services? And second, how might local “humanitarian¹⁰⁰” and voluntary affects and sentiments fuel welfare interventions beyond the state?

The first question engages with the work of anthropologists concerned with the ways in which the practice of global humanitarianism troubles the notion of citizenship and governance (McKay 2012; Redfield 2012; Rees 2014a). Peter Redfield’s (2012) question, presented in the Introduction – *can one be a citizen of a neglected disease?* – attempts to make sense of the ways in which humanitarian concerns with transnational populations comprised solely of individuals with a particular disease gives rise to a novel, and perhaps limited, notion of citizenship. In this chapter I similarly inquire into the applicability of a related category, asking what exactly does the category of the “social” refer to for a corporate partnered voluntary organization, and how does it uniquely define and enact its social responsibility? To answer this question, I draw on volunteer training sessions, interviews, and volunteer manuals in which YFS articulates its specific visions of the social as an assemblage of human and non-human entities bound to one another by relations of debt, which requires distinct responsibilities from the members comprising it.

¹⁰⁰ The term humanitarian is generally applied to global or transnational interventions; here, I draw on the intellectual resources of anthropological studies of humanitarianism while recognizing that YFS, confining its sphere of activity to India, at least for the moment, is more concerned with interventions that are limited to a national scale rather than those that might target a global “humanity.” A formal resemblance nonetheless exists between national and global forms of humanitarian action, in that they operate outside the bounds of the nation-state and are focused in many respects on the amelioration of the health and well-being of various populations.

A provisional answer to the second question, concerning the role of local voluntary affects and sentiments, is sought in an examination of how YFS frames and attempts to cultivate the sentiments of indebtedness, service, sacrifice, and worship among its volunteer corps. With the increasing supplementation of the nation-state's forms of welfare with transnational and local non-state forms, scholars have observed a corresponding shift from a discourse and practice of welfare founded on the basis of rights to one instead driven by practices of voluntarism and gifting fuelled by affect and moral sentiments, or "the emotions that direct us to the suffering of others and make us want to remedy them" (Fassin 2012:1). Contemporary analyses of global humanitarianism might lead us to believe that the moral sentiments underlying responses to suffering through charitable regimes of welfare and governance – compassion, benevolence, and altruism, for example – are fairly stable across time and space, with analogues in most of the world's religions, as well as in secular thought. For example, Didier Fassin (2012) argues that a politics of compassion, epitomized in the parable of the Good Samaritan, is dominant within "humanitarian government" today.¹⁰¹ Fassin (2012:1) appears to argue that a nearly universal politics of humanitarian compassion

[...] feeds Western morality well beyond the domain of Christian doctrine, which obviously has no monopoly on concern for the misfortune of others, whether we consider the central role of compassion in Confucianism and Buddhism or its translation as charity in Islamic and Jewish traditions.

¹⁰¹ It has of course also become part and parcel of many anthropological projects concerned with witnessing various forms of injustice. The notion of witnessing arguably arrives to anthropology via medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman, whose encounter with a young burn victim as a medical resident teaches him the importance of listening to accounts of personal suffering as a means of "making contact" with his patients (Kleinman 1988:xi). The concept is reapplied towards a sometimes theologically-inspired activist anthropology, by anthropologists such as Paul Farmer, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, and Veena Das, among others. As Scheper-Hughes (1993:xii) explains, "In the act of 'writing culture,' what emerges is always a highly subjective, partial, and fragmentary – but also deeply felt and personal – record of human lives based on eyewitness and testimony. The *act of witnessing* is what lends our work its moral (at times its almost theological) character. So-called participant observation has a way of drawing the ethnographer into spaces of human life where she or he might really prefer not to go at all and once there doesn't know how to go about getting out except through writing, which draws others there as well, making them party to the act of witnessing."

But the moral sentiments underlying actions coded as humanitarian are not universal; though humanitarianism today largely stems from Western-orchestrated forms of intervention led at home and abroad, the sentiments that we might code as humanitarian or “compassionate” exist in myriad form. How might the temporal and spatial specificity of compassion and a “broad concern for the misfortune of others” be brought into view? And further, how are humanitarian sentiments cultivated and channeled towards contemporary local forms of humanitarian intervention? In the case of India, this question has most often been answered anthropologically in terms of ethnographic inquiries into the gift, as the vast literature on *daan* illustrates (Bornstein 2012; Copeman 2009; Parry 1986; Raheja 1988).

While recognizing the importance of such work, this chapter seeks to extend the literature on humanitarian and volunteer sentiments in India by examining the historical and contemporary valence and polysemy of a related and under-theorized concept: *runa*, or congenital debt, as well as the associated concepts of *yajna* (worship, or sacrifice) and *seva* (service). While YFS’s conception of charitable service is similar to Christian forms of charity in refusing recognition of one’s giving and foregoing any return to the self, the cosmology and theology it draws on is specifically – though eclectically – Hindu. In contrast both to corporate conceptions of responsibility which require a demonstration of a return to the corporation, as well as to related conceptions of the human as a strategic entity oriented towards personal gain and accumulation, YFS attempts to position the volunteer as *always already indebted*. Ethical selfhood in this case thus consists of assuming what YFS, referencing its collaborations on CSR projects with major transnational corporations operating in India, calls one’s “Individual Social Responsibility”, or ISR.

In the final part of the chapter, I situate the concepts used by YFS within the various strands of Hindu thought from which they are drawn. In doing so, I demonstrate how YFS's approach does not constitute a simple redeployment of religious concepts, but is rather a novel iteration and application of Hindu concepts to the development of civic forms of responsibility through voluntary action.¹⁰²

What I try to gesture to here is an *ideal* (and not necessarily actualized) conception of ethical selfhood that might be juxtaposed against both economic conceptions of the human as an accumulative and self-interested actor, as well as against a corporate ethos of measurable returns and converging interests found in much of contemporary CSR practice, discussed in Chapter 2. At the same time, an indebted, sacrificial life does not necessarily map on to one that might be defined as entirely "selfless" or altruistic; it may also be seen as a condition of one's flourishing in a world where one's success is viewed as dependent not primarily on oneself, but instead on the perpetual contributions of known and unknown others.

Youth for Seva

I was initially referred to the volunteer organization Youth for Seva (YFS) through a circuitous route that can be traced to one of the archivists at Vidhan Souda, Bangalore's imposing and architecturally eclectic legislature. There, bureaucrats, politicians, and scholars consulting its subterranean archives are greeted by the apparent truism "Government Work is God's Work",

¹⁰² Ananya Vajpeyi (2012) has pursued a similar kind of analysis in *Righteous Republic*, where she explores the textual inspirations for nationalist's ideas about India and ways to govern it, among them Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar, and Tagore. Nationalists actively sought to arrest and reverse the crisis of Indian tradition and culture that coincided with the intensification of the British presence in India in the mid-eighteenth century by drawing on, commenting on, and reinterpreting ancient texts, concepts, and symbols. In the process, nationalists literally recreated and disseminated ideas about an India that had, in many respects, not existed in shared form before that point.

inscribed in neat black capital letters in English and curling Kannada script above the portico of the entrance, ornamented with carved and painted lotus flowers and Corinthian columns.

Via the archivist's connection, I establish contact with Bosch India's CSR department, which has partnered with YFS to implement the Doctors in Schools Program in Bangalore. The program, launched in 2011, leverages the capacities of non-specialist YFS volunteers, volunteer doctors, and funding from Bosch to provide free health screenings, prescription medications, and medical services to economically disadvantaged children in government schools. I decide to volunteer with YFS to get a better idea of how the joint corporate-NGO intervention works, and so I have signed up to attend one of its volunteer orientation sessions. The session takes place on a Saturday afternoon in an office complex in the affluent and largely Brahmin neighbourhood of Malleshwaram, near the austere temple complex of the controversial South Indian saint Sai Baba. The adjacent flower market is already alive with devotees purchasing fragrant jasmine garlands and roses for their worship.

The orientation is filled mostly with well-dressed, middle-class young professionals, as well as some parents and elderly people. I make conversation with Vikrant, a young Non-Resident Indian who has arrived from Chicago with his mother and brother to spend the summer in Bangalore, and is looking for a way to "contribute." Sandesh, a Bangalore-area photographer, has heard about YFS from some friends and tells me he wants to offer his skills to the organization, after asking if he can take my photo. A group of young men working at a large software development company and sharing a flat in my former neighbourhood of Koramangala are here too, part of a contingent of corporate volunteers looking to volunteer at the government schools around their company.

The YFS team stands at the front of the room appearing modest, many of them wearing the *khadi kurta*, a traditional Indian shirt made of hand-spun cotton that remains a potent icon of Gandhi's *Swadeshi* Movement and the struggle for independence.¹⁰³ Venkatesh Murthy, the founder of YFS, stands at the front of the room, eager to welcome the aspiring volunteers. As I learn from a discussion we have a few weeks later, he founded YFS in Bangalore following a stint in corporate America, returning with a deep appreciation of the models of volunteerism he encountered in the US. He was particularly inspired by the Points of Light Program inaugurated by George Bush Sr. in the early 1990s. At his inauguration speech in 1989, then-US president George Bush Sr. made "the call to public and community service a centrepiece of his presidency", speaking of "all the individuals and community organizations spread like stars through the nation, doing good." Shortly thereafter, Bush launched the modern volunteer movement in the US by signing the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (Points of Light 2013). Murthy drew jointly on the model of Points of Light as much as the teachings of Gandhi and the late nineteenth century Hindu monk and nationalist reformer Swami Vivekananda to found YFS in 2007.

While YFS is classified as a non-profit entity, its representatives actively avoid the label of NGO. Its website describes YFS as a "*platform* to provide opportunities for youth who wanted to take active part in community development despite time constraints" (YFS 2012a). Founders of other non-profit organizations I met likewise avoided the mantle of NGO, marked as it was with

¹⁰³ Gandhi's promotion of the weaving and purchase of *khadi* was a key technique of economic resistance to colonialism and British attempts to undermine local industries by flooding the Indian market with cheaper Lancashire cottons. In *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (1996), Emma Tarlo explains that for Gandhi, *khadi*-wearing was "a moral duty to both the nation and wearer, who should recognize the full implications of the 'khadi spirit': 'illimitable faith', 'illimitable patients', 'self-sacrifice', 'purity of life' and 'fellow feeling with every human being on earth'" (Gandhi 1959:104-5 in Tarlo 1996:89). As Chakrabarty (1999:4-5) notes in *Clothing and the Political Man*, while white *khadi* remains the quintessential uniform of the Indian politician, symbolizing purity and an identification with simplicity, poverty, and his "capacity to make sacrifices (*tyag*) in public/national interest", its semiotic value has by now been reversed, coming to stand instead for corruption and the illegal acquisition of wealth. For a history of the incorporation of *khadi* into the Congress, see Bernard Cohn's essay *Cloth, Clothes, and Colonialism* (1996).

the stigmata of inefficiency, corruption, and superfluity¹⁰⁴ (cf. Bornstein 2012). Preferred labels instead emphasize a combination of entrepreneurial spirit, sustainability, and the quintessentially Indian characteristic of *jugaad*, or the ability to cleverly and creatively find solutions to quotidian problems in spite of conditions of scarcity.¹⁰⁵ Like corporations deeply involved in CSR, post-NGO forms such as the social enterprise or business also appear to seamlessly meld social and economic interests. I recall my friend Vinayak Thanvi's almost incensed reply when I mistakenly called Zikwa, the Delhi-based organization he founded to link small-scale artisans with designers to manufacture products for corporate gifting programs, an NGO. "No, no, no" he said. It's not an NGO! It's a 'not-*only*-for-profit' enterprise." Profits were the very condition of the existence of his organization, he explained; they were necessary to support the continuation of his work, which was in turn able to help artisans generate an income by securing them with better market access for their wares. The idea that he – or anyone – would refuse profits was nonsensical.

YFS is not a social enterprise though; a concern with profit does not figure into its planning documents. YFS doesn't sell anything; it funds and sustains its programs through a combination of corporate financing and donations, as well as the long-term time commitments of local volunteers. It presents its mission as oriented towards the empowerment of youth to become positive change-makers in their communities, drawing inspiration from the century-old words of Swami Vivekananda: "My hope of the future lies in the youths of India, youths of character and intelligence, renouncing everything for the service of others" (YFS 2013). A few steps from YFS's

¹⁰⁴ In response to citizen-led allegations concerning government inattention to the use and taxation of the significant sums it distributes to NGOs each year, in 2014 the Supreme Court ordered the Central Bureau of Intelligence to collect statistics on the number of NGOs operating in India. While major states, including Karnataka, did not furnish statistics, based on available information the CBI estimated that 2 million NGOs, or one per every 600 Indians, were operating in the country (Mahapatra 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Putting the word *jugaad* into a Google image search will provide a more colourful range of examples than any one that I could give here.

main office in the largely Brahmin Basavanagudi neighbourhood, in front of the Ramakrishna ashram, stands a tall bronze statue of Ramakrishna's well-known disciple, Swami Vivekananda. Several of Vivekananda's quotes are displayed around the statue, one of which I recalled often throughout my discussions with those engaged in various forms of "not-*only*-for-profit" activities in Bangalore and beyond:

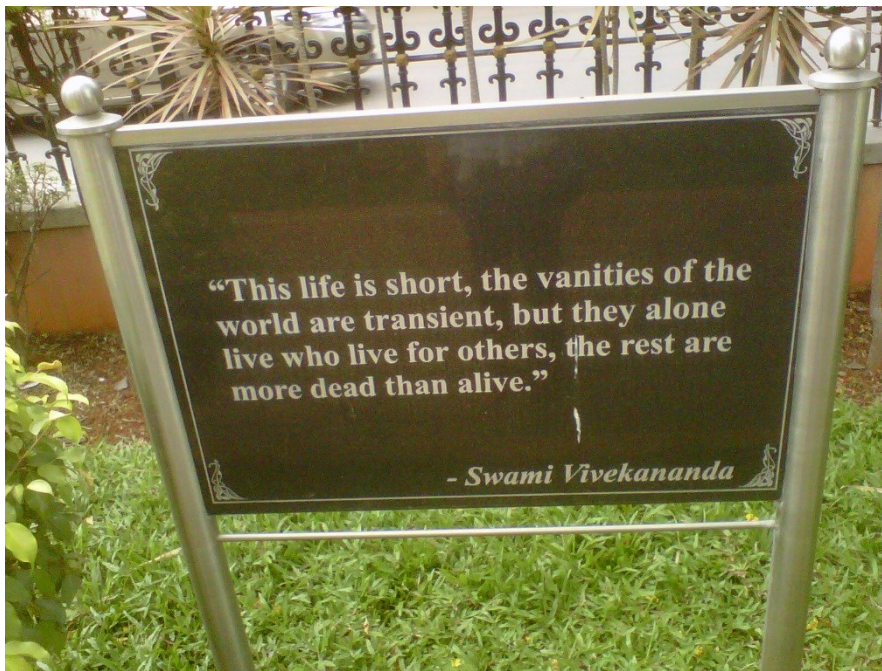


Figure 5: Vivekananda's quote (author's own)

Orienting Volunteers

Venkatesh Murthy calls the volunteer session to order, and begins his power point presentation by asking the audience to outline some of the progress and shortfalls apparent in post-independence India. On the side of progress the group identifies the gains in agricultural yields brought by the Green Revolution in the 1970s; progressive economic growth, infrastructural development, and the empowerment of women. When he asks for examples of failures, Murthy elicits many of the issues that NGOs operating in India are currently busy developing "solutions" for: poverty, access

to health care, corruption, a growing gap between the rich and poor, an imbalanced sex ratio, a lack of good quality and affordable education, and a lack of awareness about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. “Whose responsibility is it to address these problems?”, he asks. Rather than waiting for an answer, he presents a slide displaying an image comprised of four circles clustered around a central circle within which is written the word “community.” Around it are the circles of government, corporations, NGOs, and citizens.

Murthy uses to his diagram to parse out what he believes are the specific roles and responsibilities of each entity. Government, having access to a significant amount of resources collected through taxation, has the responsibility to develop budgets, and to use them to design and implement programs, policies, and infrastructure that will provide people with access to basic necessities. Corporations provide jobs and generate economic growth along with their revenues, providing social security to working people through employment, as well as affordable products and services. They can also innovate to a greater degree than government can. Citizens, possessing electoral power, have the responsibility to vote and monitor the government. They should also “try to do the right thing as individuals”; if they get involved in larger forms of action, they can work to create the “right kinds” of community. Lastly, NGOs tackle what the other three entities are unable to do, channelling resources, generating awareness, and creating new models through experimentation and innovation. NGOs can work with each of the other three entities, helping government to implement schemes, partnering with corporations, and implementing its own development programs. Each entity is important to the functioning of community, says Murthy, and dysfunctions emerge when any one of them does not perform its responsibilities effectively.

Murthy then turns to a discussion of the ways in which YFS conceptualizes of the practice of *seva*. “We employ the philosophy of *seva* (service) – in particular *samaj seva* (social service).

This is not in the literature, although it is used today”, explains Murthy. Though he does not explain this in the meeting, the scholarly work on voluntarism in early twentieth century attests that the ligature of *samaj* to *seva* is not one that can be found in Hindu sacred texts (the “literature”), but is rather a creation of the early twentieth century Indian nationalist movement. During this time, the nationalist movement redeployed the Hindu concept of *seva*, or “individual pious acts of homage, worship, and service to a deity or guru” towards a “more worldly” service of an aspirational - though under colonialism as yet unmanifested - *samaj*¹⁰⁶, or society, that was called into being and intervened upon by growing numbers of social service associations (Watt 2005:97). *Samaj seva* in the early twentieth century served as a kind of aspirational nation-building project – in the absence of an independent nation – parallel to the colonial state; colonial subjects refused their subject status not only through the struggle for *swaraj*, or independent self-rule, but also through the development of associational cultures rooted in the practice of *seva*. As was discussed in Chapter 1, such associations gradually contributed to the erosion of colonial rule through progressive Indian control over social welfare that gave way to increasing governing powers with dyarchy and later independence.

In a post-liberalization India, *samaj seva* for YFS does not, of course, seek the erosion of an illegitimate colonial state, but instead aims to complement the Indian state’s project of poverty alleviation, by seeking to mitigate some of the “shortcomings and challenges” facing government-managed social welfare systems such as education, health care, and municipal services (YFS 2012b:5). YFS effectively provides services that the state is presently unable or unwilling to,

¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that the meaning of the Sanskrit term *samaj* differs from that of its Western counterpart, though in the twentieth century the two could be said to have converged more closely. As Gupta (2009:143) notes, the etymology of the Sanskrit term *samaj* means “to move together, in a united manner”, and variously referred to an “aggregate, collectivity of individuals, union of castes, or people of a specific region. It was therefore an umbrella-like concept that could accommodate different families, *jatis*, castes, and regions under its rubric by forging a network of linkages.”

through the development of parallel and supplementary programs operating largely through partnerships with corporations. Examples of such programs include eye tests conducted by volunteers and the provision of corporate-sponsored prescription eyewear to students in government schools, the provision of free medical care to poor students by volunteer physicians, the maintenance of a free urban clinic in the neighbourhood of Basavanagudi, waste segregation, clean-ups of urban garbage heaps, and adopting government schools and sending volunteer teachers to mitigate staff absences (YFS 2012b). YFS's volunteer corps is a key element in the majority of these interventions. The development of such a corps, though there are historical precedents¹⁰⁷, is novel in its emphasis on corporate partnership and to a certain extent, corporate financing. While it is primarily based in Bangalore, YFS has also founded chapters in Delhi, Hyderabad, and Chennai, and strives towards becoming a national movement.

Its *seva*-based approach has been consciously adopted as an alternative means of providing services to the needy in India today, one that aims to serve as an alternative to two other commonly vaunted solutions. First, YFS's emphasis on *seva* attempts to counter feelings of incapacity and apathy among urban residents¹⁰⁸ – and the corollary expectation that welfare and civic activities should be the responsibility of government – into actionable plans for social change. Widespread today among India's middle classes is the perception that there is a general lack of “civic awareness” in urban centres, one that manifests itself in what people recognize as the divestment

¹⁰⁷ As (Watt 2011:275) notes, volunteerism was also integral to post-independence development with Nehru's founding of the Bharat Sevak Samaj (BSS), created in 1952. “Charity and social work were to be centralized and brought under the control of ‘superior’ experts in rational or scientific planning and development, and much stress was placed on using charitable activities to promote ‘national discipline’ and make Indians more efficient and productive.”

¹⁰⁸ As Murthy said during the volunteer training, “compassion is a natural quality of humans. When you see someone suffering, you feel it – pain resonates. But what happens with that compassion as we age? When we see children begging on the street, we tell our own children to turn away. We don't know if they are genuinely suffering, and even if they are we feel a sense of helplessness – what can I do about this? Some problems begin to appear hopeless. Slowly, slowly, the feeling of compassion is replaced by indifference. But if we can channelize your feeling of compassion towards *seva*, we can empower you so you know what to do. Hopelessness does not enter, and neither indifference.”

of individual or community responsibility for the development and maintenance of neighbourhoods, and a persistent dissatisfaction with the failures of government in this regard. A comedic theatre piece that opened YFS's Annual Day on August 12, 2012 parodied this perception, presenting an argument between two middle-class couples that develops when one character expresses a kind of helpless dissatisfaction with the family maid. Her friend replies: "But it's the government's responsibility - *they* should ensure the maid is properly doing their work. They should ensure that everyone gets an efficient – and also good looking – maid!" This parodying of the popular perception that government should take more responsibility for the lives of (particularly middle-class) citizens served to provoke a reflection on the limits of governmental responsibility and to promote YFS's alternative vision of heightened volunteerism and citizen engagement – particularly among those groups who have been the primary beneficiaries of liberalization – as a viable solution to gaps in government services.

Second, YFS's approach attempts to challenge the argument that it is greater financial investments on the part of NGOs and philanthropists that will spur social change in India. Such a position was perhaps most recently and widely publicized in Bill and Melinda Gates' 2010 and 2012 visits to India and their contention that Indian philanthropy is an underdeveloped practice, as was discussed in the Introduction. YFS representatives, by contrast, expressed suspicion of increased financial inputs as a solution to poverty. Such a position is not surprising in an environment where public opinion concerning social welfare interventions has been shaped by steady media coverage of cases of corruption, negligence, and fraud underlying the "benevolent" activities of government, NGOs, and corporations alike (cf. Bornstein 2012; Gupta 2012). As Murthy and his staff explained to me, YFS wants to avoid being fully financed and hence potentially co-opted by corporations; its goal is to ultimately function entirely through volunteer

labour. Until then, it refuses to simply accept funds from corporations to implement programs, requiring that donor corporations also provide volunteers to run its programs from their own employee pools. YFS thus explores “how an attitude of *seva* can fill the gap that seems hard to be met by monetary incentives” (YFS 2012b:3).

Murthy continues to provide us, the aspiring volunteers, with the conceptual scaffolding that comprises YFS’s philosophy: “Also important to us is the Sanskrit concept of *runa*, or debt. *Runa* basically means that you are not the only one responsible for your success; there are others who helped you get to where you are, to acquire what you have.” Absent in the concept of *runa* is the notion that success is a straightforward outcome of individual agency; it instead highlights the ways in which individuals are inevitably supported by larger human and non-human systems that are often rendered invisible. A more comprehensive elaboration on the notion of *runa* can be found in YFS’s 2012 Annual Report:

Whatever people achieve in their lives is not solely due to their individual efforts. Parents, teachers, friends and even many unknown people work hard and contribute to a person's success. When you drink a cup of water, think about how many people have worked to bring the water from a river to your home. Not just people but also trees, rivers, clouds, the sun and many other things in nature have contributed. If we contemplate on this aspect, we will be overwhelmed with a sense of immense debt to our parents, teachers, fellow human beings, animals and other elements in nature like trees, rivers and mountains. In Sanskrit the word for ‘debt’ is ‘Runa’¹⁰⁹ (YFS 2012b:5).

Meditating on the ways in which the activities of various beings and elements have come together to enable one’s existence is thus a key to cultivating a sentiment of indebtedness vis-à-vis the world. Once the feeling of indebtedness is recognized, one must then define appropriate means of servicing one’s debts. Murthy explains that *runa* is typically paid with *yajna*, which he explains means “to worship” or “to please.” He tells us that there are five types of *yajna*, one for each of

¹⁰⁹ I saw Murthy’s reflections on *yajna* reflected in a poster entitled “Expressions on Quality” on the wall of a CSR manager’s office at Titan’s watch factory in Hosur. The poster quoted Albert Einstein: “a hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depended on the labours of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.”

the five principal entities to which we are born indebted: 1) *pitru yajna*, or worship of ancestors; 2) *rishi yajna*, worship of teachers; 3) *deva yajna*, worship of the divine and its embodiment as nature; 4) *bhoota yajna*, worship of animals; and 5) *nara yajna*, worship of humanity.

Several practical examples are offered of how a YFS volunteer might repay ones debts to each of the five entities: one's debts to ancestors can be repaid by assuming the responsibility to care for one's parents in their old age and offering them the joy of playing with their grandchildren; the debt to *rishis*, whose foundational teachings permitted humanity to build its ever-growing artifice of knowledge, can be serviced by teaching others free of charge¹¹⁰, or by conducting research and making one's results freely available to others; the debt to nature can be serviced by electing to lead an "eco-friendly life" and not damaging nature by using non-biodegradable items; debts to animals can be paid by feeding strays in the neighbourhood¹¹¹; and finally, one's debt to humanity in general can be paid by engaging in various voluntary activities that involve caring for those broadly defined as "in need." For Murthy, living a life in tune with the five types of *yajna* is "everyone's Individual Social Responsibility."

The Self in Yajna

What are the sentiments that should underlie a volunteer's practice of *yajna*? As a YFS Activity Report (2009:6) explains,

Any act of giving with the spirit of *Yajna* will be devoid of ego. The spirit of *Yajna* is, 'Whatever I have today truly belongs to society. I am only a trustee of it. I shall use whatever minimal is required for me and give the rest back to society.'

¹¹⁰ *Rishi runa* continues to be widely recognized in India; certain kinds of knowledge transmission, such as those concerning the art of yoga or meditation, are in theory ideally provided free of charge as they are considered to lie outside the sphere of market exchange.

¹¹¹ This is a common practice across India; other religiously sanctioned forms of caring for animals include the construction of *goshalas*, or cow shelters, by Hindus and Jains to care for cows rescued from slaughter or on the verge of death.

YFS's notion of *yajna* thus appears to draw on Gandhian ideas of trusteeship discussed in Chapter 1, as well as the practice of CSR and Mohammad Yunus' concept of the social business. YFS urges individual volunteers to act like "enlightened" corporations and businesses do by independently seeing themselves as trustees – not of the wealth of society, as in the case of businesses, but rather of its varied non-financial contributions to the life of an individual. The material and non-material possessions of the individual for YFS are reconceived of as comprised of the formerly unrecognized contributions of members of society, of which one is only entitled to a portion; the individual is thus compelled to give back, as the corporation as trustee would by providing a return to his original "investors", which in this case are numerous and largely unknown.

The "ego" is implicated in such processes, but its relevance is marked by its absence; in recognizing the ways in which the self is constituted by others, the ego falls away. The Hindu concept of *ahamkara*, or ego, differs somewhat from the meanings it holds for Freudians and in more colloquial English speech. *Ahamkara* literally means "I-doing", and references the conception of everything in terms of an I, one that should be transcended through *yoga*, the cultivation of a sense of non-attachment, or through practices that center on the recognition of the ego as a false self that can be overcome through identification with *Brahman*, or an undifferentiated and ultimate reality (Jones and Ryan 2006:17).

Murthy further highlights that *yajna* is not simply about making offerings and providing *seva* as a volunteer: it is also about transforming oneself. "There is today a trend to become an activist. But a lot of sustainable development must be about how you lead your own life – to not add to the problems of society. This is compartment activism – it gives birth to a lot of NGOs, but doesn't solve problems." Murthy, perhaps speaking against the Gates Foundation's valorization of

American philanthropy, highlights a paradox in the fact that the US is home to the largest number of NGOs and philanthropic foundations in the world at the same time that its people produce the most volume of garbage per capita. For him, this is clearly evidence of excessive consumption and an ultimately selfish and unsustainable relationship to the world, one that cannot be undone by charitable activity. For YFS, NGOs and philanthropists are clearly *not* the most important catalysts of social change – their mere presence does not necessarily index the more comprehensive individual self-transformations that are required to ensure ethical and sustainable ways of being. He implores the aspiring volunteers to follow Gandhi’s advice to “‘be the change that you want to see in the world.’ Ask yourself: can you live a sustainable life, or consume less?” In a discussion a few days after the training, he again highlighted what was at stake for him in the philosophy of *yajna* and Individual Social Responsibility: “As I said, *being* is the most important part for me. My individual life I should lead with integrity, honesty, and character, so I am not a liability to the community, that's the first thing.”

Yajna and Identity

In one of our discussions, Murthy highlights the importance of identity to his construction of Individual Social Responsibility. He notes that the attachment to one’s religious or caste identity in post-independence India has been framed as a kind of “narrow-mindedness” that prevents the achievement of secular liberal democracy. Murthy argues that efforts to suppress caste or religious identities in favor of the kind of secularism that has been promoted in India since independence¹¹² are misguided; instead, he sees these identities as crucial to the development of an individual’s

¹¹² See Bhargava (2007) for an elaboration the Indian variety of secularism, which does not enforce a strict separation between religion and the state.

feelings of responsibility for the different entities for which one should perform different kinds of *seva*:

I believe my identity will exist at different levels: I have an individual identity, I have family identity, I have my own caste identity, the country's identity. And all the identities can coexist. [...] And at some level, identity propels you to do something for that entity [within which one's identity is constructed]. It creates a sense of responsibility. Because I have a family identity I want to do something for my family. Because I have the identity of this country, I am patriotic and I want to do something for this country. Like workers of a company who volunteer too, they want to do something good.

To ensure that identities remain productive rather than destructive forces, Murthy asserts that one guideline must be followed: “always you sacrifice the smaller [identity] for the bigger one. If there is the country's interests at stake, then you'll give up your caste identity or language identity, if there is a conflict. You know, in the *Mahabharata* there is one classic philosophy.” Murthy recites a Sanskrit *shloka*, or set of verses, to me to illustrate what he means:

*tyajet ekam kulasyarthe /
grama syarte kulam tejit /
gramam janapadha syarte /*

Which he translates as:

You give up individual well-being for the well-being of the community.
For the sake of the entire village you give up the community's interests
For the sake of the bigger society, you give up your own village's interests.

Here a kind of perpetual indebtedness is promoted, where the needs of the individual are subordinated to the needs of the larger entity that encompass him or her. If the individual only keeps a portion of what they gain by virtue of being in the world, it is necessary that they defer to the larger entities that sustain them, recognizing that they are enfolded within and sustained by them, but also seeing the ways in which those same entities are necessarily enfolded within and sustained by larger ones.

Unfortunately the vagaries of the market present a problem for Murthy's schema; in a world where benchmarks for development and the "good life" center around increasing production and consumption, the possibility for a life lived ethically in the repayment of debt to generate returns for society at large remains elusive:

But the paradox is that GDP will go down, the total number of goods and services sold will decline. We consume more and the GDP grows. So maybe GDP should not be the yardstick for development. There are other measures, such as HDI that we should be aiming for. Particularly in India, where 40% of the GDP is generated by some forty families.

Despite the lack of resolution of this problem, the conceptualization of a life lived in debt, repaid through the performance of *yajna* to humanity, animals, and nature remains the cornerstone of YFS's philosophy of *seva*, standing in opposition to solutions based around increasing institutional capacities or marshalling more funding. Through the promotion of this philosophy, YFS aims to catalyze a sense of *individual* social responsibility among volunteers, who are provided with a rationale to supplement the Indian state's ailing social programs. Once life is reconceived of as an immeasurable debt to be repaid by the practice of *yajna*, the responsibility of the state to provide services such as education, waste management, and health becomes one that can be shared by volunteers; less a technique of governance and more an ethical orientation to the world, what Andrea Muehlebach (2012:24-25) has called, in the context of contemporary Italian voluntary movements, an "other-oriented technology of the self." Likewise, here, YFS encourages its volunteers "to effect 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). And yet, this self-technology was not only one which elevated the needs of others as a means of working on the self, but also sought to recognize their contributions to constituting the individual's very being.

In this sense, YFS's philosophy links the transformation of the self to the transformation of one's surroundings: the ego is renounced, as well as one's presumed right to unlimited accumulation, and replaced with the premise of a life marked by congenital debt to be repaid by worshipful sacrifice to other humans, animals, and the natural world.

The philosophy of *yajna* thus makes a notable departure from the logic of agentive and self-directed accumulation, as much as from older structuralist readings of Indian social relations as pre-eminently determined by caste, embodied by Louis Dumont (1988) in the figure of the Indian *homo hierarchicus*, who served as "other" to Western *homo aequalis*. In the present post-liberalization moment, one might imagine a meeting of two other abstract figures: *homo economicus*¹¹³, utility maximizing seeker of his own interest; and *homo obaeratus*, indebted man, whose debts are immeasurable and perpetually borne for life.

Runa and Yajna in Hindu Sacred Texts

Having considered the content of YFS's philosophy of volunteering, I would like to highlight the extent to which it relies on a remodeling and re-application of older Hindu religious concepts to contemporary problems. If early interpretations of India's pre-independence nationalist projects centered around their status as discourses either derivative of Western political ideals or mired in

¹¹³ Michel Foucault (2010) has traced the shifts in conceptions of *homo economicus* from liberalism to neo-liberalism. In the classical liberal conception, *homo economicus* appears as a partner in an exchange process (2010:226), a figure who "...pursues his own interest, and whose interest is such that it converges spontaneously with the interest of others", thus unintentionally benefitting others in society through the action of the invisible hand (2010:270). Such a system of collective benefit requires that each actor be blind with regard to the collective outcome. If this is so, then sovereign intervention into the realm of the economy becomes an unnecessary interruption of an almost automatic process; further, the sovereign overextends his power by intervening into the economy, whose mechanisms he is necessarily ignorant of (Foucault 2010:280-86). In the liberal tradition then, *homo economicus* thus "strips the sovereign of power [...] he reveals an essential, fundamental, incapacity of the sovereign, that is to say, an inability to master the totality of the economic field" (Foucault 2010:292). However, the challenge posed by *homo economicus* does not bring an end to sovereign power; rather, it prompts the emergence of the "scientific and speculative rationality" of economics as a *lateral* operation of the art of government: government thus comes to be informed and guided by economic reason (2010:286, 294), centering around the application of economic analyses to new domains, such as family dynamics, crime and punishment, and the ways in which human capital is formed and accumulated.

a kind of neo-traditionalism (Chatterjee 1993), more recent analyses have highlighted the extent to which early twentieth century nationalists actively adapted and reinterpreted existing religious concepts to enable new forms of social and political action (Birla 2009; Vajpeyi 2012; Watt 2005). It appeared that Murthy was attempting a similar project, applying the concepts of *runa* and *yajna* towards the resolution of a uniquely contemporary problem: the perceived inability of the Indian state to adequately care for its citizens.

Below I briefly compare Murthy's understanding and use of these concepts to their appearance within the varied Vedic sacred texts from which they are drawn, to gesture to the ways in which YFS's appropriation of religious concepts aids in forging a groundwork for novel ethical relations through voluntary action in contemporary Bangalore. Of course historians of India have made clear the ways in which the British colonial project relied on a reading of sacred texts as expressions of pure and unadulterated forms of Indian religion and culture that had been lost through the ages, and were privileged over actual social relations in informing British interventions into Indian society and culture¹¹⁴ (Cohn 1994; 1996). Much of colonial legislative intervention into areas of religious importance, such as *sati*, or the immolation of wives on their husbands funeral pyres, for example, was thus accomplished through literalist readings of religious texts that often imposed an artificial coherence to Hindu and Muslim belief systems, and also served to regulate and suppress established practices which did not accord with British notions of propriety and could be argued to have no "real" basis in religious edicts (Liddle and Joshi 1986:28-30; Metcalf and Metcalf 2002:57).

¹¹⁴ Sanjay Srivastava (2007) notes that contemporary analyses of India often fall prey to this same colonial textual determinism, especially with regard to texts on sexuality. Similarly, British understandings of caste based on textual sources outlining the *varna* system, such as the *Manusmṛiti*, were used to class and order Indian society, despite the presence of local understandings of hierarchy based on *jati* (a system of occupational categorization). For a discussion of these issues, see Susan Bayly (2001).

In examining the textual influences from which YFS derives its conceptual repertoire, I am not claiming that these texts ever did or should now reflect lived experience, although many continue to draw on them for inspiration today, including YFS. Neither am I making the claim that YFS's appropriation of these ideas constitutes an unwelcome departure from "purer" conceptual streams. Rather, along with Watt (2005:74), I examine them as "living traditions" to highlight how YFS is creatively re-applying them to novel social ends.

Vedic Conceptions of Runa and Yajna

Genealogical inquiries into Hindu sacred texts grouped under the category of the Vedas are a difficult proposition, considering that their genesis as oral traditions have made dating them notoriously difficult, and also considering that the majority of this vast textual corpus remains untranslated into any European language (Flood 1996:35-39). Despite this, one can discern several broad currents within different branches of Hindu thought concerning the relevance of the notions of debt and sacrifice. Here I will focus on three: 1) conceptions of debt and sacrifice as essential duties of high caste male householders within early Vedic texts such as the *Brahmanas* and *Samhitas* (1200-800 BCE); 2) the foregoing of debt and sacrificial duties as a part of the practice of renunciatory asceticism seen in later texts such as the *Upanishads* (800-600 BCE); and 3) the notion of action and being in the world as a sacrificial act, which first comes to be seen in the *Bhagavad Gita* (500-200 BCE).

Runa is a term of no known etymology. As Malamoud (1983:23-26) notes, neither is the reason for its existence explained in the sacred texts: "so man's congenital debt, while it explains everything, is not itself explained by anything, and has no origin. In the same way as the notion of debt is already there, fully formed [i.e., given by the gods], in the oldest texts, so does fundamental debt affect man and define him from the moment he is born." In early Vedic texts it refers not to

debts voluntarily taken on throughout one's life, but instead to those given by birth; *runa* are thus *congenital* debts. According to the *Satapatha Brahmana* (c. 800-600 BC) *runa* is conceived of as a triple debt: it comprises a debt of Vedic study to the ancient sages and poets (*rishi runa*), a debt of sacrifice to the gods (*deva runa*), and a debt of offspring (i.e. having children) to the ancestors (*pitr runa*) (Davis 2010:72). Malamoud (1983:28) notes that the *Satapatha Brahmana* also outlines a fourth, the hospitality rites owed to all men.¹¹⁵

In early Vedic texts, the triple debt was not conceived of as one as binding for all Hindus, but was rather delimited by caste and gender. Such texts specified that the system of debts and their repayment was to be applied only to men of the twice-born (*dvija*) castes; that is, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaisha (Davis 2010:71). This was because it was only the *dvija* who could be expected to pay such debts at all, being in possession of the means to conduct the necessary sacrifices (Malamoud 1983). The imperative to live one's life according to the repayment of such debts remains today as a mnemonic still worn on the bodies of some high caste men in the form of a holy neck cord of six strands of cotton which are worn from the day of marriage, "each set of three symbolizing his responsibility to discharge the debts (*rna*) towards gods, gurus and ancestors – one on his own behalf, the other on behalf of his wife" (Madan 1987:45).

Fire rituals were essential to the discharging of debts to the gods, which were believed to secure one's material comfort on earth as much as rewards in the afterlife. While *rishi runa* and *pitr runa* were to be repaid by study and marriage and the birth of a son respectively, *deva runa* was to be repaid in the performance of the *yajna* ritual, a form of fire sacrifice in which oblations of food and other items are offered to the gods through intermediary god of fire, Agni.¹¹⁶ While

¹¹⁵ The traces of the conception of this debt remains apparent today in maxims such as *athithi devo bhav*, or, "Guest is God", which tends to describe the ideal Hindu approach to relationships to guests.

¹¹⁶ See Flood (2008:77-9) for review of literature on *yajna* and feeding.

yajna may be conceived of as a form of worship, as YFS asserts that it is, *yajna* is typically translated in Vedic texts as “sacrifice”, and personified as *Yajna*, the god of sacrifice. The logo of YFS (Figure 6) references this older (yet still contemporary¹¹⁷) meaning of *yajna*, depicting a circle of individuals standing around a *vedi* (sacrificial fire altar), in which the five flames of Agni represent the five entities to be propitiated or worshiped under YFS’s schema.



Figure 6: YFS Logo (YFS, 2012b)

Within functionalist anthropological analyses, sacrifice was argued to serve distinct social and individual needs, constituting religious acts which, through the consecration of a victim (in this case, offerings to the fire), “modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects with which he is concerned” (Hubert and Mauss 1964[1898]:12). In the Vedic religious system, sacrificial ceremonies were an integral part of life, believed to maintain the order of the universe, give strength to the gods, expiate sins, permit one’s salvation in the afterlife, and also permit certain benefits to the sacrificer, such as strength, vigour, good eyesight and intelligence (Rao 1991; Walker 1968:316-17). The triple debt and the sacrifices that are meant to repay them also were explained as a transmission of householder *dharma*, or duty, one that is passed down from father to son. The former in fact depends on the latter for the repayment of these

¹¹⁷ Havans and other rituals employing fire sacrifice are still commonly practiced in Hindu homes and temples.

debts for his own flourishing, both during his life and after death.¹¹⁸ *Runa* thus appears in classic Vedic conceptions, as it did for Mauss (1990 [1950]), as a congenital gift of obligation, the gift of a role which comes with certain conditions, as well as certain rewards. Study, marriage, and ancestor worship present a man with the “requirements necessary to become fully human and thus serves as one kind of epitome of the religious life in the Hindu view” (Davis 2010:72). It is for this reason that the practice of *yajna* is seen primarily as a responsibility of high caste male householders (*grihasthi*), and not of other categories of person (Malamoud 1983). Sacrifice relationships later evolved to extend outwards from the immediate family, coming to characterize relations between Brahmins and Kshatriyas, the latter appearing as *yajamaana*, sacrificers, who offer generous gifts in the form of *dana* to Brahmins as one aspect of sacrifice, and who in turn act as intermediaries officiating at sacrificial ceremonies (Biardeau and Malamoud 1976; Parry 1986; Raheja 1988). *Yajna* and *runa* are thus situated within the Vedic tradition as religious practices that might be called “communal”, “concerned with the regulation of communities, the ritual structuring of a person’s passage through life, and the successful transition, at death, to another world” (Gombrich 1988 in Flood 1996:12-13). This vision of debt and sacrifice are however but one of many within Hindu thought, which elsewhere deploys the notion of sacrifice to serve needs other than those of communities.

Soteriological conceptions of Yajna

The philosophical shift apparent with the beginning of renouncer traditions and the appearance of the Upanishads around the sixth century BCE challenged these more “communal”, literal, and largely ritual-based Vedic conceptions of sacrifice and raised soteriological concerns with self-

¹¹⁸ The etymology of the Sanskrit word for son, *putra*, is itself derived from such a conception of *runa* – the son is he, who by virtue of his very birth, saves (-*tra*) his father from the hell called *put* (Malamoud 1983:32).

realization by redefining the *telos* of spiritual life as the sacrifice of the ego and the apprehension of the ultimate nature of reality, or *Brahman*. Perhaps most relevant is the appearance of the figure of the *sannyasin*, or renouncer. Whether the arrival of this figure was endogenous to Vedic tradition or arrived to Hinduism through Buddhist and Jain traditions remains a point of scholarly contention (see Flood 1996:87-91 for a review). Whatever his origins, the renouncer is relevant here because his arrival brings with it a new relationship with fire, debt and sacrifice.

The renouncer is he who gives precedence to knowledge (*jnana*) over action (*karma*); “detachment from the material and social world is cultivated through ascetic practices (*tapas*) celibacy, poverty, and methods of mental training (*yoga*)” directed towards attainment of final liberation from bonds of action and rebirth (Flood 1996:81). Proponents of such traditions argued that spiritual salvation could not be attained by virtue of a high-caste birth, “but only by liberating insight or understanding the nature of existence.” Pure and moral conduct, then, and not birth, became the *sine qua non* of salvation within renouncer traditions (ibid).

With renunciation, sacrifice takes on a more figurative meaning, and fire rituals, emblematic of one’s membership within a community, are abandoned. The rite of renunciation itself appears as a “ritual to end ritual”: a symbolic shift from action to non-action, it is the last time the renouncer kindles his sacred fire, an eminent mark of his high caste status, and also the vehicle for his sacrifices to the gods (Flood 1996:91).

In giving up fire, then, the renouncer has given up Brahmanical rites; he has also given up cooking and must henceforward beg for food. His sacred thread is too offered to the fire, and with it, his responsibility to repay the three debts it symbolizes. He likewise gives up clothing and life in the home for a life of wandering [...] symbolically breathing in the flames during his last rite, the renouncer internalizes the fire of the Vedic solemn ritual and so abandons its external use”

(Flood 1996:91). He thereafter covers himself with the accoutrements of the *sannyasin*: a waistband, loincloth and ochre robe, while bearing a staff, water pot, and begging bowl (ibid). Sometimes a renouncer will symbolically perform his own funeral before the fire, which “consumes his old social self”, thus obviating the need for cremation at death, and resulting in his placement in a sacred river or his burial in an upright position (Flood 1996:92). Whatever the variations, the important point is that this is the last time the renouncer will kindle fire and thenceforth he will not be allowed to attend further rituals” (ibid).

Sannyasi traditions also began to redefine the necessity of *runa* itself, questioning its status as an obligation of all twice born men, and suggesting its application only to those who choose to be recognized as an *adhikaarin*, or as a fit and authorized person, defined by virtue of his capabilities, his own desire and his ritual qualifications (Malamoud 1983:37). To draw an analogy with Greek conceptions of political life as discussed by Hannah Arendt (1998), it was not an individual’s biological existence (*zoe*) that was the condition of his debt, but rather his recognition as having adopted a recognized role within a collective that came along certain benefits, and as such, the necessity to repay them.

Yajna in the Bhagavad Gita

The “Hindu synthesis” that took place during the early Classical period of Hinduism (500 BCE to 320 CE) is marked by the arrival of certain texts, chief among them the *Bhagavad Gita*, that brought Vedic and renouncer traditions into dialogue with one another (Hiltebeitel 2013:12). In the *Bhagavad Gita*, *yajna* and non-attachment become less about the fulfilment of caste-based duty and appear increasingly as paths to spiritual liberation that are open to all castes (Biardeau 1988). Sacrifice here importantly becomes refigured; less an act to be accomplished by fire rituals, and more one to be undertaken through thoughts, words, and deeds.

It is Krishna's dialogue with the warrior Arjuna, as recounted in the *Bhagavad Gita*, that offers the clearest explication of the practices associated with synthetic notions of *yajna*. If the central problem in the *Bhagavad Gita* is the discovery of a means of engaging in action while avoiding the accumulation of further karma (to avoid further rebirths) and also without prematurely pursuing the path of renunciation before the other three stages of Hindu life¹¹⁹ are completed, the solution becomes the synthesis of action *and* renunciation. This rapprochement is termed *karmayoga*, or acting while renouncing the fruits of one's actions; that is, acting without attachment to or regard for the result. The end result of such a practice is nonetheless conceived of as *moksha*, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth. The reconceptualization of quotidian action as *yajna*, a sacrifice to the gods that denies the actor any ownership over the act as much as its outcomes, thus becomes central to the practice of *karmayoga*. As Krishna advises, "Do therefore [...] earnestly perform action for *Yajna* alone, free from attachment"¹²⁰ (Chidbhavananda 1974:222).

It is the synthetic Hindu conception of *yajna* found in some interpretations of the *Bhagavad Gita* that bears the closest resemblance to YFS's philosophy, although its approach diverges in several ways. Like YFS, Swami Chidbhavananda's (1974) reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* also takes the view of *yajna* as a social service. It is in Chidbhavananda's commentary that one finds his mention of the five *yajnas* as they are outlined by Youth for Seva, though his suggestions for action differ somewhat from YFS's volunteer-based plans. Chidbhavananda asserts that *yajna* is to be conducted only by the ideal family man, who should begin his daily practice of the five *yajnas*

¹¹⁹ That is, Brahmacharya (celibate studenthood), Grihastha (householder), Vanaprastha (forest dweller) and Sannyasa (renouncer).

¹²⁰ In the case of Arjuna, he is coached to offer himself as a sacrificial victim for the world's good, excused of the slaughter of his relatives by renouncing the fruits of his actions, by non-attachment to the outcome. The sacrificer thus becomes the true *sannyasin*, who never has self-interest nor ego in view but devotes himself to God and acts as his representative or duplicate on earth (Biardeau 1988:94).

with the worship of Deva, or God, according to one's particular means of worship (1974:231). Juxtaposing Chidbhavanada's reading to YFS's, it becomes apparent how YFS has adapted religious terms to give them new meanings and applications. To recall YFS's conception, *deva* was defined not as God per se, but as the divine principle, or "nature" by YFS, and *bhoota* as animals. *Bhoota* is in fact derived from the past participle of the root *bhu*, meaning to be; *bhootas* are thus not animals, but "has-beens, shades, spirits who have left their bodies", propitiated under earlier Hindu traditions as "the indistinct beings that prowl around the house" (Malamoud 1983:28).

With the path of *karmayoga* opened by the Bhagavad Gita, man can act and still "make endless ethical and spiritual progress and at the same time remain untethered to karma" (Chidbhavananda 1974:221-223). The way to achieve this is to perform action for the sake of *yajna*, for the sake of sacrifice, alone – that is, to reconceive of all of one's actions as a form of sacrifice.¹²¹ Such a self-focused practice is however also defined as ideal in part because it serves not only to fulfil one's own ethical and spiritual needs, but also because it is helpful to *others* (ibid). While *yajna* appears as an act of "self-dedication", an act in which every sacrifice is met with a return to the self, it is also one that aims towards "the welfare of others":

The act of offering the best and the most useful in one for the welfare of others is self-dedication. Both the giver and the received stand to gain though this sacred act. It is like draining the water away from a copious well into a fertile field. This bounteous act goes by the name of *Yajna*, which literally means sacrifice. As fresh water springs out from an emptied well, the man who performs *Yajna* becomes more and yet more enlightened and prosperous. By imparting one's learning to others the capacity to teach increases. By sharing one's knowledge and wisdom with others, one's fund of knowledge and wisdom increases. By supplying manure to the soil its capacity to yield is made more potential. By giving the labourer his due wage the urge in him to turn out more work is made keen. By sharing one's wealth with all those who have been responsible for its growth, security and further expansion are ensured. The personal weal is ever unfailingly contained in the public weal. Giving effect to this inviolable law of nature is the effect of *Yajna* (Chidbhavananda 1974:223).

¹²¹ At the same time, *yajna* itself is said to be born of karma (Chidbhavananda 1974:233).

So rather than the self- and family-focused expiation or propitiation of the gods that Vedic fire sacrifice is thought to accomplish, sacrifice as conceived of in the *Bhagavad Gita* is one that brings benefits to the giver in this life, as well as to those around him.

Life on earth is wrought with misery, however much a man may pose to be free from it. Still, there is an unfailing way to convert earthly life into a 'mansion of mirth.' When all activities in life are changed into *Yajna*, the spectacle also undergoes a corresponding change. Man is born to give and not to grab. The grabbing man pays the penalty in the form of misery; the giver reaps the reward in the form of undiluted joy. The means to give somehow increases in the man who has a mind to give. The resources, the bodily effort and mental disposition – all these become multiplied in the man of *Yajna*. His life flowers in being useful to others and fruits in enlightenment (Chidbhavananda 1975:225).

Yajna as *karmayoga*, the renunciation of attachment to one's actions, thus may also appear here as a sacrifice according to the schema of Hubert and Mauss (1964:100); as a religious act in which the individual sacrifices the ego and its attachments (the "victims") through a refiguring of action itself as sacrifice, in order to achieve *moksha*, liberation. Particularly in the commentary of Chidbhavananda, the reconceptualization of action as *yajna* shows itself in the Maussian "dual light" of the sacrifice, one that he later applied to the gift: for the man seeking *moksha*, "it is a useful act and it is an obligation. Disinterestedness mingled with self-interest" (ibid).

Transformations of Self, Transformations of Society

It is clear that YFS's schema also draws inspiration from more contemporary thinkers who were concerned with the relationship between the transformation of the self and the transformation of society, such as Gandhi and Jiddu Krishnamurti.

The dual nature of *Swaraj*, or self-rule in Gandhian thought has been well-elaborated by scholars of Gandhi; briefly, Gandhi's emphasis on *swaraj* referred not only to self-rule in the sense of self-determination for India under British rule, but also to a kind of self-technology centered around bodily self-restraint and service to others, one, like YFS's focus on the dissolution of the

ego, was ultimately oriented towards a dissolution of the self¹²² (Alter 2011:30, 104; Vajpeyi 2012-48). His constructive work programme, discussed in Chapter 1, clearly bears certain resemblances to YFS's approach.

A parallel to this line of thought can be found in the writings of Jiddu Krishnamurti¹²³ (1895-1986), the once-appointed leader of the Theosophical Movement, and an influential figure amongst Bangalore's elite.¹²⁴ Like Gandhi, Krishnamurti drew on *advaita*, or the notion of a fundamental nondualism between the self and the divine¹²⁵, to highlight the necessity of the transformation of the individual to effect the transformation of society. For YFS and Krishnamurti both, the key dualism effaced appears to be that not between man and the divine, but rather between the individual and society. In a collected volume of Krishnamurti's writings and speeches entitled *Social Responsibility* (1992:29-30), he stresses that the society in which we live "we have created, we are responsible for it – each one of us [...] It has come about through our greed, through our ambition, through our personal like and dislike and enmities, through our frustrations, through our search for satisfaction." The individual *is* society, for Krishnamurti, and so to transform society one must necessarily first transform the self:

All our problems are really individual problems because the individual is society. There is no society without the individual, and as long as the individual does not totally understand himself, his conscious as well as his subconscious self, whatever reforms he may devise, whatever gods he may invent, whatever truths he may seek will have very little significance (Krishnamurti 1992 [1965]:i).

¹²² In his speech "True Independence", Gandhi remarked that "external freedom will always be the means of measuring the freedom of the self within. Hence we often find that the laws made to grant us freedom often turn out to be the shackles binding us. Hence the *dharma* of those workers who wish to attain true freedom is to try and attempt an improvement in the self" (Gandhi 1928 in Dalton 1995:107).

¹²³ For more on Krishnamurti's thought, see Hillary Rodrigues (1990) *Insight and the Religious Mind: An analysis of Krishnamurti's Thought*.

¹²⁴ The Valley School in Bangalore and Rishi Valley School in the nearby state of Andhra Pradesh are both well-attended elite educational institutions whose pedagogies draw on the philosophies of Krishnamurti.

¹²⁵ The philosophy of *advaita* holds that there is in fact no difference between *Brahman* and the self, that god and man are simply different manifestations of the divine.

Political and legislative change, for Krishnamurti as much as for YFS, is perhaps not as capable as securing radical social change as is a profound turning inward to the self. The self thus appears as a kind of microcosm of the whole of society, which can only be transformed by the actions of each individual:

What you are, the world is, and without your transformation, there can be no transformation of the world. The society is not different from you – you are society. The very structure of society is the structure of yourself. So when you begin to understand yourself, you are then beginning to understand the society in which you live. It is not opposed to society. So a religious man is concerned with the discovery of a new way of life, of living in this world, and bringing out a transformation in the society in which he lives, because by transforming himself, he transforms society (Krishnamurti 1992[1965]:30).

Conclusion

The above examination of *runa* and *yajna* demonstrate that the ways in which YFS's use of Hindu concepts is not a simple redeployment, but a novel reading that serves to define new objects and modes of partnered corporate-volunteer intervention, though it clearly draws on earlier traditions in its imagery and the development of its philosophy. This reading allows something like the cultivation of a sacrificial subjectivity among volunteers, comprised of a specific set of humanitarian sentiments required to intervene in new ways on a new object, an extended conception of the social comprised of various entities to which one is indebted.

While YFS's philosophy clearly draws on Hindu textual sources, it also exceeds these sources, refiguring the notion of responsibility according to the exigencies of a "secular", liberalised India. YFS's formulations of *runa* and *yajna* have clearly exceeded the constraints imposed by Vedic notions of sacrifice that once confined it to Hindu men of particular castes and directed towards their circles of *dharmic* obligation; neither are they strictly focused to a

reconceptualization action as *yajna* towards the practice of *karmayoga*, one that would be undertaken as an effort to attain moksha, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth. Instead, YFS's philosophy appears as a voluntary code of conduct that can be applied by largely middle-class volunteers who come from diverse religious and caste communities. While volunteers undoubtedly apply their own unique justifications for their engagement in voluntary work, YFS's code of conduct nonetheless attempts to promote the conceptual scaffolding of the indebted life for all volunteers, regardless of religion or caste, in an attempt to frame volunteerism as a form of ethical action. While the linking of *runa* and *yajna* to particular castes or to Hinduism has been dispensed with, the idea that these are practices linked to certain identities and roles nonetheless remains. One's identity as a member of a family or community is refigured as an important basis for promoting the notion of responsibility, rather than barriers to it. Similarly to Vedic thought, *runa* is not simply a debt that one acquires by virtue of one's birth; it is instead a condition of social life, or, perhaps more broadly, of a life lived in relation to the world and to others. In such a formulation, one's very existence results from sacrifices made by known and unknown others, a sacrifice that one in turn perpetuates. Inuit naming practices appear in a similar light, as gifts that can never be repaid. As Lisa Stevenson (2005:235) explains, the Inuit name, or *atiq*, is a gift of selfhood for which one owes one's very life, connecting the individual to a lineage of others sharing the same name. The gift of the name cannot be repaid, though one must act as if it could be. Citing Mauss, she writes:

‘The obligation attached to a gift itself is not inert. Even when abandoned by the giver, it *still forms a part of him*’ (emphasis added Mauss 1967:9). ‘Hence it follows that to give something is to give a part of oneself’ (10). Mauss discovers that the trauma of the gift lies in the fact that in giving, “a man gives himself, and he does so because he owes himself- himself and his possessions- to others” (Stevenson 2005:45).

The perpetuation of *runa* might also be understood in light of what Butler (2006:46) calls the “enigmatic traces of others” that are implied in the formation of the self and the source of one's

ethical connection to others: “I find that my very formation implicates the other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection to others. I am not fully known to myself, because part of what I am is the enigmatic traces of others.” The concept of *runa* likewise suggests that one’s debts are effectively enigmatic; unknowable, incalculable, and hence perpetual. Can one’s *runa* ever be repaid? In this life or in others to come? Can one ever know if they have been?

What also becomes clear in YFS’s conception of life as debt are the ways in which it serves as a compelling critique of notions of rational and maximizing selfhood associated with economic conceptions of the human. For YFS, ethical life instead appears as a process of an increasing accumulation of debts rather than of success or commodities. Conceiving of life as always already indebted shifts one’s inclination from taking to giving; from acquisition to a kind of generosity by necessity. Life, for YFS, despite what the economic priorities pursued in post-liberalization India seems to suggest, is not about accumulation, but about discharging debts. A life directed towards the repayment of *runa* thus foregoes the idea of a rational, enterprising, maximizing, agentic self that is embodied in *homo economicus*, though I recognize that even contemporary economic thinkers no longer hold on to this figure as an adequate frame of reference.¹²⁶ Behavioural economists now argue that the human economic actor is not necessarily rational, though when he is not, he is nonetheless “predictably irrational” (Ariely 2009). According to behavioural economist Dan Ariely, man lives in two worlds, one in which market considerations prevail, and

¹²⁶ Anthropologists earlier engaged with this figure otherwise, using him to demonstrate that economic rationality is not a cultural or historical universal (Mauss 1924, Sahlins 1972), a gendered concept that ignored the realities of the “dependency phases” that bookend human life in infancy and old age, and for which women remained disproportionately responsible (Buggraff 1997). Economists have likewise questioned the accuracy of an economic model based on such a narrowed conception of human aspiration, with Amartya Sen having christened *homo economicus* a “social moron” (Sen 1977:336).

in which he acts as an economic actor, and another where social norms structured by gift relations require and motivate a different set of behaviours entirely (Ariely 2009:93-109). As was mentioned in Chapter 2, organizational psychologists have begun to argue that “givers” tend to be more successful in their personal and work lives than “takers” (Grant, 2013), blurring further the distinctions between market and social subjectivities. Even a contemporary introductory economics textbook imagines *homo economicus* come to life as an outcast avoided by others, “...woefully ill-suited to the demands of social existence as we know it” (Frank and Parker 2007:20).

Conventional conceptions of the human as an economic being are clearly in the process of being reformed, conceptions in which meeting one’s need to give, for corporations as much as individuals, is being refigured as also part of one’s “self-interest”, as was discussed in Chapter 2. This process is a fascinating one, of which I am here only able to offer a partial and fragmentary analysis. Still, *homo economicus* remains useful as an ideal type, one against whom I may juxtapose YFS’s counter-type of *homo oebarratus* as I have called him, indebted man.¹²⁷ But it is not my intention to create an unnecessary dualism that represents a life lived in sacrifice and in the repayment of debt as a selfless one; as Chidbhavananda’s (1974:223) commentary makes clear, “the personal weal is ever unfailingly contained in the public weal.” If it is through the unrecognized contributions of others that the individual succeeds, then it appears to be only through one’s return sacrifices to those entities that one can expect to continue to thrive. The corporate analogy to this maxim might be echoed in the following saying, commonly repeated

¹²⁷ Similarly for anthropologist Natasha Dow Schull (2006:17), the recovering compulsive gambler in Nevada also models a kind of self that diverges in a from the figure of *homo economicus*: “...not a consumer sovereign who masterfully pursues a pristine, coherent, and unconflicted set of desires, but a subject whose desires constantly shift in response to environmental feedback, and who constantly recalibrates action in relation to those shifting desires – modulating action not to maximize but to maintain.”

among CSR professionals in Bangalore: “businesses cannot succeed in societies that fail.” Accordingly, neither can individuals thrive in contexts where knowledge and education fail to circulate freely, where environments are destroyed, and where humans and animals in need remain uncared for.

Finally, YFS’s conception of the entities deserving of sacrifice are noteworthy because they call into being new spheres and objects of responsibility. While the Vedic man owed debts to his ancestors, the gods, and his teachers the *rishis*, YFS expands this sphere to encompass other entities: nature, animals, and anonymous others in the form of an in-need subsection of “humanity.” It thus moves beyond a conception of caring for something that we might call “society”, that universal entity for which the Indian state had, in the post-independence era, been defined as the most appropriate steward.

Relations of debt implicate potentially limitless numbers of unknown individuals and entities; not only something that we might recognize as “society”, but also humans in general, animals, nature, as well as those who are no more, and must be repaid indirectly: the ancestors who gave life, and the *rishis* who developed the ideas that enabled the creation of further meaning and knowledge in the world. Do such entities easily map on to what we would recognize as “society”? If society might be something like that entity that is produced and enhanced by the state (Foucault 2010) then what is the thing that YFS is acting to enhance? To what are its volunteers responsible?

In drawing attention to what is owed rather than what one may expect to accumulate (from government as much as from the market), YFS attempts to catalyze a sense of responsibility not only towards “society”, but also towards nature, and the world at large among volunteers and citizens, partly relieving the state of its arduous biopolitical mandate to provide welfare in

exchange for the legitimacy to govern. The state's responsibility in this sense is now shared not only by corporations through CSR, but also by individual volunteers bearing their own Individual Social Responsibility, a concept that uses the term "social" but which appears to constitute an expanded meaning of the concept. A broader and more diaphanous object of care and responsibility is thus apparent here, in contrast to the examples of previous chapters, which focused on the generally minimal and less expansive scale of corporate efforts at social intervention, in comparison to those of nation-states.

Watt (2005) has argued that the redeployment of religious concepts like *seva* were historically instrumental in creating new spheres of action towards new entities like society during the interwar period. Copeman (2009) has nuanced this analysis in a contemporary context by highlighting how novel spheres of collective social action, such as blood donation drives, can meet social needs at the same time as they encompass older more "habitual" spiritual needs, such as the acquisition of *punya*, or religious merit. I would add that YFS's redeployment of Hindu concepts also redefines already existing entities like "society", enlarging this sphere markedly and interpellating the forms of ethical selfhood best placed to serve its needs. Neither increased financial inputs nor the proliferation of institutions are thought to best serve this new entity, but instead it is ethically transformed individuals, acting alongside the state, NGOs, and corporations in the performance of what might be seen as a "caring division of labour" that is thought to be the only way to ensure that the vast needs of Indian society can be met. For YFS, the object of this division of labour appears no longer to be the kind of society governed by a nation-state, but is instead something much more expansive.

In the next chapter, I continue my focus on local humanitarian sentiments by turning to the related concept of *runanubandha*, or a debt-relationship, and my search for its meaning, spurred

by my own relational debts in the field. If YFS conceived of *runa* and *yajna* as perpetual debts and offerings which could transform the self while at the same time transforming society, I aim to show how the concept of *runanubandha* gestures to the ways in which charitably ethical relationships with others are conceived of as fated and necessary, but also as debts that should ideally be ultimately discharged by the individual seeking *moksha*, an orientation I found to be unusually common among many of the CSR professionals I met. For such an individual, the ideal condition is that of *runa muktha*, to be free of all debts; and for that, it is permissible to sacrifice all.

CHAPTER 5: THE INDEBTED ANTHROPOLOGIST

In Chapter Four I explored how Youth for Seva's (YFS) notion of *runa*, or debt, sought to promote ideal forms of voluntary selfhood premised on the re-conceptualization of life as comprised of congenital and perpetual debts, as gifts that can never be repaid. Members of YFS suggested that ethical selfhood required bracketing the neoliberal imperative to compete and accumulate in favour of a recognition of the enormity of one's debts, and engagement in efforts to repay them through voluntary efforts guided by sentiments of gratitude and sacrifice.

And yet these "idealized" selves were not necessarily what I came across in my experiences with others in the field. My experience with YFS spurred an interest in the notion of *runa* that followed me throughout my field research, permitting me to engage more deeply in the ways in which people – many of them involved in corporate social responsibility or in charitable activities sponsored by the corporations they worked for – conceived of themselves and their relations, including their relations with me, an anthropologist from Montreal. These individuals, many of whom worked in corporations mounting CSR programs, saw ethical relations not necessarily as debts to be perpetually borne out and paid out with sacrifice, but instead as products of the karmic residue of previous lives. That is, rather than being consciously chosen, one's relations and obligations to others were predestined, operating on the principle of a kind of karmic balance sheet constituted by previous actions that individuals themselves remained necessarily unaware of – this was the concept of *ṛunanubandha*, or karmic relations of debt.

Rather than being understood as a vehicle of love, altruism, and selflessness, relationality here constituted a risk to one's spiritual development, as a means by which the ego's desire for selfish attachment could be actualized. The way to achieve *moksha*, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth was thus to either accept that these relations were out of one's control, remaining unattached

in the face of their endings, or to renounce them entirely, foregoing completely the endless cycle of debt and its repayment. Rather than maintaining perpetual relations of debt and self-sacrifice then, the pursuit of the renouncer's search for *moksha* instead required the sacrifice of one's very relations. This was the state of *runa muktha*, to be free of debt.

The denial of attachment initially, for me, provoked a feeling of alterity, indexing a way of thinking and feeling that I could not identify with, one which later gave way to a sense of familiarity. Elizabeth Povinelli (2001:326) draws attention to the ways in which a recognition of forms of radical alterity today “push against the previously tacitly held understandings of a shared deontic and epistemic horizon”, one that can be in earlier anthropological projects that sought to demonstrate the essential universality of certain features of human experience, such as rationality, or certain kinds of affect. At the same time, Katherine Ewing (1994) has problematized analyses hinging on the assertion of an epistemic abyss between anthropologist and informant. For Ewing, such an analytical orientation constitutes a hegemonic act that “results from a refusal to acknowledge that the subjects of one's research might actually know something about the human condition that is personally valid for the anthropologist” (1994:571). If the anthropologist is to move beyond confining the relationship their relations with “informants” to the parameters of Western discourse, one must take seriously the possibility of being made over by both what and how the Other knows. The process of being made over might be itself seen as an essential yet unexpected outcome of anthropological fieldwork, described by Lisa Stevenson as a “practice of the self of late modernity”, a “making of the self that is an incessant unmaking” (Stevenson 2005:14).

Such an orientation might require a bracketing of the attempt to forward social scientific claims in favour of a refiguring of anthropology as experience, a move which might dispense with

a desire to establish causal connections in favour of what Walter Benjamin (1999:553) sees as an apperception of “the similarities that have been lived.”¹²⁸ Such an orientation might also recall what Paul Stoller (2011:xvii) has termed “sensuous scholarship”, an approach rooted in a kind of lending of one’s body to the world. For Stoller, such a lending does not mean “giving up one’s agency” – though perhaps one could conceivably give it up, for what I will try to gesture to here is a (or several) way(s) of being in which the nature of one’s agency remains ambiguous, multilayered, and difficult to dissect. As Stoller (2011:xviii) explains,

The sensuous scholar’s agency, however, is a flexible one, in which the sensible and intelligible, denotative and evocative are linked. It is an agency imbued with what the late Italo Calvino called ‘lightness,’ the ability to make intellectual leaps to bridge gaps forged by the illusion of disparateness.

Perhaps what I seek to describe is the process by which a way of being ethical in the world began to come into view through these conversations, one that challenged and “made over” my own conceptions about the sentiments that I saw as underlying the imperative to give. This way of knowing hinged on a particular conception of the self, one that initially appeared to me as incongruous when expressed by people who busied themselves with the work of charity, challenging my preconceptions of charitable acts as linked to an unquestioned ideal of selflessness or duty. In my encounters, I realized that some of my interlocutors were expressing a different conception of an ethically relational self than my own. As with Youth for Seva, it was one where the trajectory of one’s relations were accepted as outside of one’s control and so should be met with equanimity and nonattachment. But in contrast to the notion of *runa* used by Youth for Seva to promote volunteerism, which was presented as a kind of congenital and perpetual debt to others

¹²⁸ “There is no greater error than the attempt to construe experience – in the sense of lived experience – according to the model on which the exact natural sciences are based. What is decisive here is not the causal connections established over the course of time, but the similarities that have been lived. Most people have no desire to learn by experience. Their convictions prevent them from doing so (Benjamin 1999:553).

that must be ethically met by an equally perpetual repayment, here was instead one in which the ultimate *renunciation of one's obligations and debts* was the ideal. Here, it was permissible to admit – in fact, one should admit – unselfconsciously, that ultimately the *self* was the most important entity of all, and the pursuit of *moksha* the highest ideal. Neither a debtor nor a creditor one should be; this was the condition of *runa muktha*, or freedom from debt.

In this chapter, I offer a set of vignettes intended to provide a kind of negative image to the indebted volunteer sentiments presented by YFS in the previous chapter. These vignettes might also serve as juxtapositions to dominant Western justifications for charity that rest on an idealization of selfless actions wilfully engaged in by the individual, as much as the anthropologist's belief that her fieldwork is of her own design. In the first part of the chapter, I present individuals' efforts to recognize the ways in which not only one's relations, but also one's charitable inclinations, are predestined. Such relations, including one's relations with anthropologists conducting fieldwork, are said to be shaped by one's *runanubandha*, or karmic debt relations with others. The second part of the chapter explores how the ego is said to be implicated in shaping one's relations with others, as much as one's charity: one's apparent altruism obscures the fundamental selfishness or self-interestedness that potentially lies at the root of every action. Renunciation of attachments, rather than perpetual indebtedness, arises as another way of living ethically and charitably in the world.

*

A few days after my volunteer orientation at Youth for Seva (YFS), I am still thinking about the Sanskrit concept of *runa*. I decide to ask Ketu about it one day, finding him on Google Talk. Ketu is a mechanical engineer, a manager and volunteer at a Bangalore corporation deeply involved in CSR. I met Ketu following a confluence of events which found us seated as passengers on a

corporate bus headed from Bangalore to a Special Economic Zone in Tamil Nadu one sunny afternoon in June.

He is well-known at his company as a kind of lay scholar of Vedanta, a branch of Hindu philosophy found primarily in the Upanishads¹²⁹, a diverse collection of texts concerned with the pursuit of self-realization and enlightenment. Ketu had once told me that his colleagues and friends would sometimes called him *rishi* (teacher) or *guru ji* (revered guru), titles he laughingly rejected. He was largely self-taught, having nurtured his interests through reading, attending lectures, and engaging in discussions with religiously-inclined friends, many of them writers and poets, and most of them significantly older than he. He had told me that on several occasions people had mistakenly assumed that he was a Brahmin, many expressing surprise with the revelation that he is a member of an agricultural landowning caste.

Ketu tells me that laymen limit the meaning of *runa* to “debt”, but that elsewhere in the Vedas its meaning is expanded. He recites a Sanskrit *shloka* to illustrate: *ṛṇānubandharūpeṇa paśupatnīsutālayāḥ*: cattle (i.e. wealth), wife, son (i.e. children), home, all are *ṛṇānubandha*.

“*Runa* is not exactly like debt, though it is commonly used in that sense”, he writes. “*Bandha* is binding (attachment), and *anubandha* is a connection. For every action there is a reaction. Now the reaction and action has a relation - that is *runa*. There is no debt payment to one another...it is more like a cosmic law.”

¹²⁹ Vedanta means the end of the Vedas, and refers largely to the Upanishads. Such texts depart from a focus on ritual and instead focus on themes relating to the liberation of the soul, the *atman*. The epic the Bhagavad Gita, which recounts a conversation between the warrior Arjuna and Krishna contained within the *Mahabharata*, one that famously promotes a non-instrumental ideal of action without attachment to its results, is also considered a Vedantic text.

Ketu explains that the “natural and dynamic affinities” that develop between people and objects are neither chance occurrences, nor the result of conscious individual desires. Instead, all attachments forged in this life are in fact outgrowths of actions undertaken in previous lives. Feelings of friendship, love, admiration, and hatred alike are all fueled by *bandhas* from previous lives that continue to pull us into what he calls “the wheel of existence”, directing us to act in ways that are essentially beyond conscious recognition or control.

“But what about people who have no affinities towards those things – to wealth, family etc?” I write.

“They become god. The Buddha. That is called *runa muktha* – free from *runa*”, he responds.

I ask if being *runa muktha* also means being alone – renouncing those attachments and living the life of *sannyasin*, or itinerant monk.

“Alone? No, one is not alone. One becomes everything. Only then the affinity is gone. As long as ‘I’ and ‘the other’ exist in *samsara*¹³⁰, there is some degree of affinity, no? Some kind of linkage or connection.”

Ketu had earlier explained that he believes that the renunciation of attachment is better achieved in relation with the world rather than turned away from it. It is the recognition of *advaita*, or the state of an essential non-dualism between self and other, human and divine, that allows individuals to transcend *runa* and in doing so, attain liberation from the cycle of rebirth. As he says, one is not alone, but instead “becomes everything”, in recognition of the divine origin and nature of all things.

In contrast to a Judeo-Christian notion of the separation between man and God, proponents of the philosophy of *advaita* would hold that the essence of Brahman, the undifferentiated ultimate reality, is equal to the essence of the *atman*, or differentiated soul.¹³¹ For Ketu, achieving the state

¹³⁰ From the Sanskrit root *sr* = “to flow” and *sam* = “together”; *samsārā* refers to both empirical existence and worldly illusion (Grimes 1996:275).

¹³¹ This is but one interpretation of the story; the philosophy of *dvaita* would hold that a dualism between man and the divine is nonetheless preserved, for example.

of *runa muktha* thus did not require a life of material and social renunciation, but rather a conscious and determined effort to embrace the principle of *advaita* while at the same time renouncing the ego and its attachments to external objects.

“And what about our connection?” I ask, wondering how he sees the friendship that has developed between us, one that he knows has been spurred by my anthropological research.

“That too is *runa*”, he replies.

*

It had happened more than once that the people I came to know in the field gestured to the idea that our encounters could not be reduced to the exigencies of my anthropological project, or were not solely instrumental means to academic ends.

On a balmy Sunday afternoon in July I am in a car driving back to Bangalore from a village in a region of Karnataka that the British had once called “Little England”, a place where coconut trees mingle with rolling green pastures and fields that give birth to vegetables and marigold flowers. Satyavan, manager of CSR at Titan Company, had invited me to spend the day with him at an “eye camp” co-organized by his company, the Rotary Club, and the Government of India, where hundreds of villagers were tested for eye diseases and vision problems and provided with same-day access to free surgeries and eyeglasses. On the two hour drive back to Bangalore, we engage in a meandering dialogue which eventually turns to a Janus-faced conversation about destiny. Satyavan looks back on the events that have shaped the fifty-three years of his life, highlighting the moments where he felt a sense of failure to achieve what he remembered as having been his dreams. In this present moment though, he tells me that he has finally learned to look on his life with different eyes, seeing that he has been given all that he wanted, that those dreams he thought he had were in fact only projections of the expectations of others.

Satyavan finishes looking back on his destiny and turns instead to looking ahead to mine. He tells me that it was no accident that I came to India. Neither was it any accident that I had come specifically to Bangalore, and that I had secured a place as a visiting scholar at the Indian Institute of Management, where my local supervisor Soumyanetra had introduced me to Manoj, the former head of CSR at Titan, who, during an animated discussion in his office, picked up his phone and arranged for me to meet Satyavan, who kindly welcomed me into Titan's CSR programs.

He says that he is certain that there is only reason why we ever met, and why he continued to answer my phone calls and requests to tag along during his workday. "I could have *not* answered your calls, you know. I was very busy with work. My mother was ill at the time, I had other things on my mind. But I did, although I am not exactly sure why. And so I am quite certain that the reason why we have met is because I have a role to play in your destiny, though perhaps it isn't yet clear to either of us how."

*

I email Ketu to ask for another example of *runa* a few weeks later. He writes me a short message in reply:

Think about a bird that might be singing outside your window. Do you think that all people around your apartment will listen and enjoy it the same way as you might? Some people won't even realize that it is singing. Others might be irritated by the sound. It is all *runa*. Not the debt, but the channel that lets individual awareness flow and come into contact with many things in creation. It is only with *runa* that it comes to our awareness. Otherwise, even if we are immersed in it, nothing comes to our awareness, good or bad, gain or loss.

*

After leaving Bangalore, I spend much time trying to trace the provenance of Ketu's *shloka* about *runanubanda*. Ketu suggests it is derived from the *Manusmriti*, the ancient Hindu laws of Manu, though it is not to be found there.

An internet search turns up little; I find one reference to *ṛṇānubandha* in journalist Mira Kamdar's memoirs¹³² and one on the website of a Telugu-speaking astrologer living in Australia. I read a few comments and articles on the Times of India's "spiritual" website *The Speaking Tree*, listen to two songs entitled *ṛnanubandha* and watch the beginning one 1960 Telugu language film. I browse through academic search engines, but there is nothing but a script from a theatre piece in the Indo-Aryan Konkani language, which I cannot read, at the Library of Congress.

Rucha, a Non-Resident Indian living in the USA, has written one of her 2012 blog entries about *ṛṇānubandha*. Her reflection is spurred by her initial refusal to engage with a man in a wheelchair begging for food outside a Walgreen's, followed by a nagging feeling of concern that eventually prompts her to buy something for him to eat during her shopping trip. She explains her charitable compulsion with recourse to the concept of *ṛnanubandha*:

If you read between the lines, you will realize that the debt of *ṛnanubandh* is one that is unique and in the purest form. The beauty of this concept is in the fact that *Ṛnanubandh* rids all feeling of obligation. Instead, *Ṛnanubandh* helps us realize that we may be previously indebted to the individual we are helping, and our act towards helping a fellow human out becomes selfless and unexpectational. We no longer feel that we "must" help whoever we come across but we rather perceive it as an action in response to a previous unseen connection we possibly had. We no longer expect anything in return because we become the one returning the favor. It becomes a truly unconditional act devoid of feelings of burden or force. Rather than the drag we feel when we do our chores, rather than the force we feel when we're asked for a favor, we start feeling like the act is a natural response. It is as if our unconscious mind is telling us that there is a reason for everything we are doing, everything we are becoming, everything we see, feel, hear, and experience. At the same time, this idea also helps us justify the negative things in life too. Rather than becoming down and depressed when tragedy or hardships enter our lives, we can use the concept of *ṛnanubandh* to remind ourselves that what is happening is only because we previously shaped it to happen. If we lose connection with a friend or if we have a death in our close friends or family circle, rather than becoming depressed by the loss, we simply remind ourselves that the bond, the *ṛnanubandh*, lasted as long as it could. But when its time ran out, the bond was broken. And this is the point at which nature took its own course and with *ṛnanubandh* in the back of our minds, we do not feel the need to fight nature. Somehow, somewhere, and at some time in our existing, this bond determines what will become of us now and forever.

¹³² In *Motiba's Tattoos*, Mira Kamdar Kamdar (2002:275), writing of her journey to trace her family's history in India, writes: "To borrow a pronouncement of Panna Naik upon realizing we were connected in ways we had not suspected, it has all seemed *ṛnanubandh*, everything is predestined."

After returning to Montreal, I phone Parvathy and ask her about *ṛṇānubandha* one afternoon. Parvathy had also once worked at a Bangalore-based company I had done research with, and has recently relocated to Montreal along with her engineer husband, Manjunath, who is now completing a temporary contract at a Montreal-based corporation. I ask her if she knows a *pandit* who can explain *ṛunanubandha* to me, but she brushes my suggestion aside, excited to explain it herself instead. She invokes the example of her own arranged marriage to illustrate: “see, in my case, I had many matches for marriages, and yet, Manjunath was chosen. This means Manjunath was written for me.” I ask how it happened that Manjunath was chosen, if it was her parents or her who chose him, though her response is ambiguous. She said: “it automatically happens – the mind will say – this is the guy! Even if you have many people, many choices, *ṛunanubandha* forces you to accept it. It is often when you are getting your marriage fixed that you hear about *ṛunanubandha*, it is something that elders will tell to you. But also, when someone moves away or your friendship ends – it means you are done your *ṛunanubandha* with them.”

A few days later I email the verse to my friend Prashant Keshavmurthy, who emails his lawyer friend Satyanarayana in Bangalore, who explains that the verse is a *chātu*, a type of anonymous verse found in varying forms across South India. Satyanarayana presents me with another commonly recited version: *ṛṇānubandha rupena patni putrah sakhyah jāyante*, which he translates as “it is on account of karmic connections that one meets one's spouse, has progeny and makes friends.”

I email the H-ASIA listserv to see if I can find out anything more. Michael Slouber, Assistant Professor of South Asia at Western Washington University, replies the following day with an answer. He says that the popular oral verse can be found in the *Mahāsubhāṣitasamgraha*,

a book of Wise Sanskrit Sayings. He explains that *ṛṇānubandha* is derived from a Sanskrit compound of *ṛṇa* + *anubandha*, meaning “a debt-relationship.”

The Mahāsubhāṣitasamgraha (Sternbach 1974, verses 7364-1 and 2) contains the *shloka* in its entirety:

ṛṇānubandharūpeṇa paśupatnīsutālayāḥ /
ṛṇakṣaye kṣayaṃ yānti kā tatra paridevanā //

Cattle, wife, sons, home---these are examples of debt-relationships
When the debt is finished, the relationships are too; what is sorrowful about this?

Debts and the Anthropologist

Runanubandha appeared to gesture to the machinations of destiny that guide people towards every inclination and encounter, distributing the karmic debts of previous lives like a fine sediment on the soul. *Runanubandha* thus came to explain the folding of myself into the lives of others in ways that were thought to transcend agency, motive, or will, in both temporary and more permanent ways. Despite my lack of a “host family” and having only distant family relations in Bangalore, my presence was folded into a cosmology that transcended relationships of kinship, and further this present mortal existence. Unlike the experience of Erica Bornstein (2012:5), whose in-laws were central to her entry into the field, for me, it mattered not “to whom [I] belonged.” My presence itself was metaphysical reason enough to fold me into the lives of others and to serve as evidence of lingering debts; it seemed to be enough that I was simply there.

The notion of *ṛnanubandha* appeared to challenge the concern with the ethics of (some) contemporary anthropological projects, understood as hinging upon the anthropologist’s agentic and instrumental rationality in the search of a compelling anthropological account. Anthropologists of course gain immensely from the relationships they forge in the field without

giving much of substance in return, although some have gestured to other ways of conceiving of these relations.¹³³ While these concerns are of course valid and cannot be easily dispensed with, what the invocation of *ṛṇānubandha* instead seemed to be highlighting was the contingency and inscrutability inherent not only apparent in the anthropological encounter, but in all human relationships. Ketu's, Satyavan's, Rucha's and Parvathy's words seemed to indicate that our relations with others could not be attributed to a general personal agency, but were rather predestined and related to unknown actions and events stemming from previous lives, causing sentiments to arise within us that served as fuel for our relations with others.

People thus connect with one another not because of their own conscious and instrumental designs, but because they are always already connected by actions occurring within chains of previous and unknowable karmic relations, actions that come to determine the ways in which we relate in the present: these are the “real” reasons why we meet, feel connections to others, and continue to meet, while foregoing relations with others, who remain invisible or unheard, like the bird's song.

Ṛṇānubandha also fuels altruistic sentiments, asserts Rucha; a recognition of this fact makes giving “selfless and unexpectational”, and givers become reconceived; less as benevolent benefactors and more as individuals who are deeply and unknowingly indebted to those to whom they give. Our own agency in matters is refigured; as Rucha says, “what is happening is only because we previously shaped it to happen”, not in the present though, but in a previous life we have no access to or memory of.

¹³³ See Trawick's (1990) *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family* and Lawrence Cohen's (2010) *M's Book*, for two powerful reflections on the pleasures and perils of the anthropologist-interlocutor form of relationality in India, as well as the challenge of its ethnographic rendering.

The meaning encapsulated in the first part of the *shloka*, which explains relations with wives, children, and wealth as predestined are perhaps familiar elements of popular Western thought as well: significant life events are often described as inexplicably “meant to be”, by seculars and non-seculars alike. And yet the *shloka* in its second half reveals a kind of sentiment not as easily translatable as the first. *When the debt is finished, the relationships are too; what is sorrowful about this?* A natural equanimity in the face of loss appears to replace a railing against outrageous fortune: “we do not feel the need to fight nature”, writes Rucha. The appropriate sentiment here is not one of grief, but rather one that interrogates the very appropriateness of feelings such as possession and loss. It appears that if the birth of our relationships are not of our conscious design, then neither are their endings.

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One afternoon I sit reading the *Mankuthimmana Kagga* at Jaaga’s Courtyard Cafe, after a day of interviews and discussions on CSR and religion. Jaaga (space, in the Kannada language) is a sort of experiment in ephemeral architecture, a co-working and living space on Double Road in Shanthinagar, a largely Muslim neighbourhood in Bangalore that existed in colonial days as the dividing and strictly policed line between the British Cantonment area and the native *pete* settlement.

Jaaga has been constructed with metal pallet racks commonly used in factory warehouses, overlaid by clapboard and mud, and designed to be put up and taken down in a matter of seventy-two hours, which it had been already once before. The moveable space has become a magnet for local and visiting artists, event planners, Kannada film script writers, journalists, phone app-developers, Bangalore’s young start-up crowd, and also myself and the only other foreign anthropologist I knew who was doing fieldwork in Bangalore. Jaaga became the place where I

would write my field notes, read, and meet other people who also passed their time at Jaaga. By the time I write these words, Jaaga is already gone, its lease having expired, its architects having rented a more permanent space instead. Its Facebook page displays a photo of a pile of rubble where the structure once stood.

The *Mankuthimmana Kaggera* was recommended to me by several people in Bangalore; it is described as the *Bhagavad Gita* of the Dravidian Kannada language that is the *lingua franca* of the state of Karnataka, of which Bangalore is capital. It was written and published by poet, writer, and nationalist D.V. Gundappa in 1943; a bronze statue of the portly, bespectacled DVG, as he is better known in Bangalore, depicts him seated jovially under an umbrella, protected from the screeching fruit bats above, in the park surrounding Bangalore's Bull Temple. Its verses broach topics ranging from family life to the nature of the mind to politics, focusing on the paradoxical relationship between the necessity and folly of human desire, promoting a Vedantic ideal of non-attachment as a means of escaping this paradox. Its fictional author, Mankuthimma, who has renounced the world, passes his life as a wandering ascetic, innocently and repeatedly asking a question central to his poetry:

Now and then he would, nodding his head, ask himself
'Why does one live at all? Am I only alive
To have my earthly share of rice?

Mankuthimma's poetry tends to refuse a strongly normative ethical orientation, relying on a style of verse that poses questions rather than answers; it is the questioning itself which is Mankuthimma's means of discerning an ethical relationship to the world rather than a reliance on any *a priori* ethical norm.¹³⁴ Poems relating to attachments of various kinds, however, depart from this formula, and are unequivocal in their directive to remain wary and ever-vigilant. One such

¹³⁴ For a discussion of context-dependent morality in Hindu thought, see Ramanujan (1989).

example can be found in the poem entitled *Connection with Past Births* (Gundappa 1973 [1943]:79):

Load weighs on you a bale of obligations and what is earned in previous lives
Noosed tight around your neck, destiny
Holds a wisp of grass in front of you and inveigles you with hopes
And you are the galloping donkey

Food and raiment, suffering, play and action
All are obligations, a share of what accumulated in the past
While it is etched on the forehead¹³⁵, there is none to read it
Will grumbling erase it?

This day a marriage spread; tomorrow a funeral feast
One day an epicurean dinner, the day after a beggar's bite
Today plain fasting, tomorrow early breakfast,
In this manner is your rice account settled.

Foe friend wife son kinsman family and all that
Are they the proliferation of one's actions or shoots on the ivy of past obligations?
Family life which baits you by turning you into an ovine
Can also become a fiery pestilence.

The circle of kinsmen, it is an army of the god of death,
Their gestures of affection are offerings which bring travail
Their acts of kindness cause emaciation of the soul
Do not become an object of sacrifice for the multitude.
- Mankuthimma

As I read the *Kagga* at Jaaga, I ask if I can take the ashtray on the table of a man who is seated opposite to me, who is also reading a book. We both get up to leave at the same time. As I walk past him, he asks me if I am writing a book. "Writing? No, I am reading one", I say, although I suppose I am also writing one, and wonder how he knew to ask about it. "And you were reading one too. Which one were you reading?" I ask. He pulls out a copy of a book on ancient Indian history, and I show him *Mankuthimmana Kagga*. He had never heard of it. His name is Rakesh,

¹³⁵ Popular Hindu thought holds that the forehead is the location of one's destiny: it is Chitragupta, the accountant of Yama, the god of death, who is believed to inscribe a child's fate on his forehead on the sixth day after birth. See (Jackson 2005:xxi-xxii).

and he is from Kerala. We talk a little bit and he mentions he is interested in Vedanta. I say he too should read *Kagga* then. We decide to return to Jaaga for another cup of chai and a chat.

Rakesh tells me about his guru, and how he met him. He tells me that one should be honest and not live with a shadow, a shadow of lies. He seems to imply that all of us inevitably do, and that it was his own shadow of lies that eventually pointed him towards his guru.

He asks me what my name means. I tell him I am named for Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, and that Rigillo means “little king.” He tells me that Rakesh means lord of the night, and Ramachandran means beautiful moon. He begins to tell me more about his guru, a forty year old man who took *sannyas*, Hindu vows of renunciation, seven years ago and left his family to live the life of an ascetic who survives off the charity of his devotees. Rakesh gives him a certain amount of money to live off of each month, and in exchange they speak daily. He calls his guru “even at midnight”, if there is an unresolved question that needs answering. “This is the mark of a true guru”, says Rakesh. “He is always available.” Rakesh bought his guru a laptop recently and has taught him how to use Facebook. He translates his messages from Malayalam into English every few days and helps him update his Facebook status with his interpretations of verses from the Upanishads.

I ask Rakesh if he ever thought about taking *sannyas*, and he says no, at least not now. But one day he will, after fulfilling his obligations.

“What are those?” I ask.

“Obligations to meet a wife, marry, and have children. And then I will leave them all”, he says.¹³⁶

“You’ll simply get up and leave?” I ask. I imagine Rakesh leaving a palace quietly on a moonlit night, as Siddhartha, the man who became the Buddha, was said to have.

¹³⁶ With this sentence, he is perhaps loosely organizing his future along with the ideal four phases of life as laid out in the Manusmirti That is, Brahmacharya (celibate studenthood), Grihastha (householder), Vanaprastha (forest dweller) and Sannyasa (renouncer).

He says it's not like that; he will give his wife two options, to stay at home with the children, or to follow him. But she should know that poverty and hardship are probably what lie ahead, and should be prepared to endure that alongside him. I tell him that I still don't understand the imperative of non-attachment. That dependencies seem inherent to the human condition - we are born dependent and tend to make our exit from the world in the same way we arrive - helplessly dependent on the care of others. It is only because of the care of others that we survive at all.

He smiles and agrees. "But what is the nature of that dependency?" he asks. "People will say that a mother feeds her child because the child needs to eat. But in fact she does so to maintain her own happiness - she could not be happy if she didn't. That is attachment - it is ultimately selfish. People are only attached to you because you become a condition for their happiness", Rakesh concludes. Such relationships are ultimately selfish, implicating the ego, possession, and fear of loss, he explains. "These relations bring happiness and satisfaction to the ego, but happiness is not bliss. Bliss is by nature unconditional – it arises within the self and doesn't require any external object." ¹³⁷

He tries to convince me that I too would be better off without all my own attachments, though I have told him nothing about them. Still, he suggests that renunciation might be a necessary step on my spiritual journey, having understood my interest in Vedanta as an indication that I

¹³⁷ The ideal embodiment of the state of perpetual bliss is perhaps found in Shiva, the ascetic Hindu god of destruction who meditates with a perpetual erection. Shiva's meditative ithyphallic state is the eminent proof of his bliss, which also poses a contradiction of sorts – how can an erection, the sign of "a mind drawn to things material" represent blissful non-attachment? As Pattaniuk (2006:13-16) explains, "Shiva's phallus is aroused but his eyes are shut. According to scriptures, his semen moves in the reverse direction, a condition known as *urdhva-retas*. Thus in Shiva, the mind is stirred, but not by external stimuli. Shiva's linga is *svayambhu*, self-stirred, spontaneous, resulting from the realization of *sat*, the true nature of all things. This realization happens when *chitta* or consciousness has been purged of ego, memories, desires and all sources of conditioning that delude the mind. What follows is *ananda*, tranquility unconditioned by external influences. Shiva's spontaneous and automatic erection, unaccompanied by any sign of excitement in the rest of his body, is an artistic expression of the state of *sat-chitta-ananada*, the state when one is in touch with Brahman. Immersed in the state of *sat-chitta-ananada*, Shiva is self-contained; he feels no urge to react to worldly enchantments or shed his semen."

should take *sannyas* myself.¹³⁸ I don't find the words to respond the email he sends a few days later.

*

Satyavan also enjoys engaging in discussions concerned with the topic of renunciation. Like Ketu, he is of the mind that rather than renouncing the world outright, one can follow the path of *karmayoga* as outlined in the Bhagavad Gita, renouncing attachments to one's relations as well as the fruits of one's actions – to act but without regard for the result, as he says. We speak about gifts and charity, about how Hindu ideals depart from Christian ones one day as we are on our way to visit Titan's MEADOW program, which employs women in watch-making co-operatives as a form of empowerment-based CSR. Satyavan says that the figure of Christ and his sacrifice of self to save humanity has fuelled Christian ideals of selflessness that are simply not relevant in Hindu thought. Satyavan, as he often does, recites a *shloka* to illustrate. This time though, it is one that I also know: it's the same one that Venkatesh Murthy had recited to me to illustrate his vision of volunteerism as perpetual sacrifice, and that I presented in Chapter 4. Venkatesh however had omitted the last line, while Satyavan presents it in its entirety, reversing the hierarchy of selflessness and sacrifice implied by the first three verses:

*tyajet ekam kulasyarthe
grama syarte kulam tejit
gramam janapadha syarte*

Sacrifice individual well-being for the well-being of the community
For the sake of the entire village, sacrifice the community's interests
For the sake of the larger society, sacrifice the village's interests

¹³⁸ Anthropologist Meena Khandelwal (2004:88) in her research with female ascetics and *sannyasins* in North India, similarly observed that her interlocutors would often explain her service to sadhus (rather than her spiritual knowledge) as likely stemming from events in her own previous lives. As one of them said to her: "Occasionally [...] it happens that the experiences from some past life manifest themselves in a present life. Thus, she continued, I must have been a yogi in a previous life and was born into a family in America to experience (*bhog*) some karma or another, but that the influence of those past lives led me back to India to live in ashrams and listen to the wise words of Indian sadhus."

Satyavan now adds the following:

Atmarthe prithivim tyajet

But for the sake of one's self, sacrifice the entire earth.

One day, Ketu suggests I read Swami Rama Tirtha's work, *In the Woods of God Realization*, particularly the section *Happiness Within*. Ketu is troubled by what appears to him as my ill-conceived belief in selflessness, and seeks a means of imparting a revision to it. Rama Tirtha was born at the end of the nineteenth century in Punjab, a mathematics professor turned mystic and wandering ascetic following a chance meeting with Swami Vivekananda in 1897. Like Vivekananda, Rama Tirtha also served as a teacher of Vedanta abroad, eventually departing for Japan and the USA to spread its message, dying in 1906, two years after his return at an ashram in the Himalayas, at the age of thirty-three.

Happiness Within is a meditation on the sources of happiness, sources that Rama Tirtha presents as mutable and irrevocably linked to one's stage of life. For babies, all happiness is found in the bosom of their mothers; not even the finest delicacies can tantalize them before they are weaned. As young children, toys become the source of happiness; when they are taken away, tears and unhappiness result. As children grow, happiness is found in stories and books, an attachment that is carried through to one's studies. Following graduation from student life, one begins to strive towards material security, and a concern with material accumulation begins to occupy the space where the pursuit of knowledge had earlier brought happiness. Later, members of the opposite sex become the locus of happiness, as the aspiration for a wife or husband is developed. Finally, the crowning achievement is defined as a child, the pinnacle of happiness in adult life. "Does happiness really dwell in these objects?" asks Rama Tirtha. Or, is it like the sun, which shines on different countries at different times during a day, while its source is ultimately elsewhere? "From

whence does happiness proceed? Where is its real home? Let us look at the Sun of happiness, as it were”, suggests Rama Rama Tirtha (1932:93). He turns to a story of a child trapped in a burning home while his family stands lamenting helplessly outside, offering everything in their possession for someone to go in to rescue him. Rama Tirtha says that while these lamentations appear to confirm that the child is the source of all happiness, there is something that is in fact more important than the child, for which it is ultimately sacrificed:

[...] that something else must of necessity be sweeter than the child, that something else must be the real centre of happiness, must be the real source of happiness, and what is that something? Just see. They did not jump into the fire themselves. That something is the Self. If they jump into the fire themselves, they sacrifice themselves and that they are not prepared to do. On the child is everything else sacrificed, and on that Self is the child sacrificed [...] People and things are dear to us as long as they serve our interests, our purposes. The very moment that our interests are at stake, we sacrifice everything. Thus we come to the conclusion that the seat of happiness, the source of happiness is somewhere within the Self (1932:97-99).

“The self is dearest to the self”, concludes Rama Tirtha. Ketu wants me to remember this, to abandon my implicit ideals about selflessness. This was not to say that others were not important, stressed Ketu. “It is like they say on planes during the safety protocol: ‘Put on your oxygen mask before helping someone else to put on theirs.’ It is foolishness to think that our acts can ever be completely selfless. I must help myself first. Only later then my actions might help you but even then they must also be helping me in some way, no? What is the trouble in admitting that?”

Tum bahut zyada sochti ho, Nicole, says Ketu one afternoon. You think too much, Nicole. I sense that he is becoming frustrated with the “why” questions I am asking that are often gently brushed aside. The reasons for why he gives charitably or makes one decision rather than another; eventually he comes to anticipate and circumvent these questions: “Please don’t ask me why, how can I know the reason?” And eventually I stop asking, realizing that these are – of course – unanswerable questions, though perhaps many people answer as if they were not. What is the

nature of one's knowledge about one's agency or motives, particularly in a cosmology where extensive debts accumulated across unremembered previous lives shape not only relationships, but also action itself? One's debts may be etched upon one's forehead but there is no one there to read them, as Mankuthimma says. Eventually Ketu suggests that things might be easier for me if I followed the Buddhist sage Tilopa's Six Words of Advice to his disciple Naropa. I told him then that these rules seemed particularly ill-suited to academic pursuits, though I still wonder what kind of work – or what kind of life – might be possible if one tried to take Tilopa's advice seriously.

1. Don't recall (let go of what has passed)
2. Don't imagine (let go of what may come)
3. Don't think (let go of what is happening now)
4. Don't examine (don't try to figure anything out)
5. Don't control (don't try to make anything happen)
6. Rest (relax, right now, and rest)

On Renunciation

I recognize that the kinds of conversations I engaged in with Ketu, Satyavan, Ramachandra and Venkatesh were uncommon; they may appear so only because I have foregrounded them at the expense of the more commonplace dialogues that made up the majority of my interactions with others. These people spent much time thinking about their relations with themselves and others, ruminating over philosophies and texts which most others had never heard of. And so their voices became the rare birdsongs in which I delighted.

While Louis Dumont's fascination with renouncers led him to call renunciation the supreme value of Hindu life, "a sort of universal language of India" and the "key" to Hinduism (1970:52 Madan 1987:2), more recent work on renunciation has of course abandoned such sweeping structuralist claims. T.N. Madan has tempered Dumont's thinking on the matter, arguing that while renunciation is Hinduism's best known cultural ideal and a remarkable value-

orientation, “[...] it does not bestow its distinctive character on the everyday life of Hindus” (Madan 1987:1). As Gananath Obeyesekere (2014:21) reminds us, “though ascetics are conspicuously visible, they are rare creatures.” Strangely though, they appeared to be less rare the field of CSR through which I was moving; renunciatory and soteriological concerns often made their way into my discussions, perplexingly from people that were more often dressed in button down shirts and ties rather than in ochre robes. For me, this was an unanticipated surprise: I hadn’t expected that I’d come across aspiring renouncers in Bangalore, India’s shining IT capital, no less in sparkling corporate towers with names like “Golden Enclave”, sites that were supposed to be oriented towards profit and accumulation. But these same people were also working towards other goals: development, poverty alleviation, and gender equality. And at the same time, they were working on their own self-making projects, ones that sought to interrogate and make sense of their altruism and the ways in which they cared for others and incorporated them into their lives. While I cannot make the claim that these ideas are representative of a broader Hindu ethic of relationality and giving, I still take their existence as sufficient to validate their anthropological relevance. They appeared as another means of conceptualizing and living an ethical life, one that was not premised on an altruistic sacrifice of the self for others as in YFS’s schema, one shared in justifications of humanitarianism more broadly, but rather on the sacrifice of others for the sake of the self.

On Selfishness

What I wanted to gesture to with the second series of vignettes is a conception of relationality, altruism, and care that is shot through with the perils of attachment and the desires of a fundamentally selfish ego; necessary perils of existence to be sure, but also roadblocks on the way to enlightenment. The taken for granted ways in which we act as seemingly ethical beings is continually called into question in such an epistemology. The quotidian kindnesses of the family

are refigured, for example; neither as economically rational investments upon which one might expect a return, nor as duty-bound sentiments arising from previous debts, but rather “offerings which bring travail” that cause “an emaciation of the soul”, as Mankuthimma cautions.¹³⁹

The notions of the ethical life and the conceptions of sacrifice expressed by my interlocutors in this chapter then stand in contrast both to those seen at YFS in the previous chapter, as well as to broader global humanitarian sentiments rooted in an ethic of an apparently selfless love for humanity. The first contrast can be seen in the different orientations to the *shloka* on sacrifice recited by Venkatesh and Satyavan. For Venkatesh, the *shloka* justified an escalation of sacrifices to increasingly more expansive entities as a means of guiding the actions of the ideal Indian citizen-volunteer, who was expected to constantly sacrifice his own needs for the greater good: individual for family, family for community, and village for society. But Satyavan’s inclusion of the *shloka*’s real ending places a limit on one’s sacrifice, reversing the escalation of sacrifice of increasingly larger entities; for the self, which was in the first line sacrificed for the sake of the family, one can legitimately sacrifice “the entire earth.” This particular *shloka* has interestingly been analyzed otherwise by Charles Malamoud (1988:33-34), who argues that it spells out a political maxim intended for a king: “a sovereign must be prepared to give up a part in order to save (what remains of) the whole, and to give up what is accessory, if need be, to preserve what is essential – the essential, in a kingdom, being the king’s own person, that is, that for which the king is his own self.” In other words, the Hindu king is ethically permitted to sacrifice the entire world to save his divine body, in line with Foucauldian notions of sovereign power and the

¹³⁹ I heard a similar notion expressed in the 2011 Hindi film *Aarakshan*, or *Reservation* (Jha 2011), when one of the characters, in a personal reflection on charity, asserts that “to give a man a cloak appeases your poverty more than his.” This quote is interesting when juxtaposed with Lacan (2013:179-190)’s psychoanalytic reading of the episode of St. Martin’s philanthropic gift of a cloak to a naked beggar, in which Lacan asserts that the beggar wants not St. Martin’s distanced charity, but rather a more intimate – and necessarily fraught – relation of love.

state of exception as theorized by Agamben.¹⁴⁰ But the shloka is imbued with a different meaning when read by a spiritual aspirant such as Satyavan; it serves to justify his belief that one is permitted to leave the entire earth behind, to sacrifice or renounce one's debts and attachments *in toto* in the interests of the self and its realization.

Thus while a life led by a sense of indebted and disinterested duty remains an ideal within Hindu thought, so too is one in which one's debts can be forsaken in the search for a presumably higher ideal – the realization of the self. Departing from Christian notions of pure altruism then, of which the ideal is the sacrifice of Christ for the souls of the multitudes, Vedantic notions of sacrifice appear to call into question the very notion of self-sacrifice in the interests of others. A mother cares for her child not out of selfless instinct, but rather because her failure to do so puts her own happiness at stake, as Rakesh argued above.

The conceptions of the ethical and charitable life explored in this chapter are uneasily reconciled with Western characterizations of humanitarianism inherently altruistic and self-sacrificing acts. My interlocutors would likely disagree with those who might draw on Adam Smith's (1853:4-5) ideas to assert that altruistic relations are rooted in moral sentiments stemming from a diaphanous "fellow feeling." Rather, charitable actions of all kinds might stem from relations in previous lives, as in Rucha's account. Or, as in Rama Tirtha's account, apparently selfless acts might come from a space far less generous, rooted in the ego's desire to possess external objects, including other people, and the fear of loss. Challenging Western notions of familial love as much as biological theories of the selfish gene (Dawkins 2006), Rama Tirtha's proposition that no one will enter the burning house to save the child means that an uncomfortable

¹⁴⁰ See Foucault (2012c) and Agamben (1998).

truth must be faced: the child cannot be as dear as one thought, he cannot be the source of all happiness. The self is rather what is dearest to the self, according to Rama Tirtha. Ketu claims that there is nothing wrong in admitting this – and that by extension the alternative is much more dangerous: a world of egocentric givers narcissistically delighting in their own good deeds, refusing to acknowledge the ways in which charity serves us as much as those to whom we give. Charitable gifts allow us to forge a sense of self based on qualities such as benevolence and kindness; this is also a gift, one that the receiver allows us in exchange for what is given to him.

The recognition of the centrality of the self means that the renunciation of one's attachments constitutes the litmus test of one's sincerity, the height of non-egoism. It is not in remaining forever duty-bound to others, but rather in pursuing the state of *runa muktha*, freedom from debt, that the self might also be liberated. These subtle refigurings of the motivations underlying our actions appear to constitute an understanding of relationality, care, and altruism that might appear as "other" to our own understandings of these concepts. Less a universal humanitarian ethic of charity, and more one with its own grammar, logic, and apparent ends, though the use of a word embodying such a notion of instrumentality is of course inadequate here.

CONCLUSION: THE HYBRID ON THE THRESHOLD

In *Life Beside Itself*, Lisa Stevenson (2014) writes of the need for an imagistic anthropology, one which sees the potential of the image to capture uncertainty and contradiction without having to resolve it, as discursive modes of analysis often do (2014:17-18). She uses the example of a raven behind a boy's house; he tells her his sister says the raven is his dead uncle. When she asks him if she still thinks that, he replies: "I don't know." He pauses for a second and then adds, "It's still there" (2014:5).

As Stevenson puts it, the image of the raven works on several registers; for the boy it is a form of care, a dead uncle keeping vigil behind the house. For her, it is an image of ambiguity that doesn't need to be resolved. Whether or not the raven is really the dead uncle doesn't matter. The raven is still there (2014:17).

Images, then, unlike facts, can remain multivalent and suggestive rather than fully decoded. Further, we may ourselves desire and resist the clarity that is often a feature of verbal formulations; the image is, after all, the principal medium of dreams:

This is where Freud's intuition about the link between image and desire comes in. We do not always want the truth in the form of facts or information, often we want it in the form of an image. What we want, perhaps, is the opacity of an image that can match the density of our feelings. We want something to hold us (Stevenson 2014:21).

Stevenson suggests that "images, like stories, resist explanation, and therefore resist the demand for objectivity that is caught up in the question of replicability" (Stevenson 2014:23). An anthropology of the image, then, rather than a piling up of examples, might seek to condense experience in the form of "an image that cannot be approached as a fact to be tested" (2014:23).

I too close with an image, an image of a hybrid on a threshold.

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After a long day of pulling disposable diapers out of blocked sewer drains and picking up candy wrappers caught in the edges of fences for Titan's Clean Hosur project, one of the volunteers on my team, Aditya, and I drink chai in Titan's base camp in the grassy dusty field of a nearby school as the sun sets, tinting the sky with pinky orange hue whose beauty is only enhanced by the smoky pollution that serves to refract and soften the light. A man wearing a black kurta, a matching black scarf hanging loosely around his neck, lingers a short distance away, chatting with another volunteer. I ask Aditya why the man is dressed that way, and he tells me that his clothing and unshorn beard tell us that he is engaged in a 41 day period of penance (*vrata*) that is a necessary prerequisite to a pilgrimage to Ayyappa's temple in Sabarimala, in the neighbouring state of Kerala.¹⁴¹ Ayyappa, though he appears nowhere in Hindu sacred texts, is borne of a union between Shiva and Vishnu, the latter taking on the form of the temptress Mohini to seduce the ascetic Shiva. Out of this union comes Ayyappa, created so that he may slay the demoness Mahishi, and worshipped today for his success in having done so. Perhaps because we have reached the neither here nor there moment of twilight, or maybe because the story of Ayyappa, son of Vishnu, prompted a kind of associative memory, Aditya asks me if I have ever heard the myth of Narasimha. I tell him I have not, and so he begins to recount it to me.

Narasimha translates as man-lion, and that is what Narasimha is: a fearful being with six muscular arms, the head of a lion upon the body of a man. And yet despite his appearance, he is not an *asura*, or demon, but is rather the fourth incarnation of the preserver god Vishnu. The image of Narasimha is useful too in reflecting on the dualisms that structure our thinking and analyses, a

¹⁴¹ Anthropologists have explored the Sabarimala pilgrimage in various ways: E. Valentine Daniel (1987) himself attended as a pilgrim, whose writing on his emergence from phlegm-filled waters is difficult to forget. Srinivas (2009) contends with the relative obscurity of Ayyappa, who is nowhere to be found in sacred texts, while Osella and Osella (2003) explore the gendered aspects of the pilgrimage.

number of which, as the reader will have noticed, have been presented throughout this dissertation. By way of a conclusion, I retell the myth of Narasimha, which Aditya told to me.

The story of Narasimha begins with the demon Hiranyakasipu, who wishes to avenge the death of his brother at the hands of his great enemy, the preserver god Vishnu. He performs great austerities and as a reward for his devotion gains a boon from Lord Brahma, god of creation. Like most demons, Hiranyakasipu desires the boon of immortality, although this is one boon that Brahma never confers. Hiranyakasipu, undeterred, tries to get as close as he can to immortality, without asking for it directly:

Grant me that I die neither inside nor outside any residence, during the daytime or at night, neither on the ground nor in the sky. Grant me that my death not be brought by any being other than those created by you, nor by any weapon, nor by any man nor beast (Satapatha Brahmana 7.3.36).

With the quasi-immortality conferred by the granting of Brahma's boon, Hiranyakasipu's reign becomes ever more fearful and absolute. One day, his young son, Prahalad, decides to become a devotee of his father's enemy Vishnu, angering Hiranyakasipu, who tries to kill Prahalad. His efforts ever-unsuccessful, as the child is protected by Vishnu, Hiranyakasipu challenges Vishnu to appear, striking a column which Prahalad had identified as a manifestation of the god with his mace. The offended and enraged Vishnu, incarnating as the red-eyed, snarling man-lion Narasimha, emerges from the crack to do battle with Hiranyakasipu. After a short fight, at the right moment, Narasimha comes to face Hiranyakasipu. On the threshold of the palace courtyard, in the twilight of the setting sun, Narasimha grabs Hiranyakasipu with a few of his many arms and places him, writhing, over his lap, a space that is neither on the ground nor in the sky. Narasimha then disembowels Hiranyakasipu with his sharpened finger nails, garlanding himself with his enemy's entrails, and the vanquished Hiranyakasipu falls dead to the ground. The gods shower Narasimha with blessings, free of the reign of the demon at last.

*

I hope I am not making the sacred unforgivably profane in suggesting reading the myth of Narasimha as a cautionary tale of the dangers of dualisms and mistaking the conceptual category for reality. Hiranyakasipu relies heavily on dualisms to organize, know, define, and thereby control the conditions which might bring his downfall. But his reliance on dualisms to delimit and control reality fails to accept its fundamental unruliness; the categories and concepts we impose upon it confer only a tenuous sense of order that reflects neither the totality of the ontological present nor its immediate future. Hiranyakasipu's vain effort to clearly enumerate and control the dualities that he believes constitute the sum of the possible dangers to his existence thus almost serves as a provocation for that unruliness to make itself visible, to assert its ontological weight. The incarnation of Narasimha thus demonstrates that reality is comprised not only of neat and manageable dichotomies, but also of zones and states of ambiguity and liminality; of hybrids, objects, thresholds, and interstices; of twilight, or the indeterminate space between ground and sky. Taking the category for the world of ontological possibility is what brings about Hiranyakasipu's undoing, whereas it is Narasimha's exploitation of the zones that fall outside the dualism that is the condition of his victory.

The evasion of classification and ambiguity that is the apparent source of Narasimha's power makes it difficult to discern whether this power is monstrous or divine, as Pattanaik (2014:12) notes:

Narasimha is a form of Vishnu that is neither man nor animal. It is neither this nor that. For many, this is a monster because it cannot be classified. For the devotee, this is God, because it defies classification.

Corporate social responsibility, a much more profane and perhaps much less interesting hybrid, is a similarly potent force that is difficult to classify, alternatively portrayed as monstrous

and benevolent. The analysis of CSR, within this dissertation as well as outside of it, thus relies on the application of multiplicity of dualisms that attempt to make it comprehensible rather than accepting its troublingly ambiguous status: corporation/state, market/society, gift/exchange, altruism/self-interest, universal/targeted, inside/outside, indebtedness/accumulation, householder/renouncer.

I too have used these concepts and dualisms to make sense of a diverse set of dynamic processes that tend to resist classification, although I acknowledge their limits in adequately being able to render the myriad hybrid forms that CSR gives rise to, only a few of which were discussed in this work. There is the hybrid Company State of the colonial era, succeeded by the British Raj and its efforts to govern India as a company, replaced in the present moment by India Inc., governed by a CEO/Prime Minister (p. 36-37). There is the legislation of CSR in India, where the state asks companies to take on responsibilities that are widely perceived as those of the state. There is PACE, the patented charitable service (p.102), a product that holds the potential to “create shared value” by generating profits at the same time as it secures the apparent empowerment of women. There is Titan Company, the “joint sector company” (p. 129) born out of private and government efforts that orients itself towards profit and development alike. There is YFS, a volunteer platform that partners with corporations to undertake social actions, imbuing corporate volunteers with its own ideas about ethical selfhood.

“Doing well by doing good” then, the title of this work and the global slogan that describes the hope latent in the world’s innumerable CSR projects, is itself a hybrid formulation, one which detractors see as monstrous, though its advocates clearly don’t see it with the same eyes. What I have instead tried to gesture to is the possibility that the world is being remade in interstices that

lie between the dualisms we have come to abide by. It seems important then, to pay attention to the hybrids on the threshold, in whatever form they might appear.

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