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Faith, Spirituality and Social Work Education
Deliberating guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements

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Warwick ID 1591248

Submitted for PhD by Published Works

University of Warwick,

Centre for Education Studies.

October 2016

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Acknowledgements

This programme of PhD by published work has been my aspiration to enhance my skills and cultivate rigour in my work in the domain of faith, spirituality and social work. Being a social work graduate and educator for several years now, I have always felt the need to strengthen this aspect within the curriculum, and the Centre for Education Studies at Warwick, and its mandate, gave me the room and space to think about this in greater depth. This was not with the mere aim of furthering my academic qualifications but to indulge in research-led reflective practice and education.

The recent burgeoning of interest in faith and spirituality across several academic and practice-based disciplines has presented social work academics and practitioners with a fascinating challenge. It calls for decisions to be made about the value and ‘usefulness’ of the concept, and for a pedagogic exploration into effective ways of helping students and practitioners alike to study and engage with it. As a practice-based discipline, social work has several spaces to incorporate such discourses. Without doubt, there has been some resistance within the profession of social work, certainly in India, to such developments. One of the main resistances is the communal face of faith and the related risks, which come from fundamentalist positions. The other resistance is due to an ambiguity, which surrounds the concept of spirituality. But with the development of the field and the current quest for indigenisation, the picture has changed. For India, it is time now that deliberations are seriously done on the rigours of social work practice in a multi-faith context. Specifically this needs to be done in the context of indigenous faith and spiritual perspectives, on which literature is limited. With that basic understanding in mind, I set out to do work on guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith-based organisations, Indic spirituality and social work. This led to a creation of a body of published work to which I wanted to give a more thorough and well-

shaped direction. I wanted to see a form emerging from the works being collected together and subjected to further informed reflection.

I made contact with Revd Canon Professor Leslie Francis in February 2014, who kindly agreed to guide me in my effort. I am hugely grateful to you Sir for responding to my simple 'to enquire' mail and engaging with my efforts wholeheartedly. I feel very indebted that you facilitated every aspect of this doctorate. This sense of gratitude is now lifelong, as you have taught me an invaluable way of self-reflection, understanding and critique towards an academic enterprise, which is my life work. I am also grateful to Revd Dr Tania ap Sion, for providing invaluable feedback and support.

I am and will always be grateful and deeply indebted to my parents who have supported, unconditionally, my love for academics and my publishing work. My mother has been my friend, philosopher and guide through this arduous journey: giving a patient ear, offering advice, reprimanding when necessary and yet completely supporting all my efforts. I dedicate this work to my parents.

I acknowledge with thanks all those who supported me: Bishop David Walker who sent me the introductory material to his doctoral submission by published works to refer to; to the members of the order at Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math and Mumbai; to the officials of Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust, Shirdi; to the Brahmakumaris; to the sadhaks and members of Sri Aurobindo Society; to the officials at Vivekananda Kendra and Swaminarayan Sanstha as well as the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission, Art of Living Foundation, and to all the member adherents and beneficiaries of all the organisations from where I collected the data. Further, I will always remain grateful to some very distinguished editors of the various journals who facilitated the peer review process, provided sharp comments for improving the manuscripts and arranged for copy editing support - Prof Gerard Delanty, Editor, *European Journal of Social Theory*; Prof Ron Geaves, Editor, *Fieldwork in Religion*; Dr Warren

Goldstein, Editor, *Critical Research on Religion*; Dr Nasir Tyabji, Editor, *History and Sociology of South Asia*; Prof Werner Menski, Editor, *South Asia Research*; Dr Cathy Ota, Editor, *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*; Prof Roger Smith, Editor, *Practice: Social Work in Action*; Dr David Embrick and Dr Kasey Henrick, Editors, *Humanity and Society*; Dr William Schmidt, Editor, *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*; Prof Asbjorn Dyrendal and Prof Alexander Norman, Editors, *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*; and, Prof Helen Scholar, Editor, *Social Work Education*. I also thank the editorial team of *Sage Open* and specifically my two editors Prof Rowena Robinson and Dr Laurie Occhipinti. I remain grateful to all the people who have been instrumental in shaping different aspects of my work.

Samta P Pandya

Declaration

All of the published work included here is entirely my own.

Samta P Pandya

Foreword

In this series of published papers, I have set out to explore, in a systematic way, how theoretical and empirical considerations can analyze and highlight the connection between faith, spirituality and social work with specific reference to guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements and Indic spirituality. My thesis is that guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements, through their social service activities and spiritual techniques, which they evolve and promote, have important bearings for social work discipline and profession in a variety of ways.

The idea for this research emerged with the contention of scholars like Edward Canda and Leola Dyrud Furman (Canda, 1988; Canda & Furman, 1999; Canda & Furman, 2010), whose work for over a decade proposed that faith and spirituality are increasingly informing social work practice at micro and macro levels. This can be looked at as a post-secular development, whence discourses on faith are returning to the public sphere. And it is in connection with social services, social work and public policies that the strongest claims have been made for the view that post-secular conditions have raised the public profile of faith (Beckford, 2012). Cultural geographers and other spatially-oriented scholars have been in the forefront of research on the new or revitalized presence of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in welfare states. The general theme is that the growing importance of FBOs' activities in social welfare and justice campaigns is part of a broader augmentation of religion's place in the public sphere, as a consequence of neoliberal public policies.

The social leanings and sentiment of sociality in faith has been argued from the point of the philosophical perspectives, or, what we call the text language, as well as the institutional forms, called faith-based organisations or popularly FBOs. Jamoul and Wills (2008) have discussed that the major faith traditions share a commitment to 'looking out' to the wider community and testing faith through action. This is often expressed as charity, and

as service provision; and the fact remains that faith-based organisations have been encouraged to get involved in ‘community cohesion’ and ‘regeneration’ schemes. Scholars like Vries and Sullivan (2007) and Wagner (2008) have thus argued that faith communities play a significant role in cultivating virtue, generating social capital and helping people engage with democratic processes.

Over the past two decades, there has also been a resurgence of interest in spirituality and social work, something clearly evidenced in the social work literature. The resurgence of interest in the field has resulted in the foregrounding of the biopsychosocial and spiritual model (Bhagwan, 2010a, 2010b) and a move towards traditional, spiritual and indigenous ways of thinking. Consequently there has been an exponential growth of publications that enrich the salience of spirituality to practice, the development of a website on spirituality sponsored by the Council of Social Work Education in the US, and the introduction of courses on spirituality in schools of social work. The relevance of spirituality to practice is rooted in the central strength it brings to clients in despair, particularly when existential and spiritual concerns interlink themselves with psychosocial problems. The strong influence of New Age spirituality fuels our self-help culture, as individuals attempt to find meaning and a sense of belonging in an increasingly alienating world and, in so doing, harken back to traditional worldviews, which embrace collective values, community, the environment, and a sense of place as implicitly spiritual (Coates, Gray, & Hetherington, 2006). Although spirituality at a surface level may be tinged by individualistic underpinnings, it is also deeply connected to anti-oppressive practices and issues of social responsibility and social justice. Spirituality or indigenous spirituality is an important component of decolonizing social work perspectives in erstwhile colonies.

Focusing on my thesis, and my area of published work that I present here, I discuss ways in which guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements, through their social service

activities and the tenets of Indic and New Age spirituality influence people, and through that have implications for the social work discipline and profession.

Guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements' prominence in contemporary times is a result of the resurgence of Hindu nationalist sentiments in India, particularly since the 1990s. They own and manage vast institutional and financial empires, command an international presence, and, within India, attract followers largely from educated, urban, 'middle class' sections of the country's population. Social welfare activities belong to a common repertoire of social service engagements undertaken by a wide range of Hindu-inspired faith movements. Most of them in India now engage in some charitable and social service activity, and quite often to retain their tax-exempt status. Spending on medical, educational and other charitable projects is a convenient means of achieving this, and has the added benefit of garnering favourable publicity. For those who participate in these social service endeavours, it is seen as a component of spiritual development: a form of practical spirituality. Further, these faith movements actively use spiritual techniques, for the psychosocial development of their clientele. Hence apart from traditional social service activities, spiritual technique too becomes a mode of intervention. This has multifaceted implications for the followers and beneficiaries.

The biggest challenge of social work in India is now that of exploring the indigenous value base for social work practice. This basically means looking at perspectives to decolonize social work. Decolonizing social work recognizes the limitations and imperialist frameworks of western social work that must be contested on behalf of populations that have been victimized rather than helped by these approaches (Gray et al, 2013). Inserting discourses on faith and spirituality is a part of indigenisation. This means appreciating and looking at those worldviews and cosmovisions which are not rational and secular, as appreciated in a dominant social work theory and practice, but faith-based and spiritual,

which lays grounds for newer perspectives for practice, theory and interventions. So instead of looking at western philosophies, beliefs and theories, the idea is to now look at Indic approaches to enhance the Indian social work episteme. This makes a case for systematically studying the enterprise of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements, their social service, spiritual techniques and the implications for the social milieu, followers and beneficiaries, which has been attempted, through the published works.

Inclusion of Published Work

The following thirteen published works form the basis of the work reflected on in this submission:

1. Pandya, S. P. (2016). Governmentality and guru-led movements in India: Some arguments from the field. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 19 (1), 74-93. DOI: 10.1177/1368431015579977
2. Pandya, S. P. (2014). Seva in the Ramakrishna Mission Movement in India: Its historical origins and contemporary face. *History and Sociology of South Asia*, 8 (1), 89-113. DOI: 10.1177/2230807513506630
3. Pandya, S. P. (2014). Syncretism and pilgrimage in India: Nuances of devotion to Saibaba of Shirdi, *South Asia Research*, 34 (1), 31-46. DOI: 10.1177/0262728013517028
4. Pandya, S. P. (2013). The “Social” face of the Brahmakumaris in India: Contemporary perspectives and praxis nuances. *Fieldwork in Religion*, 8 (1), 50-73. doi: 10.1558/fiel.v8i1.50
5. Pandya, S. P. (2016). “Our aim is to link humanity to the divine”: Social philosophy and social service of Sri Aurobindo Society. *Humanity and Society*, 40 (3), 254 – 277. doi:10.1177/0160597614565697

6. Pandya, S. P. (2014). The Vivekananda Kendra in India: Its ideological translations and a critique of its social service. *Critical Research on Religion*, 2 (2), 116-133. DOI: 10.1177/2050303214534999
7. Pandya, S. P. (2012). All for faith: Profiles, engagement chronicles and implications of adherents to Indic faith-based organisations. *Sage Open*, 2 (4), 1-17. DOI: 10.1177/2158244012463924
8. Pandya, S. P. (2015). Contemporary female gurus, their movements and followers: The case of Amma and Mata Amritanandamayi Mission. *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 6 (1), 75-99. doi:10.1558/ijnsr.v6i1.25760
9. Pandya, S. P. (2013). Beneficiaries of social initiatives of Indic faith-based voluntary organizations: Profiles, service experiences and implications. *Sage Open*, 3 (2), 1-13. DOI: 10.1177/2158244013489688
10. Pandya, S. P. (2014). Sudarshan Kriya and Pranayama: Insights into an Indic spiritual practice for promoting well-being. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 16 (1), 51-71. DOI: 10.1080/19349637.2014.864544
11. Pandya, S. P. (2015). Adolescents, well-being and spirituality: Insights from a Spiritual Program. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 20 (1), 29-49. DOI: 10.1080/1364436X.2014.999230
12. Pandya, S. P. (2015). Sudarshan Kriya of the Art of Living Foundation: Applications to social work practice. *Practice: Social Work in Action*, 28 (2), 133-154. DOI: 10.1080/09503153.2015.1053856
13. Pandya, S. P. (2015). Including spirituality in the social work curriculum: Perspectives from South Asia. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, 34 (6), 729-746. DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2015.1043259

Rationale for publishing in the said journals

The general frame of the published work has been a thematically and logically organised collection of papers in journals of repute and good academic standing. The effort has been to position this subject of study, 'Faith, Spirituality and Social Work Education: Deliberating guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements', at the cross junctures of social theory, religion and sociology of religion, applied sociology and South Asia research, spirituality and applied spirituality, and social work practice and education.

The first work on 'Governmentality and guru-led movements' has been published in the *European Journal of Social Theory*, in compliance with the journal's focus of building the domain of social theory through field or practice insights. The paper on 'Seva in the Ramakrishna Mission movement' has been published in *History and Sociology of South Asia*, and the paper 'Syncretism and pilgrimage in India: Nuances of devotion to Saibaba of Shirdi' has been published in *South Asia Research*. The focus has been to examine the contemporary facets of these South Asian faith-based movements, within the frame of South Asia as well as highlighting the criticality of religion in this context. In the next work, I build on certain earlier works on the Brahmakumaris, such as by Tamasin Ramsay (2009) and John Walliss (2007), and hence the paper on 'Social face of the Brahmakumaris' has been published in the journal *Fieldwork in Religion*. The attempt has been to test certain earlier propositions on the Brahmakumaris and substantiate, validate or unvalidate them, based on insights from ethnographic fieldwork. The article on 'Social philosophy and social service of Sri Aurobindo Society', published in the journal *Humanity and Society*, fits into the remit of applied sociology, as a link between spirituality and community development as envisaged by a guru faith movement. The article on 'Vivekananda Kendra in India: Its ideological translations and a critique of its social service' focuses on a critique of the social service of the Kendra, from the lenses of critical theory and sociology of religion, and hence the journal

Critical Research on Religion, with a focus on critical religion research, has been the platform for publication.

A large dataset-based study on followers or adherents of these faith-based movements was submitted to *Sage Open*, owing to its leanings in the disciplines of social sciences, sociology of religion, voluntary sector studies and studies in social capital. The paper on followers of Mata Amritanandamayi is specifically focused on the nouveau approach of the charismatic guru, the physical embrace, which promotes well-being in her followers and hence has been published in the *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, in line with the journal's focus on looking at newer ways of believing and aligning.

Three published works on beneficiaries of social service projects and spiritual programmes form the next part of this collection of published works. The work on beneficiaries of a range of social service projects of faith-based organisations, with a focus on their profiles, and service experiences, has been published in an interdisciplinary open access journal *Sage Open*. The next two works focus specifically on beneficiaries of spiritual programmes. The study on Sudarshan Kriya beneficiaries has been published in the *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, as the focus is the study of implications on mental health and well-being of beneficiaries. The study on ART-Excel spiritual programme for children and adolescents has been published in the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, in line with the focus of the study, which examines how the programme, promoted by a modern guru-led movement, contributes to mental well-being, peace and happiness of adolescents. To conclude the argument of the study, on the critical bearings of guru-led and Hindi-inspired faith movements' social projects and spiritual programmes for social work discipline and practice, the last two published works of this collection focus on application of a specific programme to social work practice and educators' views on the need and relevance of a course on spirituality and social work within the social work curriculum, in line with the

contemporary quests in the discipline on indigenisation and decolonisation. The former has been published in the journal *Practice: Social Work in Action*, and the latter has been published in *Social Work Education: The International Journal*.

Cumulatively, the selection of journals has been in a manner that link is shown between social theory and religion, research on South-Asian guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements, critical research on religion, applied sociology, interdisciplinary social science research on large faith-based datasets, new religions, spirituality in psychosocial care and finally faith and spirituality in social work practice and education.

All the journals in which the works have been published have a good standing, have a multidisciplinary readership and audience and are relevant for the academic enterprises of religion, new religions, critical religions, sociology of religion and faith and spirituality, applied social sciences and social work practice and education. This relevance for the academic enterprise is substantiated through each of the journals promoting an interface with traditional domains, of each of the pure and applied disciplines, and promoting newer dialogues by pushing boundaries from both within disciplines and with respect to other related and allied disciplines. The academic quest, in all the published work and thereby in the journals where they have been published, is to develop a post-secular, post-colonial, decolonised and indigenous discourse on faith and spirituality driven sociality, which has important bearings for social work education and practice.

Abstract

This thesis presents a reflection on a series of published papers which attempt to explore, in the systematic way, the interface between guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements, Indic spirituality and social work through conceptual and empirical considerations.

The context of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements, and their spirituality, has been explored through a meta-analysis, followed by qualitative studies of five contemporary guru-led movements and their distinctive styles of seva or social service – “mission”-isation; syncretism, lived religion and organised charity; millenarianism, post-apocalyptic vision and social service; humanity, divinity and service; and austerity, nationalism and service. This is followed by a study of followers/adherents who participate in social services of these guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith-movements and beneficiaries, through five fairly large datasets. The first dataset is on adherents of these movements and what motivates them to join, serve and gain. The second dataset is on followers of a particular new movement and how they derive their sense of well-being from the same. The third dataset is on beneficiaries of social initiatives of these movements and organisations. The fourth dataset is beneficiaries of a particular spiritual programme of the Art of Living Foundation called the Sudarshan Kriya. The fifth dataset is on a similar spiritual programme for adolescents and how it positively influences them. Theoretically it can be said that the adherents and beneficiaries together form a habitus of these movements. I finally discuss, through two published works in social work journals, as to how a specific spiritual technique of a guru movement and spirituality in general is perceived as having critical bearings for the social work discipline in the contemporary Indian and South Asian contexts.

The structure of the thesis illustrates the progressive nature of the research and demonstrates how the component parts come together to form a cumulative and coherent

case. The collection of works argues the following contentions, to make critical contributions to the domain knowledge of guru-led movements, faith, spirituality and social work. Guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements use social service as a legitimising trope. Guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements have implicit and explicit spiritual techniques, which accompany the social service/work package. Followers and beneficiaries of these movements gain materially and spiritually, which keeps them motivated to be aligned. This in turn contributes to the fellowship of guru-led movements.

For the social work discipline, the phenomenon of guru-led movements is an important aspect to be paid attention to. Their social service engagements call for a need for working in or with guru-led movements as a part of social work practice horizon. With this focus, in the published works, implications for the discipline of social work are drawn out and made explicit. The power of a cumulative study using a range of empirical tools is shown.

Overview of the research field and the present study

This research field is at the junctures of research on faith, spirituality and social work education. The broad research agenda is to show how guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith-movements, through their quest for sociality, and through their New Age spiritual techniques, contribute to the social milieu and build their own legitimacy, and how this, in turn, has critical bearings for the social work discipline, practice and education.

I provide brief overview of the twin research fields: of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements, and of faith and spirituality in social work education. Subsequently I discuss the emergent research questions that remain unanswered in extant literature, and which are addressed through this collection of published works, sequentially and cumulatively.

Guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements have risen to public prominence owing to the resurgence of Hindu nationalist sentiments. Scholars in the discipline of religion, sociology, anthropology and psychology, have been occupied with the phenomena of guru-led movements for a few decades now. The terrain of scholarship on guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements has the following broad themes. Guru charisma is the first and critical aspect of the discourse, where recognition of the power of that charisma is the central aspect of the social and psychological dynamics of guru-led movements. The next is how gurus move beyond traditional religious tenets and perform the charisma using active, conscious, cognitive and non-cognitive methods. Charismatic giving or transfer is one important part of this (Coleman, 2004), oriented towards the 'inner' selves of followers and hence offering a viable spiritual resource within global revivalism, that puts a premium on spiritual purpose and meaning.

The multiple and expansive role of the gurus has been discussed, including their public appearances, publicity campaigns and their vast networks of charitable institutions,

further enhanced by their Diaspora presence (Peabody, 1991; McKean, 1996; Prentiss, 1999; Copley, 2003; Fuller & Harriss, 2005; Warriar, 2005; Beckerlegge, 2006; Shah, 2006; Barrett, 2008; S. Srinivas, 2008; Copeman, 2009; T. Srinivas, 2010; Huffer, 2011; Martin, Gunten, & Zablocki, 2012). Devotion is purposefully performed, as a way to exercise individual authority, and demonstrate leadership in the sphere of influence. Guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements are characterized by a hyperpluralism and domination of simulation. Hyperpluralism means that gurus modify their strategies and practices depending on local and translocal cultures. Domination of simulation means that followers' experiences are mediated by synthetic images of divinity produced and disseminated by the gurus (see Froystad, 2012).

Female gurus have been another area of discourse and empirical consideration. This includes the way they have drawn their legacies from female bhakti saints (Malhotra, 2012), their performance of a gendered model of religious leadership and promoting a guru tradition alternate to the official male model (DeNapoli, 2013). There are discussions on female gurus' performative domestication of renunciation (i.e. even as renunciants they continue to perform traditional women roles such as that of a mother, but in a different form) (Pechilis, 2004, 2012), and, giving credence to personal experience as a new pathway to devotion (Pechilis, 2008; Anderson, 2008; DeNapoli, 2009; Huffer, 2010).

The habitus ('knowledge system' which prescribes action for the constituencies) of guru-led movements, i.e. their coterie of followers is another area of scholarly exploration, specifically in terms of their profile and the symbolic meaning of this highly nuanced association/alignment for the socio-political milieu. The nuanced sense comes because there are exclusivists who attach themselves to a single guru lifelong, and those who attach to many gurus or are like consumers in a spiritual marketplace. Sometimes there is personal agency in the choice; at others, the guru supposedly 'appears' before the devotee who then

recognises him/her as the intended guru. Some followers also attribute the recognition of one's guru to an intuitive knowledge, which cannot readily be explained (Foss & Larkin, 1978; Palmer & Bird, 1992; McKean, 1996; Nanda, 2009).

Of particular academic interest are the following questions: how this is temperamentally post-secular (Warrier, 2003a, 2003b, 2006), how followers define personal gains of self-fulfillment by being followers of gurus (Mines & Gaurishankar, 1990; Mines, 1999) and how this is a new status marker for middle class and upper middle class urbanites (Copeman & Ikegame, 2012a, 2012b). The next level is the transformation of guru devotion centres to pilgrimage sites (Shinde & Pinkney, 2013), a nouveau form of modern religiosity.

Another critical aspect of empirical exploration in the context of guru-led movements is their sociality, and social entanglements of the gurus, specifically through social welfare and service engagements, very often on a large scale (Copeman, 2009). Service done through these guru-led movements is seen by the service doers and associates in different intentionalities, directed at once to the guru, and, through the guru, to larger humanity. Guru is a transcendental recipient of the donation, personalizing a service done by someone, in a depersonalized cosmos – where abstract donations to anyone, become donations to the guru and hence personal. At another level, service is a means of institution building (Beckerlegge, 2010), a strategy of proliferation and world affirmation. Performing service or seva is a form of practical spirituality and a component of spiritual development. There is a guru governmentality (the term offered by Copeman & Ikegame, 2012a, 2012b), where the neoliberal state borrows from or harnesses the guru-devotee relationship in order to fulfil governmental ends. This takes the form of a sacred public-private partnership (Ikegame, 2012a, 2012b). The radical asymmetrical exchange between the guru and devotee, manifested in humanitarian service, is harnessed for governmental ends. For the devotees, however, this is not really value neutral (Barrett, 2008; Copeman, 2009; Cohen, 2011).

Hence, a compelling theme in the study of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements is a critical take on their ideology, which, very often, foreshadows and supports a radical, political Hindutva doctrine (Casolari, 2002; Mehta, 2008). Scholars have proposed that this service, qualified by guru remembrance or memory, is directed towards building a society complying with Hindu nationalism's agenda of revolutionary nationhood (Basu & Bannerjee, 2006).

Within the discipline of social work, discourses on faith and spirituality are gaining prominence in domains such as: individual psychopathologies and spiritually sensitive practice (e.g. Rosario & De La Rosa, 2014; Garde, 2015); spirituality as promoting universal values of justice and peace (e.g. Beck, 2010; Beckford, 2012), mindfulness for psychological well-being (e.g. Mishna & Bogo, 2007; Lynn, 2010), comprehending faith-based initiatives within the larger paradigm of the post-secular, and recognising their role and the need to partner with or draw from them to deliver the social service goods (e.g. Gibelman & Gelman, 2002; Vanderwoerd, 2002; Hamplova & Nespor, 2009; Furness & Gilligan, 2010; Crisp, 2011; Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013a, 2013b).

In the domain knowledge of the twin research fields, the following questions further emerge, which get addressed sequentially through the present collection of published works.

- Apropos to the discourse on their public prominence in a post-secular tenor, what are the conceptual/theoretical dimensions that emerge when guru-led movements, in the neoliberal era, become agents of devolved state responsibility of social welfare and delivering social service?
- Given that sociality and social service engagements are key operating lynchpins of guru-led movements in the contemporary era, what are the distinct nuances and service delivery styles of specific and prominent guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements and what does the composite package comprise?

- Building on the habitus promoting potential of the guru-led movements, qualified essentially by the devotees of the charisma, what is the profile of these followers and associates of these modern guru-led Hindu-inspired faith movements, what is the form of this fellowship and engagement, what are the sustaining factors, what does this devotion mean for them and how do they perceive gurus' sociality and social entanglements?
- As subjects of their net of social operations, who are the recipients of social services of the guru-led movements and participants of their spiritual programmes and what are the consequent implications and gains perceived?
- With sociality as the summum bonnum and legitimising trope, manifesting as social service, how does this enterprise of guru-led movements' social service talk to a discipline whose core is social work, facilitating well-being and change at micro and macro levels? What do its key vanguards, i.e. the educators, in a post-colonial context, opine on this for the curriculum?

The published works sequentially and cumulatively build on the spaces of interface between the domain knowledge of guru-led movements and sociality, particularly how social service is their key legitimising trope, and simultaneously highlights their dialogue with the discipline of social work. They show how this contributes to faith-based and spiritually sensitive social work practice, its criticality for interventions, the curriculum, and the indigenous calling of developing a knowledge and skill-set of working in and with faith-based groups, to promote synergies of praxis, for greater common good.

Conceptual and empirical considerations

The context: Guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements, their ethos, sociality and governmentality

Given the empirical discourse that guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements actively engage in reaching out to society through social service, the question that I pose in my paper on ‘Governmentality and guru-led movements in India: Some arguments from the field’ (**appendix 1**), is about their role in the neoliberal era, where the state searches for venues to collaborate, borrow and harness, so as to meet certain governmental ends, specifically those of welfare provision. Literature has discussed how gurus and their institutional social services are seen as supplementing and complementing state efforts (e.g. Gupta, 2009; Copeman & Ikegame, 2012a, 2012b; Lucia, 2014; Tøllefsen, 2014), which very often also, in turn, serve the tax divesting purpose for guru-led movements (see Warriar, 2003a), apart from sublime goals of sociality, creating social legitimacy, public image and garnering more followers.

The question that I have asked is about the nature of this partnering and collaboration in welfare provision and its ramifications within the larger discourse on governance and hence governmentality, or practices of the government. Theoretically, based on Foucault and post-Foucauldian analysis, I draw from the argument that governmentality moves beyond the practices of the state. With that lens, I have done a meta-analysis of guru-led movements based on empirical evidence. Based on this, the governmentality of guru-led movements has been studied through: (1) the political acts and powers of the gurus; (2) the supplementary and complementary efforts to aid the state by the guru-led movements; (3) instances of resistance and taking on the state; and (4) the flipside of governmentality, which manifests as hegemony, Hindutva politics and Hindu nationalism. Through the governmentality argument, aspects of the surveillance, discipline, control, interactivity and competition of the guru-led movements emerge. What is discussed is a post-disciplinary model of governance, which

devolves power downwards from crumbling state institutions to new agencies of control, in this case, the gurus and their institutions. This devolution, however, is not without its tensions and the article also argues that guru governmentality betrays traces of hybridity and nonlinearity.

This paper thus expands the contours of governmentality studies as well as disciplinary domains of guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements. In core governmentality studies, religious modes of authority and power have not been tackled. This article, on guru governmentality, attempts to push those boundaries as well as the general Eurocentric bias. At another level, the idea in this paper is to transport the discussions on guru-led movements from religion studies and sociology of religion to realms of social theory. This is done through a serious deliberation on Copeman and Ikegame's (2012a, 2012b) concept of guru governmentality, by first discussing about the political engagements of the gurus and biopolitics of devotion and then expanding their social service ethos by showing the theoretical relevance of concepts such as *parresia* (Foucault, 2010) and party governmentality. *Parresia* (truth-telling in procedures of governance) becomes relevant because the neoliberal regime encourages guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements to extend their mandate of social operations and that in turn elicits favourable behaviours such as institutional social services from them. The concept of party governmentality testimonies the hybrid nature of guru-led movements and their roles in the polity. None of this, of course, is without complications, as guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements inevitably operate on an ideological high ground thereby leaving adequate room for fundamentalist discordances. Hence the paper also highlights the hybridities and tensions writ in guru governmentality basically through the cryptic shifts in topologies of power. Very often, guru movements tend to move away from a benign enactment of the state agenda towards a propensity to dominate the polity through their *Hindutva* agenda. Nonetheless what cannot be discounted is their

presence and engagement as critical players in social welfare, that is crucial in a resource limited social sector such as India.

Guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements and social work: The field and its facets

Social work or service, or more popularly *seva*, is a way to fulfil the ‘mission’, the earthly mission, of the guru. However there are different forms of this social work, which are directed towards specific communes, larger social fabric and the general social milieu. Historically some movements began with social work directed towards a limited commune or the follower community (e.g. see Gupta, 1973; Nye 1995; Vertovec 2000; Beckerlegge, 2000a, 2000b; Williams 2001; Kim 2008). Over time and generally with the mandate of making their presence felt in society, guru-led movements became more assimilative in their approach, by extending their sociality to the larger community (e.g. see Walliss, 2007; Locklin & Lauwers, 2009; Srinivas, 2010; Zavos, 2012) – the quintessential acts of bridging. Contemporary guru-led movements aggressively use faith motifs and the language of spirituality to legitimise their presence in the wake of modernity and justify their social work (e.g. see Tøllefsen, 2011, 2013, 2014; Tøllefsen, Alisauskiene, & Lewis, 2016). Their strategies entail the range from *dana* or charitable giving inspired by traditional Hindu dharma (Kasturi, 2010) to macro level socio-political engagements (Beckerlegge, 2007; Tøllefsen, 2014). In the next five articles, I have discussed the different aspects of the field of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements and the various facets of social work, which they promote.

“Mission”-isation

In the article on ‘Seva in the Ramakrishna Mission movement in India: Its historical origins and contemporary face’ (**appendix 2**), I develop an understanding of *seva* in

Ramakrishna Mission, one of the oldest guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements in India. Given the history of social service of the Mission, I began by asking about the genesis of seva and then the contemporary form and hence the style or brand of social service promoted and popularized by the Mission, and what seva means to them in praxis.

I have built on some of the earlier historical-sociological works on the Ramakrishna Mission, which have, from a historical materialist perspective traced the transformation of the Mission as renunciation-oriented towards altruistic service, its role in Indian history and nationalism and its imbibing of the Christian Missionary style of operations, specifically in social welfare (e.g. Gupta, 1973; Singh, 1973; Beckerlegge, 1995, 2000a, 2000b; Basu, 2002; Beckerlegge, 2003, 2007). With the key objective as studying the genesis and development of seva as a strategy of action and proliferation in the Ramakrishna Mission, data was collected through content analysis of Mission's popular texts and archives, a discussion with key informants (i.e. members of the monastic order) and non-participant observation of their social service projects.

Analysis of fieldwork showed that seva for the Ramakrishna Mission was inspired by Swami Vivekananda's charisma and then carried forward by various monks to promote the Mission's ideals and build its public image. This signified a paradigm shift from the traditional privatized role of faith, towards a more public role and hence a community orientation. Seva is then prescribed as a moral behaviour and assumes the form of a doctrine, thereby, betraying traces for the Mission as a 'lived religion' (see Winchester, 2008), creating a habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and shaping the moral and faith-oriented selves of associates. By partnering the core sectors of development such as health, education and livelihood, Ramakrishna Mission creates a model of faith-driven public-private partnership in a resource-limited setting. There is the collateral of Hindu nationalism that seeps in and hence I propose that the faith-based seva of the Mission is like a faith-coded biopolitics, a practice

of governmentality, which put the agents other than the state and hence the Ramakrishna Mission too, in a position of exerting continued power over social life (Arif, 2008).

With strong memories of the charismatic gurus, Vedanta philosophy and faith-driven principles in service, I have proposed that the style of Ramakrishna Mission's seva is 'theistic existential', going beyond simple instilling/extolling of virtues, to fulfilling big social obligations and popularizing communitarian notions of social citizenship. Notions of social justice are also faith-based and the flip side is that seva also is a soft means to forward the Hindu nationalist agenda in a benevolent way onto the Indian social fabric.

Syncretism, lived religion and organised charity

In the article on 'Syncretism and pilgrimage in India: Nuances of devotion to Saibaba of Shirdi' (**appendix 3**) I begin by asking the question on the nature of Saibaba devotionalism, a popular form of worship in South Asia, and how those doctrines and belief systems transform the moral subjectivities of followers, which in turn encourages them to perform dana or charity and hence do social service.

Based on the theoretical backdrop of syncretism and pilgrimage, I draw on earlier works by Srinivas (1999a; 1999b) who has discussed how this devotion has evolved into a complex composite of material, oral, textual, performative, kinetic and visual traces and how Hinduisation of the shrine and pilgrim centre and hence the Sansthan (organisation), is a core phenomenon (Rigopoulos, 1993; Warren, 2004). The analysis is based on fieldwork with the Saibaba Sansthan of Shirdi through an analysis of texts, Saibaba hagiographies, discussions with key informants of the Sansthan and non-participant observation.

Dealing with contradictions, my analysis of the fieldwork has shown that pilgrimage to Saibaba Sanstha shrine is at once a form of deification of the Saibaba imagery, as well as a performance, which operationalizes faith practices and also social leanings. Performative

dimensions include teachings and praxis, which authorize Saibaba, and, prescribe moral acts for the devotees, predominantly which include dana or charitable giving to social causes. Through this, devotion to Saibaba becomes a deeply moral endeavour. This devotion too is a form of ‘lived religion’, which entails shaping the moral and faith-oriented selves of devotees who are encouraged to have a penchant for his Sufi austerities (see Marianne Warren for more details on Sufi leanings of Saibaba, also discussed in detail in this article) that include poverty and renunciation. Based on these tenets is the ‘will to give’, which in turn is operationalized through philanthropy, the Hinduised version of which is dana, accepted by the Sansthan for medical, educational and developmental purposes. Hinduisation is seen in making this performance of ‘giving’ sequential and systematic, where charitable offering to the Sansthan is seen and understood as charitable offering to the charismatic teacher or guru Saibaba. This then assumes the form of a doctrine for the Sansthan and charity, or specifically scientific and organised charity (based on needs-resources optimization), as a dominant form of social service. Tax exemption from donations further ensures that the ‘will to give’ is sustained. This form of social service also conjures the syncretic saint image of Saibaba, as an Absolute being, in solidarity with the oppressed, carried forward by the associates and devotees. I maintain that in reciprocation, devotees get spiritual benefits through the grace of Saibaba as the divine protagonist. The final goal is said to be ‘higher’, not solely spiritual enhancement of the self, but the commune as a whole.

Millenarianism, post-apocalyptic vision and social service

In the article ‘The ‘Social’ face of the Brahmakumaris in India: Contemporary perspectives and praxis nuances’ (**appendix 4**), I set out to understand the contemporary face of the Brahmakumaris, specifically through their social service. I ask how social service has proved to be the means of world affirmation for a movement whose original stance has been

that of world rejection. I have drawn the basic understanding of the Brahmakumaris from earlier works by Roy Wallis (1984), Howell (2005), John Walliss (2007) and Ramsay et al (2010) who have discussed the millenarian philosophy of the Brahmakumaris, their apocalyptic vision, their Raja Yoga, world rejection and affirmation and at times world ambivalence and subtle exclusivity through emphasis on soul consciousness. This has been through insights obtained from Brahmakumaris' operations in India and the Diaspora.

Being intrigued by systematic social service as one of the key elements in their contemporary existence, I explore the Brahmakumaris or PBIV (Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya), the acronym that I have used, through ethnographic fieldwork at their headquarters in Mount Abu, entailing a study of the organisational literature, digital archives, key informant interviews and non-participant observation of processes and initiatives.

I propose that the Brahmakumari package is unique in terms of worldview, ethics and social transformation visions – all that build into the package of social service. This is managed through spatialization and a reflexive deployment of the Raja Yoga metaphor. Spatialization means that there is an intermittent movement between a world rejecting position and instrumentalist position, which is modified to suit situations. Reflexive deployment of the Raja Yoga metaphor refers to the utilization and negotiation of different metaphors at different events to cater to the core or serious audience as well as the peripheral or casual audience inclined towards spiritual window-shopping.

I also propose that, with their millenarian philosophy, Brahmakumaris become a model for the third or voluntary sector in the Indian scenario where tradition and modernity or reflexive modernization, intersect. This is reflected in their social service interventions where there is a combination of various levels: tangible social service (interventions in areas of health, correctional settings), facets of spiritual remembrance with Raja Yoga being a part

of the package and the eventual presentation of Raja Yoga tradition as the way forward. Service becomes a way to build that desirable world, which is better than the present age, a form of utopia. My fieldwork has shown that this mix of millenarianism, world accommodation and ambivalence, and subtle exclusivity, create a faith-based social service model, unique to the Brahmakumaris. Through service they tell the various stakeholders and audiences how to live and see the world.

Humanity, divinity and service

In the article titled “Our aim is to link humanity to the divine”: Social philosophy and social service of Sri Aurobindo Society’ (**appendix 5**), against the theoretical backdrop of Habermas’s epistemic rules for religious arguments in the public sphere, I ask how Sri Aurobindo Society (SAS) becomes a visible socio-political player in the social service arena through its rural development project, SARVAM (Sri Aurobindo Rural and Village Action and Movement). My question is focused in particular on their social philosophy and social service projects, to build a discourse through the research on how they deploy their distinctive ideals, strategies and approaches to reach out to humanity and build their credibility and credentials.

I have also specifically focused on the beneficiaries of SARVAM, by asking the following questions: whether the SARVAM project fulfills their material needs; whether it fulfills their spiritual needs and hence gives them an experience of self-actualization; whether it gives them a feeling of proximity to or being anchored by SAS as an organisation; and, whether the SARVAM project is positively different from other rural development projects. These questions are based on the general literature, which discuss the sociality of faith-based organisations and the active engagement of several modern guru-led organisations in a range of social service activities. On whether and how these are unique and different from other

social initiatives, is a dimension of the question that I pose, based on the literary contention that the social philosophies of faith-based institutions are guided by discourses on transcendence and consciousness (Koepping, 1977), propose a link between community development and spirituality and insert a divine mandate into service (Chile & Simpson, 2004; Nurnberger, 2010).

I obtained the data through a mixed methods approach combining content analysis of organisational literature, interviews with the office bearers and survey of beneficiaries. Organisational literature comprised two important works of Sri Aurobindo, namely, *The Life Divine* and *The Human Cycle*, as well as some abstracts from the *Collected works* of the late charismatic teacher, Mirra Alfassa or popularly known as *The Mother*. To the key informants, I posed questions on the social philosophy of SAS, the idea behind their social projects, beneficiary outreach and the eventual vision for humanity and society. At the rural development project sites, I interviewed 396 project beneficiaries.

Findings and their discussion substantiate two arguments: 1) the social philosophy of SAS as a faith-based organisation obtains credentials in society through acts and forms of institutionalized social service, and, 2) beneficiaries of the social projects of SAS, particularly that of SARVAM, feel a great sense of affinity to SAS because the service fulfills their material needs and gives them a spiritual anchor. The core of service/work/action proclaims more of ultimate goals—transformation, recognition of divinity in beings, supramental manifestation (Srinivasan, 2010), and less of proximate goals such as inequality and poverty alleviation, but that too are certainly addressed. I further submit that through social and rural development projects like SARVAM, SAS demonstrates ways in which faith shapes civic culture.

From the point of view of sociological analysis, SAS recreates genres for the voluntary sector in three ways, namely, antecedence, apostasy, and complementarity.

Antecedence is seen in the way SAS links its service and action to the principles of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which then translate into its social projects. Apostasy is seen in its demystification of traditional notions of rural development. This is seen in the way SAS promotes the principles of integral yoga in all its social projects. Complementarity is seen in terms of connecting with the third sector, that is, the voluntary sector (distinct from the state and the civil society), through partnerships and collaborations.

The dominant thesis is that of transcendence in action. The distinctive aspect of this transcendence is that it can be intuited and comprehended but not humanly created, which is what makes SAS's worldviews exclusive. That is how they claim that philosophy and action is to link humanity to the divine, which is supposed to provide answers to modernity's fragmentation by taking cognizance of the deeper sacred.

Austerity, nationalism and service

In the article titled 'The Vivekananda Kendra in India: Its ideological translations and a critique of its social service' (**appendix 6**), I pose a question, on the contemporary socio-political form, of a Hindu faith-based movement, the Vivekananda Kendra, which is volunteer cadre driven, though thoroughly based on the ideals of Swami Vivekananda (posthumously translated by Eknath Ranade, a right wing Hindu political leader), and had social service or more specifically spiritually oriented social service initially embedded in its design. Specifically I also ask how the Kendra's ideological leanings, which are essentially right wing and Hindu nationalist, colours their social service. I base my propositions on Gwilyn Beckerlegge's (1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2007, 2010) work on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideals, social service agenda of Vivekananda and other monastics and the genre of volunteer cadre development for Hindu nation building, a very specific characteristic of the Kendra. Beckerlegge has also said that Vivekananda interpreted service in a manner

where spiritual teachings were very important to the service repertoire, and, it is more about ultimate goals of social transformation and less about proximate goals of poverty alleviation. Using this strand, I specifically build on how service is strategically used by the Kendra now to establish its social legitimacy and relevance as well as forward the Hindu nationalist agenda.

I did fieldwork in the Kanyakumari headquarters and Maharashtra branch of the Kendra, which comprised key informant interviews, survey of the organisation's literature and observations of the Kendra's social initiatives as a nonparticipant in the organisation. I have proposed that faith-oriented spiritual proliferation is the core goal of the Kendra, supported by a 'social' stance. It functions as a Hindu missionary organisation having right-wing ideological positions on Indian national politics and social service being its entry point. In a more critical way, what underlies the benign social service agenda are strong assertions of Hindu nationalism, communal othering and subtle patriarchal norms.

Specifically through the insights gained from fieldwork, I have built a critical discourse on the social service of Vivekananda Kendra. Specifically I develop and argue the following four contentions. The first one is that the Kendra emphasizes on Vedantic socialism vis-à-vis traditional socialism. Since the social service of the Kendra is focused on alleviating the socio-economic disadvantage of people, it can be said to believe in the objective necessity of a socialist society. However, as there are elements of Advaita Vedanta's transcendentalism, and an emphasis on Vedanta inspired ethics and values as opposed to solely working class interests, the Kendra can be said to promote a variant of traditional socialism, which can be called, Vedantic socialism. The second contention is that the Kendra views society through a gendered and ethnonationalist stance. The third contention is that the Kendra, determines matters of justice and equity from a stance which is benevolent but also at once patriarchal. Finally the entire relationship of the Kendra with the

state (government) and its role in the public sphere has elements of historicism, cultural renaissance and communicative rationality. Historicism is in the way Vivekananda's ideals have been appropriated as right-wing, and then projected as the ideal way forward for service. Cultural renaissance is in the unabashed pronouncement of Hindu worldview as providing the necessary base for service and Vivekananda's "man [sic]-making and nation-building" ethos. Finally, communicative rationality characterizes the Kendra's relation with state and its role in the public sphere, where Hindu hermeneutics are used deftly, and, through a self-appointed emancipator role, the Kendra projects Hindu thought as having a kind of universal pragmatics.

Hence through the five published works within the larger set of field insights of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements, five nuanced styles of social work/service undertaken by them emerge: missionary style of service and a theistic existential approach; organised charity instrumentalised through guru devotion and its performance; spatialization and reflexive deployment of Raja Yoga spiritual technique manifesting in three levels of intervention: tangible service, buffet of spiritual remembrance (vis-à-vis amnesia) as the lynchpin of intervention and Raja Yoga itself as a metaphor of service; transcendence in action and evolving the sacred social category through antecedence, apostasy and complementarity; and, spiritually oriented service derived from Vedantic socialism. Underpinning all these styles are guru teachings, Hindu tenets (overt, subtle and derived) and a re-imagining of the nation in Hinduised ways and hence Hindu nationalism.

Followers and adherents of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements

In the next two published works, I have studied the adherents and followers of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements, one important and critical component of their habitus. To characterize this habitus quality, in many ways, these movements are like relational configurations, which have a gravitational pull effect on all agents that enter their field and get associated with them.

In the published work “All for faith: Profiles, engagement chronicles and perceived implications of adherents to Indic faith-based organisations” (**appendix 7**), I have explored a dimension of the habitus of guru-led movements, by asking the following questions about the adherents or followers: what is their background profile, what motivates them to align, how much time do they devote, the work they do and their motivation to continue, how do they see this alignment for themselves and how do they see the role of these organisations in society and their distinctiveness from other social/voluntary organisations. I have based this inquiry on western understanding of adherence and volunteerism in congregations and churches (e.g. Gronbjerg & Never, 2004; Yeung, 2004) and a growing, but at this point limited to individual case studies, work in the purview on sociology of religion, on guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements’ devotees (e.g. Juergensmeyer, 1991; Taylor, 1987; White, 1992; Williams, 1984; Knott, 2000; Warrier, 2003a; Crnic, 2009; Wood, 2010). With this empirical literature review, the need for a cross-organisational study on followers or adherents, is highlighted.

A survey has been carried out with a two stage sampling procedure, selecting nine organisations in the first stage and a sample of 481 adherents or followers from them, identified through the systematic sampling procedure, at the second stage. Data was collected through an interview schedule comprising questions on adherent/follower profiles, stories of their engagements with the guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements,

perceived implications and the Duke University Religiosity Index (DURI) scale and the Spirituality Assessment Scale (SpAS). The main limitation was that data was collected from organisational headquarters or Mumbai centres and sampling was done only from among registered active followers/adherents, weeding out thereby any other forms of adherence.

Results showed that adherents/followers came from a privileged background, were mostly Hindus, more women and had high religiosity and spirituality scores, signifying parallels with profiles of 'new age' aligners (e.g. Ababou, 2005). They get drawn to these movements through the organisational ideology, teacher charisma and very often, also, family connections which in many cases, involves a long-term attachment. Majority do seva or social service work in these movements, which is seen as participating in the movements' mission, enhancing the spirit of *communitas*, as a moral imperative and as a work guided by the divine, which is instrumental in permeating faith-basedness in society. Aligning, adhering and continuing in the organisation is seen as a matter of personal gain. This shows some links to the social identity theory, which posits links between social institutions and categories, individual identities and psychological well-being. Essentially adherents/followers felt that this association and the work they did there had transcendental implications for themselves, which gave them a sense of well-being, resilience, life satisfaction, spiritual connectedness and positive health effects. Since all movements were also actively engaged in social service, which the followers/adherents too participated in, they had the following observations to make about the movements' role in society and their distinctiveness. They said that these guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements provided instruments to deal with existential uncertainties, did so with a predominantly moral tone, which then refracted a sense of constituted habitus among adherents/followers, impressing then this morality onto the wider social field. The distinctiveness from other social/voluntary organisations comes to foray with their emphasis on the mystical-spiritual worldview vis-à-vis profane-prosaic. This is

managed alongside actually carrying out the tangible social service activities and thereby also contributing to social welfare and development.

In the next paper titled ‘Contemporary female gurus, their movements and followers: The case of Amma and Mata Amritanandamayi Mission’ (**appendix 8**), I have discussed the followers of a contemporary female guru Mata Amritanandamayi or Amma as she is popularly called, and her movement called the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission (MAM). Being a female guru and using an unconventional method to connect and reach out to devotees/followers such as physical embrace (she is also known as the hugging saint), I set out to study how followers associate themselves with MAM and how they see Amma, their experiences of Amma’s embrace and its perceived efficacy i.e. how it contributes to followers’ well-being, scores of the followers on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being scale and core differentials and predictors of perceived efficacy of Amma’s embrace.

The backdrop of my inquiry has been the conceptual work on female gurus, specifically the norms that they challenge, and, the way they promote a guru tradition, which is an alternative to a more official male model, maintain a dialogue with tradition and simultaneously innovate (Pechilis, 2004), and the way they emphasize several critical topics such as personal experience, feminine power, renunciation, service and soul-body dualism, and body objectification. There is a simultaneous emphasis on renunciation and fulfilling the culturally expected roles of a woman, such as that of a mother, in a divine guru form (Pechilis, 2012). Hence the path that they choose is not anti-social, since there is a huge social interaction (Hausner, 2006). These gurus also have followers, like their male counterparts, largely from educated, urban, ‘middle class’ sections of the country’s population, whose aim is to seek solace through the gurus from modernity’s perils and hence find a sense of self-fulfillment (Mines, 1999; Warriar, 2003a). Female gurus, in turn, reciprocate fully by adapting new narrative styles of reaching out (Froystad, 2012). Further I

build on Maya Warrier's (2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2006) work on Mata Amritanandamayi who has discussed her origins, followers and the transnational ramifications of the movement, along with how seva or social service is a means for its institution building. Specifically I focus on the gift of embrace, which she gives to her followers (building on Simon Coleman's concept of charismatic giving and spiritual gifts). Selva Raj (2004) describes this physical contact as transgressive. Amma strokes, embraces, hugs and kisses her devotees with total disregard to gender, moral condition and physical purity (Raj 2004, p. 214). Raj further says that "her darshan (seeing and being seen by a revered figure) defies not only traditional Hindu norms concerning purity, pollution and bodily contact between the devotee and the embodied divine but also societal norms governing gender relations. Darshan is her discourse on defiance" (2004, pp. 214–255) and for her followers it is a way to annihilate from past sins (Warrier, 2006, p. 183).

As there has been no quantitative survey on what exactly her followers think of Amma and the embrace and how they gain from it, in this article, I have, through a systematic sample of 543 followers of MAM in India, studied the level of well-being felt by her followers through the embrace. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being scale (WEMWBS) has been used. Scale scores and the analysis showed that Amma's embrace enabled the generation of a sense of well-being among her followers. The four analyses of variance showed that the followers who saw Amma as a personal Godmother, were associated with the movement as devotees, who saw Amma's embrace as a protective fold and who described its efficacy as a healing touch, had higher average WEMWBS scores.

Embrace experiences and its perceived efficacy by followers makes a case for a self-psychology (Heinz Kohut, 1971, 1977); the important goal of which is to update individuals' spiritual faculties by bringing them in contact with their changing experiences of reality (see Amarasingam 2009). I have proposed that there are three types of follower experiences:

idealizing Amma as an icon, ‘mirroring’ by seeing the Absolute in her, and, a sense of ‘twinship’ by having a feeling of oneness with her. These enable building the followers’ sense of self, the sine qua non of Amma coterie building and participation in her spiritual schemes, which, are both, essentially therapeutic. At a meta-analytical level, this study on Amma’s embrace and its perceived efficacy by followers attests two dominant Indian psychotherapy models: 1) the guru-chela (teacher-disciple) paradigm which emphasizes Amma’s authority, the institutional context of MAM as a movement, and, morality as derived from Amma’s teachings and embrace, both of which inspire right action and conduct among followers; and, 2) the abhyasa (study and practice) paradigm which focuses on the interpersonal dimension of the therapeutic relationship between Amma and her followers. Limits are set on the followers’ abilities to cope with existential realities, which are then surmounted by Amma’s divinity and embrace.

Beneficiaries of social services and spiritual programmes of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements

In the next three published works, I have studied the beneficiaries of social service projects and spiritual programmes of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements. Distinguishing from followers and adherents, beneficiaries comprise those whose primary alignment is as service users of these movements. Eventually they too may form a part of the follower coterie.

In the paper titled ‘Beneficiaries of social initiatives of Indic faith-based organisations: Profiles, service experiences, and implications’ (**appendix 9**), I enquire on the socio-demographic profiles, experiences of the services obtained, perceived implications of the beneficiaries for themselves and society and perceived difference from other social initiatives. This enquiry is against the conceptual background that faith-based organisations’

engagement in social services is a form of their partnering in the development goals in a resource limited setting. Religious imagery inevitably accompanies the service mission (Ebaugh et al, 2003), which essentially cultivates a faith-based context for service (Kaplan et al, 2009). Beneficiaries of social service programmes run by churches and congregations have been studied, specifically the health programmes (e.g. Brudenell, 2003), substance abuse and crime prevention (e.g. Hood, 2000), employment generation for youth (e.g. Kennedy & Bielefeld, 2003) and work with vulnerable families (Wuthnow, Hackett, & Hsu, 2004). Clientele satisfaction is a parameter for efficacy. Studies on Indic or guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements' social service programme beneficiaries are few and scattered across disciplines. Some scientific literature has examined the efficacy of Sudarshan Kriya (a spiritual technique popularized by the Art of Living Foundation) for stress relief and addressing depression (e.g. Janakiramaiah et al, 2000; Vedamurthachar et al, 2006); and Integral Yoga (of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram) on consciousness processes (e.g. Dalal, 2001). No systematic study has addressed the questions of who the social service project beneficiaries of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith-movements are, what they perceive of the services and how they gain from them, a gap, which the present published work has attempted to fulfill.

A survey was conducted with 966 beneficiaries of social service projects of Indic faith-based organisations (the term used in the study, comprising Hindu-inspired faith-based organisations and movements). Nine such organisations were identified at the first stage through selection and from those 966 beneficiaries were identified through probability proportional to size sampling from a range of social projects covering health, education, rural development and livelihood sectors. Log regression analyses were deployed to identify profile predictors of beneficiaries' perceived implications of these social services for

themselves, for the society at large and the difference vis-à-vis other secular social service initiatives.

Results showed that the beneficiary profile resembled the general public welfare user in terms of financial/economic status, but were majority Hindus, thereby signifying a selective-bridging capital generation approach of these movements. Faith messages accompany service delivery, which reflects in the beneficiaries' familiarity with the charismatic teacher and ideology. This fulfills the idea of the guru-led Hindu-inspired faith-based movements to bring faith back into the public forum, beyond rituals, towards a community orientation (see Isaac, 2003). I have proposed that beneficiaries saw the social service projects as having fourfold implications for themselves (a) functional need fulfillment (b) self enhancement and actualization (c) *communitas* development and (d) faith-embeddedness. Essentially, what is mediated is mindfulness among the beneficiaries: of the faith orientation and the charismatic guru. Further the beneficiaries saw these social service endeavours as essentially contributing to macro social growth and development. They also saw these as distinct from other social initiatives owing to the ideological backing, teacher charisma and faith orientation. These perceptions were, however, contingent on beneficiaries' level of familiarity with the charismatic guru and the organisational vision-mission and ideals. Although having huge positive effects, the flip side to this entire faith-based service repertoire is the colouring by a faith agenda, which could be biased. Hence in a complex social fabric, striking a balance between the faith push and socio-economic needs pull, so as to deliver the goods appropriately, remains a challenge.

In the next published work titled 'Sudarshan Kriya and Pranayama: Insights into an Indic spiritual technique for promoting well-being' (**appendix 10**), I ask whether and to what extent, a popular New Age spiritual technique called the Sudarshan Kriya and Pranayama (SK&P), promoted by the Art of Living Foundation headed by guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar,

contributes to the well-being of its participants. I place this against the backdrop of literature on spiritual practices, specifically of New Age movements, where these become ways to live the teachings (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005; Pargament, 2007), and the literature which emphasizes their positive contribution to well-being (e.g. Luttmer, 2005; Hill & Pargament, 2008). Specifically I also draw on clinical literature on SK&P which has emphasized its efficacy in dealing with dysthymia, depression and melancholia (e.g. Meti et al, 1996), enhancing brain function (e.g. Sharma et al, 2003) and treatment of stress and anxiety (e.g. Bhatia et al, 2003). This literature showed that studies thus far on SK&P were of experimental and clinical nature, which did highlight its efficacy, albeit under controlled circumstances. A case was thus built for a survey with a larger cohort, which underwent the SK&P and whether and how they themselves, as beneficiaries and hence active stakeholders, saw its efficacy.

For the study, 828 participants who had undergone the SK&P course in Mumbai were selected through a process of systematic sampling. In the face-to-face interviews, apart from questions on socio-demographic profile, questions were posed on the participants' reasons for having done the programme, post programme engagement in terms of self-practice and follow-up, perceived programme efficacy and post programme scores on the Well-Being Picture scale (WBPS) and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ).

Findings showed that SK&P was perceived to be effective by all participants in maintaining their well-being (as per the scale scores), contingent on their personal engagement with the technique entailing self-practice and follow up. SK&P also has tangible positive health effects and log regression analysis showed that Hindu participants, those having good education, in employment, those having done the SK&P for coping with depression, stress, rootlessness, and uncertainties were more likely to perceive the technique as effective. Hence the study shows that SK&P is an effective New Age spiritual technique

popularized by a contemporary guru-led Hindu-inspired faith movement, albeit more effective for those socially privileged (Hindus, educated, employed), comprehending limitations of modern lifestyles and hence looking for appropriate spiritual solace, and those willing to engage personally with it on a long-term basis through self-practice and attending follow-up sessions. It can be deployed cross-culturally too as it characteristically has ingredients of spiritually inclined interventions such as: commencing from the spiritual starting point of the individual, looking at the individual as a part of the divine scheme (non-duality) and practical spirituality comprising unconditional love and forgiveness, altruism, detachment, disengagement, and positive coping which in turn promote a general sense of peace and well-being. With sub-techniques oriented towards personal healing and restoration, the resultant benefits across social categories are higher self-esteem, greater maturity in relationships and a better psychological competence.

In the next published work ‘Adolescents, well-being and spirituality: Insights from a spiritual program’ (**appendix 11**), based on the fact that several guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith-movements have tailor made programmes for children and young people, with the aim of cultivating their religiosity and spirituality and possibly get lifelong followers, I have posed the question on the influence of this spirituality on participant adolescent well-being. This has been specifically from the point of view of the All Round Training in Excellence (ART-Excel) programme for adolescents developed by the Art of Living Foundation (AOL Foundation). Specifically I have asked, vis-à-vis the control group who had not undergone the ART-Excel programme, whether ART-Excel is useful for the adolescent participants, whether programme participation improves well-being, educational attainment, relationships, sense of social duty, future vision and social participation, and, whether it influences achievement, hope, well-being and happiness as depicted through scale scores.

This inquiry is set against the backdrop of theoretical literature on adolescence, which is seen by theologians and psychologists, as a period of spiritual awakening (Fowler, 1981; Good & Willoughby, 2006; Spika et al. 2003; Levenson, Aldwin, & D’Mello 2005). Further I have also looked at empirical literature to support this argument, which sees spirituality as a source of resilience in adolescence (Lerner, Roeser, & Phelps, 2008), source of coping with adversity and promoting health and well-being (Raftopoulos & Bates, 2011), is linked to developing altruistic attitudes and hence social duty (Büssing et al., 2012) and is specifically effective for adolescents and youth experiencing challenges entailing risk behaviours including violence, delinquency and sexual and health compromising activities (Markstrom et al., 2010).

To substantiate the enquiry, a sample of 396 ART-Excel programme participants (13- to 15-year-olds) in four cosmopolitan and international cities: Vancouver, London, Johannesburg and Mumbai, was identified using the probability proportional to size sampling (self-weighting design). The control group comprised an equal number of participants from local schools in each of the cities, not having undergone the ART-Excel programme. An email questionnaire comprising questions on background profile, perceived usefulness of the programme and four scales (achievement motivation scale, hope scale, wellbeing scale and happiness scale) were deployed.

Results showed that that the ART-Excel programme was perceived as useful by participants. This programme however privileges those who belong to a particular socio-economic class. Hence, in general, girls, Hindus (homeland and Diaspora), adolescents in higher monthly expenses brackets and with a better health status (that is no self-declared ailments) saw a higher efficacy to the ART-Excel programme. However, in general for all participants, the programme was seen to contribute to well-being, social participation, sense of social duty, relationships, future vision and educational attainment. For the participants

who had already undergone the programme, the scores on the four scales were in the fairly good range, with socio-demographic background variations. The control group however, that is those who had not undergone the ART-Excel programme, performed poorly on the scales compared to their counterparts who had undergone the programme. Hence, controlling for other effects such as health and socio-economic status, the levels of well-being, happiness, achievement and hope of the programme participants was higher.

Hence the study showed that ART-Excel programme's spirituality has positive mental health and well-being influences and spirituality influences achievement, hope, well-being and happiness of adolescents. This is particularly so for Diaspora Hindu adolescents as ethnic minorities in a foreign land, who are more likely to use spirituality during times of stress. Limitations for the findings of this study and hence generalizability come from the fact that participants belonged to the upper class and enjoyed privileges which may influence their sense of well-being, which cannot solely be attributed to the ART-Excel programme. A sharper analysis, controlling for intervening factors is thus warranted. Further post programme retention of positive effects, and whether there is a sense of continuity, may require longitudinal studies. Nonetheless the findings from this study have implications for clinical work with adolescents, and for recognizing the role of spirituality in early adolescents' psychological well-being. This comes with respecting the meaning and power of spirituality in the belief systems of adolescents and using it proactively to work with adolescent groups across strata and cultures.

Implications for social work education and practice

In view of the fact that the discipline of social work is moving towards indigenisation and decolonisation in many cultures, including India, the need to foreground indigenous perspectives has a premium. Faith and spirituality form critical components of the

indigenisation repertoire, but hitherto uncovered in the social work education mainstream discourse. Given the presence of guru-led and Hindu-inspired faith movements in the social service milieu through tangible social service projects, as well as spiritual programmes aiming for psychosocial benefits of followers and beneficiaries, it becomes crucial to systematically examine their bearings for the social work discipline and social work education in general. In the next two published works the focus has been to see how a spiritual technique of a popular contemporary guru-led movement fits into the purview of social work education, and how, within the discourse of indigenisation-decolonisation, academics within the discipline, across cultures, understand spirituality and see the spaces to incorporate the same within the curriculum.

In the published work titled ‘Sudarshan Kriya of the Art of Living Foundation: Applications to social work practice’ (**appendix 12**), I have asked how a New Age spiritual technique, popularized by a modern guru-led movement, can be applied to social work practice. This is in line with the general quest for looking at indigenous perspectives in social work practice. The attempt is to add to the growing body of literature on spiritually inclined social work interventions (proposed first by Ed Canda and L D Furman in 1999) which highlight the psychosocial potential of New Age spiritual pathways (Derezotes, 2006; Bhagwan, 2010a; Crisp, 2010; Houtman & Aupers, 2010) as also their role in social justice and transformation (Coates, 2007; Lee & Barrett 2007; Bhagwan, 2010b; Prior & Quinn, 2012; Gray & Coates, 2013). This is also by simultaneously being mindful of the fact that many such techniques have a class bias, may subscribe to, or derive from, hegemonic ideologies (such as Hindutva), and religion and spirituality may themselves comprise oppressive social structures and are essentially in contradiction with the secular ethos that the discipline traditionally upholds.

The empirical evidence for this study draws on the experiences of a systematic sample of 1099 participants of the Sudarshan Kriya programme in Mumbai. Results showed that those who engaged personally with the technique in terms of post programme self-practice and of attending follow-up sessions perceived the effective of the technique more. The technique was also seen as useful for building psychological competencies and addressing lifestyle ailments.

For the social work discipline and education, I propose that Sudarshan Kriya as a New Age spiritual technique, popularized by a guru-led movement, draws on individual strengths and hence is micro oriented, and also demonstrates the potential to combine macro virtue ethics through its embedded components of seva (social service), spirit of altruism and philanthropy. Ingredients of the technique that are critical for practice are: the micro domain with a clinical focus, and, the macro domain with an existential-social focus. The micro domain addresses issues of the self (individual), affected by disharmonies that call for transcendence. The macro domain is geared towards cosmic disharmonies and hence quest for better worldviews and decolonisation of lifeworlds through metaphors of peace, justice, equity, harmony and reverence for life.

The contribution in this published work is the building of a frame in which the Sudarshan Kriya technique can be used as a modality of spiritually inclined social work interventions. The model has four components: episteme, practical steps, intervention domains and possible efficacy parameters. The episteme recognises five levels of consciousness (physical, emotional, mental, existential and spiritual) with the spiritual level as the highest. In that there are the vertical and horizontal dimensions: the vertical dimension as the relationship with God and the horizontal dimension as the relationship with self, others and the environment. The core is the tackling of the traditional clinical, spiritual and integrative dimensions of individual existence.

The practical steps include identification of the spiritual starting point of the individual and focusing on (1) self as part of divine and (2) non-duality beliefs for self-actualisation propensity. The part 1 course involves the first introduction to the Sudarshan Kriya technique followed by the part 2 course emphasizing on the power of silence for relaxation and rejuvenation. Further, the Sahaj Samadhi Meditation (the third level) can provide a personalized meditation ritual for serious followers. Finally, all techniques learnt have to be backed by daily self-practice and weekly follow-ups.

Hence, there are two domains of intervention: the micro or the clinical–therapeutic domain with a focus on the self and well-being; and, the macro domain with a focus on cosmic consciousness and existential–social harmony. The possible efficacy parameters in this frame, to gauge Sudarshan Kriya effectiveness, are broadly identified as: (1) effective for lifestyle ailments, (2) effective for stress relief—reduces cortisol, (3) effective for overall well-being, (4) general feeling of peace and well-being, (5) supports immune system, (6) increases optimism, (7) increases brain function—calmness, mental focus and recovery from stressful stimuli, (8) re-instating harmonised worldviews, transcend to larger macro-cosmic domains with metaphors of equity, transcendence and reverence for life and (9) cosmic transcendence and synergies of being and becoming.

Hence I conclude that for the social work discipline and education, Sudarshan Kriya develops a paradigm of Indian psychotherapy, which guides the individual to larger macrocosmic domains and surmounting the limits of individuality. Hence the technique is relevant for micro practice and also has macro implications having threefold paradigm shifts: from a general value orientation to the accepting charismatic guru Sri Sri's authority orientation, from individual choice to a Sri Sri follower drive and from morality to a deeper understanding of transcendence.

In the next published work titled 'Including spirituality in the social work curriculum: Perspectives from South Asia' (**appendix 13**), I have moved the discourse onto the realm of curriculum and education, by asking what the educators from within the discipline of social work think about the inclusion of spirituality within the social work curriculum. This is within the remit of indigenisation-decolonisation of the discipline, and, spirituality being a critical component in promoting the same. Specifically I have asked how educators understand spirituality, whether they consider spirituality as having bearings on micro and macro practices, their meanings of spiritually sensitive social work practice, whether they consider including it in the curriculum, and, if so, the nature of curricular orientation, objectives, content, incorporation of practical/experiential dimensions and settings of practice.

This inquiry is focused on the growing literature on spirituality and social work, within the discipline of social work, responding to quests for decolonisation and the need to take cognizance of diverse worldviews (Gray et al, 2013), the fact that spirituality has a positive usage in therapeutic settings and its growing relevance within the paradigm of the post-secular (Hodge, 2005). A considerable body of literature in the US, UK and Australia is now also focusing on what educators think of the inclusion of religion and spirituality in social work (e.g. Furman et al, 2005; Gilligan & Furness, 2006; Coholic, 2006; Stirling et al, 2010; Bhagwan, 2010a, 2013). The general understanding is that spirituality and religion are poorly addressed within the curriculum and hence must be more proactively included. Barring limitations to the construct and ideology of spirituality (Olson, 2002; Illaiah, 2004), there is enough evidence to show that its inclusion has merits for the social work curriculum. In the absence of any such inquiry in the South Asian context, I have addressed that gap in literature and studied it through this published work.

A survey was conducted with 1084 social work educators from six South Asian countries —India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma and Bhutan. Data was collected through an email questionnaire comprising questions on basic background profile, Spirituality Assessment Scale, open- and semi-open-ended questions on educators' views about meanings of spirituality, application of spirituality for micro and macro practices, meanings of spiritually sensitive social work practice, whether to include spirituality in the curriculum, and if so the curricular objectives, orientation, content, practical/experiential component and settings of practice. Limitations, which arise from doing a large-scale multi-country survey, do exist. Nonetheless, the findings have many critical propositions to make for social work education, which can be carried forward.

Results have shown that a course on spirituality is a desirable inclusion in the social work curriculum, as perceived by South Asian educators. South Asian educators gave three broad meanings of spirituality—transcendence, mind-soul discourses and a relational view. For a majority of Indian educators spirituality meant a transcendence of sorts. A majority of educators from Nepal and Bangladesh gave a relational view of spirituality. Women educators and all those who were Buddhists also construed spirituality in a relational manner. Basically, it means that social work educators promote conceptions of spirituality that combine self and a relational view. For the discipline, since both the self and the other are quintessential, all the conceptualisations of spirituality were seen as critical in operationalising spirituality into the curriculum. A majority of educators perceived spirituality as useful for micro practice. The religion of educators had a significant association with this perception; but educators who were Muslims said that they were not sure of the application of spirituality for micro practice. This could be due to the fact that one of the tenets of Islam leans more towards text-ritual religion than abstract tenets of spirituality. A majority of Indian social work educators and those who scored high on the

spirituality assessment scale were convinced of the usefulness of spirituality tenets for macro practice. Particularly, the emphasis was on elements that promote peace and global well-being. Fewer educators from countries such as Burma and Bangladesh were convinced of its macro application as the contours of the discipline in those countries are yet confined to individual work and micro practice. On the other hand, educators from countries having witnessed civil and ethnic strife (India, Sri Lanka and Nepal) as well as a country like Bhutan (which has the unique concept of Gross National Happiness) did see the application of spirituality for macro practice.

In terms of spiritually sensitive practice, a greater credence was given to using spirituality and mindfulness as intervention methods. One-third of the educators, however, said that the core was the spiritual potential of the clientele/group/community. This trend is akin to indigenisation and decolonisation of practice/praxis whence spirituality is attributed critical significance in planning/envisaging interventions (Gray et al., 2013). While all agreed that spirituality should be a component in the curriculum and a majority also said that it should be at the postgraduate level, educators were almost equally divided between the concepts of whether it should be optional or compulsory. Educators with longer years of service and with high spirituality scale scores believed that it should be compulsory. This meant that those who had been with the discipline for a while and were spiritually inclined were more willing to expand its contours as well as see the synergies of spirituality and interventions. Educators believed that a comprehensive curriculum should be a combination of evidence-based and experiential components. Furthermore, they proposed that it should be an adequate mixture of knowledge and skills. However, a significant proportion of the educators proposed that learners' spiritual capacities should also be developed through the curriculum. Essentially, I have proposed that, a curriculum on spirituality and social work finds a firmer acceptance in the contemporary South Asian scenario. For the dissenting

minority too, spirituality and specifically the resurgence of New Age movements is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored.

Hence I submit that the curriculum could contain components of: meanings of spirituality and positions both in the global and indigenous contexts; conceptual models and literature on spirituality and social work; empirical evidence on actual interventions and spiritually sensitive practice; techniques of spiritual interventions and skill-building for practice; and personal meanings and constructions of spirituality and developing learners' spiritual self and potential.

Summary and way forward

Thirteen published works comprise this thesis, which discuss the following: a) characteristics of the guru-led movements, specifically their partnering in the social welfare mandate with the state in a neoliberal era; b) particular cases of prominent movements and their styles and nuances of social service; c) the fellowship of these movements comprising devotees who derive therefrom existential meaning, sense of well-being and also participate in their social service schemes; d) the beneficiaries who are supported by the guru-led movements both in material and spiritual terms; and, e) how the core artefacts of these movements, through the lynchpin of the post-secular discourse, can be deployed to enhance the current indigenisation-decolonisation mission of the social work discipline, the core of which is social change.

Each of the individual publications submitted as a part of this thesis, advance knowledge in different ways. The first published work on 'Governmentality and guru-led movements' brings in a new lens to analyse guru-led movements' field operations and specifically social service. The governmentality argument theoretically positions guru-led movements in the macro civil society-state alliance discourse and conceptualises its social service practice as a form of partnership with the state to fulfil the welfare mandate in a

resource limited setting. This is a form of devolved governance with two embedded tensions – occasional instances of resistance and the backdoor entry of Hindutva hegemony. I have argued that guru-led movements are emblematic of a post-disciplinary model of governance which devolves power from the state to new control agencies, in this case the guru-led movements. This contributes, at one level, to governmentality studies where religious modes of authority and power are still sparsely recognised, and at another, alleviates the discussions on guru-led movements to the realm of social theory.

The next five publications of this thesis map and discuss the field of guru-led movements through the lynchpin of social service and attempt to discern the facets of faith-driven social work or service, also known as *seva*. The frame of analysis to study various guru-led movements' social service is unique, combining: the genesis story and contemporary form in the socio-political milieu; stance on society, stratification and perspectives on social service; social transformation visions; scope of service initiatives; volition, prescriptivism and doctrinarism; interplay of memory and oblivion to determine the service style; and, the flip side through dimensions, manifestations and subtext of Hindu hegemony. Through this the forms of social service and in turn the facets of post-disciplinary models of governance with guru-led movements as the fulcrum, have emerged.

The five published works deliberate and foreground five styles of social service of guru-led movements: missionary motives of service and a theistic existential approach; positioning organised charity as lived religion; social service as a way to realise the utopian worldview post-apocalypse believed to be a millenarian inevitable; social service as a form of transcendence in action, linking humanity to divine through antecedence, apostasy and complementarity; and, spirituality oriented service, towards the ideal of a faith-oriented socialism, determined through principles of austerity and ideals of nationalism.

Though this by no means is an exhaustive rendition of the social service repertoire of guru-led movements, the rich mosaic of the service traditions are revealed through the five publications and primarily through the sociology of movements and institutions lens, something which literature on guru-led movements has thus far not attempted. Collectively thus the five publications on specific guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements contribute at once a frame of analysis, and to styles of faith-based social service as extrapolated from themes emerging from the analytical trajectories.

Guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements operate in the social milieu through followers and devotees as well as beneficiaries of their service projects. Followers and devotees contribute to the movements' momentum as well as partner in implementing the social service agenda. The two published works on adherents of these movements and followers of a female guru make a significant empirical contribution in terms of mapping devotee profile and understanding their motives. While the original empirical large-scale survey data adds to devotee literature, the findings have a significant point to make. Fellowship, adherence and being a part of the devotee coterie is motivated and sustained through perceived personal and psychological gains. Devotee identities are formed and realized through coterie memberships and performance. Participation in social service is emblematic of a service to humanity, which is in turn seen as service to the guru. These two empirical studies contribute to the social identity theory, which talks of the connection between social institutions, individual identities and psychological well-being. Further they illuminate a paradigm of Indian psychotherapy, which highlights the therapeutic aspect of the guru-devotee relationship.

The next three published works chart the virgin domain of generating data on the beneficiaries of guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements, emphasizing that the unique aspect of the social service package of these movements, apart from traditional service projects (viz.

health, education and livelihood), are their trademark spiritual techniques, which have well-being promoting potential. The first publication in this subset maps the beneficiary profile and service experiences and promotes that while the profile is similar to the general public welfare user, their allegiance to the guru and his/her ideology makes their fellowship exclusive. Further, while the guru-led and Hindu-inspired movements fulfill their functional needs, it also additionally grants the privilege of coterie alliance, self-enhancement and faith development.

The next two published works squarely highlight the well-being and psychological competence promoting potential of the trademark spiritual techniques through large-scale surveys, a robust empirical addition in a field largely dominated by clinical and controlled trials. This signifies charting into the yet growing research tradition of generating big data on efficacy of spiritual techniques in non-clinical settings, within the domain of spiritually sensitive interventions.

With social service as the core and spiritual techniques as the fulcrum, the last two published works of this dossier emphasise the contributions of the novel theoretical arguments and the propositions made through the original empirical data for a discipline and domain knowledge whose core is social service viz. social work. What I substantiate is that within social work's quest for generating an indigenous knowledge and practice base abiding by the argument of decolonization and cultural relevance, indigenous spiritual techniques as helping/enabling techniques, advance the frontiers. The cross-cultural empirical data on social work educators' views on spirituality and social work flag the growing focus on the post-secular tenor of this relatively nouveau discipline, which takes cognizance of spiritual techniques as public practice technologies with a potential to promote personal, psychological and social change.

Cumulatively and iteratively, through the published works, I have proposed that this enterprise of guru-led movements foregrounds the social dimensions of guru-led movements and brings in aspects of post-secular to social work education. In the scheme of the public resurgence of faith, guru-led movements' social engagements comprise a form of sociality, which connects at once with the state (through partnering in the welfare mandate) and civil society (through its fellowship comprising followers and beneficiaries). This contemporary phenomenon of guru-led movements propelling faith-driven social service has not been explored systematically in either the discipline of religion studies or social work. In the former the preoccupation has been more with the intrinsic benefits of faith and spirituality of new religions and extrinsic manifestations of peculiar characteristics of the fellowship. In social work and social development, the historic movement of renaissance and modernity tended to foreground secular concerns, temperaments and outlook, thereby relegating faith and spirituality to intensely personal and private realms.

My submission through the thirteen published works is to recognise the public role of guru-led movements as: civil society actors endowed with the capital to partner in social welfare mandate, something that is required in welfare settings which are inherently resource limited; as anchors for its own fellowship by providing followers, adherents and beneficiaries, roots, identity, material and spiritual resources; as grounds of inception of spiritual techniques and technologies of self-enhancement; and, as new social institutions which can promote a synergy between the social dimensions of religion and social work to highlight the social role of faith and spirituality and post-secular form of social work which values the indigenous and the post-colonial, a strong fulcrum of which is faith and spirituality.

This brings forth the need for further research in some of the following areas. More nuances of guru-led movements, their Diaspora and translocal avatars and how service pans

out in that context needs a closer examination. This is also so, for their spiritual techniques and systems, which are popularised, catering to diverse clientele, to enable psychological benefits. In the post-secular vein, how exactly the disciplines of new religions, faith and spirituality studies and social work can talk to each other more systematically and consciously, needs research from specialists who can discourse across. A more tangible alliance can be sought, banking on the common denominator of both: people, society and self defined ethics of goodness and well-being.

More specifically, on guru-led movements, research is required on their ways of being in a post-liberalised market-driven economy, the way they balance ideas of ascetism, renunciation and philanthropy, or more specifically, to use John Walliss' terms, world renunciation and world affirmation, and what exactly is the form of impure altruism that is floated through their social service. This is because, through the published works, there is enough evidence to show that the service of guru-led movements is as much about citizenship performance, as it is to do with garnering a devotee coterie or a kind of 'clubbiness' (Bowman, 2004). Hence seva performativity of guru-led movements needs a closer view from the lenses of state, market and civil society, given that it is seen as a price paid by doers/engagers/followers for non-tangible benefits and transcendental commodities such as the guru's grace. Sometimes this takes the form of mental engagement and symbolic participation i.e. seva or service done for the guru is seen as directly reaching out to society and vice versa. Hence the way actual social service is foregrounded/backgrounded through the guru's expansive agency, and what this means for facets of seva, needs closer examination. The other case is made for more ethnographic and psychoanalytical studies on followers' volition and motives to join and stay and beneficiaries' inclinations to continue to align. Basically this can be done also from the point of view of the range of spiritual

techniques and testing their psychological effects and how exactly they influence the macro social milieu through claims of exhorting for peace and justice.

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Appendices

Published Works

Appendix 1

Pandya, S. P. (2016). Governmentality and Guru-led Movements in India: Some arguments from the field. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 19 (1), 74-93. DOI: 10.1177/1368431015579977

Appendix 2

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