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Moving Toward Utopia

Language, Empathy, and Chastity among Mobile Mothers and Children in Mayapur, West Bengal

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

by

Teruko Vida Mitsuhara

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

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Professor Elinor Ochs, Chair

This dissertation examines the utopian impulse as a historical concept that informs twenty-first century religious migration and community formations in opposition to late-capitalist modernity. It foregrounds the understandings and experiences of women and their children in Mayapur, a transnational village comprised of devotees of Krishna in West Bengal, India. Based on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, this study offers linguistic anthropological insights into the motivations for why women choose to leave Western and other "liberal" contexts in favor of fundamentalist religious spaces. Through close analysis of everyday interactions in multilingual children's peer-groups it shows the affordances that growing up in such a utopian community has for the development of "linguistic empathy" across racial and linguistic boundaries, as well as the reflexive understandings of religious and cultural concepts that children acquire, debate, and transform.

Beginning with the history of utopia in sixteenth-century Europe to its exportation to India in the nineteenth century, this study identifies ways in which utopian thought shapes the creation of Mayapur. "Utopia" was invented by English saint and satirist Sir Thomas More in 1516 as a double entendre meaning "non-place" as well as "place of happiness." More did not intend his satirical novel

to become a blueprint for actual alternative world-making projects. Yet, over the course of five hundred years, innumerable attempts to manifest "ideal" worlds have taken place. This study traces how utopian thought impacted nineteenth century Bengali reformer Bhaktivinoda Thakur, who envisioned Mayapur as the homeland of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Gaudiya Vaishnavism centers on *bhakti*, the devotional worship of Radha and Krishna, avatars of the supreme Hindu god Vishnu. This medieval religion was later exported from India to the West by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada, who founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in 1966. Mayapur is ISKCON's headquarters and was prophesied to be the learning center and homeland for all devotees of Krishna. Mayapur is fast becoming a city with around 3,500 Bengali and other Indian residents alongside approximately 2,500 international devotees who are culling together their resources to build their Bengali guru's Vaishnava utopia.

Through participant observation, interviews, and video recordings of face-to-face interactions, this study examines everyday life among those living in utopian communities. It addresses the subjective, existential concerns of devotee women, who migrated to this utopian project. Featuring close analysis of devotee mothers' *narratives of entrapment*, I suggest that pressures on mothers in the working world has been a catalyst for migration to communal projects that uphold strict gender divides. The main push for family migration is vested in protecting their children from "material world" logics, chief among them, feminism. For devotees, feminism stands as the trickster that duped them into engaging in social commitments for which they were not prepared, delaying motherhood in pursuit of education or career advancement, and placing money or society above one's family—all framed as anti-motherhood and ultimately practices that they as members of a community of like-minded devotees need to correct in order to birth the Vaishnava utopia envisioned by their guru.

Once families migrated to Mayapur, children from around the world and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds began living in close proximity to one another in school, neighborhoods, the temple and other community settings. This dissertation showcases the communicative possibilities in this utopian community. Due to constant migration and ever-changing demographics, the community is in constant flux. In a place predicated upon a mobile constituency and liminality, this study

investigates the communicative dispositions made possible in Mayapur. Recorded social interactions among devotee children (ages 8–11) reveals that children assist each other in language learning and display patience for conversational mistakes, referred to here as *linguistic empathy*.

This dissertation discusses how the lifeworlds of girls as highly mobile migrants promote religious flexibility regarding chastity among their generation. The girls transform ISKCON's concept of chastity from a strict moral code with clear tenets into a demeanor that is contextually variable. Investigating religious change among mobile devotee girls complicates ideas about children's role in migration as "passive" dependents who mirror the sentiments and ideologies of their parents. From the perspective of the girls' families, utopia is about protecting their daughters from the "world-out-there." Yet, because of their constant migratory experiences, devotee girls are periodically exposed to that world. Rather than categorically reject or embrace it, the girls display an ability to modify or switch moral frameworks surrounding chastity. This study discusses cultural changes initiated by the next generation of devotees as an outcome of their cosmopolitan life, especially their frequent geographical mobility, which exposes them to variability and affords contestation of localized values.

The dissertation of Teruko Vida Mitsuhara is approved.

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2019

To my mother and the memory of my father,

for pushing me forward to dream.

And to Jan,

for dreaming alongside me.

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Transcription Conventions

Transcripts of naturally occurring discourse follow the conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) and modified by Marjorie H. Goodwin (1990, 25–6).

Symbol	Description
:::	elongated sounds (number of colons is relative to duration of sound);
[	onset of overlap;
=	latching speech;
-	a dash at a final word boundary indicates a cut-off or drop-out;
(.)	micropause (silence of less than .2 seconds);
(.4)	pause (number indicates silence duration in seconds);
.	falling intonation (not the end of a sentence!);
,	continuing intonation that may rise a little;
?	rising intonation (not necessarily a question!);
h	audible aspiration, usually breathing or laughter; enclosed in parentheses when occurring within a word; multiple h mark longer or more intensive aspiration;
.h	aspiration that is an inhalation is marked by an h preceded by a dot; without a dot it is usually an exhalation;
h(h)	laughter;
ALL CAPS	increased volume;
underlined	emphasis;
°within degree signs°	low volume;
“within quotation marks”	reported speech, quoted discourse;
(best guess)	incomprehensible speech (best guess of transcriber);
( )	incomprehensible speech;
((comment))	transcriber’s comments.

Note on Names, Transliterations, and Images

Pseudonyms are used to preserve the anonymity of my informants unless otherwise noted. I have spelled Bengali and Sanskrit terms using English phonetic spelling (Krishna instead of Kṛṣṇa). Diacritics are used in the text only when referencing original sources that utilize them and for the first usage of gurus' names (e.g., A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Srila Prabhupāda will be referred to in subsequent mentions as Prabhupada without the diacritic ā). For the reader's convenience, I have glossed the meanings of vernacular terms in the text and also provided a glossary in the appendix. All photos are mine unless otherwise noted. Stills from video data have been cartoonized and eyes have been blurred to preserve the anonymity of informants.

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UCLA has been a stimulating intellectual environment and I am grateful to my dissertation committee for their support. I am extremely appreciative of the care and constant belief in my work from my doctoral advisor, Elinor Ochs. I consider myself lucky to have had an advisor who carved out so much of her time to meditate upon my research and closely edit my work. From my M.A. to this Ph.D., I have always known that Elinor is in my corner. That confidence is priceless.

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and vision—a combination that has grounded me as well as allowed me to soar above the hurdles that have dotted these years.

When you fall down, you get up. When you fall down, you get up again.
And you keep getting up until falling down gets tired of you.

The race is not for the swiftest,
but for those who have the endurance to endure it till the end.

These are two of my father's many mantras of strength and perseverance that reverberate through me daily. He passed away three months before this thesis was completed and I dedicate this manuscript to him and my mother, who cared for him 24/7. The last few years of his life were not easy, and my mother's patient care, labor, and self-sacrifice are the stuff of tales; indeed, I have never met a woman who comes close to her. As such devotion often goes unnoticed I mark it on this page, ensuring it will live in print and online. Thank you. Your sacrifice gave me room to flourish and complete this dissertation among other things. If I am a pinch of the human you have been to those in your circle, I will be great. Dad was lucky, and so am I. A historian and political scientist, my father added layers of meaning to every single conversation-turned-college-lecture. That love of mining through the past is present in this thesis. Our lives are reflections of innumerable laminations and conversations. Thank you for that perspective. Thank you both for breaking the box of "normal" and setting high standards.

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CHAPTER I

Anthropology of Utopia

> *The question is not: is it true? But: does it work?*
> *What new thoughts does it make it possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel?*
> Brian Massumi ([1980] 1987, xv)

In the current era where nation-state primacy dwindles as corporations and borderless economies take its place (W. Brown 2010), it would seem that utopia has no place beyond science fiction, and certainly not to be taken seriously in any practice. The utopia (lit. "non-place" as well as "place of happiness") of Thomas More's time, where an island far away holds the secrets to an ideal society, seems impossible to create. The web of globalization appears to have no limit, no physical escape is possible, yet some still look to outer space for imagined refuge. Preeminent scholar of utopia, Frederic Jameson (1996, xii) famously pointed out that "it seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism." So what do we do with the people who try anyway? What to do with the ones who dare to fight against or disengage from the current world order? Ruth Levitas (2017, 3–4) writes that a "Utopian approach allows us not only to imagine what an alternative society could look like, but enables us to imagine what it might feel like to inhabit it, thus giving a greater potential depth to our judgements about the good." For families who want their children to not only live the nostalgic childhood that they see disappearing in their home countries but also "live with a higher taste" for what "real life" is, the search for utopia is imperative.

This dissertation addresses utopia in the following ways: as a theoretical framework for understanding twenty-first century religious community formations; as an exported concept from Europe

into British India, forever transforming Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism; as an interactional achievement, building the backdrop for language sharing linguistic empathy among unlikely *bondhus*[1] or friends and disrupting longstanding social and racial dynamics of in the Global South; as a vehicle for local brands of female empowerment in a post-industrial late-capitalist world that burdens mothers; and as a space that affords for cultural change among cosmopolitan girls.

Across eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork between 2015 and 2017, I conducted participant observation among six families, five of whom migrated to Mayapur, West Bengal to live in a religious utopia project. Since 1971, Mayapur has been the headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) (Sarbadhikary 2015b, 151) more popularly known as the Hare Krishnas. ISKCON started in 1966, when Bengali guru Srila Prabhupada left West Bengal to preach the tenets of Gaudiya Vaishnavism in the United States. "Gauda" refers to the Gauda region of present day West Bengal and Bangladesh. Vaishnavism refers to the worship of one the most important Hindu gods, Vishnu. One of the many tenets that Prabhupada introduced to the North American public was the concept of *bhakti* or loving devotion to Radha and Krishna, the divine female-male incarnation of Vishnu. This female-male divinity is a central focus of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Sparked by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1534) in the sixteenth century, and existing in a variety of forms, Gaudiya Vaishnavism did not become a worldwide religious movement until the efforts of nineteenth century Bengali reformer Bhaktivinoda Thakur. From Bhaktivinoda came a new lineage of Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism that sparked efforts at crafting a Vaishnava utopia on earth. As the history of this movement will be further discussed in chapter 4, here I will fast forward to the present where we find thousands of ISKCON Hare Krishna devotees from around the world actively building religious community in a village 130 km north of Kolkata in rural West Bengal.

Nestled in the middle of a historically Muslim area (Eaton 1996), Mayapur—approximately a two-mile long village—has become home to 2,500 non-Indians from Africa, Asia, South and North America, Western and Eastern Europe, and Australia. This is a sharp increase from the early 1990s,

1 The singular Bengali word *bondhu* (friend) with an English plural marker "-s."

when less than a hundred non-Indians, mostly North Americans and British, were permanently living in Mayapur (Mayapur Archives 1994). Many foreign devotees are actively buying land in West Bengal through Indian lawyers who sign for the land in their own name as well as through marriage to local Bengali devotees. The largest immigrant population as of 2016 are from the United States and Russia. Mayapur's temple authorities have also been purchasing land in the region for almost three decades developing and renting out apartments to foreigners who then bring their families, investments, languages, and cultural practices. Packed into a small area, these ethnically, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse people work on a common project of building their ideal city and temple for Krishna—a temple that, when finished, will almost equal St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City in size. The interactional field of the community is intensified among the children through peer group formations both at school and in closely situated housing units. This study focuses on utopian discourses across the centuries as well as those invoked and instantiated, made and remade through everyday talk.

This dissertation investigates the Utopian impulse as a historical concept that informs twenty-first century community formations designed in opposition to the world. In times of crisis, Nietzsche said, that the modern world would turn away from itself, something Weber later incorporated when discussing his theory of the religious rejection of the world (Weber [1916] 1958). To be opposed to something and to envision that you know the solution is a thoroughly modern Utopian impulse. Grounding this dissertation is the utopian concept as it pertains to "intentional communities," face-to-face communities that are built as "total institutions" (Goffman 1961). I focus on the lives of mothers and children in the Mayapur community.

This study examines three aspects of life in this utopian community beginning with how mothers construct dystopic narratives of life in the twenty-first century and join a religious utopian community. It analyzes how multilingual, highly mobile children create empathic communicative "spaces of abeyance" in peer relationships. Finally this study investigates how mobile devotee girls develop and transform religious ideas thus problematizing children's role in migration as "passive" dependents who mirror the sentiments and ideologies of their parents.

1.1 The Audacity

> *Audacity: Unusually strong and esp. rude confidence in yourself; courage of a kind that other people find shocking.* (Cambridge English Dictionary 2019)

1.1.1 Utopia—What's so Unreasonable?

"Utopia" is a bad word. I know this because I have been examining religious utopias for almost a decade. The term incites skepticism and churns the listener's stomach in preparation for rebuttals regarding the unreasonableness of the concept.

The question of the merits of "reason" was posed by Charles Fourier ([1808] 1996, 7), the utopian socialist who named the field "the social sciences" in 1808. He had hoped this field would solve humanity's problems and demonstrate that "the philosophers" and "the political scientists" only get humanity into trouble (Fourier [1808] 1996, 5, 17; Hage 2015, 1–76). Fourier wrote during Napoleon's rule, after the chaos of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century. Fourier, an autodidact, reacted to

> the evils of poverty that accompanied civilisation; the uselessness of the rights of man without a right to work or the right to a minimum standard of living; the resort to adultery or prostitution as the product of women's subordination; the hypocrisy and "cuckoldry" which belied civilised marriage; the misery, waste and overproduction which resulted from the lack of association between capital, labour and talent; the tedium and monotony of "civilised" work. (Introduction of Fourier's Theory of the Four Movements, Jones [1808] 1996, viii)

Fourier demolished "Civilization" and theorized social configurations that would "liberate women and slaves," allow women, children, and men to pursue pleasure, remove the need for marriage (a vestige of what he called "the Patriarchate" and "Barbarism"), and increase profits dramatically through the community rather than the disdainful individual household. Fourier dreamt of a commune of three hundred families variously configured united in pursuits of pleasure and wealth. He enjoined the French to adopt the world he created, but no one in power or in the Academies would listen. He died in 1837, when Karl Marx was soon to turn twenty years old. Both Marx and Friedrich Engels read Fourier along with Henri Saint-Simon and Robert Owen, who are now considered the "Socialist

Utopian trifecta" (Manuel and Manuel 1979, 702).[2] Keeping with contemporaries who deemed the trifecta as idealistic, Marx referred to their concepts as "utopian" as an insult (Marx and Engels [1848] 2012, section 3). Fourier's concept of social change did not include class revolution, a folly in their eyes. Many in the social sciences and beyond have inherited this knee-jerk reaction to utopia from Marx and Engels, yet these two thinkers are always on utopia reading lists, as their works are lined with visions for a radically different future.

The social sciences were conceived in an era of action, revolution, imagination, questioning the status quo, and applying "absolute doubt" (Fourier [1808] 1996, 7) to everything[3] including our own disciplines if the human species is ever to rise out of the misery of civilization. Marx ([1888] 1969, thesis xi) captured this mood best in his Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."

1.1.2 The Shadow Side of Utopias

Failed utopias garner a considerable amount of attention in analyses of creating and living in a utopia-driven society. Does failing mean not achieving the goals of the founding vision and, instead, creating more problems than the Utopian impulse sought to resolve? Attempts to change communities and the world are prototypically utopia for some and dystopia for others. English parodist and caricaturist Max Beerbohm (1963, 54) captured this ambivalence and feeling of the dream/nightmare quite well as a response to Thomas More's *Utopia*:

> So this is utopia,
>
> Is it? Well

2 Fourier's solution to the world's problems was to help catapult it from ruinous Civilization into the age of Guaranteism, a concept that was later dubbed "socialism" and propelled forward by Karl Marx. Also, Fourier's criticisms are a "reminder that 'socialism' began as an attempt to discover a successor, not to capitalism, but to the Christian Church" (Fourier [1808] 1996, xxvi).

3 He found Descartes foolish doubting his own existence but not the merit of his field's existence and place in the Academies.

I beg your pardon,

I thought it was Hell.

Fundamentalist or fascist regimes driven by visions of a "pure" future are the focus of utopian histories. There are "major utopians" (Winter 2006), those who sought mass social change by "producing mountains of victims" by "weeding" them out of their perfect gardens (Bauman [1989] 2001, 18).[4] Hitler is classified as a notorious "major utopian." Yet, historian Jay Winter (2006, 3) notes "it would be a mistake to see the utopian temperament as a form of derangement, a mild or severe mental disorder leading inevitably to ruin." Herbert Marcuse, "the most influential Utopian of the 1960s" (Jameson 2005), championed Utopian thought for its imaginative functions and power to refuse or accept "as final the limitations imposed on freedom and happiness by the reality principle" (Marcuse 1974, 148–9). Visions of the future whether applied in a micro or macro fashion are integral parts to human life. At the core of numerous sanguine efforts at creating a better world is a preoccupation with human rights and liberation (i.e., religious, spiritual, political, sexual, and more recently, ecological freedom). Yet, the shadow of visions for a "better" world may account for why utopia is, as noted, a bad word. Ursula le Guin's (1975) short story, "The ones who walk away from Omelas," encapsulates this friction quite well. I summarize it here:

> In Omelas everyone living is happy, thriving, the food is plentiful, sex is not taboo, no one is in pain. Well, one being is in pain. The condition for Omelians is that everyone's happiness is at the cost of one child's suffering. And everyone in Omelas knows this price. The child is feeble, hungry, made deformed by neglect, and sits naked in a room with no light and just enough food to stay alive. Every citizen in Omelas is required to meet the child, and most accept the premise told to them: their happiness depends on this child suffering. They feel bad for a moment, but eventually move on in their happiness. Yet every now and then, one citizen cannot shake the image, cannot accept this price and does the unreasonable and walks away from Omelas, straight out of the city gates.

4 The science fiction of the mid-twentieth century explores the many pitfalls of the so-called "scientific dystopia" where utopianism takes up Darwin's theory of evolution as way to create a master race of humans and arrive at a "perfect" world (Lake 2017). Eugenics becomes a central mark of engineering a perfect society in these fictions: sick children are killed; sick and poor people are not allowed to marry.

Le Guin does not reveal where those that leave go. The reader is left to imagine what happens when they walk away from Civilization. This story draws readers into wonderment at the costs for living in "ideal" conditions. Le Guin's lesson is a dark one: many people know the price, and many people accept the premise that others must suffer in order to sustain their lifestyle. The few who object often walk alone and we consider them crazy for opting out.

With this in mind, I view the religious utopia project and twenty-first century dystopian narratives at the heart of this dissertation as commentaries on contemporary times. Mayapur families left their cities to convert to a fundamentalist religion and live in a reconstructed Vedic city, a utopia project. They hold complex, often contradictory, arguments regarding problems of family life in a post-industrial, late-capitalist world. Chapter 5 examines the narratives of mothers who left the "material world" in pursuit of the good life, reflecting on the bad, often dystopic spaces they have abandoned.

1.1.3 "The World Out There" vs. Mayapur

Mayapur was designed to be cut off from mainstream society. It is a small fundamentalist Hindu utopia community nestled in the middle of Muslim and Hindu villages one hundred and thirty kilometeres north of Kolkata. Prophesied to exist in the 1880s,[5] the movement expanded around the Bengal region in the early 1900s. The first buildings belonging to ISKCON were erected in the 1960s, and then settled in the 1990s by British and North American devotees of Krishna. From 2006 onwards, thousands of devotees from across Eastern and Western Europe (mainly Russia, England, France, Switzerland), South America, Africa (mainly Ghana), Asia, Australia and New Zealand, and Central and North America flew, drove, and boated into Mayapur to build a homeland for devotees. From a tiny village, Mayapur transformed into a town with a goal to become a city, a Vedic city—a name meant to invoke an image of India five thousand years ago, a time when their scriptures say Lord Krishna walked Earth. It is marketed on their tourism website and brochures to be a physical respite from the world, so that

5 This prophecy by Bengali Vaishnava reformer Bhaktivinoda Thakur will be discussed in chapter 4.

Figure 1.1: A path across the back of Mayapur

devotees could focus on religious life and live in peace in the Holy Dham (holy place), where the founding sixteenth century saint, Lord Chaitanya, an incarnation of Krishna, grew up.

Mayapur is located in the farmlands of West Bengal, surrounded by the Hooghly and Jalangi rivers. Across the Hooghly river is the town, Nabadwip, a still very medieval-looking town with narrow streets just wide enough for a bicycle or human-led rickshaws to squeeze through. In 2014, electric rickshaws began dominating the transport market, but bicycle rickshaws are still the preferred mode of movement for many residents who need to travel narrow roads and pathways. Nabadwip and Mayapur temples are in constant debate over which can claim the title of the "real" birthplace of Lord Chaitanya. Mayapur itself is enclosed in walls and linked by bridges to the other eight islands of the area. It is therefore quite remote, taking four hours by car over potholed and bumpy roads, or three hours by train to get to Dum Dum Airport, which sits at the north point of Kolkata, West Bengal's capital city—a place most devotees labored and moaned about when having to visit for supplies. The noise of the city versus the peace of the farmlands is a common trope among devotees.

Figure 1.2: Women eating communally

Devotees discursively position Mayapur, the Holy Dham, as distinct from the "material world." It is depicted as "a hospital to purify the souls of all *dhambasis*," residents of the *dham* (place). Devotees are encouraged to come to Mayapur to go through purification and perform *seva* (service) to Lord Krishna.

Economically, Mayapur is deeply tied to global flows of funding. Foreigners wire money through Western Union, PayPal, RiaMoneyTransfer, and direct bank wires into the town's local economy.

Mayapur's spiritual-cultural tourism industry caters to Bengali pilgrims and Indian and non-Indian tourists, totaling half a million visitors annually, especially during the Hindu festival season (between October and February).[6] International foods such as Russian borscht, authentic Italian pizza (difficult to find in most cities in India), fried plantains, Bengali *sabji* (vegetable dishes), and more can be consumed at one dinner party. Colombian plantains were smuggled in by Colombian devotees, and the Russian herb dill was smuggled into gardens by Russian devotees, who require this flavor for soups. Kitchens across Mayapur hold packaged goods from around the world, because devotees always travel with a traveling kitchen inclusive of spices, herbs, and main ingredients. An exception to their avowed anti-materialism, foodstuffs and kitchen tools—even major appliances like pizza ovens—are incorporated into Mayapur life ways. I was often requested to bring cheese, organic vanilla extract, and dry baker's yeast from Germany, and vegan marshmallows from the USA for two families I was studying. Community members knew whom to ask for Georgian items, Roman particulars, Californian vegan goods, German cheese, Colombian plantains, Mexican desserts, and Russian sourdough starters. The exchange of recipes rivaled the internet. Innovating for lack of certain ingredients, the syncretic food creations became hallmarks of this international community. Cuisine formed a strong nexus among women in the community.

Transnational ties can also be seen and heard. Signs around Mayapur are written in Bengali, Russian, and English. Menus at restaurants are often bilingual, and depending on the main patrons of a particular restaurant, Russian or English menus are available in addition to Bengali. Walking the streets of Mayapur and nearby towns one can hear Bengali, English, Russian, Spanish, and Mandarin more frequently than Hindi. Hindi is emitted from the television and shows up during the festival and tourist season, when Indians visiting from Vrindavan would come to Mayapur. The introduction of wireless internet in Mayapur in 2014 by a Russian devotee and engineer brought many global images, films, television, and tele-communication possibilities into the area. Wireless internet also

6 These figures come from an interview with the tourist director of Mayapur in 2018, but were reflective of the years before Spring 2016. Due to security issues and dramas that occurred and recurred in the community between Spring 2016 until 2018, tourism numbers dropped significantly.

Figure 1.3: Sign in a Mayapur neighborhood

introduced questions about "the world out there" among many of Mayapur's youth, who would download US American movies and television serials such as *Suits*, *Game of Thrones*, and many more. It was at a such viewing party with late teens and early twenty-somethings, that I met Sita. Sita and I just finished binge-watching three episodes of *Suits,* an American legal drama starring Meghan Markle, now the United Kingdom's Duchess of Sussex, as she began to ask me questions about "the world out there."[7]

7 The following dialogue is from fieldnotes.

"What's it like, you know, out there?" Sita asked me curiously.
"You mean with non-devotees," I joked back, "in the material world?"
"Well, yeah. You're really nice, is that normal?"
I laughed. "You mean are non-devotees nice? Some of them, yeah. Many actually."

"The world out there"—it was a dream for seventeen-year-old Sita, who was adamant that she would spend her life in Mayapur. It means several things. It is coupled with the more common term "material world," meaning spaces where people do not place God, or Krishna specifically, at the center of their lives. I found that more often than not "the material world" meant the "non-devotee world," the places where people who do not claim to be devotees of Krishna reside and work. It also indexed modern education systems. Sending one's child to non-devotee schools was discussed as sending them to "a karmi school," where materialistic or "karmi" kids went. This term, *karmi*, means those whose actions are not in service of Krishna; therefore their life's activities only bind them further to this world. It is often considered a slur, and some devotees object to using "karmi" to describe the non-devotee world and its inhabitants. But these objections do not sway use in daily conversation, as it is frequently used to code community members' behaviors as well as to discuss outsiders.

Sita has lived "out there," as she was born in Colombia. She moved with her parents and brother at the turn of the twenty-first century when she was a small girl. She lived in Mayapur before the boom in domestic and foreign migration in 2006. Sita holds a Colombian passport with visas to a variety of countries and has traveled between holy sites in India and visited her family in Colombia for most of her life. She is fluent in Spanish and English, can speak basic conversational Bengali, and can recite Hindi movie quotes. She has linguistic mobility and cultural capital. Her father earns a modest working-class wage selling silver and other Indian goods to foreigners online and during his trips back to Colombia. It is enough to sponsor required visa renewal trips, coupled with family visits to Colombia every few years.[8] With all this at hand, living in rural Bengal was where Sita wanted to be. Though intrigued about the world, she never responded in the affirmative whenever we talked

8 Conversion rates enable most foreigners to earn dollars, rubles, pesos, or euros and spend rupees with earning power as middle class in India.

about her ever living in "the material world." Yet, she still wondered what it was like, was it really like what she saw on TV?

With all her curiosity, why did Sita want to stay in rural Bengal? This community is different from the Amish in the eastern United States, where young people have an option to explore outside communities and then, after a year, make a decision about where and how they would like to live. Hare Krishna devotee youth can leave at any point, once old enough to attend college, pursue business ventures, and/or marry outside of the community without formally having to declare that they left the community. Rather than leave, many youth opt to live in a grey area somewhere between the ideals of community and religious doctrines, while also making decisions independent and apart from those ideals. That grey area is geographically mapped in the region surrounding Mayapur. For example, one of the transcribers whom I hired, Abhimanyu (mid-twenties), half black and half white, was raised in the movement and lived mostly between London and Mayapur in his youth. By the time I met him in 2017, he was living with his Italian girlfriend, Gita, for almost five years unmarried, a taboo in the community but not a huge problem for younger devotees, who generally hold more lax attitudes towards coupling and romance. To live this way, young devotees cannot take residence in the Grihastha living quarters, which is under temple control and the closest real estate to the temple, and must rather live outside of the community boundary wall, half a mile or further from the temple. They are also not allowed to hold any leadership positions in the community, work with children (so as to not influence them), or be employed by the temple in any way. How I, a declared non-devotee, was allowed to live in the Grihastha quarters and work with children for two years mostly unbothered was quite a feat in this otherwise surveilled community (see chapter 2 for more information).

These youth are considered to live like "karmis" since they do things according to their will rather than to *sastra* or scripture. Yet, they are not wholly pushed out from the community, nor were youth itching to leave. The temple and festivals are open to everyone regardless of lifestyle. I found youth to be very attached to the deities,[9] more willing to move to the towns next door to Mayapur, such

9 The Mayapur deities consist of Krishna and his eight gopis, the cowherd girls chief among them Radharani. There is also a massive installation of the Panchatatva.

as Gauranagar or Rajapur, so they could still attend temple. Living in nearby towns allowed young adults, like Abhimanyu and Gita, who did not fit in with some of the community's policies about marriage, to live like "karmis" but also be part of the temple community. They lived in the in-between spaces. These spaces were not discursively marked as "for outsiders," as many rule-abiding devotees and trusted community members lived in these neighboring areas as well. Moving beyond "the wall" often involved practical considerations, as newer complexes tended to be larger and cheaper than temple-owned properties within Mayapur's Grihastha living quarters. Whether inside or beyond the temple community walls, Mayapur is a "respite," "home," "bubble," "hospital," and "safe haven" from "the world-out-there."

1.2 The Safe Haven, the Intentional Community

> *There has hardly been a period in Western history when some group or another has not invoked communalism as an answer to their needs and beliefs, indeed as the answer to the crisis of the time.*
> (Shenker 1986, 3)

While "community" is a topic of anthropological interest, most research on intentional or utopian communities is conducted by sociologists (e.g., Abrams et al. 1976; B. Goodwin 1978; Sargisson 2007; Goodwin and Taylor 2009; Levitas [1990] 2010).[10] Intentional and utopian community formations call for ethnographic analysis to illuminate members' ordinary life worlds and perspectives on alternatives to dystopic, late-capitalist, neoliberal societies. Sherry Ortner (2016, 60) asks, "what is the point of opposing neo-liberalism if we cannot imagine better ways of living and better futures?" Alterity in these times can be hope. And utopias are seeped in alterity. As small communities are a long-sought bandaid during times of societal trouble in Western history (Shenker 1986; S. L. Brown 2002), these particular formations merit ethnographic attention as a source of folk critique and praxis.

10 Notable exceptions are Melford Spiro's (2004) work on the Israeli Kibbutz and Susan Brown's (2002) edited volume on intentional communities in the United States. I exclude anthropological work on cults and forced communities from this discussion.

1.2.1 Community

Anthropological theory on community, though helpful for understanding some aspects of Mayapur's population, is not robust enough to account for the intersections present in a transnational, and highly mobile diverse community that is working together to build a temple for Krishna, an enterprise Babelian in its efforts. "It will be forever until this is done," moaned Lalita and Jay, a Brazilian and Bengali devotee couple who donated hundreds of dollars years ago for the construction of the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP). They, along with most devotees whom I encountered in Mayapur, cannot see the end in sight, as millions of dollars, rupees, euros, yen, and more go into building this temple. The community wants it. "We will show to the world, what is possible with Krishna in your heart!," professed Gopal, an American-Bengali man whose family is settled in Mayapur while he earns money in England. Is this an imagined community (Anderson [1983] 2006; Gal and Irvine 1995), a speech community (Bloomfield 1933; Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 1982; Morgan 2014), a community of practice (Bucholtz 1999; Mendoza-Denton 2008), a digital community (Newon 2014)? Certainly it is all of the above depending on whom you encounter, in which language, on what platform (digital or face-to-face), and at what point in time; but Mayapur is also something else. It is an in-flux migrant community that is grounded in space, but is highly mobile and liminal (van Gennep [1909] 1960; Turner 1974).

"Community" is derived from Latin *communitas*. It builds on Latin *cum*, meaning "with" or "together." Seemingly simple, community often comprises those sharing codes, practices, institutions, belief systems, values, histories, genetic roots, and social networks. In this conceptual framework, community can mean just about any social unit. During the Enlightenment, community connoted "a social formation held together by shared behavioral norms, beliefs, and values mediated by a common language spoken over a contiguous territory" (Jacquemet 2005, 260; see also Gumperz 1968a; Gal and Irvine 1995). In this definition, place and language are emphasized as a foundation for sharing common ground with others. This emphasis on language linking a community of people influenced early theorizations of "speech community," first understood as "a group of people who use the same set of speech signals" (Bloomfield 1933, 29). Understandings around speech community have broadened

Figure 1.4: View of the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) from temple-owned farmlands

to include "shared values and attitudes about language use, varieties, and practices" (Morgan 2014, 1; see Gumperz 1968b). A "linguistic community" refers to a group of people that are united in their idea that they are connected by ("standard") linguistic usage (Silverstein 1996). This conceptualization crosses territorial boundaries that usually delimit speech communities (Bucholtz 1999, 203). The emphasis on linguistic code and practices is vested in a Western monoglot language ideology (Silverstein 1996) and does and does not reflect communities united in other ways (Hymes 1968; Hanks 1996; Bucholtz 1999). Hanks (1996) introduced "communicative practice," which includes a "triangulation of linguistic activity, the related semiotic code or linguistic forms, and the ideology of social and power reactions" (Jacquemet 2005, 264). The concept of "communities of practice" (Lave 1991; Bucholtz 1999; Mendoza-Denton 2008) makes activity rather than code central to communal life.

The idea of "community" as social formation "mediated by a common language spoken over a contiguous territory" (Jacquemet 2005, 260) emphasizes geographic location. In an increasingly mobile world, questions around how people form community and interact across geographic spaces and places needed to be addressed. As Marco Jacquemet notes, "the experience of de- and reterritorialization, and

the sociolinguistic disorder it entails, requires a serious reconceptualization of the connection between communication and shared knowledge. We can no longer assume that such shared knowledge exists to provide a common ground from which to negotiate conflicts and agendas" (Jacquemet 2005, 273). Jacquemet introduces "transidiomatic practice" to describe "transnational groups that interact using languages and communicative codes simultaneously present in a range of communicative channels, both local and distant" (265). This framework allows for the use of electronic media to foster belonging and lifeworlds in "digital community" (Newon 2014).

These understandings of communities inform how I approach Mayapur. The idea of communities of practice comprised of a multiplex of transidiomatic practices is one I build from as Indian and non-Indian transnational devotees migrate to Mayapur to engage in worship together. Yet, this community is more comprehensive in its intent beyond a situated activity; it is a community bound by ideologies and practices for living in a community more broadly. The community *is* the activity, and it entails eating, sleeping, coupling, child-raising, working, building, dying, and most importantly, worshipping Krishna, together in Mayapur and other temple communities around the world. They believe themselves to be united across nations, ethnic groups, racial groups, linguistic communities, and speech communities. Around the world, devotees are certainly an "imagined community," bound by a "deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson [1983] 2006, 7). They also identify as citizens of their respective countries. But when in Mayapur the community of import is one united under each other's devotion to Krishna. Their vision spans decades with an orientation to the future. Depth of time marks devotees' practices as integral to Mayapur as an intentional community.

1.2.2 Intentional Community

Intentional communities emerge "as a result of a number of people consciously and purposely coalescing as a group in order to realize a set of aims. [...] These aims are not partial: they attempt to create an entire way of life, hence, unlike organizations or social movements, they are intentional *communities*"

(Shenker 1986, 10, emphasis in original).[11] They are reflexive responses to the modern nation-state; they exist because of disillusionment. Susan Brown (2002, 6) argues that these communities allow anthropologists "to observe how human beings living in large heterogenous societies use community to cope with the exigencies of life."

There are many features that distinguish intentional communities. They are characterized by volunteer participation in education, food collection and distribution, governance and management, and an emphasis on sharing where members "embrace communalism as an ethical end itself" (Shenker 1986, 10). For these reasons, online communities are precluded from this discussion. Also excluded are government planned or compulsory agrarian arrangements (for example, Chinese communes and former Soviet kholkhoz and the efidos). John Bennett (1975, 69) calls such communities "captive communes." Through eight years of field research among Hare Krishnas in the United States and India, I have found the various communities to be porous, built on *seva* (volunteering service) and the constant movement of devotees (and non-devotees) who enter and leave the communities at will, devoting their time as they deem appropriate. This practice is similar to the *seva* or volunteer service that allows Indic faith-based organizations (IFBO) to flourish in India. Such organizations are syncretic by design, with "translation of carefully selected elements of the indigenous cultural repertoire of the orient and the occident" (Fischer-Tine 2003, 112).[12] Intention around specific ideals is an important element in distinguishing intentional communes from other human group formations. Theorists from the 1960s onwards began calling such volunteer communities "intentional communities," because the community itself is the object that draws people together. Their community is not happenstance; they have chosen to live together. Intentional communities are communal in many regards: things normally shared are "wealth, property, labor, food, and sometimes even spouses" (Kamau 2002, 17).

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11 Chapter 3 will discuss the communitarian ideal in Christian Europe and the development of utopia as part and parcel of "new" community formations.

12 This unregulated service to the temple or community is often amazing to watch but is also often a problem for the Mayapur community as devotees often leave their official posts when it is no longer a positive experience or impedes their time unnecessarily.

Intentional communities generally come together because of a charismatic figure. Also key to such communities are liminality and an emotional state known as *communitas* (Kamau 2002). Victor Turner (Turner [1969] 1991), fused this word with Arnold van Gennep's theorization of liminality (van Gennep [1909] 1960), which concerns the middle stage in ritual passages.

> The attributes of liminality or liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. (Turner [1969] 1991, 95)

People living in liminal situations exist outside of normal institutions, social roles, and structures of everyday life. Old statuses and identities are lost as rules and regulations are overturned and boundaries are blurred. Turner's work on liminality is the cornerstone of research on intentional communities (S. L. Brown 2002) and applicable to twenty-first century globalization and intense mobility that has rendered much of the world in constant liminal states (Thomassen 2014).

Intentional communities are generally short-lived. Because most communal experiments fail, discussion often focuses on the value and effectiveness of the utopian idealism that fuels them (Bennett 1975). Bennett (1975, 66) enjoins scholars to look closely at the everyday life within these communes to reveal how members can successfully organize social relations when searching for "alternative social pathways."

For example, small religious groups such as the Quakers had an immense influence on the US American prison system and their role in the abolitionist movement is undeniable (Bacon 1999). The kibbutz in Israel, a secular socialist commune project devoted to a new Zion that emphasized communal ownership and the benefits of physical labor, comprises two percent of Israel's population (McCord 1990, 47). The kibbutz concept has survived a century, and many children of the kibbutz have gone on to lead the country's political, military and cultural elite and, astoundingly, the kibbutz generates more than forty percent of national agricultural output of Israel (Russell, Hanneman, and Getz 2013). The kibbutzim were also once in a state of decline in the 1980s but younger generations are again joining, and there are now two hundred seventy-four kibbutzim in Israel and on the West Bank (Russell,

Hanneman, and Getz 2013). While no "utopian movement has ever commanded a majority within its particular society or attracted a broad mass base from the lower classes" (McCord 1990, 184), their place at the periphery and often small group membership relative to the wider population are not metonymic of their impact. Barry Shenker notes,

> The existence of communal societies often evokes a powerful and emotional interest, even among people who have not the slightest intention of joining one and indeed never even come into contact with one. Communal societies appear to touch a raw nerve in our psyches, generating a gamut of reactions ranging from, at the one extreme, vicarious admiration and sometimes naive, romantic idealism, to, at the other extreme, hopelessly ill-informed and irrational hostility—frequently tinged in both cases with a degree of sexual fantasy. (Shenker 1986, 3)

He cites Abrams and McCulloch (1976), who describe mainstream society's stigmatizing reactions to communes in the 1960s. The indexical link between commune life and sexual fantasy is a stereotype that researchers of communes, alternative societies, and intentional communities document. Shenker (1986, 259) describes an encounter with an Israeli man who thought the women of the Kibbutzim were also communal. The assumption of "shared" bodies and unregulated sex as part and parcel to the counter-culture protest is widespread. When describing my fieldwork to others in India and the United States, I find myself answering the 'Is there lots of sex? (nudge nudge)' question frequently. My rote response is "Actually, sex outside of marriage is heavily frowned upon, and even within marriage it is ideal if sex is engaged in for procreative purposes only." The shock at that revelation betrays an assumption about the allure of and stigma about commune life.

1.2.3 Utopian Community

I discuss Mayapur as a "utopian community" rather than an "intentional community" because they do not behave communally as a rule and they are characterized by a world-reformation stance. Firstly, intentional communities are characterized by communal ownership and sharing of items. Mayapur, by contrast, does not mandate this communal behavior. Mayapur does share a vision for worship, chosen deity, food habits, and other cultural tenets. Members migrate from around the world to partake in a devotional project prophesied by their charismatic guru, Srila Prabhupada. Yet, they do not share

material goods as a rule. The temple owns property, and devotees can rent housing units from the temple; but wealth, food, and other items are not distributed. The community requires inhabitants to figure out on their own how to practically live there. Secondly, intentional communities do not seek to convert the world to their mission, yet Mayapur does. This community survives because it actively recruits members akin to the efforts of the Christian church in the fifteenth century onwards, when discovery of the New World and utopia share an intertwined past vested in religious community (see chapter 3).

Utopia as an analytical concept is hard to define. For Sir Thomas More, it is a double entendre meaning "non-spatial site of happiness." Karl Marx used utopia as an insult flung toward the so-called Utopian Socialists Charles Fourier and Charles Henri Saint-Simon. In literature, especially twentieth century science fiction, utopia is a space of play and innovation for world-making. For sociologists and political scientists, it connotes new societal systems of governance. In colloquial English, "utopia" can be synonymous with "ideal society." The people of Mayapur envision their project as an example for how to live in a world where people can pursue their own interests, generate capital at will, share in worship and religious ideals, and create a "spiritual United Nations." They have come together to manifest the visions of their lineage of gurus, the most charismatic being Bengali guru, Srila Prabhupada. They have an outward reformation stance that I deem crucial to utopian communities: utopia is vested in conversion, and Hare Krishnas have a mission to convert the world-out-there.

1.3 Anthropology and Utopia

Many terms have proliferated to mark the period of the late twentieth century in first world countries, such as "postindustrial," "late captitalism," "knowledge economy," "information society," and "(hyper)consumer society" (Giddens 1990, 1). In his book *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens (1990, 2) emphasizes that something else was afoot, called "post-modernity," "post-modernism," "post-industrial society," or "post-captialism." Giddens does not embrace post-modernity, a notion made popular by Jean-François Lyotard (1984, 31–41), who casts this period as an evaporation of

the "grand narrative." Giddens (1990, 3) argues that "we are moving into one in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalized and universalised than before." What marks "high modernity" in the late twentieth century early twenty-first century is the pace of change, the scope of change, reconfigured political systems, new forms of mediated experience, and self-identity as a hyper-reflexively organized endeavor.

In this high modern space, Ghassan Hage (2015) discusses "stuckedness" as a response to twentieth and twenty-first century reactions to crises. From the mid-nineteenth century until the 1970s, crisis was supposed to incite social change. The perduring problem of "stuckedness" arose in the mid- to late-twentieth century into the twenty-first century with "the growing awareness that a state of permanent crisis seemed to have become the very way in which capitalist economies and societies ensured their reproduction." Hage cites the 2008 financial crisis and the following Occupy Movement as a premier example of the "stuckedness" within the "crisis of critique":

> Nothing illustrates this [stuckedness] situation as well as the intellectual reaction to the global financial crisis of 2008. While the crisis led to a "revival of Marxism," celebrating once again the relevance of Marx's analysis of capitalist crises, in most cases this celebration was not accompanied by an equal celebration of the possibility of social transformation or of the existence of a political subject capable of bringing about such a transformation. The hopeful twentieth-century Marxist critique of crisis gave way to a depressed and depressing critique, which in fact reproduced a sentiment of a general paralysis of the radical imagination and the will for social change. The impetus for social change that ended up manifesting itself in the Occupy movement came almost entirely from outside that tradition of "crisis critique." (Hage 2015, 34)

Those who refuse to be stuck, whether in a line, in their countries, or in their job, are often seen as "disorderly" and "uncivilized." Being a moral citizen of this new crisis world order is knowing how to "wait it out." "It" being the crisis. Except, that crisis never ends. She who does appear to leave or achieve mobility is seen "like any petty bourgeois achiever. She is standing out as different from the 'community.' She is exhibiting an unwillingness to be part of the community of the stuck" (Hage 2015, 40).

Some persons seek alternatives to being stuck, considering going back in time to the so-called pre-modern way of life or perhaps eliminating technology from their lives. These are possibilities that

I encountered in fieldwork as to why devotees "left" *maya* (illusion) for rural West Bengal. Giddens surmised that these quests would arise among those living in high modernity.

> The popularity of futurology in the system of high modernity is not an eccentric preoccupation, the contemporary equivalent of the fortune tellers of old. It signals a recognition that the consideration of counterfactual possibilities is intrinsic to reflexivity in the context of risk assessment and evaluation. (Giddens 1990, 29)

Giddens states that "no such disengagement is possible in modern times [...] especially for those living in the core geographical areas of modernity" (1990, 30).

This is where I see anthropology's contribution to understanding the relation between change and utopian projects and communities. Samuel Gerald Collins (2008, 110), notes two ways in which "anthropology might contribute to reinvigorating the future as a site for radical alternatives": (1) anthropological futures can provide alternatives to Western-dominated discourse on progress and technology, and (2) anthropological analyses of emergences might even intervene in the process of future imaginings. Collins views utopia

> as a means of approaching the limits of critical thought in the age of globalization and thereby gesturing to a future difference that, by definition, cannot yet be articulated. Such an anthropology may work to finally dismantle the time machine, understood here as the suspect manipulation of chronotypes for the production of knowledge. (Collins 2008, 110)

Joel Robbins (2013, 447) laments that the discipline has left behind the study of radical alterity and suggests "anthropology might coalesce in a further shift, this one toward an anthropology of the good capable of recovering some of the critical force of an earlier anthropology without taking on its weaknesses." Hage (2012, 286; 2015) proposes that "critical anthropological thought can generate new problematics that are of pertinence to radical politics." He sees, and I agree, that alternative ways of living lie at the crux of anthropology. This perspective follows Hardt and Negri (2009, 124–5), Viveiros de Castro (1998), and other anthropologists who pose radical alterity not as an alternative world lying outside, elsewhere but as a transformative force that can be operative anywhere. And, of course, in high modernity radical alterity is ubiquitous. With the hi-speed circulation of texts, ideas, news and

beyond, the person sitting next to you can hold views so far from your own. Anthropology need no longer go far for the "other."

As quoted at the onset of the chapter, "the Utopian approach allows us not only to imagine what an alternative society could look like, but enables us to imagine what it might feel like to inhabit it, thus giving a greater potential depth to our judgements about the good" (Levitas 2017, 3–4). I add that the theoretical and historical framework of anthropology promotes field methodologies that capture how participants in utopian projects conceptualize and enact alternative lifestyles "on the ground". Interrogating the use of Utopian thought in propelling forward the direction of anthropology beyond what Ortner (2016) calls "dark anthropology," this dissertation exemplifies what the anthropological canon can offer to understand how utopian communities fulfill their felt sentiments that the world is in need of a new narrative, a bright anthropology.

While this dissertation is not a call to reproduce Margaret Mead's clumsy attempts at culture-engineering (Bateson and Mead 1941, 241; see also Collins 2008, 27–41),[13] it takes a step beyond Robbins' (2013, 457) "anthropology of the good": The dissertation looks at "the good" through the lens of a utopian community in India and reflects upon the anthropologist's sticky ethical dilemma in drawing upon findings to enhance pursuits of "the good" elsewhere.

I began my research on utopia during the Barack Obama administration. It was a hard sell—that people were unhappy with the world and defecting from it as if their lives depended on it. Initially, I could not secure large funding. I culled together smaller grants focusing on migration or women and was able to fund nine months of research. During the 2015–2016 campaign year, when Donald Trump eventually secured the US Presidency, I won every prestigious grant that I applied for. The project had not changed much; the US and global political scene had. Understanding why and how people decide to escape and make something alternative to the present was no longer so outlandish or audacious.

13 During their involvement in the "Committee on National Morale," Mead alongside Gregory Bateson utilized anthropology to direct Allied countries during World War II to desired ends such as changing American diet habits so that the population would more readily accept war-time rations (Mead 1943; see also Collins 2008, 29).

Topics of interest pivot in the world, but a sense of dystopia in the Global North and Global South appears to linger.

1.4 Chapter Outlines

Chapter 2, "Fieldwork and Methodology," is a methods chapter that contains a vignette of my entry into the field followed by a detailed explanation of field methods as well as data collection sites and participants. I discuss what it means to be an "adult-child" researcher as a way to position oneself while conducting longitudinal research with families and children. The use of innovative body cameras for ethnography is also discussed here. I end with an explanation of how data are transcribed.

Chapter 3, "Utopia: Evolution of an Idea," discusses the concept of utopia as a framework to understand Mayapur and other world remaking projects. Beginning with the publication of Thomas More's *Utopia* and ending with twenty-first century dystopia, this chapter argues that Mayapur is a utopia project made possible by the colonial presence of the British in the Bengal region.

Chapter 4, "History of ISKCON—Visions of a Vaishnava Utopia," dives into the history of the most famous modern Gaudiya Vaishnava institution, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). This historical background makes it possible to understand this global religious utopia effort more generally and will help in later chapters to contextualize how women invoke utopia in their everyday, remaking the world, and preparing their children's souls for a better future by leaving the "material world."

Chapter 5, "Narratives of Entrapment—Dystopia/Utopia," discusses how conversion to fundamentalist religion becomes a logical choice in the twenty-first century as well as a vehicle for empowerment for female converts from an array of religious, ethnic, national, and linguistic backgrounds. Interviews and everyday gossip about other women and girls highlight the everyday socialization of girls' and women's chastity in this global utopian community. Despite idealized fraternity (note, no sorority) among devotees and the world, women place themselves as guardians of the moral order and also

saviors of the world, birthing utopia through their motherhood. Included here is a also discussion on Gaudiya Vaishnava religious dystopia and *cosmic time* as a factor for migration to Mayapur.

Chapter 6, "Linguistic Empathy among Highly Mobile Children," examines data from the international school and Mayapur's neighborhood, where Bengali and non-Bengali children play together frequently thus highlighting rarely documented scenes in the post-colonial Global South where white-skinned immigrants play among and learn aspects of languages of their brown-skinned peers. I also examine what I call "linguistic empathy" among Mayapur's children, discussed as a patience for language learning and conversational mistakes. I argue that this empathy stems from a personal experience of not understanding the many languages in one's environment and it results in an action-based imperative to translate (broker) for non-native peer speakers in interactions. Though not an explicit attempt at a linguist's post-colonial utopia, Mayapur proves an interesting case study for high density language sharing among diverse sets of children in frequent contact.

Chapter 7, "Mobile Children, Moral Spectrums," analyzes children's everyday experiences of a cosmopolitan future that is at odds with the community's religious and gender ideologies, especially for girls. This chapter analyzes this bind and religious ideologies that mitigate desires for success in the "material world." These ideologies neutralize blame for not pursuing advanced degrees in institutions beyond the temple community, thus encouraging children to remain in Mayapur and secure generational continuity.

CHAPTER 2

Fieldsite and Methodology

This ethnographic study of the lives of devotee children and their mothers in Mayapur, West Bengal is based on twenty months of fieldwork over the course of three years (2014–2017), two months for the pilot study in 2014 and eighteen months for dissertation research (2015–2017). During this longitudinal research, I participated in the daily lives of the families and community.

A pilot study conducted in summer 2014 set the foundation for this dissertation research with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). During the pilot study I secured institutional affiliation with the Mayapur Community Office (MCO)[1] and the Sri Mayapur International School (SMIS) to conduct yearlong fieldwork. There, I built rapport with teachers, students, and families, conducted preliminary surveys in schools, and interviewed a small sample of adults and teenagers. I also signed up for the community online forum that acted very much like a bulletin board where devotees not only from Mayapur, but from around the world could post about community updates, upcoming events, sales of items, and also debate religious topics. Through this forum, I was able to locate potential spaces for living quarters the following year.

In the course of the pilot study I volunteered as a teaching assistant in grade 5 of SMIS, one of three ISKCON schools, which caters to approximately one hundred devotee families and serves around two hundred boys and girls from grades K to 12. There are two other devotee schools, one all-boys and one

1 The MCO is in charge of foreigner visas and creating community programs. I needed letters of approval from this office before approaching the school or families for participation in research in Mayapur.

all-girls school (*gurukul*), both of which teach the community's gender appropriate "traditional Indian" cooking, handicraft, arts, Sanskrit, and religious texts like the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and several *Upanishads*.

During the pilot study, I focused on SMIS as it was co-ed and I was originally interested in co-ed peer groups. I conducted surveys and interviewed teachers and staff about the students' national origin, linguistic diversity, and the English as a Second Language Program. Data from the school records indicate that the following languages are spoken by children at home and at school (in order of greatest number of child speakers): English, Russian, Bengali, Ukrainian, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, Hindi, German, Tamil, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Hebrew, Telugu, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Kannada, Malaysian Malay, Swahili, Oriya, Malayalam, Afrikaans, Igbo, and Mauritius French Creole. Children's multi-lingual capacities were not represented in the school's records, as parents filled these forms out upon enrollment. As the school is an English medium school, most children after one year at SMIS had conversational proficiency in English, and that language was added to their file though their actual competency records were kept with the ESL teacher.

Every year the SMIS enrollment changes, as families return to the home countries or are assigned a *seva* (service) in other devotee communities. During my stay in summer 2014, there was an influx of Ukrainian and Russian families. I heard from concerned devotee parents that their move was to avoid the uncertain political future between Russia and Ukraine. In light of the increase in monolingual Russian and Ukrainian immigrants I enrolled in Russian before dissertation fieldwork in 2015. This training was helpful to introduce myself to some members of the Russian devotee community and help in recruiting translators and Russian families to participate in my research. Pre-dissertation fieldwork focused on building rapport with the community, teachers, and children and focused on adult perspectives on children's lives. This dissertation focuses mainly on the devotee girls' lifeworlds from their perspectives as well as those of their mothers. From my pilot study in August 2014 and through eighteen months of dissertation research (2015–2017), I documented the lifeworlds of a relatively stable cohort of girls between eight and eleven years of age.

I restricted the study to only girls, as boys were not interested in being followed by a "mataji" (woman). Whenever I tried to watch or take notes of their activities they would giggle or stop playing,

highly aware of my presence. The dissertation mostly focuses on girl peer groups in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. Chapter 6 also incorporates interactional data collected at the SMIS nursery, which forms the base for many of Mayapur's international and Bengali children's (three- to four-year-olds) first school experiences with other children who speak a variety of home languages.

Data collection consisted of (1) participant observation, (2) field notes, (3) surveys, (4) local archival research, (5) video- and audio-recordings of everyday interaction, (6) child-recorded video recordings using GoPros (body cameras) where children recorded each other during recess as well as on their rides home from school, (7) audio-recorded interview data, and (8) transcriber's notes on transcribed video data. These diverse sets of data provided windows through which to understand the complex lifeworlds of the children in Mayapur. The next sections contain a vignette of my entry into the field followed by a detailed explanation of field methods, data collection sites and participants, and transcription and analysis.

2.1 Entry into Mayapur

Arriving in Mayapur after nine days of gathering supplies and staying with a friend in bustling Kolkata, feels like an entry into surreality. The stark contrast between the two locations most certainly adds to the utopian mythos of Mayapur. The drive from Kolkata to Mayapur is, as I came to be quite familiar with, always bumpy and never pleasant; and no matter which driver one hires to traverse this journey, it feels like death waits around every corner your vehicle remarkably does not hit. Wanting to record the journey and mirror my advisor's (Ochs 1988) entry into Samoa I try to video record, but my stomach has other plans. I close my devices, my eyes, and as many senses as possible for most of the four hour drive to Mayapur. "Aki. Mataji," Bapi, my driver from the year prior wakes me up. "Amra mayapure" (we're here in Mayapur). *Mataji*, "honorable mother," is an address term among Hare Krishna devotees meant for any woman who is not your actual mother. Opening my eyes, I see we are about ten kilometers (about twenty minutes) from the entry gate. I recall the scene from the year prior during my pilot study.

Driving into the region, I note the beauty of the Bengal countryside with stunning farm after lush farm flanking the inner roads leading up to the entry gates of the ISKCON compound. To my right is the Hooghly River, an offshoot of the Ganges that leads to Kolkata. The dam holding it back had been released due to the monsoon rains prompting high flooding in the region. Those floods had receded the week prior to my arrival and left the area looking surprisingly refreshed amid the chaos that such an event brings. I wonder how Krishangi, an eleven-year-old Bengali girl whom I had worked with in August 2014, was doing. She had sent me photos of her riding the waters and Facebook-messaged me that she was excited for me to come. I text her in the car that I am almost there.

The road leading up to Mayapur, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Road, is named after the guru of Srila Prabhupada, the man who exported this religion beyond India and encouraged the world to drive on this road and come to build a "model spiritual United Nations" in rural West Bengal. You cannot escape Vaishnavism if you tried here. There are temples, signs, and statues of prominent Vaishnava figures everywhere your eye flutters towards. The soundscape is markedly distinct from Kolkata, the air too. There is more dust when passing through towns. There is always some blockade in Rajapur[2] where young men collect fees and give out pink tickets. The buses are the loudest creatures on earth, taking up the entire road. An old man squeaks by on his bicycle and I covet his confidence. Bapi continues up Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Road, and eventually we see the main ISKCON fruit shops outside the gate. I see the phone re-charge stand that I like and the *gamsa-walas* (cloth sellers) where I note I need a new towel.

Finally, the main event. Bapi continues alongside the ISKCON wall separating the temple campus from the "main road."[3] Bapi honks and honks at the children, cyclists, buses, and *gamsa-walas* blocking the vehicle from inching forward to enter into ISKCON. The main road is always full and at night, the youth in Mayapur would get the *puchkas* (a spice filled mashed potato food stuffed inside a fried shell topped with roasted peanuts and an array of other nice things) from outside the gate as a treat. We

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2 Rajapur is a village three miles from Mayapur.

3 Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Road is referred to by locals as the "main road." It is the only road with a name in the area.

turn left into an immediately quiet corridor as we approach a gate with a guard posted. I roll the window down, the humidity hits my air-conditioned face, and I tell the guard my building name, "Radha Gokulananda." I give him the name of my only adult contact in Mayapur, "Sharada."[4] He recognizes it and lets us pass. I assume Sharada has told him that I was arriving.

Inside the ISKCON gates is a different world than the dense swirl of activity on the main road. We are the only vehicle on the unpaved road, and we kick a lot of dust into the air. I roll the windows back. Dust-infused sweat drips down my temples. Our car continues for a minute until we are in front of my future site: the Sri Mayapur International School. Silence as the car stops. Opening the door, there is nothing to be heard. This lack of sound less than a half mile from the main road would remain for me the single most important feature of the ISKCON compound, the sensorial opposite from its neighboring villages and general area.

With luggage in hand and Bapi waiting for payment and to see if I will ask him to help me with my bags, I call the only number I have in Mayapur, my future neighbor Sharada, a *mataji* who would become a mother to me in the field. I loved this woman upon seeing her. She has jet black hair, green-brown eyes, and a smile betraying a kindness that I interpret as her being a real "mom" type—you know, the type that tells you to eat even though you just did. She is more cautious than I am: "Haribol, Teru? I'm Sharada." She introduces herself and instructs the Bengali driver in Hindi to get my bags. I have three large pieces of luggage. Sharada does not comment on the luggage, but her face says, "You brought a lot." I respond to my internal conversation and announce, "It looks like a lot, but there's mostly books in there." She smiles. I pretend that I have convinced her. There are actually a lot of fabrics and saris that I bought in bazaars in Dhaka. … I am instantly embarrassed, but "what to do." Sharada walks me past her building and up the stairs of a three-floor brick building to apartment D. There were four apartments there and it smells a bit stale, but I am relieved after years of preparing for "the field" to arrive here at apartment D, my new home for what would become two years of fieldwork in a utopia project.

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4 All names are pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of my informants unless otherwise noted.

Bapi takes one 20kg (44lbs) bag up two flights of stairs, Sharada leads the way, and the guilt builds as I offer to help him carry it. He waves his hand "no" and proceeds up and up. I cannot bear it. I re-wrap my Senegalese twists[5] and hoist the other 20kg up the stairs. Sharada peers over the railing, "Don't! You'll hurt your back, let him do it." "No, no. I packed it, I can carry it!" Months later, Sharada would recount this moment as the one when she knew I was "different": "You help yourself and many people here don't." As I haul the bag up mustering up arm strength I don't actually possess, Sharada made up her mind about me. From then on, and unbeknownst to me, the path was set as this cautious woman became one of my chief respondents, friends, and guardians in Mayapur.

Sharada is from Mauritius. She is ethnically Indian, and her family has been living in Mauritius for four generations. She left in the early 2000s to move to Poland with her new husband whom she met at the ISKCON temple in Mauritius. By the time I met her in 2015, she had been living in India for eight years with her two children, Sundari (girl, aged 8) and Shyam (boy, aged 11), and her husband, a Polish national whom I call Prab, a respect term Sharada always called him. To this day, I never learned his name, and when asked, neither he nor Sharada told me. And no one ever said it, as he was one of the few men people often referred to in stories as "Sharada's prabhu," literally meaning "Sharada's master" but pragmatically "Sharada's husband." It did not seem to matter what his name was because he was hardly there. I did not meet him until six months later in February 2016.

Sharada opens the door to a large living room floored with marble, seeming luxury for the North American graduate student abroad, but fairly commonplace in Mayapur where the average home has thick marble floors, bathrooms, and kitchens. She leaves me to settle in. A few minutes later, there is a knock on my door, it is Sharada holding a container and I see a little girl hiding behind her smiling widely. I knew she was a real mom! She brought me something to eat, *daal, sabji,* and *chapati,*[6] and introduces her daughter, Sundari. "Your hair is so long," Sundari stares. Being multiracial with the very determined curls that I was told I got from each of my Japanese, German, and Afro-Latina grand-

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5 An African hair braiding style that looks akin to two semi-thick strands of twisted rope. My style reached the middle of my back.

6 *Daal* is lentils, *sabji* (vegetables) is used in Bengali for any vegetable dish, and *chapati* is a wheat flour thin bread.

parents was a worry for me in India. It is a worry whenever a Black woman travels, the maintenance, the care, the public perception. And for fieldwork, I thought hard about what to do with my hair. What ethnicity shall come to the fore? Would the parents or children like me, would they be scared of my braids? Would this be America? "Does it grow like that?," she asks. "Oh no! It's braided. See?" I bend down and show Sundari my hair. She blushes, giggles, picks her teeth, and holds a thought. "It's beautiful," Sharada chimes in. "It's funny," Sundari adds. "It's perfect for the heat, the easiest thing to wash. I'm in and out." I realized this made little sense to people who had never talked to a Black woman about her hair. They watched me and I watched them.

2.1.1 Fieldnotes and Ethnographic Writing

I reprinted edited fieldnotes here as an account of how research gets done, moment to moment. It is the small stuff that matters: Sharada bringing me food, Sundari uttering her first words to a foreign woman who would soon be a mainstay in her life, my kneeling to show Sundari my braided hair. Lifting my own suitcases—this particular moment set the trajectory of my ability to live in a fundamentalist religious utopia relatively unfettered for two years. Sharada liked me and defended me and made inroads for me starting from an impression of a tiny act. A slight modification to how we perceive an "other" can make or break a relationship in the field, in life. I also include this fieldnote to point out my writing and ethnographic descriptions as integral to data collection and therefore, methodology.

Lila Abu-Lughod (1996) notes an absence of feminist and "halfie" anthropological voices in James Clifford and George Marcus' (Clifford and Marcus 1986) volume *Writing Culture*. "Halfie" here refers to "people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage," and who, alongside feminists, unsettle the boundaries between anthropologist and other (Abu-Lughod 1996, 137). Abu-Lughod proposes that a chief textual strategy in "writing against culture" is to produce "ethnographies of the particular," wherein "extralocal and long-term processes are manifested locally and specifically, produced in the actions of individuals living their particular lives, inscribed in their bodies and their words" (137).

Although ethnographers are translators of culture, "final interpretations" (Crapanzano 1986) are "positioned truths" (Abu-Lughod 1996, 142). "Power and history work through [ethnographers] in ways their authors cannot fully control" (Clifford 1986, 7). I am interpreted in the field as I am interpreting. The data that I collected were affected by my personal background and ways of living among others in India, in West Bengal, in Mayapur, and in the homes of devotee families. Being a short (close in height to many of the middle schoolers I researched), gregarious, young, married, college-educated, female-of-a-color-other-than-white, non-devotee influenced how I conducted fieldwork. My gender and marital status in particular influenced my access to the everyday socialization practices that promote girls' chastity, as well as my interpretations of how women position themselves as guardians of the moral order and saviors of the world, birthing utopia through their motherhood.

2.1.2 Participant Observation

"Immersing yourself in the culture" (Bernard [1988] 2006, 344) can mean participating in some aspects of the cultural activity, classically noted as being a participant observer. For example, one can enter a temple and bow to the deities as a form of respect as opposed to watching everyone else do that and being the lone being standing and watching them. But it can also mean being an observer standing or sitting and watching people engage in an activity while not participating. Whenever I was in the classroom at the Sri Mayapur International School, for example, I sat in the back or on the side of the classroom with my camera set up in whatever location I deemed appropriate, and was quietly observing and note-taking.

It was often necessary to fuse both approaches of being an observer who does and does not participate in the activity. When researching a family in their home, I would enter with my camera and record what was happening for a fixed set of time, often one hour, careful to not interfere with the family's tasks. At some point, every family would want me to eat with them or have something to eat myself, and despite my desire to record meal time conversation and simply leave the camera set up while I left, most of the time families would refuse this. What I eventually learned was that the times that I was able to leave, the recordings did not capture what I had hoped for, i.e., talk among the

participants. Many devotee families hold silence while eating in high regard. This ideal is vested in theories about digestion being better when one does not talk. The Russian families whom I observed would, instead of talking, put on an audio recording of their guru doing a spiritual lecture in Russian. The Indian-Polish family would sit in quiet. The Bengali family would often exchange comic glances and make a few jokes but return to silence. Contrastingly, on the occasions when I would eat with the family, we instead talked; they asked me questions about my husband and we would all catch up for the week. I learned a lot, both from the mostly silent mealtimes, as well as from switching off the camera; choosing instead to be a guest at the table (or floor, as four out of six of the devotee families I worked with ate on mats) was sometimes the better way to be an ethnographer, especially in the first year of research.[7] They felt that they did right by feeding me, I felt that I did right by being fed. We strengthened our relationship. I became a social person who knows the rules of etiquette and, thus, someone whom people want in their home.

2.2 Setting the Stage

Before I was granted permission to conduct an ethnography in the community, in late summer 2014 during my pilot study I was interviewed separately by Mayapur Director Gauranga Simha Dasa (white South African) and Mayapur Community Seva (MCS) Director Krishnalaulya Devi Dasi (white American and Hawaiian).[8] In addition to inquiries about the subject of my research, they both inquired about my marital status and religious beliefs, two things, which turned out to be very important to my ability as a young female researcher to successfully work in a conservative religious community.

At the time of those interviews I was engaged to be married, but had assured both that I would be married before my fiancé would join me in 2015. Gauranga Simha was relieved: "That's good. I know things are different in the West. But here, we can't have men and women living together if they aren't

7 The second year of research we would sit in silence and I took this as an acceptance that I was no longer "just" a researcher or guest to be amused through talk.

8 Their names are unchanged as they are institutional leadership.

Figure 2.1: The Sri Mayapur International School (SMIS)

married and then especially to work with the children. It sets a bad example. It was not too long ago that I had to ask a couple to quit their service with the MCS Youth because they were living together. Everyone thought they were married and then word got out that they weren't. Trust me, those aren't easy conversations. So it's good you're getting married, it will be easier for you here." He was also curious about my religious or spiritual affiliation. I responded with the truth, that I am not a devotee but consider myself a friend of devotees. In my fieldnotes I wrote, "I distinctly recall feeling as if this was not enough [... and added,] 'I was raised Buddhist but went to Protestant and Catholic schools up until college.'" And my favorite part of this fieldnote entry, "I also like Krishna, he's really naughty doing things he shouldn't like stealing butter and playing tricks and that's appealing." He smiled at this, and I got approved. This was not a falsehood to appear sympathetic to the religion; it is true, I do like naughty deities and Krishna is very amusing with his mischief.

From there I went to the Sri Mayapur International School (SMIS) principal and explained my interests in researching the school. She did not inquire about my marital status, and I pre-empted any religious inquiry when I told her at the onset of our meeting that I was not a devotee. She too

approved of my presence, and within a couple weeks I received all the paperwork needed to begin research the following August in 2015.

2.2.1 Schooling in Mayapur

I chose SMIS as a school fieldsite as it is known as "the community's school" and caters to an array of different devotee families. Some parents enroll their children because they often must return to their home countries and need accreditation to prove that their children have been in school since their absence from their home country. Others want their children to have "the best of both worlds" and absorb the devotee environment while still benefitting from a United Kingdom international school curriculum that requires students to complete the Cambridge International Examinations, including the IGCSE and A-levels. Students who desire to continue to most international universities are able to apply with these credentials. During the years that I conducted research in the school there were between 140 and 160 students from nursery to twelfth grade. The enrollment numbers fluctuate as many international families return home for work, family, or visa purposes. The criterion that allows children to enroll is their devotee status and ability to pay around 300 US dollars (25,000 Indian rupees) per school term. Children whose families could not pay these fees could request sponsorship from the temple administration, their guru, and other devotees. They could also homeschool or join a co-operative, a very popular option for parents who wanted more time dedicated to spiritual education with an absence of core courses (i.e., science, maths, and English) required from a Cambridge certified school. Parents homeschool in their own languages and not having to send their children to an English-medium school is a preferable option, especially for many Russian devotees who envision their children returning to Russia for schooling.

There are three other schools in the area, a Bengali public school and two gender separated "traditional" schools in Mayapur, run by ISKCON: the boys' *gurukul* and the girls' *gurukul*. The public school used to admit international children but stopped in the 2000s, as the "foreign kids" were considered difficult. What this exactly means is unclear, but gossip hinted that foreign children expected a different teacher–student relationship similar to their home countries, and when not met with that,

Figure 2.2: Boys' Gurukul campus

disciplinary issues and order in the classroom were difficult to maintain. Enrollment then required being ethnically Indian and was a popular decision among mixed Indian and foreign parents who preferred more Indian school structure for their children while living in Mayapur. Some international parents lamented not being able to send their children to the public school, which was run by Bengali Hare Krishna devotees, offered a solid education in core subjects, and was also more affordable than SMIS.

The boys' *gurukul* is a boarding school located on the outskirts of the village for devotee boys from five to twenty years of age. Its chief aim is to foster brahminical qualities in men and set the boys up to be future ISKCON community leaders and members.[9] The girls' *gurukul* is not a boarding school, and

9 *Gurukul* boys live at school and can see their parents for one hour each week. Their schedule revolves around the temple's daily program. They wake up between 2:00 a.m. and 3:30 a.m. before the waking of the deities in the tempe at 4:30 a.m. After early morning bathing from outside pumps, the older boys begin their chanting before attending temple morning programs. Afterwards, they cook breakfast for themselves and the younger boys, before beginning their school day, wherein they attend scripture classes as well as learn subjects like maths, English, and Sanskrit. Parents who send their boys here are often considered to be more "conservative" ISKCON devotees.

girls return home daily, similar to any other school. It is known as "the traditional" school for girls and is dedicated to cultivating knowledge of scriptures, dance, cooking, cleaning, painting, and other arts. Enrollment is small, and this school was closed during my two years in Mayapur.

Parents can choose among the various options for education in Mayapur. Often, children sample a combination during their time in Mayapur, deciding which one suits their educational and spiritual goals best. SMIS is the only one with international certification, which enables their children to re-enter their home countries' school systems without issues and at a much lower cost than private schooling in their own countries. SMIS was initially chosen as the site for this study because it is known as the community school for both Bengali and international students. Also, as mentioned above, during the first month of dissertation fieldwork I was interested both boys' and girls' peer groups, and this is the only school that catered to both in the primary school levels.

Figure 2.3: An apartment building in Mayapur

Figure 2.4: Residential gardens

2.2.2 Moving In

I moved into the Grihastha Area of Mayapur in August 2015. "Grihastha" or *grhastha* means "householder" in Sanskrit. In the community, these three-story brick living quarters were built in the 1970s and are situated closest to the temple, shops, and school. There are garden plots next to each building so residents can grow food as well as fresh flowers for their altars.

Figure 2.5 shows the general orientation of this section of the Mayapur ISKCON campus. I lived in the Radha Gokulananda Building, in apartment D, which overlooked the SMIS campus where I would conduct the bulk of my fieldwork. It was a very convenient space to live in as I could look over the school playground and hear the bells announcing recess or the switch of class periods.

2.2.3 Community Demographics and Parental Consent

During the first two months of fieldwork in August 2015 I re-acquainted myself with the community attending meetings, fraternizing with teachers and staff, and most importantly locating Russian and

Bengali translators and transcribers. From the Mayapur Community Seva (MCS) office,[10] I learned that twenty-three percent of the registered non-Indian devotees (numbering 1,940) living in Mayapur are Russian (see figure 2.6).

There are approximately five hundred more unregistered foreigners living in Mayapur throughout the year visiting friends and family or pilgriming. As I had learned from the prior summer, the Russian

Figure 2.5: Mayapur living quarters[11]

10 MCS is an office that assists foreigners with their visas and other documents in order to legally reside in India according to the terms of their visas.

11 Map kindly provided to me by an informant.

community is quite insular, keeping to themselves and generally not fluent in English. I had my consent forms and research agenda translated into Russian by a Russian mother whom I would later recruit into the study. The MCS gave me a verbal estimate of how many Bengali ISKCON devotees live in the area as between 3,500 and 4,000. I also had forms translated into Bengali by a local *brahmacari* (a celibate monk).

To secure the consent forms to conduct research with the children in SMIS as well as in the neighborhood, I needed as much of the community on board with my project as possible. As mentioned above, I received institutional written approval to conduct doctoral research in the community, and I copied a portion of the MCS approval letter into a document (in English, Russian, and Bengali) that I circulated around the community, wherein I had outlined my research agenda with my Mayapur house address, phone number, and email address attached.

I also included the UCLA Internal Review Board URL and my study number for all the parents to verify the veracity of my research online. These were distributed through SMIS' end of the day letters home. Parents were informed that I would also be holding two sessions at the school to explain my research, answer any questions, request permission from them in person, and outline privacy measures.

2.2.4 Meeting the Parents and Children

First impressions matter. I wore a beautiful yellow cotton *sari* to the first meeting with parents. Saris are a type of formal wear in India for school teachers and is also the standard attire for women within any Hare Krishna community. With my Senagalese twists in a bun, I introduced my name, told them that though I was not a devotee, I have worked and researched ISKCON for several years, and considered myself a friend of devotees. I also shared that I had been interviewed and approved by Gauranga Simha Dasa, Krishnalaulya Devi Dasi, and the principal. Parents were able to ask questions about me and the research.

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12 Data kindly provided to me by the Mayapur Community Seva office.

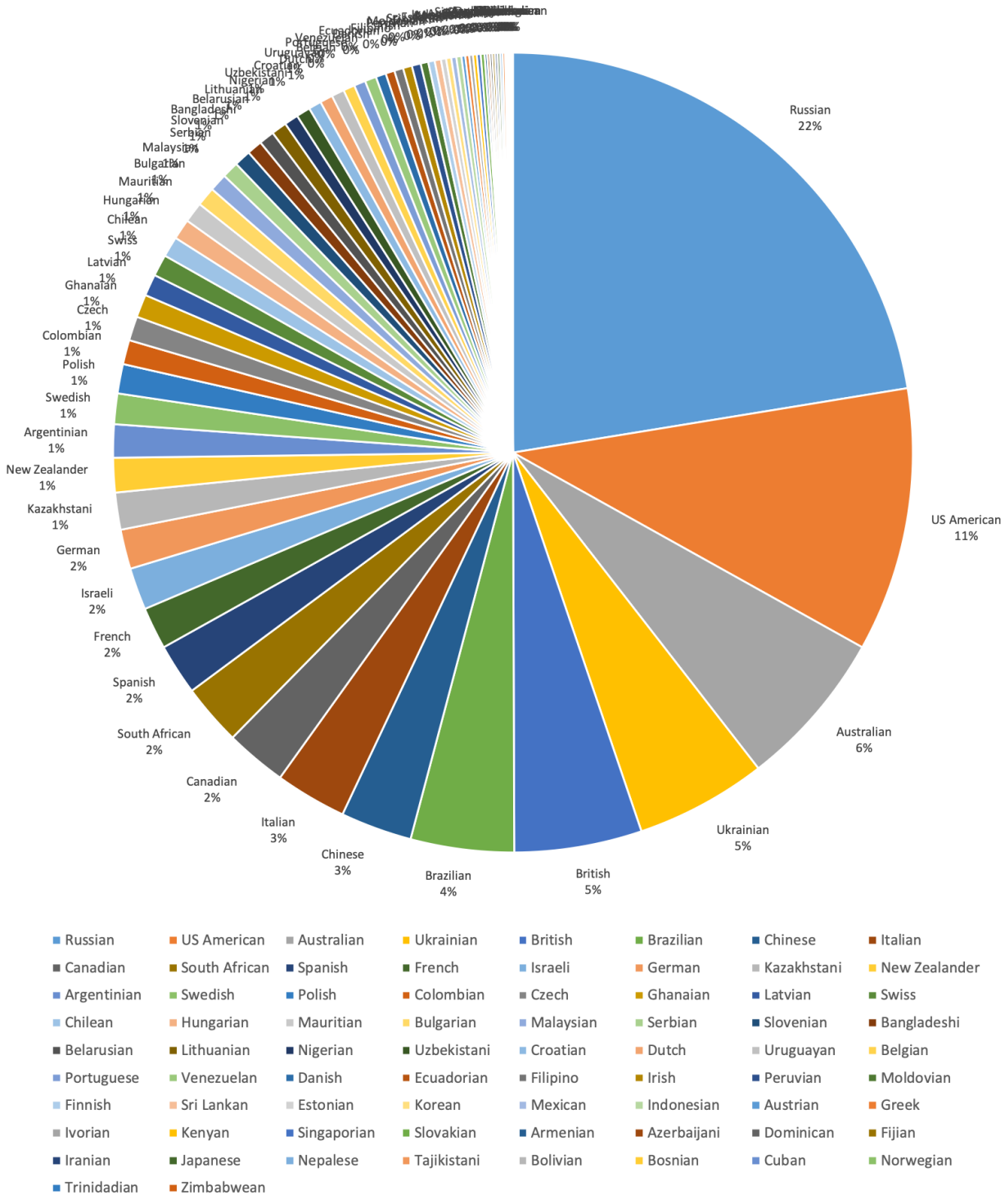

Figure 2.6: Non-Indian passport holders of 1,940 registered devotees living in Mayapur[12]

These two meet-the-resident-anthropologist orientation sessions were helpful to introduce myself to parents and also assuage any possible issues in a community such as this one where outsiders could be met with suspicion. To my surprise, people were not suspicious. In fact, they were very receptive. I told them that their children are interesting for many reasons and that I think that there is something to say about what is going on with their linguistic and cultural development. They all agreed, and my many prepared arguments to try and explain myself and my research were, in the end, unnecessary. I left these meetings thinking the parents had been waiting for someone from outside ISKCON to take notice. Upon reflection this should not have been surprising to me, as I knew from M.A. research that ISKCON as a movement, despite its insularity, always has an eye looking to the world, and that "Krishna consciousness," as Daner (1976) noted, is an "open secret."[13]

2.2.5 Introducing Myself to the Children and Children's Assent

In addition to meeting the parents and sending consent forms, I also introduced myself to the children. Navigating assent from children is always a fine line to walk with leveraging the power difference between an adult and child. "Consent" is not something children can grant in a legal sense, but they can assent or not to participation. I had informed the teachers that if any student appeared unhappy or voiced discomfort with my presence, I would not record them or take notes on them. The teachers at the primary level (grades 1 to 6) suggested the Monday assembly would be the best way to introduce myself to the students. At the assembly I told the students who I was and why I would be around the school:

> I'm interested in how devotee kids become devotee kids. Many of you come from all over the world to live here in Mayapur. I hope to be in your school learning about your lives here. I'm writing a book and it's about being a kid here.

13 As I learned throughout my time touring ISKCON spaces in India, there are many projects and collaborations with researchers, most notably in the Govardhan Eco Village, which has won UN awards for sustainability innovations. It bears also mentioning that my first contact in Mayapur in 2014 was through another anthropologist, John Fahy (2015), who had just completed fifteen months of fieldwork in Mayapur. His presence the year prior no doubt made it easier for people to accept that yet another anthropologist had taken interest in the community.

This was the opening to my introduction. And though most parents had granted consent through signed permission slips by this time, I made sure to also make clear that they did not have to be part of the research if they did not want to. One six-year-old raised her hand and said, "Mataji, I don't think my parents want it. I don't think I can do it." A few more hands from her grade level went up, "Mataji, I also don't think I can do it." I responded, "That's perfectly fine. You don't have to do anything you don't want at all. You should all be happy and okay with everything." They were in second grade, and though not part of the purview of the research anyways, I welcomed being able to publicly acknowledge that it was okay for any child to refuse being part of the research. Some of the now sixth grade children from the summer before also raised their hands. One Bengali girl who did actually become part of the study, Krishangi, raised her hand and said, "Mataji, you can research me!" And a few of her friends raised their hands too, "And me, Mataji. You can research me!" This back and forth went on for a few more seconds until the teachers called order, and I told them that I hoped to be in grades 4, 5, and 6 for a few weeks taking notes for a couple of class periods most days of the week.

I then brought out my video camera and tripod, and showed the assembly of children the devices. Video-recording was crucial to this study as it enabled a layered analysis of linguistic practices alongside gestures, gaze, facial expressions, and corporeal (mis)alignments, and the wider semiotic environment all of which are integral for examining the "accumulative action" (C. Goodwin 2018) necessary for face-to-face interaction. I announced that in a month's time I would have a camera with me to video-record some activities in the classroom and on the playground. I also made clear that they did not have to be recorded and that I would not be bothered if they did not want to be filmed. "If you see the camera and don't want be recorded, move your head, or give me a funny face, and I'll know you don't want to be filmed." I did a silly face, and they laughed. Returning to a serious mode, I encouraged them to talk with their parents and teachers, if they felt unhappy about the camera, me, or with my observing at any point. I promised to make sure to not record them or write anything down. "Everybody here should be happy. I'm going to leave now, and please talk to the teachers about any questions or feelings. [The principal] invited me to come for lunch, if you want you can ask me

anything later today." At this, I thanked them for their attention, thanked the teachers for giving me ten minutes of assembly, and then I left so the children could voice anything about me or what I said to their teachers.

Given the high use of photography and video use in the twenty-first century, I assume children do not view recording devices with the same awe that perhaps they would have thirty years earlier. Nevertheless, making sure children feel they have the power to dictate an interaction with an adult and her technology (journals, camera, and my very ethnographic gaze) was my main goal throughout my two years in Mayapur. I also believe that this groundwork helped me gain the trust of the children and families I researched.

As sociologist of childhood William Corsaro ([1997] 2015, 51) writes, "to carry out prolonged and intensive observations of young children, one must first be accepted into the group and acquire participant status." Corsaro would actually play among the children he studied, and though I do not ascribe to being a playmate as a means for data collection, I understand that being part of the devotee children's group as an adult required the children to accept me into their group in some modified capacity. Part of my approach in doing this was to not assume they are incompetent. What I mean by this is that I introduced myself to them in a forum similar to the one for their parents and teachers, some children were at the parent meeting and others remembered me from the year prior. I deferred to them in asking for permission. My research hinged on their approval of me. Of course, I do not know what I would have done for my doctorate if the children all raised their hands refusing to participate and I am very grateful that a few children were participants in this study. But approaching the community and the children with humility, clarity, and respect for whether a researcher can or should be in their space is important.

This is not perfect. Navigating assent with children is a constant activity, especially with very young children. It is also a moment-to-moment and day-by-day process, where a child appears fine with being filmed or watched one day or for one activity, but not other days or other activities. I would have to turn the camera off, using my personal judgement that something was not okay for me to see (such as a child vomiting from sickness) while keeping it on for other moments (such as bullying).

When using GoPro cameras (body cameras that are further described in a later section), children who were wearing the camera could switch on and off what they wanted to film. I have seen lots of funny faces, heard a remarkable amount of humming to oneself, and have seen lots of sky footage as they would lay down on the grass. The most jarring footage would be the frequent basketballs heading straight into the camera. More sensitively, this type of filming would also showcase a child filming their own bullying, and the bully being unaware they were on camera. In one instance, the child wearing the GoPro announces that I will see the footage, mobilizing the camera as a tool for documentation and reporting. Interesting as these data are, recording does become a question of informed and aware assent when a particular bully was unaware of being filmed or watched until announced, after which the bullying ceased. Camera use will be discussed in section 2.4.

2.2.6 Being an "Adult-Child"—Researching Children

For this research, I embraced the playful side of myself and was very much involved in the children's lives as what I call an "adult-child."[14] It is a complex line between a "participant" in the participant observer sense, and an adult who is expected by the community and sometimes the children to act like an adult.

It means being up for any adventure. I did not often play with the children, as I did not want to disrupt whatever activity I was recording and observing, but I joined them on their adventures around Mayapur. Being up for any adventure also meant that the girls and parents had my phone number and could inform me of events. For example, one of the girls would call me to tell me about something I should record. "We're getting the new deities today. Wanna record, mataji? They come from Puri." Or, outside my window in summer I would hear "Maaaaataaaaaji! We're going to rollerskaaaate! Record the finish line!" Here, children become what Corsaro ([1997] 2015, 51) calls *co-researchers*, "suggesting things I needed to record about them in my notes."

14 Emphasis on the "a" of adult otherwise it reads as if I am an ad*ult* child, which is maybe also true, but not what I mean here.

It means not being a spy for parents or other kids. If children think you are a spy on their playtime, they will not play, gossip, or argue in front of you. This is the ultimate death sentence to ethnographic research on children's everyday play and talk. There is, of course, a caveat, and I made it clear a couple of times that if there is something dangerous happening, I will intervene.[15]

It means being the babysitter when parents ask. Sharada's daughter, Sundari, loved to play in the park, but after a suspicious man was seen lurking in the neighborhood, Sharada was extra diligent about watching Sundari. I was frequently utilized as another set of eyes on the children. Here too, I occupied more of an adult role. Also, in the classroom when the teacher stepped out I was placed as the adult in charge. Importantly, the kids knew I would not tattle on them, so they could also do "whatever" they wanted, as if there was no adult in the room.

An adult-child is at hand for the children when they need an adult. Children used my cellphone to call their parents. Parents called me as a means to inform their kids to come home. Or, if a child had not come home, parents would call me to ask if I knew where their children were. I was a stable adult fixture both adults and children could count on.

It is being okay with your own incompetence and treating children as the experts. The children, of course, know that I am not a child, but over time, it became clear that I am not a typical adult either. It is not only that I did not obstruct their play or schemes, but that I treated them as authorities deferring to their knowledge for help. I asked questions. "Banglai eta ki?" (What's this in Bengali?) "Shto eta ruskiyazik?" (What is this in Russian language?) The kids would laugh at me! I did not know the names of anything it seemed! And it was in fact true, the children were teachers with knowledge to dispense. I was also in need of temple etiquette training in the beginning, not knowing the order in which to greet the deities in the temple. I usually just mirrored the families and children, much to the children's amusement. Being inept is so very important to an ethnographer in general but especially

15 This was unfortunately the case for a teenager who approached me with issues of self-harm. Because I had ingratiated myself in many of the children's, teenagers', and families' lives, it meant I also became a first-stop resource for counseling during troubled times. It was also the case when swimming in the Ganges. I was aware that a child had drowned the summer that I first arrived, and I took care to make sure that heads were above the water. I could not film during river play, as I assumed "lifeguard" mode, monitoring, and counting bodies.

with children. Being corrected illuminates to us what the rules are and can subvert power dynamics in the moment.

It means you care for them and are open to being cared for in return. An ethnographer's greatest strength is actually her ability to become accepted as part of a community. A wall-flower "neutral" observer is creepy anywhere in the world. An effective longitudinal researcher in the field becomes part of a family or families—to do so you come to know facets of their lives, and they yours. A couple of mothers in the field became counselors to me in my life. Sharada knew my sadnesses, joys, and anticipations; she advised me in my marriage and my family, I listened about hers.[16] We shared recipes—a quick bonding technique with most women in the community. I went shopping with the moms; we laughed, got angry at whatever was happening, and we stayed up late talking for hours. The children saw me participating in a variety of contexts in the community; they witnessed me hanging out with their mothers or other children's moms. Part of maintaining rapport is through giving gifts, especially to the focal families in the study. I brought novels to share with the children. When I went to Kolkata or abroad, I asked for lists of needed items and always brought saris, treats, and when asked for specific Hindi movies, I delivered. When I was in Germany visiting in-laws, I brought back coveted items like non-rennet cheeses, vegan marshmallows, organic vanilla extract, gluten free pasta, and much more.

When I left the field, I sustained a place in a child's life as an important adult who does not and will not abandon them. The ethics of the departure are fuzzy and complex. For every researcher, I understand this is differently felt and executed. What I hold as ethical when working with children and families longitudinally is to anticipate the departure from the onset. As an "adult-child researcher" who has played, watched, guarded, gifted, cared, and lived in their lives, knowing how to transition into a role that is differently maintained in their life was important. In *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Bernard ([1988] 2006, 342) writes, "only by confronting the truth about participant observation—that it involves deception and impression management—can we hope to conduct ourselves ethically in fieldwork." I knew before arriving and throughout that I was in Mayapur to collect data and use that

16 I did not advise. I was newly married in 2015, and my husband only arrived to join me in the field from October 2015 to May 2016, and sporadically between December 2016 and March 2017.

data to earn a doctorate. This has to be clear from the beginning for the ethnographer and study participants. It is why consent and assent procedures should be meticulous and sensitive, and it is also why participant observation in families can be tricky, because the data we collect is made possible only because families adopt us into their lives perhaps first as researchers but then eventually as more than that. These transformations should be a two-way street: I also acknowledge that they started out as research subjects who became more than that. Acknowledging this shift in fieldwork is necessary in longitudinal family research. And this acknowledgment should be coupled with material acts.

2.2.7 Reciprocity and Saying Goodbye

As this research was funded, I was able to give a modest monthly stipend for participation. I still remit money annually to three of the six focal families. My justifications for not doing so with the other three is economic in nature, both mine and theirs. I cannot afford at this time to remit for six families. Three families I worked with had much lower incomes, and I knew that Krishangi's parents as well as Gopi's were contemplating pulling their daughters out of school because of the high costs and the perceived low return.[17] My supplemental income did not help, as both girls have now dropped out of school. I send money for their parents to purchase books or whatever else they need. I do not donate to ISKCON as an institution directly,[18] but I do take part in efforts to keep the SMIS children's library full of books.

As outlined in my research grants, any equipment such as laptops were donated to the school. Parents were given copies of whatever data they wanted. One mother, for example, only wanted photos of her daughter to show Gopi's grandparents in Russia. One Russian couple wanted copies of the video data of their daughter. The other families did not want anything, although I offered to

17 SMIS was undergoing a lot of restructuring and the children's education suffered for it.

18 While living in the temple community, I donated to SMIS and always put ten rupee notes in the ISKCON temple donation boxes in front of each deity in the temple. This is common practice when visiting temples across India.

make copies. In the end, I made a digital file of some of my favorite photos, and gave it to individual families.

I promised towards the end of my first year that I would be back within two years. When I received extra funding, it was possible. I made sure to say that the following year I would have to go back to my country but that I would stay in touch. In this respect, social media is a huge boon to maintaining affective ties to the girls and their families and vice versa.[19] Facebook keeps me connected to many of the SMIS children's lives and a couple of their mothers.

In this circular migrant devotee community, children and mothers are used to people coming and going. I told everyone my timeline in the beginning and would bring it up when children would ask. The idea that I had to leave to make money was, to my knowledge, not offensive or surprising. Most fathers are gone for months up to a year doing that very thing. Whole families emigrate from India for that purpose. At the start of the research, Krishangi said, "Everybody comes to Mayapur!" And I would return.

2.2.8 Being a Female Researcher in a Gender Conservative Space—Marriage and Transracial Subjectivity

As the earlier section on "permissions" hints at, being married in ISKCON is important. I cannot speak to how fieldwork would have gone, had I not been married. But I can guess, based on what I do know of several single women in Mayapur who were pushed out of their positions as head teachers and directors because of suspicion that they were tempting married men or having affairs. Being an educated and powerful single woman was a liability and could invite questions of one's chasity.[20]

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19 I never had Facebook before 2015 and created one for my research. I now only maintain it to share photos with the Mayapur community and stay in touch.

20 During my time in Mayapur, a few single women were asked to leave the community. One woman, a white foreigner, was living on official ISKCON land where I lived. She was a young college-educated school counselor. For reasons that were not explained to me by the administrators of the Housing Area, she was asked to leave. And she did so in tears. The gossip inferred that it was because the Housing Area administrators did not approve of a young educated single woman living alone, including the woman who reported the gossip. When I pointed this out to her, she said,

Chastity, as chapters 5 and 7 expound on in further detail, is a religious concept linked to modesty and local concepts of empowerment wherein a woman's power and her karma are tied to her unalloyed devotion to her husband and children. Of the five cases that I came across, all suspicions appeared fabricated. My chastity was even once questioned. One white US American female (aged 40s) did not know that I was married and accused me of trying to corrupt the children by showing them that they "don't need a man and can do whatever they want." Knowing the severity of what her words could do to me and my research agenda, I calmly said, "Mataji, you do know that I'm married, happily so. He's here (I pointed to my apartment), if you'd like to meet him." She immediately went red in the face, stopped yelling, and started to hedge her comments. Among the more conservative devotees, unmarried women who have boyfriends are called "prostitutes," an obviously derogatory attribution that no woman in Mayapur could survive. There are several competing interpretations of chastity within ISKCON, and later chapters will show how girls craft their own versions of chastity socializing each other into a novel meaning of this religious ideal through everyday debates.

Being Japanese, Afro-Latina, and European lends my face placement in many global contexts. Blending in in India was therefore not usually a problem. Most of my friends in Mayapur were same-aged Indian women. I tend to pull toward the ethnic or racial category of the people whom I am standing next to, except in white spaces, where the black/white racial binary renders brown skin into blackness. In India, where color lines are maintained within different historical contexts and where elites have brown skin, I was not rendered black in tone or in socio-political subjectivity, but often mistaken as a fair-skinned middle-class Indian, specifically Assamese.[21] Being perceived and treated as a middle or even upper middle-class Indian woman was liberating while in South Asia, a window into India's "fair-skinned" mobility. This perception was even more so, living in a utopia project that

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"Yes, but Teru I am old. No one can say anything [about me]." When I said that another woman we both knew lived alone, she responded, "Yes, she has to be careful." And trying to get to the bottom of the expulsion I added that, "Sometimes Jan (my husband) is not here, why does no one suspect me?" She said, "That's different. You are married and Jan comes and goes. It's not ideal but many women's husbands are not here. But at least you have someone. And I don't know, you don't talk alone with men maybe." My fieldwork "mother," Sharada, often would tell me that it was good Jan was with me. "It's hard to be a woman alone in India, and Mayapur can be a funny place."

21 Assam is a northeastern state in India bordering Bhutan and Bangladesh.

boasts an ideology of bodily disassociation, which has influenced a high rate of mixed class, mixed race, and cross linguistic marriages and thus many children are born into "mixed" families. Many devotee community members responded to my family history with: "You look like a devotee kid!" and "You'll fit in here, you look like the children here!" "Racial malleability" (Roth-Gordon 2016) or as I call it, "the flexible face," concerns transracial subjects who can move across spaces needing only the right backstory or language to play with the category of race, and claim ancestral belonging to anywhere. My racial malleability was no doubt extremely helpful in my fieldwork, as I could move into spaces undetected among the "Latino community,"[22] the Ghanian families,[23] the Indian families, and even the Russian families who often emphasized my Japanese-ness in relating to me.[24] In "Who's Afraid of the Transracial Subject?," Alim (2016) investigates how transracial subjects' "raciolinguistic practices have the potential to transform the oppressive logic of race itself." Mayapur is a great place to investigate this dynamic, where three generations of highly mobile children raised under a much more complex doctrine than "color-blind" logics, are morally enjoined to marry according to religious qualification first with little regard to skin color or class background. Yet, this utopian ideology is not uniformly actualized.

2.3 Research Participants

After introducing myself to all the school parents in SMIS through the letters and the meetings, I observed and took fieldnotes in grades four, five, and six for one month. I sat in different class periods four days a week during the first month to ascertain which students would be optimal for a study on

22 This was what devotees who spoke Spanish called themselves. It is very much an ethno-linguistic label, where gaining entry was largely based one's ability to speak or understand Spanish.

23 I bonded in this group over my hair needs. I had special conditioners that I would share, and would get my hair braided chatting with women about being African in India.

24 Gopi's mother Manjuli would talk to me about how she knew many Japanese people when she lived in Russia and had always wanted to visit. Being Japanese held traction throughout my stay in India in ways that I hope one day to investigate further.

the multilingual devotee peer group. It quickly became clear that this study would be relegated to girls, as the boys minded my watching them; they were hyperaware when I would observe near their groups at recess. With a focus on girls, I set my ears for bilingual or multilingual girls who would code-switch between English (the school's medium) and other languages. In addition to an individual child's bilingualism, the friend group needed to be multilingual.

Data from the 2014 pilot study indicated the older non-Indian generation of devotees who attended SMIS maintained their fluency in English and Bengali, and could evidence conversational fluency in at least one other language. In interviews they cited SMIS[25] or their school-aged peer group as the space where they learned English, conversational Bengali, and where they were also exposed to other languages such as Spanish. During the twenty months I spent in Mayapur I was able to witness various levels of fluency among adults who had grown up here. I had hoped to be able to document that process of translingual peer socialization in the current cohort of SMIS children. Children growing up in bilingual and multilingual settings often acquire varying "translingual" competencies (García 2009; Creese and Blackledge 2010), understood here as bilingualism or multilingualism "without diglossic functional separation" (García 2007, xii).

After locating girls who met linguistic and social criteria, I approached their parents for permission. They had either already met me through the school or had read my handout announcing my research and obtaining consent at this point was swift. I focused my study on a subset of six middle and lower-middle class devotee families and their six children (aged 8–13). For pragmatic reasons of having one camera with which to follow children on the playground, I limited my focal group observations to two peer groups: three girls in sixth grade (Krishangi, Gopi, and Bhumika), two girls in fourth grade (Sundari and Prema), and one girl in fifth grade (Chaturika) who would play with both the fourth and sixth grade girls. These girls, of course, played with other children during the course of filming, and those children, if their parents had granted permission, are discussed when needed.

25 There were other school systems at various periods in ISKCON Mayapur's history and I interviewed twenty adults who had attended a Mayapur school in their youth.

I filmed these families and the children in their homes, the neighborhood, school, and the temple. I used a handheld camera as well as set up GoPros on the kids to capture point-of-view interactions in class, the playground, the neighborhood, and temple. Of the focal girls, Krishangi's family was Bengali, whose family members had lived in the area for centuries. Sundari's was a Polish-Mauritian-Indian family. Gopi's, Bhumika's, and Chaturika's families were Russian (though Gopi's was Russian from Kazhakstan); and Prema was mixed Swedish and Russian. Except for the Bengali family, all were circular migrants returning to their homes or nearby countries almost annually for visa renewals. Bhumika was pulled out of school after the first year to begin homeschooling and then slowly left the peer group as she became more invested in other friendships. Prema returned with her family to Sweden. For these reasons, I exclude Bhumika's and Prema's families from this description and focus on the social, linguistic, and religious ecology of Krishangi, Gopi, Sundari, and Chaturika, while referencing the other girls when appropriate.

2.3.1 Sundari—Mauritian-Indian and Polish Family

Sundari (age 8) is the Indian-Polish girl featured in the "Entry into Mayapur" field note at the start of this chapter. She is in grade four and later grade five during the course of eighteen months of fieldwork. She is a straight-A student, often bored in math class (not because she does not like math, but because she knows everything). She likes to make dioramas and paper doll houses. I often found her crafting forts for fairies in the gardens. She often dreams of being super rich and living in a big house for her and her mom. She jokes, but in serious tones, that her future husband makes a lot of money and that she will not have to work. At that statement, her mom is quick to point out that she is smart and that it would be good to have a *seva*, a service, which is a community or temple job. Sundari then says that she will become a school teacher. This routine about her future role as a rich housewife who works for pleasure was a frequent imagining for Sundari.

I lived next door to Sundari and her family. Her mom, Sharada, oversaw the apartment that I was renting, so we saw each other quite frequently. Sundari was born in India and lives with her mom, elder brother Shyam (aged 11), and her father, Prab. Prab was not often home, instead preaching abroad,

distributing books, so it often looked as if Sharada was a single mother. The household had assistance however. She employed the same maid, Kamala, for several years, who would hand wash the laundry, do the dishes, and sometimes pick the children up at school.

Sharada speaks mostly in Indian English to the children but began using French Creole to prepare them for a family trip to Mauritius in 2016, which the children had not visited since they were toddlers. Sharada talks to her son in Hindi, but Sundari refuses to speak Hindi. She evidences understanding when her mom gives a directive, but will respond in English with the exception of the numbers in Polish and a few French Creole phrases. When I asked what languages she knows, she almost always responded "English and Polish." Kamala, the maid, is quite close with the children, and as she is a monolingual Bengali speaker, she would talk to Sundari and her brother in Bengali. The children would minimally respond in English or Bengali, or in head gestures.

Sundari holds passports from Poland and Mauritius, and has an Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card. This is not a passport but does allow her to live and work legally in India. Her father is Polish, and Sharada is from Mauritius. Sharada is ethnically Indian, and her family has lived in Mauritius for four generations. It is through that heritage that Sharada and her family were able to obtain OCI and secure their place in India. Sharada is one of six children born to a Hindu family. Only Sharada and her sister, Madana, converted to ISKCON and have left Mauritius, both through marriages to European men in ISKCON. They both currently live in Mayapur.

Sundari's Polish passport and OCI card were obtained during the two years that I lived in Mayapur. Her mother's logic in gaining the passport and card was "The world is changing fast now, you never know what's going to happen. At least my kids will be okay." Sharada is a very forward-thinking planner; she is the backbone of the family, managing the children's schedule and balancing the very little that her husband earns from temple service. I found that money is not easily or often discussed in Mayapur, but toward the end of my two years in Mayapur in 2017, Sharada confided that the family has no savings. I guessed as much from the worry-full manner in which she talked about finances.

2.3.2 Krishangi—Bengali Family

Krishangi (age 11) was born and raised in Mayapur and has never left India. She is Bengali, in sixth grade and then seventh grade by the time fieldwork ended in May 2017. She speaks Bengali and English and tries to read Cyrillic. She knows some stock phrases in Russian and prides herself on translating her best friend Gopi's conversations with her mom.

She is a straight-A student, precocious, and always has the last word. She sounds like an Angelino from California when she speaks English, which is markedly different from every member of her family, except for her uncle's wife, a Mexican-American ISKCON devotee who lives in Los Angeles with Krishangi's uncle. She can and does code switch into a Bengali Indian English akin to ISKCON's Founding Guru, Srila Prabhupada. I surmise that she acquired her Los Angeles dialect because Krishangi loves her aunty, is a great imitator, and imagines that she will leave Mayapur to visit her aunty, uncle, and extended family in Los Angeles and go to university to study archaeology. She wants to dig up temples in India. Since I live in Los Angeles, she jokes that she will also live with me alternating between my home and the Los Angeles temple community in Culver City. She would be a welcome addition, for Krishangi is a ray of light wherever she goes, leaping and bounding when most girls her age in Mayapur do not leap and bound, at least not without someone's rebuke.

Krishangi looks young, which allows her to play with the boys relatively unfettered but also means she does not get to hang out with the older girls. Twelve-year-old girls get invited to decorate the roads for the *hati* procession with the teen girls,[26] and she tries to no avail to point out that she is actually twelve in Bengali years (age begins at conception, so when a child is born they are already one year old). She does not keep in fashion with the teenage girls (14 and older) with whom she longs to hang out. They wear long flowing *gopi*-skirts with *cholis* (short tops) covered by a sweeping scarf. Krishangi wears *salwar kameez*, a pant and top outfit, to play in the neighborhood and in the temple. She is aware

26 This is a Mayapur tradition where the two resident elephants walk through the community and devotees decorate the roads and bring the elephants wonderful food items to eat along the way. It is one of the most favorite family activities every Friday at 5 p.m. during the Winter season.

that she is different. Krishangi looks like a kid and acts like a tomboy. When the boys in her class do something stupid, Krishangi is the first person to let them know. Krishangi is fierce and always has to be right. Despite wanting to travel far, she has declared with pride that she will never leave India … "except to visit Malaysia, maybe." With a cheeky smile she always ends this travel routine with, "Just kidding!"

Krishangi lives with her brother, Arjun, her mother, Lila, and her father, Mukunda. They are a very jovial family, and Mukunda is the center of merriment, always joking with his children. Lila and Mukunda are clearly still in love after twenty years of marriage. They met in ISKCON when they were teenagers rendering *seva* (service) in the temple. They bonded over having the same guru, Jayapataka Swami, a white American disciple of Srila Prabhupada born in Wisconsin. They, like many Bengali ISKCON devotees, are fiercely loyal and protective of Jayapataka Swami, who brought food, *kirtan*, and economic opportunity to the region from the 1980s onwards. Both grew up in farm communities near Mayapur in Hindu Vaisya families, and they frequently visit their families. All of Mukunda's three other brothers also converted to become ISKCON devotees. Lila's sister converted too. They were the first generation of young Bengali ISKCON converts, and Krishangi was born into the movement. Krishangi's family is a great example of upward mobility through religious conversion. The Bengali ISKCON community is extremely tight-knit with robust networks designed to help each other advance within ISKCON. Mukunda was tight-lipped about money, but he and his brothers own an apartment complex, which they rent out to foreigners at a good price. They currently live a middle class lifestyle, but financial woe hit the family toward spring 2017.

After I left India in May 2017, I learned that Krishangi was pulled out of school. Her parents could not afford it. Mukunda's health was declining, and they put their costs toward his medical needs. As of 2019, she is still not in school, and after missing now two years, Krishangi's chances at becoming an archaeologist are slim. She helps out with her mom's sari business, and Mukunda tries to enjoin her to take an interest in real estate.

2.3.3 Gopi—Russian-Kazakhstani family

Gopi (age 11) is an ethnically Russian girl born in Kazhakstan. Gopi was in sixth grade and then seventh grade by the time fieldwork ended in May 2017. Her parents migrated to India after the Kazhakstani ISKCON temple was destroyed by the government when she was around four years of age. Wanting to maintain their daughter's spiritual education, they migrated to Mayapur. She and her parents live in India on tourist visas, meaning they must return to Kazhakstan every time their visas are set to expire. The length allowed differs every application, and the family cannot predict how long that they will be able to stay in India. When I asked Gopi's mother, Manjuli, how long she hoped to live in Mayapur she said, "Only Krishna willing. I don't know how long." The return visits are fun for Gopi, she likes to visit her *babhushka* (grandmother) and cousins. They are not devotees.

Gopi's father left the family for another woman. His financial contribution is unclear. Despite my inquiries into how Manjuli manages the household, she only ever says, "Krishna gives everything. Don't worry, mataji. He sent you just after husband left.[27] Krishna always provides for His devotees." Gopi seems unaffected by this, chalking her father's affair and leaving it to bad karma.

Her mother, Manjuli, was a teacher in Kazhakstan and volunteered her time in the Kazhakstani Hare Krishna temple community before it was destroyed. She is an amazing cook, sews her daughter's clothes by hand while listening to scriptures. She always has a Russian cake ready to share and Gopi never lacks for anything. Gopi's elder brother is hardly around. He lives in the *gurukul*, the all-boys boarding school at the outer limits of ISKCON's campus, only a mile from Gopi and Manjuli's house. Manjuli is rarely fazed or frazzled. Leaving fate to Krishna, she devotes her energy to her daughter, rarely worrying about the future. She tutors Gopi in Russian literature, bringing classic novels in Russian to keep Gopi's reading and scholastic level high. When I asked her why, she said, "maybe she wants to go to Russia, to go to school."

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27 She refers to the monthly stipend that I pay for doing research, which was which was enough to cover rent and other main bills for two years.

Gopi is smart. Her best friend is Krishangi, though she also has a handful of Russian girls with whom she plays in the neighborhood. She knows stock phrases in Bengali and enjoys showing off her linguistic knowledge. She is a good student, always does her homework, likes to laugh, and makes funny faces. She is adventurous, self possessed, and creative. She knits, makes her own toys, and imagines living in Mayapur forever. She does not want to go to college and, instead, wants to be engaged at seventeen. This is an ideal held in the community, and Gopi seems fully at peace with that.

After grade seven, Gopi, similar to Krishangi, was pulled out of school. Alternatively, her mother enrolled her in a Russian homeschooling co-op led by a few Russian community members. There are no plans to return her to an English medium or international school.

2.3.4 Chaturika—Russian Family

Chaturika (age 9) is Russian in grade five. She and her little sister (age 6) were born in Mayapur to two converted devotee parents, Rukmini and Narahari. Chaturika is quiet, a motherly big sister, the responsible child, and attends to her own altar and deities with great care. Most mornings she and her sister wake up at 5 a.m.. to start getting ready for the day. Her parents usually go to *mongol arati*, a 4:30 a.m. viewing of the deities. If she can, Chaturika joins her mom in which case she is showered and dressed right before the sun rises, an auspicious time to be awake. Children who can wake up at this time are considered good, and Chaturika meets this rise-and-shine qualification. When *mongol arati* is over around 5 a.m.. and the socializing with community members ends, the whole family heads back home for a five-minute ride on the family moped. The girls do have their own bicycles, but they are reserved for school travel and neighborhood play. On mornings when they do not go to temple at 4:30 a.m., she and her sister join their mother in her yoga session. The little one squirms about smiling, and Chaturika gives her admonishing glances. On the days that I filmed, their father Narahari preferred to be off camera.

At school, Chaturika hangs out with other Russian children, preferring to speak in Russian. Her closest friends are other Russian girls in grades four and six. Gopi and Chaturika live one hundred meters from each other and play frequently together in the neighborhood. She often follows Gopi's

lead, and sometimes mediates between Gopi and their other friend Lila, a Russian fourth grader at SMIS.

"Mediator" is a good word to describe Chaturika. She works at her school subjects, but it is hard with the language difficulties. School does not seem a strong interest to her, perhaps because her grade level had constant turnover for teachers. The lack of attention from a stable teacher in school is probably part of the problem, and it is a problem for many students at SMIS, whose teachers often mean well, but who are not prepared to teach for a full school year.

Chaturika and her family are together the entire year. They, similar to Krishangi's family, are part of the relatively few families in which the father is present. Her parents appear to have a happy marriage and live by the community standards: he provides, she devotes her time to the children, him, and her friends. They live a middle-class lifestyle in Mayapur, with a maid who comes five days a week to clean the house and sometimes watch the children if the mother has a task in town.

2.4 Audio-visual Ethnography

In linguistic anthropological research, video-recording has become a useful tool to document not only verbal linguistic practices, but also the facial expressions, gaze, and other embodied communicative gestures. In addition, the camera can capture the physical setting, non-focal participants, and other conditions that an ethnographer may otherwise miss (Duranti 1997, 116–9). Of course, this does not mean that video captures everything and that it is a transparent window onto life's happenings. "Even if we could approximate such a total audio-visual documentation, it would still never be the same as the experience of 'being there' [and] there might be situations for which a written record might be more revealing than a visual one" (113). I also took notes while video recording when possible. When using the tripod in the classroom, for example, I could take notes of the class while also filming. The video camera here became a way to jog my memory and supplement fieldnotes.

2.4.1 Photography

I spent six weeks in the community without using my video camera as I awaited parental consent and child assent and determined which girls' families I would approach for longitudinal study. During that time I took fieldnotes and used a photo camera, a Canon EOS 1200D. I walked around the community with this device most days to document buildings and signs and familiarize the community with my having a camera (see García-Sánchez 2014, 62). Over the course of twenty months, I shot 8,214 images documenting moments within the community (temple events and home programs), with the girls (at school, their homes, neighborhood, and temple), and with families and devotee friends in field trips to pilgrim sites from Puri to Rameshwar. For a few months, I also advertised free services as a photographer and did outdoor photo shoots for any resident who wanted that. It turned out to be a great way to meet people within the community.

2.4.2 Video-recording Naturally Occurring Interactions

After the research participants were chosen and consent granted, I began using a Canon Vixia HF G10 digital video camera with a shotgun microphone to video-record classes in the school, peer group interactions at school, the home, and neighborhood, and family interactions in the home. A tripod stabilized the camera to reduce any shaking or rapid movements, and its lightweight design facilitated longterm use and also allowed me to set up the camera and leave the setting when needed. This was especially helpful in the classroom as well as in the home for filming mealtimes or in one instance, a mother's daily yoga practice with her two daughters. I occasionally gave the camera to the girls to use. One of the girls especially liked to film me. My only video accounts of me in the field are actually filmed by her.

In addition to the handheld Canon camera, I made use of a GoPro Hero 4, a body camera that I hooked up to a child body harness to secure the camera on focal children's chests. Children would then walk around for a period of up to one hour filming what they wanted. Children were taught how to turn on and off the device, as well as delete the file allowing them some control over what

I could see from their filming. They were also instructed to inform me if they wanted me to delete the file after they used the camera. I asked focal children to wear the GoPro at recess, and every six weeks a child would wear the camera on their way home, documenting how they got from school to home. While a child was wearing the GoPro at school, I would often film with the Canon camera, take notes, or sometimes use that time to accomplish other tasks like catching a teacher at her break to ask questions.

I filmed approximately 130 hours of naturally-occurring interaction from both the hand held camera and GoPro, which I logged in an Excel datasheet to track every file's date, camera type, minutes recorded, participant, setting, videographer (me or the particular child), transcriber(s) of data, location on hard drive, and notes. Of this database, I coded and annotated 28.5 hours for use in this dissertation. Transcribers transcribed and translated video-recordings.

2.4.3 Schedule of Video-recording

I began filming in the classroom two days a week in *sastra* class (scriptures class), in English, math or science, Bengali (taught only once a week) and on the playground three days a week. I tried to film each focal girl once a month at home, but this was not always possible. Girls often played together; sometimes one day's filming for one girl would also work for another girl. I kept a calendar, noting whose turn it was to be filmed. During the first six months of fieldwork, I sent the girls home with the GoPro for focal follows every six weeks. This schedule yielded data about whom the children would encounter and in what language they would speak to different members of their community.

2.4.4 To GoPro or Not To GoPro

GoPros can be used as body cameras that have two types of harness, one for the forehead and the other for the chest. I bought both trying to see which would be useful. The children loved playing with the forehead placement, pretending to be cows with horns and mooing into everyone. Fun for them, bad

for me viewing head butting for ten minutes. The forehead placement also became the main focus of other children's attention. Within two days, I abandoned this.

The harness for the body is designed to be placed on the chest. This alternative was the obvious choice, but one never really knows how technology works until it is tried. The data retrieved from GoPros are unlike anything that I was able to capture with the handheld camera. The GoPro camera proved to yield interesting or shockingly uninteresting data. As mentioned in an earlier section, there were many sessions in which I would return home to process the GoPro recording and find that a child had filmed the sky for an hour. One child moved the camera position down to their sandals, or all the way peering directly into their nostrils. In the beginning, children would play with it quite a bit, which made sense and possibly also made the camera more familiar and less of a foreign object on their body. Figuring out how much autonomy to give the children with regard to the camera's eye yielded very odd and sometimes intrusive shots. I eventually was able to learn where the camera should be placed and secure it tightly at whatever angle given the focal child's height. Children were taught how to turn it on or off, or simply take the camera off. Children were told to switch off the camera when

Figure 2.7: GoPro use to capture audio

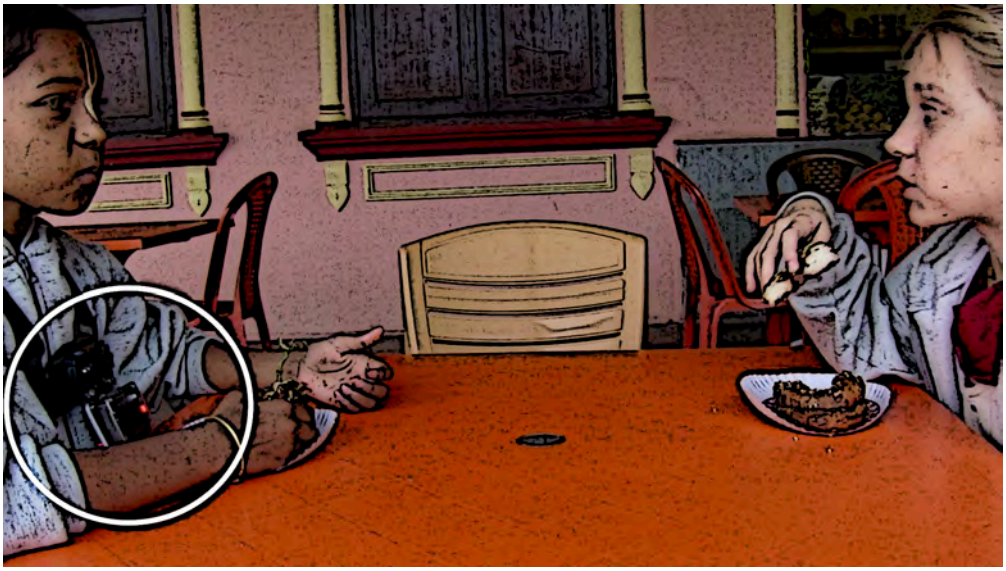

Figure 2.8: GoPro placement

using the restroom but this did not always happen, and for all times this occurred, those data were deleted.

After a period of getting used to the camera, children became skilled videographers. They would give me walking tours with a voiceover telling me what and why they are doing whatever activity at hand. I heard a huge amount of humming, and self-soothing singing, and chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra. In terms of what the lens showed, it was often frustrating as a viewer to see that the child's body might be facing north but their conversation was directed east, meaning that I was unable to actually see the child's interlocutor, although the audio was excellent. In some ways, the GoPro became a lapel microphone most reliably recording children's speech. When it was the case that the child's body and their interlocutor were facing each other and standing at least two feet apart, the recordings were the most comprehensive.

The most fascinating use of the GoPro was when a child documented bullying and teasing. When Jai, a sixth grade Bengali boy, started to tease one young girl, she yelled back, "Mataji will see you! [...] You're going to get in trouble!" The only example of "bad" bullying that I saw (mentioned earlier) was recorded with a GoPro. The bully was a white US American devotee girl who told Gopi, a Kazakhstani

girl, "Why don't you go back to your country. There are so many Russians here. It never used to be like this." Gopi remained silent as she stood next to her friend, another Russian girl who used her eyebrows to motion to Gopi that she had a camera on. Gopi took the cue and turned her bodycam to face the bully. When the bully realized that she was being filmed, she stopped and got mad. Gopi responded, "Mataji will see this. She will know." The camera became a placeholder for me, an adult who will witness this and apparently do something proactive about the problem. I saw girls being mean to each other about their clothes, hair, chastity, and money but only witnessed ethnic othering once.

I found the GoPro camera for child research useful as a supplemental video to any handheld camera use and fieldnotes. It can yield insights into the quiet solitary moments of a child's day. It opens opportunities for the child to show the researcher what is interesting to them. And the moments where it was used to police interactions are telling. If a researcher can withstand watching hours of grass, sky, and chins, the GoPro is not a bad investment as a lapel mic to record the many fascinating conversations among children in the researcher's relative absence.

2.5 Interviews

After locating the focal girls and their peer network, I audio-recorded semi-stuctured interviews with all the parents and children to learn each family's migration background, inquire about their passport issuing nation, the logistics of securing visas to live in India, parents' education, telecommunication with overseas family members (like grandparents), and how they become involved with ISKCON. Children were present for these interviews. I left a longer form for parents to fill out regarding their perception of language use in the home.

Most interviews were audio-recorded, but some everyday conversations in the market or while parents waited for children in the park turned into interviews. Information from these conversations were jotted down in field notes. Interviews that were intended as such were open-ended or semi-structured with the focal girls, their parents, teachers, as well as other community members.

Interviews with the girls were often in the company of a friend or friends, and as such, individual interviews became group interviews.

Semi-structured interviews with adult caregivers (teachers, parents, family friends) yielded insights into the various cultural scripts involved in the children's transnational and religious community, which "are closely related to cultural goals that guide parents' childrearing practices and children's experiences" (Rogoff et al. 2015, 476).

2.6 Multilingual Transcription and Analysis

Recordings of interactional data were transcribed by community members and me. I worked on the English and Bengali files, deferring to the Russian transcribers for their expertise. Swedish language occurs prominently in one family's corpus; although some Swedish has been translated, it is not analyzed in this dissertation. In cases where other languages were used, I located a native speaker to translate the dialogue or flag the file for future translation. This dissertation focuses on Russian, Bengali, and English language use within the girls' peer groups and families, because I am most familiar with these languages. To capture the fuller linguistic range of this two-mile long village would have required additional time and financial resources.

Across two years of field work, I trained eleven transcribers to use the ELAN transcription software[28] in order to code and transcribe video recordings. To qualify as a transcriber, assistants needed to be interested in the project, have access to a computer, feel confident using that computer (i.e., a minimal level of computer literacy was needed to know how to work a Microsoft interface). Two Windows laptops were purchased in the field for the Bengali transcription work, as the transcribers whom I was interested in hiring did not own their own laptops. The most important qualification was being a native speaker of the target language(s). In a multilingual community like Mayapur, the need for native speaker transcribers was at first not a detail that I held in high regard as there are many bilin-

28 www.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan

gual and multilingual speakers with varying communicative competencies. As transcription sessions began, it became clear that conversational fluency was not always sufficient to transcribe data at the level of detail required. In the job interview, I talked with transcribers in the target language. When their fluency outpaced mine, I showed them a data clip from whatever recording I was transcribing myself. If they could talk to me about what they heard and saw, then they were hired, a confidentiality agreement was signed, and the training session would begin.

Training was usually an hour long, with two subsequent days supervised in my apartment. Most learned the ELAN program in one hour, but I found that being on hand for questions in the following days sped the learning process as well as corrected any transcription errors. Some transcribers preferred to work in my home and during those sessions, notes were taken to capture transcribers' opinions and reactions to certain language practices of the children and adults. There were other transcribers who preferred to work from their home. I incorporated a comments section into the ELAN template so opinions or their questions could be documented, if they desired.

I hired four Russian transcribers, three Bengali transcribers, and three English transcribers (one of whom was fluent in Bengali and also acted as a consultant for the Bengali recordings). I also transcribed video data, but the bulk of first pass transcription was done by hired community members. Of these thirteen, only eleven actually transcribed; the other two quit after the training because they found the work to be too difficult. This was a sentiment held by all the transcribers as multilingual data transcription was a feat that none of us were prepared to undergo. The large number of transcribers for this project was due to the high turnover.

For example, one video could be seen by up to five transcribers. An average video clip of about 45 minutes would often include Russian, English, and Bengali conversations.[29] Three transcribers would attend to their applicable part of the data on individual 500 GB hard drives that I had purchased for each language set. One transcriber worked one file first, then when they completed as much as they

29 Of course, there were videos with other languages, mainly Swedish, but luckily that family data was transcribed by their mother who spoke Russian, Swedish, and English and could easily transcribe that data.

were assigned, I reviewed it, made a copy, and then gave that same file to the next transcriber if needed. The ELAN interface allows for multi-line transcription, which is indispensable to distinguish between English, Bengali, Russian, Swedish, Hindi, French Creole and whatever other language happens to be used in the recording, glosses, translations, as well as nonverbal behavior.

Hired transcribers were instructed to pay attention to discourse features such as silences, cut-offs, or lengthening and special pronunciations. Analyzing the transcripts I have added further interactional details such as overlaps, intonation contour, aspects of delivery, and nonverbal behavior. I follow the transcription style developed by Gail Jefferson (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) and modified by Marjorie Goodwin (1990, 25–6). Transcription conventions are included at the beginning of the dissertation.

Chapters 6 and 7 feature excerpts of interactional transcripts in full detail. The complete transcripts are included in the appendix. The ELAN transcriptions were exported and typeset using the LaTeX system[30] to visually represent overlaps on the page and preserve as much detail as possible, while being easily legible in conjunction with the surrounding text. Video stills have also been included to show gestures and participant alignment. To anonymize faces all video stills as well as photographs of participants have been cartoonized with the GIMP software. As the narratives that form the bulk of data for chapter 5 are analyzed mainly for content, I have simplified the transcripts and nonverbal behavior is only included when necessary. As Elinor Ochs' (1979) has argued, the choices we make in our transcripts always already imply analysis—there is no "neutral" or "objective" transcription.

30 https://www.latex-project.org/

CHAPTER 3

Utopia—Evolution of an Idea

> *So this temple, Mayapur Candrodaya temple, is meant for transcendental United Nations.*
>
> *What the United Nations has failed, that will be achieved here by the process.*
>
> *I am very glad especially to see the small children from all other countries, and Indian, Bengalis, all together, forgetting their bodily consciousness. That is the greatest achievement in the movement, that everyone forgets the bodily conception of life. Nobody thinks themselves here as European, American, Indian, Hindu, Muslim, Christian. They forget all these designations.*
>
> ISKCON Founding Guru Srila Prabhupada's ([1976] 2006, 16) "Arrival Address in Mayapur Temple"

This chapter explores the concept of utopia as a framework to understand the everyday practices of families and children in Mayapur, as well as the history and development of the religious movement that inspires thousands of devotees across the world to migrate here. I discuss Utopian thought, utopian literature, and actual attempts to create better, new, or improved communities and societies (Claeys 2011). Mayapur conforms to depictions of actual (as opposed to literary or philosophical) projects (Bestor [1950] 1970, 4; Spiro 2004, 556), where utopian communes are characterized as "concerned not only with their own salvation but also with the salvation of society as a whole" (Spiro 2004, 556). In the quote above, the Founding Guru of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Swami Bhaktivedanta Srila Prabhupāda casts their temple as a means to achieve a "transcendental United Nations," i.e., to showcase a better avenue for living peacefully. Utopian communities "believe that when others become aware of their way of life, they will take it as a model for the reconstruction of the larger society" (556). Utopian communities are usually "any social experiment that seeks to create a social form considered to be outlandish from the point of view of the establishment" (Bennett 1975, 65). Mayapur is in line with both of these descriptions, as followers

see their movement—as their guru recounts in numerous texts and lectures—as the "bonafide path towards freeing the soul" from the world, which is viewed with skepticism and suspicion by the mainstream society in wider India and most countries to which the movement spread. In the United States during the 1970s, Hare Krishnas were often discussed as being a cult stealing young hippies away from their families, which is not the case.[1] This fear of cults affected many commune efforts during the counter-cultural revolution of the 1960s and 70s (Judah 1974).

Despite a long history of thought regarding "utopia" from More's *Utopia* (1516) to the present, there is no uniform defining feature. Broadly conceived, utopianism "is the imaginative projection, positive or negative, of a society that is substantially different from the one in which the author lives" (Claeys and Sargent 1999). With this wide definition, utopianism can be read into any paradise work such as the Christian Garden of Eden or myths of a golden age from Indian epics like the *Mahabharata* (first textual evidence in 400 BCE) or the Greek poet Hesiod (700 BCE), who wrote of mount Olympus as a dwelling place of the gods. Plato's *Republic* (380 BCE) is unequivocally utopian in this sense and is an oft-cited text as the origin of human societal utopia in Western political philosophy. These exemplars lead to debates about whether the Utopian impulse is universally human or not (Sargent 1994). Yet, the particular forward-looking world-reformation stance that characterizes societal-improvement utopias is integral to the Christian conceptualization of progress and world reformation efforts to attain a Christian utopia. Parts of that historical development are provided in this chapter eventually leading to a brief discussion on how the British novel and European writings on utopia impacted Indian

1 Parents expressed deep shame at their adult children's conversion and the sweeping changes in their lives that were unfamiliar for the 1960s, like embracing a strict vegetarian diet, not drinking alcohol, no drugs, embracing celibacy (no dating), alongside chanting, book distribution, new Indian clothes, and proselytizing of devotion to an Indian blue-toned god. Two key factors in cults are secrecy and the inability for members to make decisions for oneself or leave. But Hare Krishna members are free to incorporate practices as they feel appropriate and leave at any point. Regarding secrecy, the movement is outward looking with its immense pride and self assurance in their ideologies and the ideal world they are creating. There is much anthropological research on the religious movement, partly because Hare Krishna communities are enjoined by their leaders to invite onlookers, reporters, and researchers into their spaces. I lived on the community grounds unfettered for two years with full approval and community knowledge that I would be publishing my thoughts on the movement and the community.

bhadralok,[2] specifically Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnava guru Bhaktivinoda Thakur (1838–1914) in his visions for a Vaishnava utopia in Mayapur (Fuller 2005). The British novel and parts of Western Utopian thought in India had a large impact on the Indian elite during the British colonial period in India (for a full discussion see).

The idea of utopia as any world imaginatively projected as hopeful for humanity muddies analytical waters about the differences in utopian social movements. To address this analytic problem, contemporary scholars assign their own parameters and definitions of utopia, depending on the focus or group in question. Utopian theorist and sociologist Ruth Levitas ([1990] 2010) emphasizes *desire* as the core mood for utopia, which casts utopia as "subset of a broader phenomenon" (Sargent 1994, 3). Although this perspective parallels Ernst Bloch's ([1954] 1995) analysis of hope, to use utopia as a synonym for hope or desire neutralizes its religious and political force as a proselytizing mission to change the world and, in Mayapur's case, become a "transcendental United Nations." Their utopia is not only hope for a better future but also an organized, volunteer-based, directed energy bubbling into a kind of "collective effervescence" (Durkheim [1912] 1995) that motivates changes in their built environment. Different utopias envision and take actions in particular ways and pull inspiration from a variety of sources.

In this study of Mayapur, parameters of a utopian community include: (1) a volunteer base (i.e., no group is forced to be together, members can leave); (2) a dwelling apart from mainstream society (this can be a few city blocks within a city or a swaths of land in rural spaces); (3) a common set of ideals, which include crafting their community as a model for the world; (4) families dedicated to internal growth and generational continuity.

To orient and contextualize this utopian framework when analyzing Mayapur, this chapter provides a discussion of the relevant histories of utopia begining with the sixteenth century saint Sir Thomas More. I then consider the communitarian ideal in Christian Europe before moving to the

2 British-educated Indian class that worked as interpreters, brokers to British traders, assistants, mediators in business, and political administration. Young upper-class Bengali Hindus filled these positions comprising a class that became known as the *bhadralok*.

nineteenth century utopian socialists in France. I begin in Christian Europe, because the converts to ISKCON, women especially, cite the need for community and care in ways that mirror the history of those seeking communal living in medieval to modern Western Europe and the United States. I also look to Utopian Socialists such as Charles Fourier and Charles Henri Saint-Simon, as they had clear blueprints for how to design communes, an explicit practice of volunteer social re-engineering that ISKCON has been invested in cultivating since its founding in 1966.

From these two points of utopian history, this section moves from Europe to the Bengal region in India, interrogating the religious prophecy in Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism that set the stage for ISKCON's commune upsurge in the 1960s cultural revolution. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the development of Gaudiya Vaishnavism as a utopian movement from the nineteenth century to now. In this chapter, this history is woven together with ethnographic data from Mayapur as a complement to this theoretical discussion on utopia. I note here that absent from all the historical and contemporary work on utopian communities is the focus on generational change from the perspective of both the women who organize the daily lives of utopian efforts in the home and the children who inherit, transform, and often abandon the utopias their parents carefully craft. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 address that dearth.

3.1 The Concept of Utopia

Most utopias are born of utopias, however pretentious the claims to complete novelty may be.
(Manuel and Manuel 1979, 3)

3.1.1 More's Utopia

English statesmen and saint Sir Thomas More invented the word "utopia" in 1516 with the publication of *Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*, or as most know the book, *Utopia*. The text is about an island home to a "philosophical city" meant to jestfully rival Plato's *Republic*. In *Utopia*, the poet laureate Anemolius declares of his island "I am

a rival of Plato's *Republic*, perhaps even a victor over it" (More 1965, 21).[3] Not merely an abstract city ruled by a philosopher king, More had created an entire world for *Utopia*, and part of this world was the creation of a language, poets, writers, leaders, subjects, slaves, and the general work ethic favoring everyone's physical labor and highly organized time tables for all.

Originally, More referred to the island as "Nusquama," formed from the Latin adverb meaning "nowhere" (Manuel and Manuel 1979, 1). He eventually changed this to Greek and transliterated the Greek *ou*, which conveys a negative, into the Latin *u* and combined it with Greek *topos*, meaning "place" or "land" (1). *Utopia* thus literally means "no place" (i.e., no place on a map). But the homophonous Greek *eu* also holds a range of positive meanings, rendering *eutopia*, a "place of happiness." This double entendre was intended and when conflating these meanings, utopia is a non-spatial site of happiness. It is here positioned as an impossible dream that cannot exist.

More wrote *Utopia* as a satire of the Church and royalty, not as a blueprint for an actual world.[4] He later even regretted its publication, as it was often cited by Protestant leaders of the Peasant Wars of 1525, something by which he was horrified (Manuel and Manuel 1979, 136–7). His words were being read and those readers were taking actions against the Catholic Church, an institution that he did not want to see split apart. Even during More's lifetime the concept was taken up in ways not predicted or intended by him; its larger appeal as a critique of the status quo through the imagination of an alternative was felt by many, and it would acquire a life of its own and come to inform theoretical and practical world-building projects in the centuries to come.

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3 The logic of triumph over Plato is that More built an ideal city grounded in virtues (and absent of abstract metaphysical philosophy) such that anyone could read the text and see it as real. Basically, "the excuse for all this immodest bragging is that Plato argued abstractly, whereas More painted a picture, exhibiting the inhabitants of Utopia, their laws and resources, so skillfully that in reading the little book one felt as if one were actually living there" (Manuel and Manuel 1979, 120). A take-away lesson here is that anyone trying to impart lessons to the masses should couch complex theory in a living story replete with characters, maps, relations, and breathing politics.

4 *Utopia* was meant to sharply criticize royal power and the Church's hypocrisy. More refused to acknowledge King Henry VIII as head of the English church, who is infamous for divorcing Queen Catherine in favor of Anne Boleyn. As any dispute against the king would be met with execution or murder, More was tactful when stepping beyond the bounds of being a dutiful subject. *Utopia* was an imagining of an ideal Christian society and in creating an ideal, there always exists a sharp criticism of the foil it is set up against.

3.1.2 The Communitarian Ideal

Utopia was written during the Renaissance, a time of many scientific discoveries and rediscoveries of Europe's Roman past. The two ancient beliefs that nurtured More's utopia were not only Plato's *Republic* and Hellenic myths of an ideal city "built by men for men without the assistance of the [...] gods" (Manuel and Manuel 1979, 17), but also the Judeo-Christian faith in brotherhood community and paradise as an everlasting world that perdures beyond humanity.

Thus, in many ways a history of the modern concept of utopia really begins with a history of the "communitarian ideal," defined as "an ideological template emphasizing sharing and community" from the Judeo-Christian tradition (Bennett 1975, 65). This history is longstanding and usually begins with a discussion of dissidents during Christ's time who formed the Qmran commune to escape Roman Palestine, an interesting departure from Christ, who himself rejected withdrawal in favor of "a passive-militant coping with the World in an effort to change it" (66). Because early Christian communities withdrew for survival rather than under specific ideals for an alternative society, their categorization as "communes" is debatable, but the origin of the communal utopia concept is traced in utopian histories to this time period. The documentation of early communities is sparse and incomplete, but Norman Cohn (1970) traces the heretics, wandering fanatics, and sects who posed many problems for the Church in Europe from 600 to 1500 CE. Among early Church detractors some of these groups persisted in their way of life, forming institutions of their own.[5] These groups paved the way for the religious movements in the sixteenth century, notably the Lutheran Reformation and the Anabaptist movements, where protests were aimed at the Catholic (and later Protestant) hierarchies as well as the bourgeoisie. The Anabaptist movement splintered in a variety of communes, but the only perduring sect survived in the form of the Hutterites, who have colonies across eastern United States and Canada as well as one in Japan.

5 Bennett (1975) notes three communities such as the Waldensians of the Alpine valleys, the Bohemian Brethren, and the Taborites.

The primacy of a sharing community has not impacted European political and economic philosophy to the degree that the role of the individual has (Dumont [1983] 1986). Yet, alongside the rise of individualism in the West has been a counter-narrative of the communitarian ideal that has found its ideological home in utopia. According to Bennett (1975, 64), any communal tradition has a combination of the following qualities: "the collective rearing of children; collective decision-making processes; egalitarian relationships; communal property; sharing work; maximization of interpersonal interaction; many complicated rules of everyday living." An emphasis on sharing is featured in More's *Utopia*, along with other more well-known features such as the ideal of egalitarianism, pursuits of pleasure as complementary to a six-hour work day, tolerance for slavery, and cultivation of religious ideals. Communitarianism became the macro criterion for Christian utopia and has interesting analogues in the discovery of the New World.[6]

In times of political, social, and economic strife, an interest in communitarian practices surges (Bennett 1975, 63; Graeber 2011, 250). Communes and the communal ideal of sharing and community constitute what is called the "communitarian tradition" and it forms the backbone of many utopia projects.

3.2 Seventeenth Century to Nineteenth Century Utopian Socialists

More did not intend Utopia as an actual world to be created. Nonetheless, many literary works have been dedicated to the imagining of utopia, and while utopia means "no place," many social groups have taken to their actual materialization.

The seventeenth century was full of musings, contemplations, books, and treatises that built off of Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia*. The character Gonzalo in Shakespeare's *Tempest* (1610) depicts a perfect commonwealth of innocence. Sanco Panza, the squire in *Don Quixote* (1605), is awarded the island of Barataria to govern where he establishes an ideal order. By the end of the seventeenth century,

6 For a discussion on the extent that More was inspired by the accounts of Columbus and others, see Alfred Cave's (1991) "Thomas More and the New World."

utopia was not only for narrative solace of a better world, it had also grown into a platform for an ideal society, programs of laws and codes that were meant to be enacted in the "real" world, not just the hopes of fictional characters. Utopia became predominantly about the "reformation of the entire species" (Manuel and Manuel 1979, 3). John Milton's *Apology for Smectymnus* (1642) utilized utopia as a model for an ideal commonwealth. In a seminal text on the history of *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Manuel and Manuel discuss the shift of utopia into one of political action.

> While religious commentaries on what heavenly paradise would be like kept up a constant flow of images as they had for two thousand years, the conception of a millennium as a real society on earth covering a fixed period of time gave rise to speculations about what events would occur in that blessed epoch, what government would be instituted, and what social relationships would prevail. (Manuel and Manuel 1979, 3)

The seventeenth century was also the time of the "wedding of science to utopian aspiration" (Claeys 2011, 151). Francis Bacon wrote *New Atlantis* (1627), which became the "prototype for all subsequent utopias based on scientific and technological foundations" (Claeys 2011, 151). Crucial to Bacon's narrative was the center for scientific research, Salomon's House, where experiments on food and medicine would take place to help improve society. The dream of science as the vessel toward realizing a perfect society continues through the centuries and also ushered in the "scientific dystopia" where technological advancements lead to the ruination of humanity and the world.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the communitarian tradition divided into two: the old religious type similar to sixteenth century communities and the new utopian socialists style of Charles Fourier, Charles Henri de Saint Simon, and Robert Owen (Bennett 1975, 65). These three thinkers "prepared the way for Marx" (Manuel and Manuel 1979, 13). I add that they also paved the way for how blueprint utopias are conceived of generally. Bhaktivinoda Thakur, the Bengali guru who prophesied Mayapur as an international space of brotherhood in the late 1880s, was well read in Western thought; thus it is important to understand more in depth the trifecta of Utopian Socialists.

3.2.1 The Utopian Socialists

French theorists Charles Fourier and Charles Henri de Saint Simon, and Welshman Robert Owen envisioned a radically different society characterized by cooperation among different people who would be able to pursue pleasure and discover the natural expression of their talents. They rejected society as unjust and insupportable (Levitas [1990] 2010, 46). They each found their own blueprints for society "so indisputably and self-evidently beneficial to all that they could be instituted through adequate propaganda and the triumph of reason" (46).

These thinkers influenced many, including Karl Marx and Frederich Engels. Marx (1843) denounced these thinkers for imagining a society that had no bearings on the actual world and had no class struggle or revolution as a way to transform society. The link between Marx's vision for a communist society and the utopian socialists that he rebuked has been the subject of much discussion (Claeys 2011, 144–8; Levitas [1990] 2010, 46–67). As young men, both Marx and Engels "flirted with communitarianism" but "essentially Fourierist aspirations disappear from the more mature works of both authors" (Claeys 2011, 145). The Utopian Socialist Trifecta as they are now called did not see class as a milestone to bulldoze to achieve social change. Rather, their visions for society were that all men regardless of class[7] will take to the principles, if they are explained well. For utopian socialists the onus of change, then, lay with the theorist to convince the masses and manage society. As an aside: In a posthumously published book *Professional Ethics and Civil Morals*, Durkheim ([1937] 1957, 14–15) noted that the role of the sociologist was to design a moral society (see also Laidlaw 2013, 20). In this way, Durkheim conformed to Fourier's ([1808] 1996, 7) original injunction of the social scientist as the leader in societal re-engineering and change.

For Charles Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), developing industry was the key to building a good society because he saw that it could provide enough abundance to eliminate three evils: poverty, idleness, and ignorance (K. Taylor 1975, 202–6). He promoted the idea that social harmony could

7 For Fourier (1971, 137), women and children were also vitally important members of society whom he believed should be compensated for the "capital, labour, and talent."

only come about if people's natural inclinations were congruent with their activity (or job), so that eventually there would be no need for government but only administration of activities. He "proposed replacing feudalism with a pacific, federative European state" (Claeys 2011, 143). To locate people's inclinations he split humanity into three classes, scientists, artists, and producers. After Saint-Simon died in 1825, followers of his writings began experimenting with his theories, and in the 1830s his movement declared itself a religion (Levitas [1990] 2010, 43), which was very much in line with his later writings that included a new religion to accompany his blueprint for a new good society. This new religious movement did not last long, as the doctrines of sexual liberation offended the bourgeoisie and in "1932 the leaders of the movement were brought to trial and jailed and the movement was declared illegal" (44).

Charles Fourier's (1772–1837) vision of the good society, or at least his critique of his contemporary Catholic French one, has already been noted. His actual blueprint is based on what Levitas ([1990] 2010, 44) calls "speculative anthropology" about human nature. Any blueprint utopian has a working theory about human behavior and how best to manage those behaviors for the creation of the good society.[8] For Fourier, humans possess twelve passions. Each passion can be expressed in different humans to different degrees, and each person's uniqueness will determine their choice of occupation. He describes 810 different temperaments and composes each *phalanstères* or phalanx (communes) of 300 families according to those temperaments and passions in order to maintain congenial society. Similar to Saint-Simon, Fourier had followers; they set up small communities in the United States, France, and England. Unlike Saint-Simon, his movement did not garner much support from the working class and was not "perceived as sufficiently threatening to be suppressed" (Levitas [1990] 2010, 45). There were quite a few Fourier inspired settlement projects in the United States in the mid to late 1800s. One of them was located in Clermont County, Ohio called "Utopia" (Louis 1880).

Robert Owen (1771–1858), known as the founder of British socialism, did not emphasize a universal human nature, but rather human flexibility, a notion captured best in his "doctrine of circumstances":

8 The Hare Krishnas definitely categorize humans into types tracing their logics back to the *varnāshram* system in India.

> Any general character from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means; which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men. (cited in Geoghegan 1987, 17)

Owen emphasized the role of education in cultivating a human being's ability to cooperate in creating a good society. He was also the successful manager of a cotton mill in Scotland, the site of his experiments leading to his ideas of social reform. Owen witnessed the impact of technological improvements in speeding production and lowering costs, but was opposed to the conditions that it placed on his workers packed into small, overheated and often perilous conditions. To counter-balance this condition, Owen created communities of mutual cooperation, which he termed the "social system" (Claeys 2011, 142). His good society theorizations and communitarian experiments continued through the 1830s and focused on developing a model factory that would focus on communities' relations. His system became known as "socialism" by the 1820s (142). In general, "Owenism as a movement had much deeper roots in the emergent working classes in England than Saint-Simonism or Fourierism" ever had in France (Levitas [1990] 2010, 45). This energy to design futures continued in France through the nineteenth century with visions for a scientific secular global society.

3.2.2 Nineteenth Century Utopias and India

In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the followers of Fourier and Saint-Simon, among others, formed communitarian or practical utopia experiments formed at the North American frontier (Sutton 2003, 2004; Bestor [1950] 1970). An expression of true modern self-fashioning, utopian socialists and religious reformers utilized the possibilities in North America to experiment in their visions of the futures. "Here the social dreams of the Old World were dreams no longer, but things of flesh and blood. The social problems of the nineteenth century were being confronted on the plane, not of theory, but of action" (Bestor [1950] 1970, 1). Much attention has been paid to North America and the New World more broadly as a testing ground for Europe's utopia (Sutton 2003, 2004; Bestor [1950] 1970), made possible by the violent appropriation of indigenous territory and the annihilation of its inhabitants.

Wanting from the discussion of utopia and the communitarian ethos has been its deployment beyond the West. Utopia is a progress narrative tied to the founding of the New World in the fifteenth century and nation-state formation characteristic of a Christian missionizing fervor to remake the world as a better place for man on earth, and it became a way to manifest a Christian utopia. Can utopia be applied to other regions with different philosophical and socio-political histories?

The short answer: No. A more nuanced one: Yes, during and after the colonial period.

There are attempts to assert that utopia has always been part of India. Smriti Srinivas (2015) in her work *A Place for Utopia*, focuses on urban design spaces in South Asia in the twentieth century. Srinivas theorizes utopia on the basis of More's etymology of a "good place" and "no place," while alluding to Lewis Mumford's (1961) notion that theories of utopia are commensurate with city planning in modernity. This position assumes utopia to mean imagining a better time and includes Hindu and Buddhist traditions in India that have had utopian themes in their ancient writings (Srinivas 2015, 3–4). Present in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are allusions to ideal paradises and the Golden Age; Buddhist texts describe nirvana; and here I can agree that the past is depicted as ideal, as utopian. Less problematic is the assumption that these utopias are literary, religious paradise, and nostalgic pasts. Where I have issue with her work is in her assumption that literary utopia is equivalent to building practical utopia as an autochthonous design. There is no evidence that India built reconstructed Golden Age or "Vedic" communities before the British arrived. Colonial and post-colonial designs from the Theosophical Society, Vedanta projects in California and India, religious landmarks in new infrastructures in Bangalore, and similar projects all started at the tail end of British rule in India and afterward. Srinivas is in agreement that at some point European utopia entered South Asia, forever changing how people interact with making the future.

What happened in the nineteenth century in India to fuse Indian theory with the European utopian imaginary? How does this era relate to the 1886 Bengali Vaishnava prophecy of Mayapur and the subsequent creation of ISKCON as an international utopian project during the nineteen sixties in West Bengal?

3.2.3 Religious Utopia in the Bengal-Vaishnava Imaginary

Throughout the nineteenth century in Bengal, British colonial administration and trade created a great need for a British-educated Indian class that could work as interpreters, brokers to British traders, assistants, mediators in business, and political administration. Young, upper-class Bengali Hindus filled these positions comprising a class that became known as the *bhadralok*.

> The defining traits of the *bhadralok* were an inclination for secular and liberal views and a strong commitment to education, which was the basis of their success. Also characteristic of this class was the tendency to emulate the British in habit, culture, and taste. [...] While Western ideas eventually came to influence the thinking and attitudes of the *bhadralok*, these notions did not cause most to entirely reject their own Indic traditions as valueless. (Sardella 2013, 5)

In his book *Modern Hindu Personalism*, Ferdinand Sardella (2013, 7) discusses how the mixture of "European and Indic cultural and religious ideals created a powerful group of intellectuals whose thinking inaugurated what has come to be known as the Bengali Renaissance." This concept of the Bengali Renaissance, or Indian Awakening,

> as a paradigm of intellectual history is a key to the Europeanisation of the Indian consciousness; initially, it served to distinguish Brahmo reformers from Hindu conservatives, Anglicists from Orientalists, and romanticists from rationalists. But there were few who completely denied or ignored the paradigm. Even when the Indian Renaissance turned on itself and became Indocentric, it introduced [...] an eclectic, humanist, and historically aware movement of thought and instigated the internationalisation of the consciousness. (Chatterjee 1992, 54)

This period comprised the powerful group of *bhadralok* such as Rammohum Roy[9] (1772–1833), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–1894), Bipin Chandra Pal (1858–1932), Keshub Chandra Sen (1838–1884), Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), and Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941). These Bengali thinkers and

9 Rammohun Roy is widely accepted as having sparked the Renaissance paradigm in 1832 when he wrote a letter to the British Governor General Lord Amherst urging him to introduce Western literature and science in Indian education. Bipin Chandra Pal, the great early twentieth century nationalist and reformer articulated Rammohun Roy's position in the letter to Amherst: "Modern Europe was the creation of the renaissance, which was started with the investigations of the New Organon by Bacon. India needed this modern culture for her own salvation: The whole of her future, both material and spiritual, absolutely depended upon her initiation into and assimilation of the scientific investigations of Europe. This was the Raja's view of India's need. It was to remove this need that the British had been brought to this country" (quoted in Chatterjee 1992, 53).

reformers "became historical figures in the development of modern India, tended to promote non dualism as *the* fundamental expression of Indic thought or to champion social and religious reform in accordance with their unique understanding of modern ideals" (Sardella 2013, 6). Most important for the topic of Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (1838–1914)[10] and his son who carried the legacy, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī (1874–1937),[11] were also part of the *bhadralok* class and like their contemporaries utilized the technologies of the colonial powers such as the printing press, journals, and later the novel to critique colonial rule. Unlike their Bengali contemporaries, Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati utilized these technologies to modernize Bengali Vaishnavism, appeal to Bengali Vaishnava literati, and create a Gaudiya Vaishnava utopia imaginary as one that will spread around the world.[12]

The vehicle for utopia in Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism was the British novel (Fuller 2005, 157–99). Religious studies scholar Jason Fuller (2005) examines Bhaktivinoda Thakur's use of modern technologies and Western-inspired institutions not only to contest the forces of colonial domination in British India but also to impose his own vision of Gaudiya Vaishnavism on the indigenous population. "British rule brought a number of new literary forms to the subcontinent. Although poetry (*kāvya*), mythology (*purāṇa*), philosophy (*darśana*), and history (*itihāsa*) were established forms, it was not until the nineteenth century that literary fiction in its preferred modern genre, the novel, was adopted by Indian writers" (158). Priya Joshi's (2002) *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* provides an excellent account of the impact of the introduction of the British novel in India.[13] She argues that "studying the consumption of the British novel [...] we begin to see most clearly how ideas and ideologies were received, transmogrified, rejected, or refashioned by that small but influential part of the Indian population who had access to this world of print" (Joshi 2002, 18). The concept

10 born Kedarnath Datta

11 born Bimal Prasad

12 A more in-depth account of this is provided in chapter 4.

13 See also K. D. Verma's (2000) *The Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English.*

of utopia, according to Fuller (2005, 157–199) was one of the ideals and ideas that affected Gaudiya Vaishanava reformer Bhaktivinoda Thakur.

Similar to the role that the novel played in its introduction in eighteenth century England, it opened up spaces for social realism and satire for Indian authors the following century. British schools encouraged the creation of vernacular novels as a tactic to promote regional literacy. In 1865, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee published the first important Bengali novel. Taking a cue from Chatterjee, Bhaktivinoda Thakur wrote the novels *Prema Pradipa* (1886) and *Jaiva Dharma* (1893).

> [Bhaktivinode's] novels served a number of functions. Overtly they were intended to be proselytizing tools. In his introductory remarks concerning *Prema Pradipa*, Bhaktivinode acknowledged that he had written the novella to "prove the superiority of pure Vaiṣṇavism" so that "cultivated people might become devotees of Krishna." [...] Like all of Bhaktivinode's appropriations of imported technologies and institutions the novel was another means of attempting to persuade an audience of the superiority of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism as an indigenous sacred worldview. (Fuller 2005, 162)[14]

The ideal of Indian utopia also came with the counter side, dystopia. Social historian Sumit Sarkar (1999, 186–215) has argued that the *bhadralok* became particularly enamored of the ancient conceptual model of Kali Yuga, because it enabled them to make sense of the odd situation in which they found themselves under British rule at the end of the nineteenth century. Novels and cautionary texts about the times "were evidently made possible by two major innovations brought in by colonial rule: clock time and print culture, stimulating diverse ways of thinking about time" (188). "The idea that India's occupation by the British (among other foreign Invaders) could be explained in terms of the traditional concept of Kali Yuga seems to have captured the imaginations of Bengali intellectuals in the latter half of the nineteenth century" (Fuller 2005, 166). Using the literary definition of utopia, Fuller asserts that across the Indian subcontinent "thinkers have traditionally conceptualized world history as fluctuating between periods of utopia and dystopia" (165). Traditionally, Hindus have divided cosmic history into

14 Bhaktivinoda is rendered Bhaktivinode by Fuller.

four periods or *yugas*: Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, and Kali Yuga (The Age of Truth, The Age of Three Avataras, Two Ahead Yuga, and The Age of Kali[15]).

> According to Hindu cosmologies the world trends downward from a high golden age to a low period of degeneration and misery, back up again, and then back down in an (almost) eternal cycle. From the utopian golden age of the Krta Yuga (sometimes referred to as the Satya Yuga) to the present dystopian age (Kali Yuga), gods and men have landed themselves in quite an unenviable position. Kali Yuga (the present age) is characterized by the inversion of traditional norms of society; men act like women, lower castes no longer mind their place in social hierarchies, foreign rulers take charge of the land of India, people become irreligious or degenerate, etc. (Fuller 2005, 165)

For Hare Krishna devotees the division of time in this way is often used as an explanatory model for what ails afflict the present.[16] The Vaishnava utopia will be discussed in depth in chapter 4.

3.3 Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Dystopia—Migration to Utopia

In the nineteenth century, utopia's "displacement was almost always temporal, [...] the future was the site of alterity" (Tally 2013, 4). After World War I, these ideal worlds, whether physically or temporally removed, were viewed by many as naïve (4). In addition to the scale of the world war, the many failed or suspicious utopian communities in the US in the 1800s may have affected public perception. In the contemporary "windless closure of late capitalism" (Jameson 2009, 386) there appears to be no utopian space available or possible. Yet, as cultural theorist Robert Tally (2013, 6) notes, "the rise of a new form of Utopianism in the 1960s, its spread and elaboration in the decades that followed, and its power in critical theory today discloses a paradox, as the waning of the nation-state form, for the first time in four hundred years of Western civilization, is met with a revived and transformed utopianism."[17]

Frederic Jameson famously pointed out that "it seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism" (Jameson

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15 Kali is a demon, not to be confused with the Hindu goddess Kālī.

16 The end of chapter 5 addresses such narratives of dystopic Kali Yuga.

17 The Occupy Movement in 2011 is an example of this impulse.

1996, xii). These shackles on our imagination fall in line with what many in the Frankfurt School tradition deemed the main triumph of capitalism, "the ideological appearance of hermetic closure or totalization that [capitalism] promulgates and fosters, which inevitably results in viewing the status quo as natural, inevitable, immutable and perhaps eternal, at least from the limited perspective of today" (Tally 2013, 14). Dystopic plausibility as a more viable route is what Tally classifies as the third prominent wave of utopia writings. The first started in the early modern era, in which utopias "were to be found in space [...] their existence was understood to based on a spatial displacement, using physical distance (such as the Atlantic Ocean) to signify the radical difference from the familiar" (3). The New World was supposed to be the site of utopia on earth. And the United States bore a (fictional) national identity as a safe haven with the carving on the Statue of Liberty as evidence of these lands being meant for the world's oppressed: *Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

Fast-forward to the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries and there is a return to the first form of utopia, where physically disentangling from the world is a way to escape and nation-build in one's own way. This is reminiscent of what Russell Jacoby (2005) calls blueprint utopians (i.e., Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Owen, discussed above), where community systems are theorized and then followers, devotees, and citizens try to realize the vision in practice. These efforts at old ways of demarcating community are addressed in political theorist Wendy Brown's (2010, 80) *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. It examines the oddity of the desire to build physical walls and isolation in the twenty-first century as "a literal throwback to another time, a time of fortresses and kings, militias and moats, Guelphs and Ghibellines, rather than a time of smart bombs, missile shields in space, global warming, digital touch pads." Brown (2010, 84) explains that the "idea of walls as pertaining only to border control [...] fails to grasp their iconic place in erosions [...] that suffuse the psychic, political, economic, and cultural lives of both nations and their subjects and that produce a bundle of conflicting and difficult-to-meet internal and external imperatives for states." One of those difficult-to-meet imperatives for states is the space for imagination and illusion of freedom within the Western narrative

of progress and improvement. Recall that More's *Utopia* is closely tied to the "development of the modern nation-state in the West [and] utopia is part of the substance of the modern world and key element of the process of modernization" (Tally 2013, 3). Jameson similarly (2005, 12) observes that "utopias seem to be by-products of Western modernity" (see also Wegner 2002).

Alongside the development of the modern nation state is the imaginative effort that there is another way (or ways) of doing/living/being. Under globalization, that "hermetic closure," as Jameson put it, appears effectively shut. Our current geopolitical landscape is linked to the death of the imagination. As Jacoby (1999) notes, the twenty-first century is an "an age of political exhaustion and retreat," in which "young adults fear that dark clouds are coming," and that children are deemed "too risky and expensive" (1999, xii). It is odd when Utopian thought has "undergone a dialectal reversal" (Jameson 1971, 111) from when it was considered by "older society [...] as a diversion of revolutionary energy into idle wish-fulfillments and imaginary satisfactions." In *Marxism and Form*, Jameson notes that the context surrounding utopia has changed dramatically from Marx's time in the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

> Now it is practical thinking which everywhere represents a capitulation to the system itself, and stands as a testimony to the power of that system to transform even its adversaries into its own mirror image. The Utopian idea, on the contrary, keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one and takes the form of a stubborn negation of all that is. (Jameson 1971, 111)

In the twenty-first century the craving and intellectual as well as psychological need for utopia in critical thought and serious practice is actually no longer the fluff that Marx thought it was. Concomitant with the current system of globalization is the growth and dominance of control societies as a replacement of disciplinary ones. In an insightful analysis of the twentieth century and prediction for the twenty-first, Deleuze ([1990] 1992, 3–4) describes the "generalized crisis in relation to all the environments of enclosure—prison, hospital, factory, school, family." Deleuze argues that these enclosed environments that flourished in the disciplinary societies that Foucault describes of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries "are finished" and the twenty-first century welcomes what he terms "societies of control" (Deleuze [1990] 1992). He echoes Foucault's argument that the goal of the disciplinary society was "to concentrate; to distribute; to order in time; to compose a productive

force within the dimension of space-time whose effect will be greater than the sum of its component forces" (Deleuze [1990] 1992, 3). Fordism is a great example of this at work. Deleuze does not dwell too long on the disciplinary society, as his goal is to describe the "generalized crisis" as we transition into societies of control where the family, school, hospital, prison, and factory "are finished" with varying expiration dates. "It's only a matter of administering their last rites and of keeping people employed until the installation of the new forces knocking at the door" (4). Those forces include, among other features, "perpetual training" where no one is ever finished with anything, which leads to the corporatizing of the school and all other formerly enclosed environments; individuals becoming "dividuals"[18] or "masses, samples, data, markets, or 'banks' "; floating rates of exchange that are "modulated to a rate established by a set of standard currencies"; and humans "in orbit, in a continuous network" as opposed to the disciplinary human who was a "discontinuous producer of energy" or had a limit (Deleuze [1990] 1992, 6). Deleuze published this in French in 1990 in more predictive detail than noted here, with eery precision as if he were designing the future we call the present. The point is that in historical moments of crisis world-rejection or denial is a recurring phenomena, one that Weber ([1916] 1958) addressed in his work. It should be no surprise that some people are opting out of the world, in search for something beyond.

18 Deleuze means this in the way I characterize here, not as used in Strathern's (1988) work.

CHAPTER 4

Introducing ISKCON—Vision of a Vaishnava Utopia

This chapter covers the development of the modern Vaishnava institution ISKCON, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, beginning with Bhaktivinoda Thakur's vision in 1888 about Mayapur as the birthplace of Chaitanya. This vision set into motion the flux of international migrants to Mayapur in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I then discuss how Gaudiya Vaishnavism was exported outside of India in 1966 by Bengali guru A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Srila Prabhupāda who trimmed the religious doctrine down in order to make it possible for foreigners to practice. He left India to teach, as he said, the "hippie boys and girls" the meaning of life, which was to develop *bhakti*, devotional worship of Krishna and return to *goloka*, Krishna's planet. Krishna is an *avatara* of Vishnu, "one of the most important gods in Indian religions, understood to appear on earth in various forms at crucial times of chaos and upheaval to restore righteousness. Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are the most popular of those forms" (Manring 2005, 2). There are a variety of schools and philosophical positions regarding Vishnu worship, but I restrict this discussion to Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism practiced by devotees living in Mayapur following ISKCON's doctrines. I conclude with an overview of ISKCON's Gaudiya Vaishnavism in Mayapur today as part of a sacred-city utopia project. This historical background makes it possible to understand this global religious utopia effort more generally and contextualizes how children and women invoke utopia in their everyday, remaking their world through devotion to Krishna and preparing for a better future by leaving the "material world."

4.1 The Background of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

ISKCON is rooted in the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1533). He was born in 1486 as Vishvambhar Mishra in the region of Nabadwip, West Bengal to a Sanskrit teacher and his wife. While still a young man, his father died, prompting Vishvambhar to visit the sacred town Gaya to perform the ancestral rites for his father's passing. This trip altered him significantly and thereafter he met Advaita Ācārya (1434–1559) who would become his teacher. In the Vaishnava literature, Advaita Acarya is credited for bringing on the advent of Chaitanya:

> By all accounts disturbed by what he perceived as a general state of chaos and irreligious behavior, Advaita Ācārya stormed heaven with his strenuous austerities and unrelenting devotion, often roaring out his impassioned pleas at the top of his lungs. At long last Kṛṣṇa, always moved by the love of his devotees, was forced to take human birth in this degenerate age to rescue humanity from its own ignorance and foolishness. (Manring 2005, 3–4)

After meeting Advaita Acarya, Vishvambhar began a public life as a leader of a devotional circle, *sankirtan*, in Nabadwip. Eventually, he accepted renunciation (thereby leaving his young wife), became *sannyasi*, and joined the monastic order of Dashanami ascetics. As a renunciate, his new name was Krishna Chaitanya and he traveled from Nabadwip to the southernmost tip of India leading large, public *kirtan* (devotional processions). The "radical newness" of this sort of *sankirtan* "places Chaitanya at the origin of a new king of devotional collective" (Bhatia 2017, 8–10). For this, Chaitanya is often referred to as the "founder" of Vaishnavism in Bengal. However, "founder" has been contested as "the term 'founder' operates as an insufficient English translation for a variety of positions that Chaitanya enjoys within Gaudiya and Bengali Vaishnavism. Within the doctrinal framework of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Chaitanya's position is that of a dual incarnation of Krishna and Radha, an *avatara* of the Supreme God" (9). He is not only considered a founder, but an *avatara* and incarnation.

There are many ways to describe Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In Bengal, he is known reverently and simply as Mahaprabhu, the Great Master. To modern hagiographers and religionist historians, Chaitanya is often described as a saint or holy man (Manring 2005). Social scientists describe him as a religious leader "whose devotional practices open up opportunities for social transformation in the

Figure 4.1: Painting of Krishna with Radha and the other Gopis[1]

Bengali-speaking part of the world" (Bhatia 2017). He was a Brahmin who broke caste lines encouraging women and low caste people to worship Krishna. Baul singers praise him as a mystical being both human and deity. Most applicable to this research, among ISKCON devotees he is revered as all of the above at the same time.

He is worshipped as the founder of Vaishnavism and dual incarnation of Krishna-Radha who was sent to Earth to distribute the *mahamantra*—a mantra lauded by devotees as the easiest way to enter into *goloka*, the planetary abode of Lord Krishna.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma

Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

1 From https://www.flickr.com/photos/144060333@N07/29540183823, accessed on June 1, 2019.

It is for this intervention that Chaitanya is most known. "Caitanya fulfilled the corrective role of the divine descent for the present age to reestablish religious norms for society (*dharma*) by introducing the worship practice appropriate for Kali Yuga, namely *nāma-saṁkirtānām*" (Valpey 2006, 31). It means the congregational singing of Krishna's names. A very common image of devotees is their group chanting and singing of the *mahamantra*.

Devotees love and worship Chaitanya as God. A Chaitanya deity is placed in every Vaishnava temple or home altar in Mayapur as well as other towns and villages across West Bengal, Orissa, Vrindavan, and wherevr else Gaudiya Vaishnavas live. It is from Chaitanya's vision that the world would unite in chanting Krishna's names and modern ISKCON's religious utopia begins. For a few centuries Chaitanya's *sankirtan* movement splintered off in a variety of directions, and many different groups claimed the title of "Vaishnava." It was not until the nineteenth century that the movement developed a central organizing institution under the careful crafting of colonial bureaucrat and Vaishnava theologian Kedarnath Datta, known later as Bhaktivinoda Thakur.

4.2 Discovering Mayapur

Kedarnath Datta (1838–1914) was the son of a powerful landowner and grew up about fifty miles from Mayapur in West Bengal.[2] He received the title of "Thakur Bhaktivinoda" in 1886 by the orthodox *goswami* (hereditary Vaishnava leader) lineage of Baghnapara (Bhatia 2017, 163).

He had an English-medium education, pursued higher education in Kolkata, and eventually went into bureaucratic service before retiring in 1892 so he could dedicate himself fully to modernizing Vaishnavism and establishing Chaitanya's birthplace in Mayapur (Sarbadhikary 2015b, 43; Bhatia 2017, 163–8). What prompted this post-retirement agenda was a vision he had in 1887 during a visit to Nabadwip. In his autobiography *Svalikhita Jivani*, Bhaktivinoda describes his discovery of Mayapur as the birthplace of Chaitanya:

2 Datta is a common surname in Bengal.

> Once after dusk, Kamala (his son), a clerk and I had climbed on to the terrace and were looking around the vicinity. At about 10:00 p.m. when it was quite dark and heavy clouds had collected in the sky, we noticed an illuminated building in the North across the Ganga. Kamala, being asked if he had seen the same, replied in the affirmative. The clerk said that he did not see anything. I was surprised at this.
>
> In the morning, I again examined the site from the terrace of Rānī's house. I found one palm tree there. When others were asked about this, they said that the place was called "Ballaldighi" where ruins of Laksmana Sena's fort could be seen. That Monday I went to Kṛṣṇanagara but next Saturday I visited Ballaldighi. There I saw the strange phenomenon again at night and explored the place on foot in the daylight.
>
> Having enquired from the senior people of the neighborhood I came to know that it was precisely Mahaprabhu's birthplace. (Datta [1896] 1916, 352; translation from Fuller 2005, 269)

After hearing the locals' stories of Mayapur, Bhaktivinoda began the project of collecting textual and geographic evidence to establish and prove that Mayapur, not Nabadwip, is the true birthplace of Chaitanya. The veracity of this vision is of no concern here.[3] What is of import here is that this vision set into motion the making of Mayapur as a modernized, sacred city that would become a utopia homeland for Krishna devotees worldwide.

Figure 4.2: Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (1838–1914)[4]

3 Different Vaishnava groups contest where the exact birthplace is and for an overview of the context wherein Bhaktivinoda's vision took place, read Bhatia's (2017, 163–99) *Unforgetting Chaitanya*, Fuller's (2005) *Religion, Class and Power*, and Sarbadhikary's (2015b) *The Place of Devotion*.

4 From https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5e/Bhaktivinoda_Thakura.jpg, accessed on June 1, 2019.

It is remarkable that despite not being a Brahmin or *goswami*,[5] or even a hereditary Vaishnava (Fuller 2005, 7), Bhaktivinoda became the most powerful Vaishnava leader at the turn of the twentieth century. In the 1890s, he led a religious revival and established a *guruparampara* (lineage associated with succession of gurus) that is today the most recognized lineage of Bengali Vaishnavism. This lineage now counts millions of followers worldwide (35). How he did this is chronicled in the work of John Fuller (2005), who has written the most comprehensive account of Bhaktivinoda Thakur's life and rise to power. Here, I will note only the key ways that Bhaktivinoda was able to achieve Vaishnava reform and set into motion the movement today.

4.3 Modernizing Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism

These efforts to modernize Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism in the nineteenth century "can be situated within the context of a much larger 'Hindu revivalist' movement which began in the eighteen-seventies and carried on through the eighteen-nineties" (Fuller 2005, 24–5). However, Bhaktivinoda did not align himself with reclaiming "Hinduism":

> Although it is tempting to read-back the concept of Hindutva into all reform and revivalist movements, one must not lose sight of the fact that not all religious reformers had the word Hindu as part of their active vocabularies. Rather, some of them were concerned with issues other than Hindu-ness and, in fact, were explicitly anti-Hindu (at least certain varieties of pan-Indian Hinduism) in their thought and activities. One such reformer was Bhaktivinode Thakur. [...] One would be hard pressed to discern a generically Hindu message in Bhaktivinode's writings. In fact, Bhaktivinode often remarked that he had more in common with Christians and Muslims than he did with so-called Hindus (i.e., of the monistic variety). Rather, Bhaktivinode considered himself a Vaiṣṇava—nothing more, nothing less. His goal was to define and delimit a "pure" Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. He did not define the world in terms of Hindu and non-Hindu. Rather he defined it in terms of Vaiṣṇava and non-Vaiṣṇava. (Fuller 2005, 110–1)

This distance or outright circumventing of the "Hindu" label from Bhaktivinoda continues today within ISKCON. Though scholars often define ISKCON as part of Hinduism's vast religious history it is important to note that practitioners within the movement do not identify themselves as such. For

5 A *goswami* is a hereditary Vaishnava leader of the Brahmin caste.

example, when asking a resident of Mayapur what religion they practice, the most common answers I received would be in the form of a correction: "I don't have a religion." "*Sanātana-dharma* is not religion." "*Bhakti* is not a religion." "I serve Krishna, this can be done no matter what your religion is." And, "Religion is man-made, *bhakti* is for everyone." I soon learned to ask a different question: "What do you practice?" This generated conversations about going to temple, daily altar and deity care, reading holy texts, and many other ways that devotees embody their *bhakti* (devotional worship of Radha and Krishna). But the pushback against the word "religion" is important to note when dealing with devotees who often insist they do not have one.

Through interviews and reading religious texts, I discovered that one of the main issues with the word "religion" is the implied finitude of it, the idea that if a religion begins at some point it can also end. When I asked a preacher from Poland, Rasananda Das, about this question of religion, he stressed that the "eternal occupation of the living being is to serve others" and that recognizing this and rendering service to God therefore could not be a religion, because something that is eternal cannot have a start date, like religions do. Rasananda Das then suggested I read what Srila Prabhupada had to say on the matter. In the introduction to ISKCON's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*, Prabhupada writes, "The English word *religion* is a little different from *sanātana-dharma*. *Religion* conveys the idea of faith, and faith may change. One may have faith in a particular process, and he may change this faith and adopt another, but *sanātana-dharma* refers to that activity which cannot be changed" (*Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*, 2009, 16–7, italics in the original). He continues,

> man professes to belong to a particular type of faith with reference to a particular time and circumstance and thus claims to be Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or an adherent of any other sect. Such designation are non-*sanātana-dharma*. A Hindu may change his faith to become Muslim, or a Muslim may change faith to become a Hindu, or a Christian may change his faith and so on. But in all circumstances the change of religious faith does not affect the eternal occupation of rendering service to others. The Hindu, Muslim, or Christian in all circumstances is a servant of someone. Thus, to profess a particular type of faith is not to profess one's *sanātana-dharma*. The rendering of service is *sanātana-dharma*. (*Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*, 2009, 16–7)

Sanātana-dharma is taught to ISKCON devotees as service, eternal service to an other. They are also taught that the ultimate person to serve is Krishna, and in doing so the soul develops *bhakti*. When

I stopped asking about religion and instead asked about practice and service, devotees would quickly identify as Vaishnavas (servants of Vishnu) who practice *bhakti*. This emphasis on being a servant of Vishnu in the form of Chaintanya and Radha-Krishna is very much in line with the universalizing project of Bhaktivinoda's Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Cultivating bhakti is available to everyone.

> Vaiṣṇavas are those who have pure *bhakti*, and all human beings are candidates for *Vaiṣṇava-dharma*. Muslims are not eligible to perform the duties prescribed for the different *varnas* in the *varnāsrama* system because their birth disqualifies them. However, they have every right to participate in the practices of *bhakti* ... Muslims are not eligible even to perform the prescribed karma within the *varna* system, because they are outcastes, so how can they become eligible for *bhakti*? ... Because outcaste human beings have every right to practice *bhakti*. All the *sastras* accept this. (Fuller 2005, 191, ellipses in the original)

Here, belonging to a religion or being a member of a particular caste makes one ineligible to perform certain duties as outlined in the *varna* (caste) system. But *bhakti* lies outside of caste and religion, it is discussed here as a human right, a human right to love and practice love of God. In Mayapur, many animals of the land were also described as *bhaktas* or practitioners of bhakti. So here, bhakti as a concept is pragmatically a very equalizing force within the community. Any living entity can begin to cultivate this and this notion of some right universally shared among men comes in others of Bhaktivinoda's writings. In *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, His life and precepts*, Bhaktivinoda (1896, 60) portrayed Chaitanya as a hero of universal brotherhood:

> Caitanya preaches equality of men ... universal fraternity amongst men and special brotherhood amongst Vaishnavas, who are according to him, the best pioneers of spiritual improvement. He preaches that human thought should never be allowed to be shackled with sectarian views. ... The religion preached by Mahaprabhu is universal and not exclusive. The most learned and the most ignorant are both entitled to embrace it. [...] The principle of *kīrtana* invites, as the future church of the world, all classes of men without distinction of caste or clan to the highest cultivation of the spirit. (Datta 1896, 60 as quoted in Sardella 2013, 94, ellipses in the original)

This emphasis on brotherhood and fraternity was in fact part of many philosophical lines at the time in Kolkata. The Theosophical Society and Freemasons promulgated ideals of respect and equality for humanity. Religious universalism was touted by Ram Mohan Roy. Vivekananda wrote of service to humanity as a pillar of religious practice. Though Bhaktivinoda was exposed to these conversations and

very much an avid reader and scholar, his inspiration drew mainly from Chaitanya and the writings in that lineage as the above quote explains. In that passage it is clear that social customs, gender, religion or any other social designations do not disqualify human beings from practicing bhakti. I suspect this underlying principle of potential world participation, as the phrase "all human beings" suggests, is part of why devotion from foreigners is not seen as aberrant or odd in Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Rather, it is expected and encouraged because it is indeed how Bhaktivinoda envisioned modern Gaudiya Vaishnavism. However, in his writing he does uphold that in social situations designations do matter and should be followed, but that spiritually there is no distinction among souls and therefore everyone is free to develop bhakti and chant *harinama* (the names of Krishna). Gaudiya Vaishnavas are therefore encouraged to eat alongside and participate with formerly outcaste but presently converted Gaudiya Vaishnavas as a matter of duty (Fuller 2005, 194).

What Bhaktivinoda sought to do was remove the negative association of Vaishnavism as being a "degenerate and debased form of religion—the concern of libertines, prostitutes, untouchables and beggars" (Fuller 2005, 118). This reputation came about for a few reasons. Firstly, there was no central movement of Gaudiya Vaishnavas and many people claimed to be as such. The largest group claiming affiliation were mendicants, and this group was considered the least trustworthy in society, as they were not all beggars but actually thieves. Secondly, Krishna was often an embarrassing deity for the Bengali *bhadralok* (middle class).

> Vaiṣṇavism remained, until the 1870's, one of the most embarrassing religious modalities for the urban *bhadralok*. Kṛṣṇa in particular caused problems for reformers who felt awkward about defending the relationship of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, or even the much less "scandalous" stories of the child Govinda stealing butter and frolicking with the gopis. The theological problems associated with reconciling a puritanical Victorian morality with the figure of Kṛṣṇa were compounded by the negative perception of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas in particular. (Fuller 2005, 124)

Here is where Bhaktivinoda intervened to not only change the image of Gaudiya Vaishnavas but also of Krishna, his eternal consort Radha, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He wanted to extricate what he understood as "pure" Gaudiya Vaishnavism from the lineages of the Bauls, Nedas, Saina, Sahajiya, and Ativadi. In the *Sajjanatoṣanī,* a monthly journal, Bhaktivinoda began to structure and institutionalize

Gaudiya Vaishnavism, he writes "all of them plead the name of [Chaitanya] and show off doing *upasand* [worship/prayer] … but what is regrettable is that the instructions that they preach and act as *sadhana* [spiritual practice] are all contradictory to true Vaiṣṇava *dharma*" (Datta 1881, 67–68, as translated in Fuller 2005, 137). He found their sexual practices not only morally offensive but exactly the opposite of what a Vaishnava should be doing: "According to Vaiṣṇavism the practice of cavorting with women is quite harmful. There is no harm in seeking refuge in the *varnāśramadharma*[6] and to have a married wife to take care of bodily needs … However, pseudo-Vaiṣṇavas such as the Bāuls, Sainas, Darvesa, etc. will often abandon their wives and indulge in licentious association with other women, arguing that such repellant behavior is actually *sadhana*!" (Datta 1881, 69, as translated in Fuller 2005, 137) In critiquing these groups, Bhaktivinoda was actually excluding the majority of self-proclaimed Vaishnavas from the "true" identification of being an actual Vaishnava. This was of no great concern it seemed as his readership was not of these groups. Bhaktivinoda was publishing for a Bengali middle class who were literate bureaucrats in the colonial bureaucracy who were most likely very aware of the colonial and missionary critiques of the licentious Vaishnavas.[7]

In addition to journals and periodicals, Bhaktivinoda published a novel that both created a utopian vision of the Vaishnavism while also critiquing and protesting the middle class Bengali *bhadralok*. *Prema Pradipa* written in 1886 is a ninety-page religious satiric novella wherein he argues "for the viability of an indigenous mode-of-being vis-a-vis the dystopic state of modern affairs in urban Bengal" (Fuller 2005, 168). In *Prema Pradipa,* Bhaktivinoda valorizes the rural, indigenous, traditional Vaishnava and pokes fun at the *bhadralok* who are over-educated and "obsessed with reason, argumentation, and disputation" (179). Along with Bhaktivinoda's expectations for how a Vaishnava should behave, Bhaktivinoda emphasizes a particular dress for his main characters in *Prema Pradipa*, Haridasa and Premadasa.

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6 *Varnāśramadharma* is Sanskrit for the foundational religious system for traditional caste Hinduism or social divisions of life.

7 For more on the history of how Bhaktivinoda removed authority from the various Vaishnava *sampradayas* inscribing it instead on himself see Fuller's (2005, 105–56) *Religion, Class, and Power*.

> Fully decorated as Vaiṣṇavas, Haridasa and Premadasa arrived at Pundit Babaji's ashrama. *Gopi-candana* [yellow clay] shone on their foreheads, and three strands of *tulasi* beads [beads made of tulsi leaf signifying one's belonging to Gaudiya Vaishnavism] decorated their necks. Their right hands continuously counted the holy names on *japa-mala* [prayer beads] within their *japa* bags [prayer bead bags]. The lower part of their bodies were covered with *kaupina* [loin cloth] and outer cloth, their heads were beautified by *sikhas* [lock of hair left on the back of otherwise shaved heads]. (translation as quoted in Fuller 2005, 179, translations in brackets added).

Vaishnava appearance is meant to transport all who see Vaishnavas into a different state where the urban, over-educated *bhadralok* will not fit in. Fuller describes the impact of this novella as representing Vaishnavism as "a revival that brought with it a reformer's zeal to associate itself with an idealized utopian pattern from the past while disassociating itself from the dystopian present" (Fuller 2005, 169). The sixteenth and nineteenth centuries here coalesce in this novella whereby "the utopian contrast was no doubt designed to draw striking distinctions between what could be and what was" (184). I note here that ISKCON does this still today, depicting the twenty-first century era of globalization and terror as a dystopia to which only Gaudiya Vaishnavism is equipped to respond. The increase in conversion of millennials and the mothers I researched suggest that the allure of utopia vested in nostalgia of ancient tradition is alive and well today similar to as it was in colonial Bengal.

To discipline and then create an ordered Gaudiya Vaishnavism according to his middle class Bengali morals, Bhaktivinoda continuously "published religious books, a journal, novels, and poems [...]. In this way his efforts could be read as one attempt among many in the period to seek solace in 'tradition/religion' by attempting to ameliorate an anomie generated by the humiliation of colonial domination" (Fuller 2005, 27). He wanted to reintroduce *śuddha* (pure) Vaishnavism to Bengal by eschewing the extant tradition that he found in Bengal in the mid 19th century and "retrieve the fundamentals of [Vaishnavism] as discerned through a strict reliance upon its most sacred literature sans perversion. For Bhaktivinode, religious truth was located in texts and reading sacred texts was a form of *sādhana* [daily spiritual practice]" (126).

From here he was able to foster a community of middle class readers and utilize the printing press to "disseminate traditional sacred Vaiṣṇava literature and to promote the primary Vaiṣṇava value-orientation of *madhurya rasa* [taste between lover and beloved] on a scale which had never been

achieved before and in a systematic manner which rendered certain texts and interpretations authoritative" (Fuller 2005, 128). Through his use of colonial concerns and technologies such as the printing press (journals, books, magazines, and novels), Bhaktivinoda's project was one of ambivalence where he simultaneously embraced modern institutions and technologies while rejecting secularism and other strains of colonial modernity. In other words, "Bhaktivinode was not averse to appropriating the syntax of modernity when it could be filled with the vocabulary of tradition (i.e., Vaiṣṇavism)" (29). ISKCON continues along this tension today, utilizing the most high end technologies, attending conferences on religion to establish scholar-devotees, engaging in politics in Mumbai and Delhi to affect land distribution for religious groups and gain special religious visas for foreigners to live in India thus securing their movement's international growth,[8] and showcasing their more eco-friendly temple-campuses[9] to the millennial yoga- and spirituality-seeking green generation deploying modern technologies like a time machine to the traditional life promised within the ancient Vedas. These are all interfaces with the world that communicate and attract newcomers to the "Vedic" past promised in the reconstructed town of Mayapur. Just as Bhaktivinoda "walked the Vaiṣṇava walk and talked the Vaiṣṇava talk, all the while deploying secular modes of authority to buttress his case that he should retain the power to speak for Vaiṣṇavism" (Fuller 2005, 41), modern ISKCON also employs Bhaktivinoda's tactic much to the continued success of the movement.

According to his autobiography *Svalikhita Jīvanī* (1896), Bhaktivinoda's most active years as a religious leader were from 1838 to 1896. Though he lived another eighteen years, "he was mentally and verbally disabled from a stroke" and, according to Fuller (2005, 42–43), the information available after his stroke is "incomplete and of dubious quality." However, the periodical he began regarding Gaudiya Vaishnavism, *Sajjanatoṣani,* continued for twenty years until his death in 1914. While a couple of his

8 This information is from an interview with a south Indian Deputy Director about the security of foreigners during Mayapur's 2016 "crisis."

9 See the Govardhan Eco Village (GEV) north of Mumbai at http://www.ecovillage.org.in. The guru Radhanath Swami, a Jewish convert to the religion and trusted disciple of ISKCON's founder, Srila Prabhupada, founded GEV. On the website's main page he is quoted: "The Vedic perspective teaches us that solutions to climate change lie in the understanding that we are entrusted the sacred care of Mother Earth and through this care we become the followers of true Dharma."

sons carried on his legacy, only one, Bimal Prasad, known later as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, was able to generate a following with the creation of the Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Matha in 1918. The Gaudiya Matha is the second largest Gaudiya Vaishnava institution in Bengal. ISKCON, founded in 1966 and today the largest institution, is actually an offshoot of the Gaudiya Matha. Both institutions now propagate and proselytize as normative the brand of Gaudiya Vaishnavism that Bhaktivinoda put forth in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Since Bhaktivinoda's vision in 1887, Mayapur has been actively imagined, crafted, and built as *the* homeland of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

4.4 Gaudiya Vaishnavism Goes Around the World

In addition to Bhaktivinode Thakur's vision that Mayapur was the homeland of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, he also envisioned that Chaitanya's prophecy would spread around the world. "Very soon [...] English, French, Prussian, and American people will take up banners, *mridangas* [drums], and *karatalas* [cymbals] and raise *kirtana* [musical recitation of religious subject matter] through their streets and towns" (Datta 1892, 42, as translated in Sardella 2013, 96). This echoes Chaitanya's words, which devotees know very well (*Chaitanya Bhagavata*, *Antya-khanda* 4.126):

pṛthivīte āche jata nagarādi grama

sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma

My name will spread to every town and village of the world.

For many devotees, this verse is the legitimating proof of the movement's power, as indeed it has spread around the world. Rosen (2017, 193) complicates this reading though inquiring instead about what "the world" or *pṛthivīte* could mean in sixteenth century India. He quickly points out, and I think he is right to do so, that truth of the matter is not really relevant because the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition "has come to see it as a prediction of the highest order" (193). One morning, I was chatting with a mother I work with about this prophecy and if she thinks it is true. She said,

> Teru! You are here. You ate at Govinda's[10] and years later you are here. Somehow or other everyone knows devotees! They all see the devotees in the streets or distributing books, they hear *harinama*, they eat the great *prasadam*! People don't need to be called "devotees" for Chaitanya's prophecy to be true! The Hare Krishna mantra is everywhere. [...] It's easy, everyone knows it. Just hear it once. [...] The George Harrison song,[11] people know that too!

She and I chatted on the topic for a little longer and then she said, "Look, Teru. This movement can be successful because all one needs is to be able to chant the mantra and do their best in following the prescribed rules. This can be done no matter your religion, no matter your language. The mantra, and the *prasadam*," she laughed, "are free." There are tropes within the community, and one common one is "the *mahamantra* is free [and] anyone can chant no matter your religion, no matter your language." In fact, on a popular website where ISKCON devotees circulate questions, hold debates, feature interviews, and share advice, there have been several articles about the fulfillment of Chaitanya's prophecy. In one such interview with Satyaraja Dasa,[12] a respected devotee-scholar in the movement, he is quoted:

> [Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's] method is open to everyone. Simply chant the holy name, whatever your religion, whatever your language. Chant God's name and devote your life to His glorification. If you do this much, then you are a practitioner of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's method, at least in a fundamental sense. So it is not exclusive. We don't say that one must become a Hindu, or a Jew, or a Christian, or anything. No. Just develop love for God. This is the actual substance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's nonsectarian message, and it can be embraced by everyone.

In the *Sajjanatoṣani* periodical, Bhaktivinoda published essays on religion. In one such essay he wrote:

> When in England, France, Russia, Prussia, and America all fortunate persons by taking up *kholas* [drums] and *karatālas* [cymbals] will take the name of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu again and

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10 Govinda's Buffet is vegetarian restaurant that ISKCON operates where they serve very good *prasadam*, vegetarian food that has been ritually offered to Krishna.

11 The song *My Sweet Lord* was released in 1970 in praise of Krishna. Harrison knew Srila Prabhupada and accepted him as his spiritual master. He embraced the Hare Krishna religion and became a lifelong devotee (Partridge 2005, 153). Every morning during *mongal arati* [morning worship], ISKCON temples play a portion of this song in the temple to wake the deities.

12 Satyaraja Dasa is a US American scholar whose non-devotee name is Steven Rosen. He's the founding editor the academic peer-reviewed journal Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies, founded in 1992. He is looked up to in the devotee community and many academics publish in his journal.

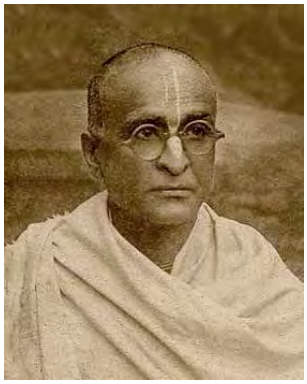

Figure 4.3: Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī (1874–1937)[14]

> again in their own countries, and raise the waves of *saṅkirtāna* [congregational singing of Krishna's names], when will that day come! Oh! When will the day come when the white-skinned British people will speak the glory of Shri Shachinandana [another name of Chaitanya] on one side and on the other and with this call spread their arms to embrace devotees from other countries in brotherhood, when will that day come! The day when they will say "Oh, Aryan Brothers! We have taken refuge at the feet of Chaitanya Deva in an ocean of love, now kindly embrace us," when will that day come! (Datta 1892, 42, as translated in Sardella 2013, 96, translations in brackets added).[13]

Parts of that passage are quoted in pamphlets in ISKCON. From my first exposure to ISKCON in 2007, I recall Bhaktivinoda's words as they were cited then and now to ground, justify, and proclaim pride in the presence of non-Indians in the movement. In Mayapur, Bhaktivinoda's desire for an international Gaudiya Vaishnava congregation is touted to tourists, to residents, and researchers like myself, who inquire about the national, class, caste, linguistic, and ethnic diversity of Mayapur. Founded in 1966, ISKCON "has over 400 centres and followers from all over the world" (Sarbadhikary 2015a, 119). It is "India's most famous, globalized, high-profile modernized guru-movement" (Sarbadhikary 2015b, 2). This international recognition is due mainly to the effort of the most internationally famous disciple, the now departed Bengali guru, A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Srila Prabhupāda.

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13 Bhaktivinoda's son Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati pushed forward the "universal church" agenda of his father. And this clearly affected how Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's student, Srila Prabhupada, took this aim outside of India to make real this desire.

14 From https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9e/Bhaktisiddhanta2.jpg, accessed on June 1, 2019.

4.5 A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON

Abhay Charan De, known also as A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Srila Prabhupāda, affectionately called "Prabhupada" by his devotees, was born in Kolkata, India in 1896 (see figure 4.4). He was a college-educated pharmacist who, before adopting the life of a renunciant in 1959, was married with children.[15] He was a disciple of Bhaktivinoda Thakur's son Bimal Prasad, known as Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, founder of the Gaudiya Math, whom he met in 1922 (see figure 4.3). Prabhupada was very much aligned with Bhaktisiddhanta's dream of translating Chaitanya's teachings into English and spreading it outside of India. Bhaktisiddhanta gave Prabhupada the specific instruction to travel to the United States. Prabhupada prepared for this feat for a few years after taking *sannyasā* in 1959. In 1965 he took a freighter to New York, practically penniless at the age of 70.

Before then, Gaudiya Vaishnavism was primarily based in India until 1965 when the United States' 1924 Anti-Asian Exclusion Act was replaced by the Immigration and Nationality Act, which lifted the entry restrictions on non-Europeans. This led to a rise of Asian immigrants along with several strands of Hindu and Buddhist faiths to enter the United States's religious scene. These religions helped shape the 1960s counterculture movement—a time when many US Americans converted or began to incorporate a variety of "Eastern" practices into their life. After Prabhupada came to the United States, Gaudiya Vaishnavism was renamed the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in 1966. ISKCON was then colloquially renamed "The Hare Krishnas" by the North American public on account of devotees constant public chanting of "Hare Krishna! Hare Krishna!" Twelve years later in 1977 he died, leaving behind ISKCON, which has now spread across the globe with four hundred centers worldwide (Sarbadhikary 2015a, 119) and hundreds of temples with at least fifty thousand North American members (Rochford 2007, 14). The international numbers are not tallied by ISKCON.

15 His great granddaughter attended the village school where I conducted fieldwork and his family is still very much involved in ISKCON Mayapur.

Most non-Bengali devotees I met in Mayapur[16] cite Prabhupada as the chief impetus for conversion.[17] For the older devotees from the 1960s and 70s his translations along with his lectures on this text are often cited as hugely influential texts in their conversion to the Hare Krishnas. Prabhupada translated the holy text, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* from Sanskrit into English creating ISKCON's own version called the *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is,* his most widely read text. Indeed, devotion to Krishna is a literary culture. Potential converts are introduced to the Hare Krishna world through the book distribution of devotees on streets and at colleges, or by browsing through the Eastern philosophy sections in bookstores and libraries. Many find Krishna after searching the Internet for information on where to join spiritually minded New Age or religious groups. By the time these spiritual nomads arrive at the doorstep of a Hare Krishna temple, many have engaged in an intense reading of different strands of North American-style Hindu and Buddhist groups. The exact number of Hare Krishna devotees is difficult to determine but the tourism department in Mayapur, the headquarters of the movement, receives a half million tourists a year, according to the Mayapur Tourism Office (personal communication, summer 2014).

What exactly motivates people to convert to new religious movements like the Hare Krishnas has intrigued religious studies scholars (Shinn 1987; Bromley and Shinn 1989), sociologists (Rochford 1985, 2007), anthropologists (Judah 1974), and cognitive scientists of religion (Ketola 2008) since the movement's inception in the 1960s. These scholars documented the movement and its members in its early days and have tried to ascertain what people gained from conversion to the Hare Krishnas. The first major ethnography on the movement is J. Stillson Judah's (1974) *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture*, which is based on literature, questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation in the Berkeley and Los Angeles temples. Judah argues that devotees were generally dedicated hippies who displayed

16 Devotees in Los Angeles also cited Prabhupada as the main impetus to join ISKCON (Mitsuhara 2013).

17 It was an interesting counterpoint that for the Bengali devotees I researched and worked with during fieldwork (2015–2017), the initial attraction to ISKCON was often Jayapataka Swami, a white American guru born in Wisconsin. He is a direct disciple of Srila Prabhupada, fully fluent in Bengali and many Bengali devotees are very much devoted to him. He has Indian citizenship and holds many responsibilities within ISKCON. The lore of Jayapataka Swami is that he was an associate of Chaitanya, born again now to help lead ISKCON in the right direction. This emergent hagiography surrounding this charismatic guru deserves a dissertation in and of itself.

Figure 4.4: A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi Srila Prabhupāda (1896–1977)[18]

their frustrations with the far right by joining a religion that is characterized by countercultural values. Two years later, Francine Daner (1976) explores identity and alienation issues in the Boston, New York, London, and Amsterdam temples.

The most cited is E. Burke Rochford's (1985) ethnography on the growth and development of the Hare Krishna movement in North America during the 1970s, a burgeoning time for new religious

18 From https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/47/AC_Bhaktivedanta_Swami_Prabhupada.jpg, accessed on June 1, 2019.

movements in the United States. Subsequently, Larry D. Shinn (1987) analyzed the social response to new religions and the issue of "cult" stereotypes prevalent in media and popular literature at the time. Other studies have focused on the religious charisma of Srila Prabhupada (Ketola 2008).

More recent anthropological research focuses on a range of religious experiences of devotees. Malcom Haddon (2013) researched conversion, mimesis, and translation practices among diasporic Indian and Indo-Fijian Hindus at the congregational level of ISKCON's ministry in Sydney, Australia. The Gaudiya Vaishnava ideal of humility and constant self-effacing as part of performing ideal devotee attributes was well-documented by John Fahy (2017) in Mayapur. In earlier research, I argued that the adoption of what Srivinas Aravamudan (2006) called "Guru English" by the first generation of Anglo-American Hare Krishna priests plays a key role in their ability to attract followers (Mitsuhara 2015).[19] In one way or another, these studies all touch upon the impact that Srila Prabhupada, an extremely charismatic Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnava, had. He inspired a generation in the counterculture 1960s and 70s and continues to impact many searching for spirituality and stability in the midst trying, often dystopic times. In chapter 5, I write about the dystopic, apocalypse narratives that showcase the urgency of joining the Chaitanya movement. The notion of *karma* and the consequence of living an amoral and immoral life are motivating for many to seriously consider changing their life.

4.6 ISKCON Beliefs and Practices

When Srila Prabhupada came to New York in 1965, he trimmed down much of the ritual aspects of Gaudiya Vaishnavism so that it would be more easily taken up by North Americans. He did not profess they should convert to a religion, but rather cultivate bhakti. In order to do so, he outlined

19 The analysis of recorded instances of spontaneous uses of Indian English shows that Hare Krishna priests rely on a small number of morphosyntactic and phonetic features to constitute the canonical Guru English register of their Indian Guru, Srila Prabhupada, and that the priests' followers are sensitive to the accumulated effect of different combinations of such features. The study argued for an account of non-mocking appropriation of Guru English as a means of inscribing an Indian cosmology and spiritual identification.

four main rules that would help center and keep "pure" the yogic system of bhakti as taught by his guru, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, while also promoting austerity and control of the senses.

4.6.1 The Meaning of *bhakti* within ISKCON

Devotion to Krishna is often how bhakti is translated. However, it encompasses much more than that word connotes. In Sanskrit, *bhakti* is a noun formed from the verbal root *bhaj-* meaning "to share, to possess, to participate," among other meanings. Every Sanskrit verbal root has a multitude of meanings. Panini, the fourth century Indian grammarian who is also considered the father of linguistics (Bod 2013, 14–9), illuminated the range of meanings of *bhaj-* and wrote of "bhakti to Vasudeva," another name for Krishna. Here, bhakti has been translated into English to mean "devotion to Krishna," making it easily mappable onto monotheistic religious practice. In an illuminating text on bhakti, Prentiss (2000) argues that this reading of bhakti as monotheistic devotion is a product of orientalist scholarship on bhakti by H. H. Wilson, M. Monier-Williams, and G. A. Grierson. Through an analysis of medieval Tamil Śiva-bhakti poetry, Prentiss (2000, 6) tries to upend the emphasis on bhakti as devotion and instead emphasize it as a participatory theology of embodiment making it the "foundation of human life and activity in the world." If I had brought this definition to Mayapur devotees, I think they would agree, for devotees repeatedly emphasized that anyone can have bhakti, and developing it is the way back to the Supreme Godhead, Krishna. Christians, Jews, Muslims, and anyone else with a God can develop it. "It" being love of God, the caveat being how to love God as He wants to be loved. Unsurprisingly, the path of bhakti, according to devotees, is the purest way unfettered by materiality. There are centuries worth of debate over what the nuances of bhakti are, and because of this and also because I am an anthropologist as opposed to a hagiographer or historian, I am inclined to approach bhakti how *bhaktas* (that is, people who claim the path of bhakti) do. In other words, it is as bhaktas say it is. In this way, I am in agreement with John Cort, a scholar of Jainism, who writes that

> Bhakti is not restricted to what scholars say it is; rather, it is primarily what bhaktas have said it is, and these bhaktas have included Vaiṣṇavas, Śaivas, Śāktas, Sants, Jains, Buddhists, and others. We then find that bhakti is a highly complex, multiform cultural category, which is differently understood and practiced in different times, places, and sects. Bhakti is both something that one does

> and an attitude that can suffuse all of one's actions. Bhakti can range from sober respect and veneration that upholds socioreligious hierarchies and distinctions to fervent emotional enthusiasm that breaks down all such hierarchies and distinctions in a radical soteriological egalitarianism. Bhakti is not one single thing. It is many things, and a significant part of the study of the history of Indian religion and theology is the study of the strident disagreements over what bhakti is and how it is to be practiced. (Cort 2002, 62)

With this freedom of meaning, I turn to my informants who outlined what bhakti means for them. "It is service to Krishna, without thought of material gain," said Amrita, a neighbor from Switzerland in her mid-twenties. "It is something Westerners especially yearn for, that connection to God" said Driddha, a Bengali delivery man who chatted with me over produce. "Bhakti is something that grows. No one can simply declare they have it. It is something a devotee cultivates every day in service of guru, Radha-Krishna, and other bhaktas." This rather complicated quote from a European traveling preacher encapsulates much of the range of answers I would hear during my eighteen month stay in Mayapur. Bhakti clearly had a paradigmatic set of meanings, and devotees were quick to point out whether a devotee did something for themselves or for Krishna. If service could be rendered to another devotee, this was one way to cultivate love for Krishna. If a devotee was tasked to do something from the guru whether something minor such as running an errand in town, or something major such as translating a book or moving to another country to distribute books, this too would be a way to cultivate bhakti. Bhakti was discussed often in conjunction with *seva* or service—service to other devotees, to a guru, to their home deities, to the family, and to Krishna. The "devotional" aspect of bhakti, it seemed, did not make sense unless devotees were willing to render service freely. In fact, much of Mayapur runs on bhakti, a spiritual currency that is expected to motivate, feed, and manage the whole town. When hard currency is required to get devotees to run things properly, the lack of bhakti is lamented as the culprit. For example, in the administration of the international school where I spent the majority of my fieldwork, the principal position was frequently vacant. After the head principal quit and moved back to England in 2017, devotees were often confused why it was so hard to find someone who could run the school. Embedded as I was in the school's politics, I knew much of the reason to be the fear of dealing with the School Board, the difficulty in managing parents and teachers, and the round-the-clock attention required for little pay. The post did not pay enough in hard currency, and

running the school for less than 20,000 rupees per month (90,000 Indian rupees is the average pay for public school principals) for bhakti alone was a hard sell. Some tried, but often the politics of the post were too much to bear. Krishna, it seemed, had not given the strength to any one devotee. "Bhakti was not enough," said a teacher at the international school, "you need money to run a school properly!"

When I asked preachers, parents, and other residents about bhakti, they would often quote Srila Prabhupada or assign me his books to read more. Good chunks of my fieldwork were spent combing over texts such as the *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*. An oft-repeated description of bhakti is Prabhupada's translation of the *Bhakti-rasāmrta-sindhu* (1.1.11): "One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Krishna favorable and without desire for material profit or gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service" (included in *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*, 2009, purport, 7.16). Bhakti is theorized as service free from material gain, and money is therefore something that taints the purity of said service. In an ideal world, people would work for Krishna with no expectation to be paid. That is one of the ideals for Mayapur and it is part of the low-pay structure within the Mayapur economy. This creates a host of problems for families trying to provide for themselves without outlining material expectations from the community.

4.6.2 The Four Rules and Regulations

Controlling one's senses begins with following four prescribed rules: (1) no meat-eating (including fish and eggs); (2) no illicit sex (sex is appropriate only if the couple is married and intends to conceive); (3) no intoxication (including caffeine); and (4) no gambling. Moreover, every devotee chants the *mahamantra*, the "great mantra":

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma

Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Hare is the feminine energy of the Lord. Krishna is the name of the Supreme Lord and is also an adjective meaning "black." Krishna is depicted as either blue or black in Indian art. Rama is one of the chief incarnations of Lord Krishna and the famous hero in the love story *Ramayana*. God's names are considered to be non-different from God Himself, therefore, chanting the holy name is considered direct interaction with Krishna. Chanting this mantra in public venues is the single most important activity for devotees. They believe that chanting Krishna's holy names spreads good energy and karma to those who hear it while also purifying the soul of the chanter. Devotees who have taken formal initiation into the movement are encouraged to chant sixteen rounds of the *mahamantra* on their *japamala* (prayer beads), which is 1,728 times every day. If they cannot do this, then they must maintain a fixed amount of rounds each day vowing to not waiver from this *sadhana*, or practice. The purpose is to clear the bad karma and cultivate a spiritual consciousness. Children are encouraged to chant a set amount of rounds that they choose, such as two rounds everyday. The goal is to develop a daily habit and increase one's rounds to at least sixteen by adulthood. After devotees have dedicated themselves to chanting, following the four prescribed rules for a certain amount time deemed by their home temple administration, their guru officially initiates the devotee by granting them a holy name from the Sanskrit scriptures like "Shastra," "Madhurika," or "Rama."

Another rule, though more like an "encouragement," is that devotees engage all their senses in the service of Krishna. They are discouraged from watching television or listening to music unless it is about Krishna. They are enjoined by elders in the community to constantly discuss Krishna's pastimes, a practice called *krishna katha*. For example, devotees derive great pleasure from recounting his escapades with *gopis* (cow-herder girlfriends), his antics when stealing butter and milk from his neighbors, and his heroic adventures with his brother, Balaram. They also relish discussing the stories of Vedic India (mostly what is written by devotees of Krishna).

Many devotees only eat *prasadam*, which is holy food that clears bad karma and predisposes the body toward working for Krishna. This food has been prepared for and ritually offered to Krishna thereby rendering it spiritual in essence. This makes travel difficult for families, who often bring prepared *prasadam* in containers rather than purchase food items in airports or other transient spaces.

These are ideal practices and not all devotees can adhere to these rules, especially if they work and live outside of a temple community. Nonetheless, devotees are highly aware of these regulations and encouragements and most attempt (or take measures to appear) to live their lives by these standards. For example, regarding the ideal of only watching Krishna-related content, a common transgression would be the small viewing parties for favorite TV shows such as *Game of Thrones,* a medieval fantasy epic. During my first summer in Mayapur, I made a good set of friends and later informants as we bonded over the USA Network show *Suits*, a legal drama starring the now Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle. I discovered the network of people who would share illegally downloaded shows on thumb drives and circulate larger files on 100 GB hard drives. Most people knew where to go to get high quality downloads, and although the more conservative devotees in the community looked down on this activity, watching *karmi*[20] shows did not seem to affect people's standing in the community. However, "uncontrolled" TV watching was often lamented by my informants as being in *maya* or illusion.[21] One informant, Ganga, made a declaration after a three-episode *Suits* binge that she was going to increase her chanting, and that doing so would help her "monkey mind," a Buddhist term to describe a restless uncontrollable mind. She smiled and I declared then that I too was going to not watch *Suits* and be more productive. Concealing taboo practices was something I witnessed and participated in quite a bit in Mayapur. Perhaps being a non-devotee anthropologist made people feel at ease. There was always guilt for these activities, and some rules were considered less morally reprehensible than others. For example, in my now decade involvement with devotees the one rule that could not be broken was knowingly eating meat. Other rules, like drinking alcohol or even trying drugs, though looked down upon were still things that the youth in Mayapur experimented with. When I asked friends between the ages of 18 and 35 if they ever tried meat, I always got an emphatic "No!" The logic for this was

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20 *Karmi* is an ISKCON term that acts as a catchall for everything non-Vaishnava. It means that engaging in *karmi* activities will only bind you further in the material world.

21 "Being in maya" is a devotee phrase that encapsulates anything that distracts or temporarily makes one blind to the correct spiritual path. For example, being beguiled by a beautiful woman or handsome man such that it makes you forget your celibate principles could prompt someone glossing the situation as "being in maya." Binge-watching TV rather than completing chanting one's daily *japa* rounds is also grounds for "being in maya."

that drinking alcohol, watching a TV show, or even having a sexual relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend, were forgivable transgressions. But killing an animal to satisfy one's desires was considered the true marker of a non-devotee.

Failing at being a devotee is "at the very heart of what it means to be a devotee. It is an integral feature of the spiritual journey" (Fahy 2017, 333). Yet, even though "failing well" (Fahy 2017) is part and parcel to life as a devotee, many people do in fact leave ISKCON because of the rigid regulations. To be a devotee is to constantly see one's "miseries and errors in their past behaviors," as a Chicano devotee articulated to me in an interview. "This," she continued, "is the only way newcomers can surrender fully to Krishna." If they do stay, the ultimate goal is for devotees to spend their life engaging in behaviors that use the material senses for loving and serving Krishna: the mouth chants and talks about Krishna, the ears listen to stories or "transcendental pastimes" of the Supreme, the eyes watch Krishna-centered videos and they read literature about Krishna, the hands make food for Krishna and write about him, the mind remembers Krishna throughout the day, the genitals are engaged to make children who would serve Krishna and so on (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.23). Prabhupada disseminated this particular value system of Gaudiya Vaishnavism world wide by translating texts and scriptures into English over the course of his twelve years touring the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, USSR, and many other countries.

4.7 Mayapur Today

After Srila Prabhupada died in 1977, the main face of ISKCON in the West changed from an aged Indian guru to millions of both Indian and non-Indian practitioners of bhakti yoga as well as other syncretic neo-Hindu practitioners (Rochford 1985). Following their guru's spiritual mandate to create a homeland for all devotees in Mayapur, the village has now become a hub of around 3,500 Bengali and other Indian residents alongside 2,500 international devotees many of whom are actively buying land in West Bengal through Indian lawyers who sign for the land in their own name as well as through marriage to local Bengali devotees. Mayapur's temple authorities have also been purchasing land in

Figure 4.5: The Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP)

the region for almost three decades developing and renting out apartments to foreigners who then bring their families, investments, languages and cultural practices.

Within this two-mile wide village there are several vegetarian restaurants, stores, a large publishing house, yoga studio, four ashrams that hold several hundred monks, five hotels with more development plans on the way. Other attractions include Prabhupada's Samadhi Temple, a museum dedicated to their holy text, *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is*, a large main *grhastha* (householder) area which contains the village school as well as leads to the boys' and girls' campuses. In many ways it is a religious enclave that Goffman (1961) would describe as a "total institution" where temple devotees like the celibate monks, married priests, women in the ashram (similar to nuns), and families spend the majority of their time. Most importantly, devotees work on the main project that brought all of them here together, to physically build an ideal city and temple for Krishna. There are construction sites everywhere. Many new building complexes are raised in former farmlands to house future devotees. And in the middle of the community, with two big cranes towering over everything is the main construction site of the temple, a huge concrete structure that, once finished, will almost equal St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican

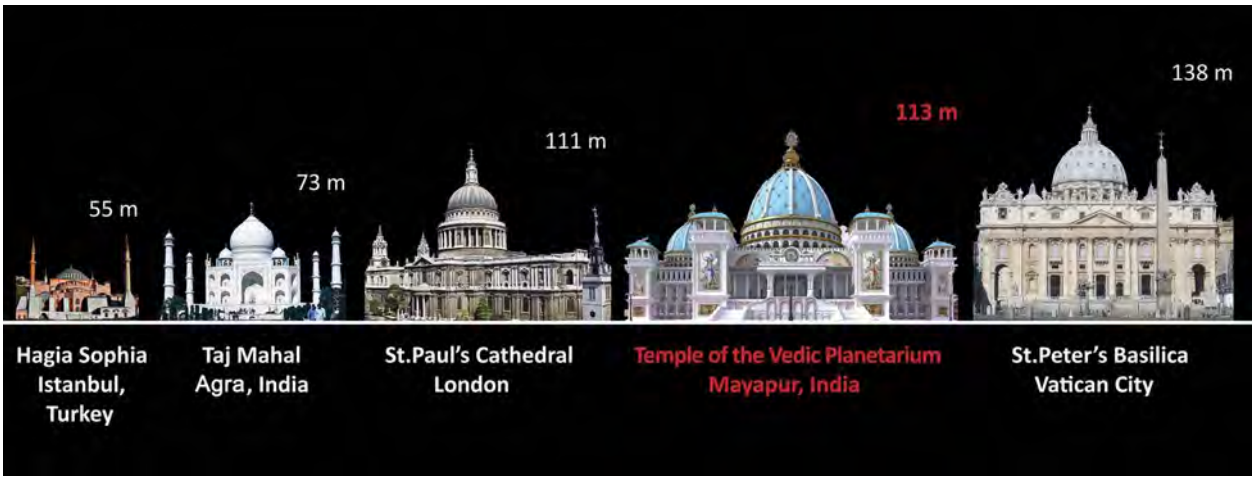

Figure 4.6: The Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) in comparison[22]

City in size. It is a multi-million dollar enterprise with worldwide donations, including significant contributions from rich families from Mumbai, London, or in one case, a twenty-five million dollar seed fund from Alfred Ford, grandson and heir to the 1.2 billion dollar US American automobile manufacturing fortune.

The huge scale of this city-making project is part of showcasing devotion as has been outlined in ISKCON:

> ISKCON devotees envision perfect devotion as disciplined and lavish services toward the deities' physical abode, for instance building huge temples and beautifying them, developing the roads in Mayapur for pilgrims, providing basic food and education to poor villagers, publishing high-quality devotional books and journals, and encouraging more and more people to become Radha-Krishna's devotees by preaching Krishna Consciousness all over the world from Mayapur, ISKCON's headquarters. (Sarbadhikary 2015b, 23)

In addition to the "lavish" quarters Sarbadhikary (2015b, 23) mentions above, the congregation needs to be diverse. The quote from the onset of this chapter captures this mood:

> I am very glad especially to see the small children from all other countries, and Indian, Bengalis, all together, forgetting their bodily consciousness. That is the greatest achievement in the movement,

22 From https://tovp.org/art-architecture-design/comparison-of-tovp-size-against-other-major-architectural-landmarks/, accessed on April 20, 2019.

> that everyone forgets the bodily conception of life. Nobody thinks themselves here as European, American, Indian, Hindu, Muslim, Christian. They forget all these designations. (Prabhupada's [(1976) 2006, 16] "Arrival Address in Mayapur Temple")

This hope that "Europeans, Americans, and Indians" will "forget their bodily consciousness" is recounted in scripture classes and in homes. When racial or ethnic tensions would arise,[23] people would deride the conflicts as people being "in maya" or "illusion" over the body. "Forgetting bodily identification" is the more colloquial phrase circulated in the devotee community, a 133-year-old ideal that fuels Mayapur's utopia project. Devotees are encouraged to accept all who practice bhakti as equal spiritually and to not have "material eyes" when looking upon fellow Vaishnavas, instead they should see the spirit soul in all living entities.

A caveat to this injunction to look equally upon living entities is that the domestic workers and other laborers who clean Mayapur are villagers from the surrounding area who do not live in the ISKCON compound. Gaining entry into ISKCON's quarters required being an ISKCON devotee and knowing someone already in the community who would vouch for your stay there. In theory, any outsider, including maids and other laborers could live in the ISKCON area[24], but the higher expense often precluded that option.

Domestic workers and other laborers are not uniformly looked after by ISKCON. Devotees are encouraged to not have maids or domestic help, but as devotee women are often alone managing their households and labor is inexpensive in rural West Bengal, both foreign and Indian households justified employing a maid to work for one hour five days a week. This labor can cost between 15 and 40 US dollars (3,150 to 8,400 Indian rupees) per month. An average foreign household of four persons (mother, father, and two children) required about five hundred dollars per month to cover rent, food, schooling costs, and other incidentals. Households that earned more than this could easily afford domestic assistance. One domestic worker could work for multiple households in the ISKCON compound, and

23 These tensions of course, do exist, but are not the focus of this dissertation.

24 For example, my husband and I were able to live there for two years.

could thus earn a large salary relative to other positions available to women in surrounding villages. However, as domestic workers have no protection or regulation from ISKCON, their treatment was variable. The topic of care and fair treatment to the laborers in ISKCON was not a topic of interest in the community that focused on building the temple above all other concerns.

4.7.1 Mayapur and the Communitarian Ideal

Working together on a common project to construct a temple and Vedic city with like-minded devotees, irrespective of national, linguistic, and cultural differences, and united by the same spiritual principles, is the main allure for families to migrate to Mayapur. This shared ideal of building a community and sharing life together is directly reflective of the communitarian ideal, characteristic of utopian projects discussed in the previous chapter. For mothers, a specific desire that I heard repeated was the hope that their children could benefit from shared devotee childcare options, spiritual education opportunities, being part of something historic,[25] and by simply walking in the dust of the Holy Dham (holy place). "The Dham will take care of them" was a phrase that I heard from a Japanese devotee mother, referring to the children at the international school. The sentiment of the land having protective power over the fate of their children was repeated by many adults in the community. Radharani, a Bengali-Australian single mother whose husband abandoned her shortly after she gave birth, recounted how tough her life has been but that she and her daughter would not have been okay "anywhere else in the world. [...] Only because of the mercy of devotees have I been okay." Devotees donated baby clothes to her in the early 2000s when she moved to Mayapur. And the community emphasis on sharing food meant that she and her child never went hungry. Her daughter, a teenager now, would complain to me that there is "too much food in Mayapur. I have to exercise!" Devotees not going hungry, despite not having a job, was something that repeatedly shocked me throughout fieldwork.

25 The ticking clock of saving one's soul during the fourth age is an important undertone to devotees migrating to West Bengal and raising their children "to benefit from the mercy of the Dham," discussed in the next chapter.

Despite individual successes with living in the community with shared ideals surrounding food and clothes, the care that is usually prescribed by the administration of utopia projects is absent in Mayapur. The institution of ISKCON does not mandate or directly regulate people's personal behavior, nor does it provide universal social nets to its constituents, as Utopian Socialists would have done. The fight for increased ISKCON social services like child care, a "protection team" for vulnerable devotees, or stable retirement fund is a constant battle within each temple in ISKCON. Each temple handles its own funding, contrary to the Vatican, where each church contributes to the wealth of the Catholic Church as a whole.

As Mayapur is the international headquarters of ISKCON, there are two governing structures that preside over it. The first is The Governing Body Commission (GBC), which started in 1970 as Srila Prabhupada was trying to ensure continuity of the movement after his death. Prabhupada did not want any one person to be in charge of ISKCON so he enlisted twelve members to continue promoting Krishna consciousness in the world and improve standards of temple management. Those twelve members have changed over the course of fifty years but the institutional structure and power of the GBC has endured and it oversees the entire movement. The second governing institution in Mayapur is focused on community needs and is referred to as "Management." Management attends to temple needs, outreach programs, tourism, and provides visa assistance for foreigners and oversees schooling. Management comprises a board of community men who are appointed their position by those in the GBC. No community-wide elections are held for any leadership positions but community members are able to voice their opinions through online forums and complaints to their personal gurus who have sway in the GBC. Management changed continuously across eighteen months of research.

Communal aspirations are left to individual devotees or subsets of devotees to accomplish for themselves. The ways in which Mayapur outlines its version of religious utopia are vested mostly in the promises of the soul's self realization through personal asceticism and renunciation of things, rather than investing in widespread material nets or comforts. One of the mothers who participated in this research complained about the lack of community in Mayapur: "I came to Mayapur to live with devotees, but Management is no good. You are on your own here except for friends. [...] Management

should take care of devotees. What do they do? Nothing." In this vein, ISKCON is an aspirational utopia community that struggles to meet many of their constituents' own expectations of communal dependency (expectations implied in their brochures to live in Mayapur)—a community still figuring out how to live on earth together, as they prepare for their exits out of the "material realm."

4.7.2 Mayapur as Utopia

Varuni Bhatia, in *Unforgetting Chaitanya*, interprets the Baul poetry and songs of the entire Nadia district as a "sacred utopia" (Bhatia 2017, 205–6). The Baul poem I will reproduce here is her translation from Bengali:

Tin pagoler hoilo mela Nade eshe

Tora keu jash ni o pagoler kache

Chaite-Nite-Advai pagol nam dhoreche

Tora keu jash ni o pagoler kache

Those three madmen come together in Nadia

Don't you wander close to those mad ones!

They have taken the names Chaitanya-Nityananda-Advaita

Don't you wander close to those mad ones!

She reads the madness assigned to Chaitanya, and his contemporaneous disciples Nityananda and Advaita as part of the madness assigned to those with impossible dreams: "Nadia is here an allegory for a sacred utopia, a nowhere land where our three madmen spend their time eternally defying all human laws" (Bhatia 2017, 205). In its longer form, the poem is also a warning for those that follow them, for they too may go mad. According to Bhatia,

> the Mayapur movement had as its goals the establishment of a universal religion based upon the teachings of Chaitanya. In this movement, Chaitanya was neither local, nor Bengali; he was the most complete representation of the concept of the universal Godhead, and hence beyond any considerations of time, space, and context. In much the same way, his birthplace, too, was perceived as lying beyond the limitations of time and space—it was a nowhere land, literally a utopia. (Bhatia 2017, 163)

This understanding of utopia as a product of the tension between a nowhere located somewhere in the minds, hearts, and later hands of devotees is where this dissertation lies.

It might sound contradictory that one would have to physically move from one location on this planet to another if the ultimate goal is to leave the material realm altogether. Or, that a massive temple would have to be built out of concrete and steel in order to advance bhakti yoga practice and anti-materialism. However, there is no contradiction if we consider that "Mayapur" exhibits a polyvalent semiotic structure. It is a place that can be located on a map 130 kilometers north of Kolkata. This is where devotees from all over the world migrate to and where the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium is being built. Yet, at the same time, Mayapur, as the birthplace of God himself exists in a different realm not on this planet, outside of space and of materiality.

This has its structural counterpart in the polyvalency of the concept of "the material world." On the one hand, it refers to the actual physical world as "matter," what devotees call *maya* or "illusion." On the other hand, it refers to the world outside of Mayapur and Western countries in particular. It is the desire to escape this "material world" in both of its senses that is the motivating factor for devotees to migrate to Mayapur, as evidenced in the narratives of the women that will be discussed in the next chapter. Thus, Mayapur, as a place that is not of this world, but yet can be reached by plane, boat, or train, is the inevitable stepping stone for getting out of the rat race and eventually reaching *goloka*, Krishna's abode. Within the semiotic ideology (Keane 2007) of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, there is an indexical link, i.e., a relationship of contiguity and correspondence between the material world and the West, on the one hand, and non-materiality and Mayapur, on the other. This also explains the immense appeal that physically relocating to Mayapur has for so many devotees.

The idea of utopia, itself a mobile concept (Appadurai 1996) that was brought to India with British colonial presence and literature, has profoundly shaped the specific Gaudiya Vaishnava Utopian impulse, which then moved back to the West and elsewhere with Prabhupada and attracted thousands to migrate to Mayapur. At the same time, utopia is a crucial analytical concept for understanding the specific semiotic configuration of Mayapur as a location on the map and a city being built at a particular moment in history, yet at the same time lying outside of time and space as ordinarily per-

ceived. Thomas More's double entendre of utopia as "non-spatial site of happiness" may not have been informed by religious understandings of spatiality and temporality, yet it is a concept that perfectly encapsulates the particular configuration of Mayapur.

Lastly, this also justifies the description of Mayapur as utopian in the sense of a project aimed at "world-reformation," while the ultimate goal might be leaving the world behind, if not "world-renunciation." The temple-, community- and world-building efforts of devotees and the proselytizing mission to convert the world through food, song, and dance become vehicles, sign-vehicles that literally transport Mayapur's inhabitants out of the material realm. The urgency of this project, and the imminent dystopic future of the material world that is looming large over human souls will be explored through women converts' narratives in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Narratives of Entrapment—Dystopia/Utopia

> *Feminism failed me.* [...] *I was raised in this movement where mothers and motherhood is exalted, but my teachers in the Krishna school were part of the feminist movement in the seventies, they brought that with them. They encouraged us to go to college and to pursue careers. So, I applied to college, and I went.* [...] *Then I got pregnant* [...] *Eventually, I dropped out. I felt like I failed my teachers and my family. My ashram teacher was disappointed with me. They made me feel ashamed. I wouldn't have gone through that if motherhood was valued.*
> (Gita, 29, white North American, raised Hare Krishna)

> *I went to the top engineering school in India, and I was working in a firm for a female CEO. I used to really admire her.* [...] *She was top in her work, a mother, was married. But one day I heard her talking on the phone trying to arrange something for her children and she was stressing, really stressing. She obviously wanted to be there, but couldn't be. I just knew that wasn't what I wanted.*
> (Indulekha, 36, Punjabi Indian, converted from Islam)

Gita and Indulekha grew up in very different traditions, countries, religious backgrounds, speaking different languages, and participating in different cultural practices. One was raised by North American Hare Krishna converts in Florida; the other is a convert from a secular Muslim family from Punjab, raised in Delhi. Both women's families invested in their daughters' college education, and both women felt that "the modern world" had put undue stress on their lives and that their jobs undermined motherhood. Though Gita and Indulekha appear to be very far from each other's experiences, this chapter addresses what brings together their histories and present involvement with the Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnava religion and Hare Krishnas: a sense of being tricked or trapped in the world and a need to escape that place for the sake of their children.

Earlier chapters have discussed the utopian concept and the creation of this particular Gaudiya Vaishnava utopia. This backdrop set the stage for thousands of devotees to migrate to Mayapur in

order to take part in the religious city-making project. Women and children comprise a majority of Mayapur's inhabitants as fathers are often absent for months at a time as they earn a living in other parts of India or abroad.[1] Women are also the main motivators for migration to Mayapur, as there, women can be protected by men as well as be protectors of children. Men feel comfortable to leave their wives and children in Mayapur for a few months each year as they work abroad; and women expressed feeling like they could be the mothers they wanted to be there. Mothers' personal histories articulate why they left what devotees call "the material world" to seek refuge in their utopia. As utopia is an ideological creation vested in hope and escape, their stories about migration cast into relief critiques of the worlds they left behind. The women belong to a non-liberal fundamentalist religion and cite injunctions from *sastra* (scripture) to dedicate their energies to their families. They also recount their own personal awakenings to the problems of the world as rationale to migrate and protect their children.

This chapter analyzes *narratives of entrapment*. I interviewed forty-seven women, thirty-one of whom were mothers. Twenty-nine mothers left their jobs to be stay-at-home mothers prior to moving to Mayapur. Interview topics ranged from how they first heard about or met devotees to everyday life in Mayapur. Across these interviews were recurring themes of feeling trapped and failed by the world-out-there, both ideologically (as in Gita's "Feminism failed me" account above) and practically (as in the specter of being an over-worked mother for Indulekha). The narratives disclose the dystopic "material world" in contrast to the allure and freedom of life in Mayapur for working women seeking a community in which motherhood is exalted. In Mayapur, stay-at-home mothers are the norm, and their children are protected. I juxtapose life history narratives from eight married devotee mothers with two devotee men's apocalyptic narratives of limited time on earth to contextualize other types of lived entrapment and felt dystopia within the Mayapur devotee community.

Devotee mothers' narratives of entrapment resemble life histories of North American black women who converted from Christianity to the Nation of Islam (NOI) documented by historian Ula Taylor

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1 The largest group of males present in Mayapur are *brahmacari*s or celibate monks living in temple property.

(2017). Black women found power and relief in what became a NOI black utopia project in Detroit between 1930 and 1975. Taylor analyzes the religious and racial background uniting their conversion to Islam and choice to live within the gendered conditions of belonging to the Nation. In White America the women felt unprotected and denigrated. Joining the Nation uplifted their racial identity to one of Black pride. Mothers no longer needed to be in the oppressive workforce.[2] Belonging to the NOI allowed an escape as well as freedom to run their household and community, while men reliably labored for the Nation. More generally, it has been noted that women's involvement in non-liberal or fundamentalist religious traditions that uphold strict gender divides has afforded women's empowerment (Hawley 1994; Griffith 1997; Harding 2000).

Devotee women's identities represent different racial, linguistic, ethnic, religious, national, and class backgrounds. Though very different from the black women in the NOI, the devotee women share a thread of commonality: they articulated frustration with the socio-political status quo for stay-at-home mothers. As Gita's quote above states, "Feminism failed me."

5.1 The "Non-Liberal" Religious Woman

Over the last twenty years liberal democratic states have mobilized negative stereotypes of Muslim women's belonging to "non-liberal" religious traditions as justification that Muslim women need to be liberated by the West. The implications of the term "non-liberal" were promptly critiqued by religious and feminist scholarship (see Mahmood 2001, 2005; Abu-Lughod 2002; W. Brown 2012; Scott 2018). Saba Mahmood (2001, 2005) critically examines forms of female agency in an Islamic revival movement of women in Egypt, questioning assumptions that fundamentalist religion is in and of itself opposed to the feminist agenda. Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) argues in "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" that "freedom" and "liberation" are normative, Euro-American liberal lenses through which

2 Also, it meant that there was a community that exerted religious pressure on men requiring that they become providers before marrying. This was a huge difference to their Christian experiences where a wife is expected to make a man out of a boy, whereas in Islam within the Nation it was required that you first be a man (with a job, stability, and community approval) before you have a wife.

Islam and Muslim women are viewed. They are held accountable by liberal[3] standards embedded in a Euro-American assumption that "freedom" universally means emancipation of its citizens from the "illogical" beliefs of the past. As noted by Webb Keane,[4] the expectation that truly free agents will be rational, secular, and modern is integral to the "moral narrative of modernity" understood as

> a largely tacit set of expectations about what a modern, progressive person, subject, and citizen, should be. [... Where] progress is not only a matter of technological mastery, economic organization, scientific knowledge, environmental disaster, or certain forms of governance [... but is also] a story about human emancipation and self-mastery. (Keane 2007, 8)

With regard to women, the moral narrative of modernity would also encompass the predominating Euro-American assumption that women everywhere are constrained by their male counterparts or larger patriarchal society and desire liberation (Mahmood 2005, 5). Feminist political theorist Wendy Brown (2012) contests these assumptions about choice and freedom. She brings to light assumptions that allow liberal democratic states to tout freedom, individualism, and tolerance while mandating what women can and cannot wear, including bans on burqas and headscarfs in public space in North America and several European countries.

> The idea that Western women choose while Islamic women are coerced ignores the extent to which all choice is conditioned by as well as imbricated with power, and the extent to which choice itself is an impoverished account of freedom. (W. Brown 2012, 10)

Brown cites Leila Ahmed (1982), who points out the hypocrisy of many Western feminists who denounce sex segregation in religious contexts as subordination while at the same time endorsing women-only venues in their own non-religious contexts as a challenge to the powerlessness of women in male spaces (women's colleges, women's centers, women's teams etc.). Brown, as well as Joan Scott (2011, 2018), point out gender asymmetry as well as bias, hypocrisy, racism, and ethnocentrism with regard to who gets to "choose" and who is "oppressed" between and across secular Western and

3 Liberal is here referring specifically to the ideas connected to individualism, egalitarianism, and meliorism.

4 See also Weber ([1916] 1958), Toulmin and Goodfield ([1965] 1982, 115–23), and Jenkins (2000).

"non-liberal" contexts. I will not reproduce their arguments here but only mention these hotly debated questions to toggle or throw into abeyance assumptions that women who belong to or, I would add, convert to so-called non-liberal religious traditions are oppressed and in need of saviors from the secular West. In the case of converts there is an added layer of critique about women they are leaving behind in favor of something that they deem better (U. Y. Taylor 2017). The following narratives attend to devotee women's critiques.

5.2 Tricked, Trapped, and Unprotected

Self-formation is in part a continuous narrative process. "Personal narrative is a way of using language or another symbolic resource to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present, and as yet unrealized experience" (Ochs and Capps 2001, 2). The personal life histories of the mothers interviewed depict their reasons to move to Mayapur as grounded in protecting their children from a world that endangers its inhabitants. Although Gita was born in the movement, she was attracted by the allure of the material world and its universities. What she experienced left her convinced, however, that it is not a place where she wants to raise her children. She immigrated to Mayapur to protect them from what she faced. Indulekha was quite content practicing a devotional life with her husband in the Middle East, but once her eldest daughter began to become friends with a popular girl in public school whom Indulekha found to be rude and exemplified "the personality of success" in the material world, she and her husband began searching for ways to leave not only that school but also the material world. When they visited Mayapur and the school, they decided to give away many of their possessions in the Middle East and migrate to the devotee homeland project. Gita and Indulekha's accounts are supported by the accounts of six other formerly out-of-the-home working mothers' stories. Some wanted to keep their children away from the "endless screens" of the world. Others voiced "shock" at school curricula in which homosexuality is discussed in primary school. Most wanted a space where their children would be able to practice a

life in service to God away from the "craziness" of the world.[5] These mothers left "the material world," but the interviews betray a sense that they felt the material world left them first, long ago. A sense of being tricked, trapped, and unprotected by the societies they left propelled women to not only leave their jobs but to eventually leave their countries.

5.2.1 The Material World

As explained in the previous chapter, "material world" is a cover term for the non-devotee world. Mothers' complaints about this world often sounded like a trap on several physical and spiritual levels. Mothers focused on the negative effects of "material" items. They voiced their desire to raise their children away from the vices of mass consumption and the felt necessity to earn a lot of money and achieve status. Indulekha, the convert from Islam, quoted at the onset of this chapter, noted that she did not want her kids to be "pressurized" into becoming "achievers." Indulekha cites the emphasis on "simple living" as the main draw to the religion. She is Punjabi and moved from Delhi to Pune for college, then to Oman after marriage, and then again to Mayapur to safeguard her daughters from "absorbing" the competitiveness and bad values promulgated in the school system, which sets them up "to become consumers":

INDULEKHA: I didn't want her to go to regular school,
because I thought, (.4) How will that work?
They're gonna teach you to (.5) uh:: indulge, (.2) that's the whole (.2)
underlying (.) uh principle, you know,
TERUKO: mm hm
INDULEKHA: that you get all this, *((gestures to sparsely furnished living room))*
so that you can buy things and like that.
TERUKO: Yeah=
INDULEKHA: =So it starts from (.) very young. To be, achievers. And like that.

5 Devotee parents that can afford private school in their home countries send their kids to private Catholic or Lutheran schools, but as most devotees are not wealthy, this option is unattainable for them. Migration to Mayapur is actually cheaper where annual school fees range between 500 and 600 US dollars per child.

Being an "achiever" is not an ideal held in esteem in many devotee families. Children are encouraged to focus on cultivating a life of devotion to Krishna rather than material things, a line frequently drawn in conversations about purchasing technological gadgets. Mayuri, a white South African woman said that moving to Mayapur stopped her sons' constant whining and requests "to need so many useless things like iPads, cell phones, and other material things. They come here, they have friends, and all that just disappears. [...] It's so much easier to be a parent here." These mothers want a "simple life" surrounded by like-minded families. This ideal is somewhat achieved, as children's requests for "material things" dissipate amid a very active social life playing with peers in neighborhoods and the temple. Yet, the "material world" is still accessible through the internet, and their lifestyle is only possible because of the mobility and transnational economy afforded by late capitalism. Choosing to be simple is, in this context, a choice laden with privilege. What is striking about Mayapur's mothers is their emphasis on detachment from things, refocusing on community with and service to other devotees as the pathway to Krishna.

These stances are similar to early Christian teachings that "things can only be means or impediments to the attainment of the Kingdom of God, while relations between men involve subjects made in the image of God and predestined to union with Him" (Dumont [1983] 1986, 36). Louis Dumont ([1983] 1986) explains how modern Christianity is a reversal of that stance, where bounty becomes emblematic of a good relationship with God, not communal relations with others. He traces the emergence of individualism within early Christianity and proposes that sharing property between people is more important than individual ownership of said property. Dumont ([1983] 1986, 36) continues, "the teaching of Jesus concerning wealth as an impediment to, and poverty as an asset for, salvation is addressed to the individual person." For devotees, being born into a wealthy material position is commented upon as "good" karma, and has more to do with one's own past actions rather than as a divinely given bounty. Material wealth as an indicator of good karma appears contradictory in a religion that promotes devotees limit their own wealth, but although Hare Krishnas recognize wealth as an index of one's karma, they also see it as something which will keep someone away from the true meaning of life. If you have many material comforts, it is less likely you will seek out God or develop personal

qualities that will prepare your soul for a life serving God. Thus, while material wealth is an indicator of one's good (material) karma, it also obfuscates the purpose of human life as devotees see it, and is thus a double-edged sword.

Mayapur's existence and rapid growth at the turn of this century is, I argue, not a coincidence. It is an attempt to live a life of a bygone era today. The desire to return to physical walls, to a removed physical utopia space, to the romanticized and clear-cut tenets of behavior and life are interrelated pulls as a response to the age of globalization and a way to wall out the global or, as many of my respondents say, to "stop working [for material life] like a donkey" and "get out of the rat race" to get out of the material world.

5.2.2 Being Unprotected—"Feminism Failed Me"

"Women are strong in the Vedas," Gita explains to me in one of our transcription sessions. She is responding to my inquiry about chastity and what it means to her. Chastity is a woman's strength to command her household, rear children, grow community, and oppose those who threaten these domains. Gita is a married white US American mother of three children who used to envision life in the academic world when she was pursuing her bachelor's degree in religious studies in the United States. As one of my transcribers for the children's video data, she brought many insights into the movement, both critical and hopeful. Her parents were both converts, and she is still very close with them. Born in the mid-1980s, her formative years were spent across countries, mainly the United States, India, and Australia. She attended devotee community schools in the United States and India but attended public school in Australia, an experience she does not recount fondly. She had difficulty in the new setting, was teased for her non-brand name clothes, and desperately tried to make friends with little success. Her only friend was an aboriginal girl whose parents, Gita recalls, were alcoholics. This memory stayed with Gita and stood for what the material world was: a place where innocence is lost.

> I've lived in India since the late eighties, and people here didn't have as much as they do now. We didn't have much either. Living with devotees back then, the community didn't have

> running water! We bathed in the Ganga. But our homes were always clean. Devotees are always clean. We have to be because of our deity worship.
> [In Australia at her friend's house] I remember I was thirsty and needed water, so I got a cup and sipped what I thought was water, but it was alcohol! I was so innocent, I had no idea what it was. I don't want to sound mean, it wasn't her fault. But still, that would not happen with devotees.

The differences between Gita's experiences of Bengali and white immigrant devotee families in rural Bengal and one aboriginal family in Australia informed Gita's impressions of how Vaishnava religion positively impacts lives. For her, the difference between the two situations seems vested not in national history, racism, or classism, but rather religion. That encounter stood for the world. It affirmed that being a devotee where cleanliness and rules about consumption were strictly followed created a better life no matter your circumstances. Gita continued to discuss her time at public school and with the non-devotee world, a place she continued to hold curiosity about for years: "I was so curious about that [non-devotee] world," she admits. "I rebelled like any teenager would and was interested in boys." Adolescence is frequently the marker of departure from chaste norms and expectations for girls. Whenever devotee girls are the subject of gossip or when devotees lament their "rebellious teen years" it usually indexes dating or flirting with boys. The material world shattered their innocence.

Gita always excelled academically and was encouraged by her family to go to college. Hers were converted devotee parents who still saw value in "material education." She enjoyed her time at university. Around nineteen, she was overjoyed to receive a prestigious summer internship at a British university in the early 2000s. Gita was interested in pursuing a career in academia and excited to flex her intellectual abilities and network among potential colleagues. Her parents had no problem with her going alone, because a couple of devotees worked at the university and they believed she would be okay. While in England, a male graduate student took an interest in Gita and soon they started a romantic relationship. He was kind and good to her, but she was not ready for "that sort of serious man–woman relationship." Gita ended up living with him that summer, and "none of the people at the university seemed to care or notice." She thought that she was smart and could handle the world and men, but that this was actually not the case:

GITA: I thought that I was cool. I was so smart. I knew everything.
And my parents had so much trust in me. Too much. I was so young.
They just let me go to England on my own
and just trusted I would be okay with devotees.
I met this grad student in [an English University]
and, well, we fell in love, I guess.
He was nice and everything.
But I look back and none of that would have happened if I was protected.
Women need to be protected.

TERUKO: Will you let [your daughter] go [to university]?

GITA: We'll see what she wants.
But for now, we moved here
so that the children would be surrounded by devotees, be protected.

At this point in our conversation she states a common phrase in the Krishna community: "I didn't have any protection." She was not referring to contraception. "Protection" here indexes community protection. If she had not gone to England, if her parents had protected her and not let her pursue this internship abroad alone or at all, this experience would not have happened. "Having protection" means having guardians who will protect your chastity, even when you may not want such protection. "Chastity" is understood among devotees as a woman's shield of honor and though it is often about not having sex, it is a cover term for a paradigmatic set of behaviors such as proper comportment around men meaning not being alone with a man who is not your husband and not laughing with a man who is not your husband (i.e., it will be perceived as flirting). It means speaking well (not gossiping or not cursing), serving Krishna, and serving one's husband and children with devotion. For Gita, her relationship with the English graduate student, a non-devotee, left her unprotected. Though she affirms that she was not raped or molested, she did not think it was right that such a relationship occurred in the first place. When she was getting ready to leave England, she says the graduate student told her that he loved her. She was flattered. "Having this feminine power over men, it is so tempting to use this and see what it can do." But Gita did not love him. Something was not right about how the relationship happened. Although she remembers him fondly and they are friends on Facebook, she interprets this period in her life as one in which she understood what chastity in the scriptures meant.

Chastity protects women from men, keeps them from experiences that will alter them and make them feel, as Gita did, confused and alone. "Women will seek a protector. They just gravitate towards one. So without my parents and community, of course there's a man." This comment alludes to a circulated sentiment in devotee communities: because women are "tender-hearted," they are easily swayed by men. After England, Gita returned to the United States and her university studies. She found that her curiosity about the world abated, as did her belief in feminism:

GITA: Feminism failed me. *((said with a tone of anger and shock))*
TERUKO: Really?
Even though this movement doesn't push forward feminism?
Why was that even a problem?
GITA: I was raised in this movement where mothers and motherhood is exalted
but my teachers in the Krishna school
were part of the feminist movement in the seventies
they brought that with them.
They encouraged us to go to
college and to pursue careers.
So, I applied to college, and I went.
I did that whole England thing.
[Back in the United States] I met my [husband]
and then I got pregnant
It was so hard to keep my focus in school and besides,
being in university was not healthy for my spiritual life.
The world takes a toll.
Eventually, I dropped out.
I felt like I failed my teachers and my family.
My ashram teacher was disappointed with me.
They made me feel ashamed.
I wouldn't have gone through that if motherhood was valued.

Gita was raised within ISKCON and encouraged to engage with the world-out-there. The first generation of North American Hare Krishna converts pushed their daughters to fuse the academic route with their chanting and spiritual practice. Yet, that world hurt her. If she had stayed in her community, she would have been protected. Frustration towards that generation of Hare Krishnas in the US undergirds this part of our interview.

> They needed to choose, and they didn't. It made life confusing for us. We were living in a farm community in [the US] and then going to school with non-devotees. [...] I tried to do both, and it's just not possible to be a strong woman according to *sastra* [scriptures], have children, and do right by yourself and family while also being content in that world. That isn't the mission here. And it was stressful. I didn't want that. I cannot understand women who want all of that. I'm exhausted some days being a mother and wife, how can doing the rest be good for the family, for the children? *((laughs in amazement))*

Gita links her experience with the foil to her story, the non-devotee woman. Assuming women the world over are stressed and have been hurt by men and lack of protection (she cites again her time in Australia and England), Gita sees life as a devotee as the most logical solution to these problems. Where she could have been trapped in whatever ails women in the material world, she found respite in Mayapur both for herself and her family.

The experiences in public school and with her first boyfriend in England strengthened her resolve to protect her own children. She and her husband, a devotee also raised in the movement whom she met in the US, moved to Mayapur to raise their children. "The world takes a toll." Gita wanted to make sure that her children were "grounded in the philosophy and know what life is really about." Devotion to Krishna and living simply with your family became newly important goals for her, not a college degree and work beyond the home. She says that the happiest times in her life were in Mayapur among devotees and with Bengalis. She is fluent in Bengali and wanted her children to know the people who live where their religion originated.

> We have benefitted so much from Bengalis, from Srila Prabhupada, from our lineage of gurus. In America, we are weird, on the fringe. My kids won't feel that. Even though we are white and will never fit in here either, they will know they have spiritual roots in this land. They will speak Bengali.

Gita was one of a few non-Indian immigrants whose Bengali fluency surpassed mine. I frequently relied on her when I encountered translation conundrums. She firmly believes that all devotees living in Bengal should know Bengali. She even has a certificate from the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) for Advanced Bengali; she can read, write, and speak it. Gita can also speak Hindi and converses with Bengalis and Indian tourists frequently in Bengali and Hindi. She is also fluent in

Spanish, "because I grew up in Florida and it just makes sense to be able to speak it." In this way, she very much stood apart from newer immigrant devotees who could speak in basic Bengali but were not fluent. Gita represents the early generation of Mayapur's Hare Krishna children who learned Bengali as a result of playing with Bengali kids daily and who were required to take tests in Bengali. When these community mandates ended, fluency was reliant upon peer groups.

Gita moved to Mayapur to protect her kids from feeling "weird" for being devotees in the West. She wanted them to know the Bengali people and land from which their religion came. There was a towering sense that Gita had been let down by her ideas of what the material world was, finding disappointment and shock where there was once happiness and innocence. Preserving the latter for her own kids, she has taken measures ensuring as best as she can that they will not be duped by the allure of the world-out-there.

5.2.3 Being Duped

In Mayapur, devotees lament over the modern woman. Her desire to work outside the home, her so-called loose morals, and "her feminism" are nodes of common discourse. "Feminist" could be a slur or compliment, depending on the devotee to whom it referred. But when used in temple class and lectures it was, without exception, the straw-woman responsible for the failures of modern society. In this perspective, it is in the woman's body where the quality of the human civilization resides. Mothers bear the responsibility to be chaste so as to not birth unwelcome and therefore uncared for progeny burdening society. Men are not considered responsible for this charge. This logic was communicated through quoted or paraphrased passages from the Founding Guru, Srila Prabhupada.[6]

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6 In Srila Prabhupada's translation of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (chapter 6.1, purport), he writes, "The fault of illicit connection with women is that it makes one lose all brahminical qualities. In India there is still a class of servants, called *śūdras*, whose maidservant wives are called *śūdrāṇīs*. Sometimes people who are very lusty establish relationships with such maidservants and sweeping women, since in the higher statuses of society they cannot indulge in the habit of woman hunting, which is strictly prohibited by social convention. Ajāmila, a qualified brāhmaṇa youth, lost all his brahminical qualities because of his association with a prostitute, but he was ultimately saved because he had begun the process of bhakti-yoga."

Prabhupada described how men "woman-hunt" and that only societal rules curb them, such that men of higher status in society feel restricted from hunting women in their own class or caste and therefore hunt women of different or lesser standing. This appears to be a charge against men's morality. Devotees report that the nature of "low" men is to woman-hunt and that in Kali Yuga (the current Iron Age), most men are "low" men.[7] Therefore, men will not stop their proclivity to hunt women unless forced to by societal norms such as marriage, religion, class or caste barriers, the law, and a woman's own chastity. Culture and the wife regulate men under this logic. Assaults, therefore, on the institution of marriage or religion, and the sexual freedom of women are framed by devotees as very dangerous for women. In an ideal Vaishnava utopia then, men's sexual appetites are discouraged but recognized and somewhat forgiven. Women, instead, are expected to always self-regulate their own personal chastity.

When I asked about male culpability in creating children, responses would vary between "of course men are part of this, but if women are chaste, then men cannot be successful" to "but in a society where men protect women, and women's chastity is guarded, there would be no unwanted children." When asked about rape, devotees responded that such situations are not the norm and that in such a rare situation, perhaps abortion, otherwise not promoted among the Hare Krishnas, could be considered. Chastity is positioned as the great wall protecting the woman, her family, and society from the problems that follow "problematic women," also known as the "modern woman" or "the feminist."

In conversations with individual devotee women, aligning with feminism was done in a confessional tone, in whispers, and in secret with me, the feminist anthropologist. My status as a doctoral-degree pursuing woman in the community automatically placed me among the "working" women, allowing for two types of assumptions on my character. One, that I was a feminist. Two, that I was unchaste (i.e., promiscuous and prone to causing problems). Pursuing a college education in the West

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7 A widely circulated text that newly married couples refer to for advice on how to conceive good children, *The Book of Samskaras* (2004, v), attests that "since all men and women of Kali Yuga are *śudras*, *samskaras* are no longer suitable for them" and since humans are so degraded in the this age of this creation the only method to beget godly children is through chanting the *mahamantra*. Many devotees do everything within their capacity to follow the *The Book of Samskaras* to invite good souls into the man's sperm during sex.

as a woman was likened by Srila Prabhupada to being a "prostitute," as a college girl is unprotected, and due to her womanly tendency to be tricked by men, will give her body to man after man, and is therefore essentially a prostitute but not paid.[8] These assumptions about my chastity affected my research only once. I was at the receiving end of a verbal attack of my alleged feminist agenda to "show the children they don't need a man." Luckily, there was a host of other mothers vouching for my character throughout fieldwork, so my reputation was not harmed by any diatribes. Having my husband living with me in the field was also immensely helpful in proving that I had not been duped by what they understood to be the feminist agenda, i.e., to ensure that women do not marry or have children but instead give their labor to society or the nationstate Living in Mayapur symbolized a respite from that trickster.

5.2.4 Being Tricked—Realizing "It's a Real Trap"

Educated women who converted to the Hare Krishnas recount the "traps" of a woman's life in the modern world. Indulekha, for example, recounts a former self who believed in the "whole modern chatter" about the importance of being an individual who could be more for her family if she worked.

INDULEKHA: And by just just being in the mode of goodness is that-
and just by doing your duty you will get happiness
So you do get a sense of satisfaction
and that just happens when you really do it.

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8 During a press conference in Chicago (July 9, 1975), Srila Prabhupada was asked about women's education by a reporter. His response was: "These two qualifications required. She must learn how to prepare first-class foodstuff, and she must learn how to become chaste and faithful to the husband. Only these two qualification required. Then her life is successful. So try to do that. Ordinary education is sufficient, ABCD. This is all nonsense, so big, big, sound education and later on become a prostitute. What is this education? (laughter) To make them prostitute, it doesn't require education." There are a handful of quotes from Srila Prabhupada regarding women's education that it is unnecessary for their scholastic advancement beyond eighth grade. However, many devotees ignore this and extend the minimum requirement to completing high school. There is an internal battle on the topic of girls' education within ISKCON and decisions are left to individual families to determine what makes sense for them. Across the almost ten years I have worked with devotees, the only community with a high concentration of high school dropouts is in Mayapur. Two focal girls within my study left school after grade eight. Both girls were top in their class and one had high aspirations to pursue a career as an archeologist. Where her education is at now, that future appears unattainable.

INDULEKHA: So if you are a little hard heartened by it
then any little thing is a *((inaudible))*
If you think it's not working for me.
It's okay as a principle but it's not working for me.
Because as an individual- I can do more justice to my family if I'm working
Because that way I'm satisfied and then I can really give them quality time.
But that's really the whole modern chatter.
It's really trying to exploit that here you do your job

TERUKO: Hm

INDULEKHA: and you also contribute to the whole economy of the nation and all that
So it's really har- it's mental shift and if you think I want to try this.
I want to really give it my best shot because that's what sastra says
that's what Prabhupada says
there are devotees who do it
and they are happy.
So it really helps to get to a place and start to work on that
because otherwise we will never really see
how it's practically working for the whole family.

Indulekha recounts an inner monologue of a former self who believed the "whole modern chatter" about being an individual who could be more for her family if she worked. Here, the economy of the nation is held in opposition to one's family. This rhetoric is not hers alone, and devotees articulate work as a trap of modern life, the "chatter" that tricks people to place other agendas before one's own children and family. As such, devotees are rarely politically involved or take up causes of import in the material world, usually placing whatever problems of the world into an expected space of suffering. Jahnaki, an older Swiss woman in her seventies said, "The world *is* suffering. It is designed this way to make each soul question why they are here. It is meant to wake the real you up from this illusion." The problems of the material world are then cast off as inevitable required conditions to both keep people under illusion as well as wake certain people up.[9] Devotees recounting the "trap" of *maya* (illusion)

9 When I was conducting fieldwork during the 2016 presidential election, I asked European and North American devotees about Donald Trump, I received puzzled faces about who this man even was. The world and its politics were far away. Once he was elected, one British respondent stated that "demons are elected to match the people. The world's leaders are all the same in Kali Yuga." This was a quick dismissal that the world's problems were something

and the world as a trap designed with release in mind undergirds much of the impetus of families to raise their children in Mayapur, so that their children do not fall prey to this illusory trap.

Indulekha and other women met for classes in the temple and at each others' homes to discuss *sastra* (scripture) as well as life as women in the movement. Those who left the working world talked about the required "mental shift" before being able to fully embrace life as a devotee in Mayapur. "Society" was the entity that duped women into ignoring their "true nature" as mothers and wives. Madhurika, a white woman from New Zealand states:

> In society, it's a real trap, you know. I like to have some *seva* [service] for the family, but in society, in the working world, there's so much stress. You can't be the mother you want to be. You're exhausted at the end of the day.

And Malati, an Indian British woman in her twenties, expressed the embarrassment that she feels when people ask her what she does for a living.

> I say that I'm a babysitter and there's this face just dismissing that as an actual job. I mean, I know that what I do is important. Taking care of a child is a very important job, I mean you are trusting your child with someone. I take it seriously. But people, even some devotees in England, don't think that's a real career, to take care of children. I can imagine what mothers feel. No one respects childcare. It is hurting my self-esteem.

Malati views her time as a babysitter as preparation for when she becomes a mother. She plans to attend college to become a teacher but is disheartened that there is little value in her hope to be a full-time mother. She voiced feeling judged by fellow devotees in England for this choice, something which confused her. She plans on moving to Mayapur when she becomes a mother.

> Children are the most important beings. We are taught to care for them like deities. That is what ISKCON is supposed to do. And who cares for these deities? Hm? Women do. Maybe one day I will come to Mayapur. I hope so.

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to be concerned about in grand scales for Kali Yuga had been already been here for five thousand years, and it will only get worse. In the meantime, "chant and be happy." Chanting and doing one's duty (being chaste, in a women's case) is considered *the* key to the soul's exit from this world. (More on Kali Yuga at the end of the chapter.) Preferring to reach individuals, devotees are a departure from recent fundamentalist political engagement in the United States. For more on the rise of evangelical Christianity and its place in USpolitics see Susan Harding's (2000) *The Book of Jerry Falwell.*

Figure 5.1: Russian mother wearing a long *kurta* with pants and daughter with *gopi*-skirt

Mayapur stands here as *the* place to foster devotee children. It is not enough to live like a devotee and also stay in the material world. Mayapur is held up as a Vaishnava utopia. The modern world, including devotee life in the modern world, does not align with the principles of the movement, which encourages women to be first and only wives and mothers. Former embryologist Divya, who left her job in Delhi to be a stay-at-home mother, recounts:

> I could not be the wife and mother that I wanted to be and continue my work outside the home. Through devotees I finally felt that I met a community that could really explain the meaning of life. Work took so much of my energy, and why? I'm much happier now focusing on [my son]. Maybe when he's older I can do some part-time work in the devotee community but now it simply does not make sense.

Divya comes from a middle-class Hindu Indian background in Delhi. She shared her story of leaving the medical field to a small group of women in the community in her apartment. When I met her, she was in her thirties and had one three-year-old son. She expressed that she would have had more children had she taken to the principles of Krishna Consciousness earlier, but because of her studies and work, having children earlier was not feasible. "When I began to live by *sastra*, life became much

easier and I got everything I wanted." She and her husband can afford to live from his salary alone if they live "simply," thus allowing her to spend her days attending to her husband and her son. During Divya's lecture I wondered how she reconciled her position as a stay-at-home mother with that of her maid, who has children but comes to clean her house five days a week. When I asked this, she did not miss a beat: "If a woman must work to feed her children, then she must work. But if there is a way that the family can make it such that she cannot work, then she should not. Keeping the family together is the first priority, not money." This response is a clear indicator of the socio-economic logic undergirding preferred decisions to not work. Devotee women across class backgrounds face huge pressures to be full-time wives and mothers relying on their husband's income for support. Pride around being able to live frugally and show that you, the wife, can make sacrifices to keep the family as the priority and not "make the husband work like a donkey," as one male respondent phrased it, is seen as evidence of a woman's chastity. Chastity includes living in simplicity; a home filled with many things indicates an unsettled spirit that has not arrived at the true meaning in life: to love and serve Krishna.

5.2.5 Getting Out—The Spectre of Stress

Indulekha converted from Islam to Gaudiya Vaishnavism in her twenties. She is the eldest of three sisters. Her Punjabi family is "fairly secular"; her parents are educated and pushed their daughters to pursue advanced degrees. Indulekha met devotees when she was in college in Pune. She enjoyed their free *prasadam* (ritually-offered food to Krishna) but was not interested in any deeper engagement. Her mind changed when she met her now husband, who was reading Srila Prabhupada's translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Together they ate vegetarian food and eventually started chanting together. She became quite enthralled with the *Bhagavad-Gītā* but did not interact with any other devotee except her boyfriend. After college she moved with her family to Delhi and her boyfriend later also moved to Delhi. Her parents did not mind that she was chanting but they did not want her attending devotee meetings. Her main contact with the religion was through Prabhupada's books and lectures, as well as

conversations with her boyfriend. Her parents were not thrilled in the beginning, but she said that it was not a problem.

> Well, actually they didn't realize it was going to be a big change. It just slowly built up. They accepted one thing, and then another, and then another. They didn't realize that- you know, it was going to be a big lifestyle change for me. So um they weren't altogether happy about it, but they were reconciled. They saw that there's no harm done. More than me practicing they were upset when I wanted to marry Prabhu. It's a whole different background and then they started to get upset. But again, after a while they were reconciled. Because particularly, my family, my immediate family they are uh- we traveled around. They were not religious. They brought us up to be independent thinkers. So although they didn't like it, they couldn't really put their foot down. Because that's not the family atmosphere. *((laughing))* In this case it backfired for them. *((laughs))*

Before Indulekha was married, she and her boyfriend talked about her career. She wanted to be a stay-at-home mother, but her husband "was more practical." She recounts,

> He said that you've been so engaged with the world. You can't just suddenly stay home you won't be satisfied. So how about you study further, because that will also give you career options that you can do while you are home. So I decided to do my post-graduation and so did he.

They got married and then she moved in with his parents. She did her post graduate work at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, a top-ranked engineering university in India when she became pregnant with her first child. She studied up until she was seven months pregnant and then took one semester off from her studies to give birth and take care of her newborn girl.

> Can I tell you something funny? So I was studying- Most of the students they were not even married they go straight from graduation to post grad often times. And then I took a semester off and they said,"What happened? Why did you take a semester off?" "Oh, I had a baby." And they were all so shocked, because they had no conception! Married. A baby. And they couldn't imagine that it just happens this way.

The shock of her post-graduate cohort was a topic that she returned to as part of the "craziness" that women have been duped into believing: "that being married and having children will take away your happiness." Indulekha was firm in her convictions that these women would regret waiting to start a family, and that it is possible to have a child because that is a woman's natural inclination. In the

interview, I mention how lucky she is to have support. Indulekha's in-laws took care of her baby while she was at university, thus enabling her to complete her education. She admitted to being lucky but also points to Indian culture as that which allowed for "harmony and stability in the home": "But even though we are Indian, the modern world has its effects even here in India, breaking families apart and shifting values." Here again she cited her same-aged cohort's surprise at her marriage and pregnancy while in graduate school.

Indulekha felt lucky that she was part of a family that understood that children are of utmost importance. At this point in her life there was little need to disengage from the working world. She had social support for childcare; her husband encouraged her both in her studies as well as in pursuing career options. But her turn away from the world came when she began working. As quoted at the start of this chapter:

> I was working in a firm for a female CEO. I used to really admire her. [...] She was top in her work, a mother, was married. But one day I heard her talking on the phone trying to arrange something for her children and she was stressing, really stressing. She obviously wanted to be there, but couldn't be. I just knew that wasn't what I wanted.

The stress of the women at her workplace confirmed what she had been learning in the philosophy.

> And I could see oh yes, it says people are struggling and they are going after all these things and it's not making them happy. So it's not <u>things</u> that are going to make you happy, and we never <u>thought</u> about these things because that's what we were taught. That you study you get a job and that <u>will</u> make you happy.

It was not until Indulekha's husband received a job offer in Oman that she decided to forego trying to balance being a mother with working outside the home. She describes her days with her baby as a time of great joy and "real satisfaction." When her daughter started spontaneously chanting with her one day, she recalls how much she had been missing of her daughter's development. Satisfied as a housewife and content with life in Oman, Indulekha and her husband lived "in the material world" with their two daughters practicing devotional life with other Indian devotees in Oman.

This satisfaction ended when their eldest daughter, Kameswari, entered fifth grade and the timetables for the children required them to be at school for the majority of the day. As noted earlier,

Indulekha did not want her daughters to be "pressurized" to be "achievers." Living with less is a cornerstone of the Hare Krishna philosophy, and devotees who have too much are gossiped about in Mayapur and other temple communities. "Renunciation" is an attractive quality and thus being in an environment where people are enjoined to earn money and then use that money to shop and consume is considered to be a very "degraded" and "low mentality." The world of consumers and rude people was something Indulekha did not want her daughter to be surrounded by.

INDULEKHA: And I've noticed in na- (.) In Oman. By that time we had moved to Oman.
That in their relationships, (.) the girl who was (.) uhm (.)
very outgoing, very popular.
TERUKO: Yeah=
INDULEKHA: Everybody automatically <wanted to be her friend.>
TERUKO: ↑Myeah
(.3)
INDULEKHA: But ironically she was not a very nice person. (.4)
You know, she would sometimes be very, rude to them. (.3)
Or abrupt in her mannerisms and (.5) and (1.2)
and that was not the type of person I would imagine Kameswari,
to be friends with. But then (.6) everybody thought that she was so cool.
TERUKO: Right
INDULEKHA: So I thought that- that- that's so contradictory, that (.6)
Okay. It's one thing about what (.2) uh=
=you're pressurized to do in terms of your academics.
But even in terms of friends if there's this whole, (.6)
you know the pressure to be with the <in group> (1.3)
It's a bit early to be happening in school.

The pressure for academic success coupled with the "rude" and "popular kids" at her daughter's school worried Indulekha about the values her daughter would "absorb" from her environment.

INDULEKHA: Everybody (.3) was very (.) competitive.
TERUKO: Mmm
(.3)
INDULEKHA: (mm) it's it's just that (.5) you have to be so:: good (1.6)
or at least good in o:ne thing.

TERUKO: Mmm
INDULEKHA: And not just, reasonably good but you have to be the best at it.
TERUKO: Yeah
INDULEKHA: Like, "oh did you win the elocution?" Or,
"Okay maybe that's not your thing. Are you good in sports?"
"Oh, you're good in maths, but did you score the top (.2) marks in the class,"
TERUKO: Yeah yeah
INDULEKHA: You know?- So it was-
TERUKO: Right. right. right.
INDULEKHA: There was always that push to be (.2) uh- the perfect.
TERUKO: Mm
INDULEKHA: So: that was a bit disconcerting (.2) especially because (1.3)
Uh:: (.6) Kameswari is a very gentle person.=
=So I thought that it's not fair that she should- (.5)
We were not pressurizing her, but you're just in this environment
and you think that- (.4) "what am I really good at?"
TERUKO: Right. right.
INDULEKHA: You know? and, and sometimes you just ↑grow into it.
TERUKO: Right
INDULEKHA: And- and I tried to tell her, that the best thing you have is
is that you are such a kind person. (.4)
But that was just not enough. Because i-
it was not good enough for (.2) the people in general, that was never valued.
TERUKO: Mmm
INDULEKHA: No teacher would, (.) talk about these things that
TERUKO: Really?
INDULEKHA: Yeah.

Needing a better environment that encouraged kindness and devalued consumerism propelled Indulekha and her husband to search for alternatives. They visited Mayapur, and the whole family loved it. Within three months, they had packed their belongings in Oman and moved. It was a transition for the family, as it meant her husband would have to secure jobs in Delhi and Bangalore and commute between the village and the cities. It was a sacrifice they were willing to make. They had been living in Mayapur for three years, with no plans to return to the world beyond Mayapur.

INDULEKHA: And then we decided that we wanted to live?=
=and within a few months we packed up (.2) and we came here. (1)
And the children were very happy (here). Right from day one. (.4)
So it was very nice.=So the (.) reason I took the decision
was because I saw this was the turning point in her life.
TERUKO: Yeah.
INDULEKHA: And it's all very well the values we (.3) give (.2) to her, but (.5)
It's (.) obvious that you do absorb (.5) whatever environment you're in.

Induleka's story encapsulated many mothers' trajectories in conversion and migration. Her life changed incrementally, and once she made the "mental shift" that her children's environment is more important than anything else, she and her husband were able to leave Oman (and the money) for a "simple life in Mayapur." I encountered Indulekha in quite a few settings in Mayapur and she was outspoken in regard to how it is the woman who really has influence over the direction of her family. Moving to Mayapur is framed as a mother's choice, and if not for a woman's ability to reduce her "ego and put the family first," her children would suffer. "We had to leave Oman." I asked her about moving back to Delhi instead with her in-laws. She replied, "Oh no, Delhi is not what it used to be. It's just a normal city now. No *bhakti* [loving devotion of God]." She saw the material, consuming future that her children would have experienced, and she plucked them out of that world.

5.3 Trapped On Several Levels

In *The Future as Cultural Fact*, Appadurai (2013, 292) suggests that anthropology needs to make a systematic effort to "understand how cultural systems, as combinations of norms, dispositions, practices, and histories, frame the good life as a landscape of discernible ends and of practical paths to the achievement of these ends." Anthropologists, he suggests, need to "move away from the anthropological emphasis on cultures as logics of reproduction to a fuller picture in which cultural systems also shape specific images of the good life as a map of the journey from here to there and from now to then, as a part of the ethics of everyday life." Here, Appadurai brings specific futures back into everyday analysis by recognizing the "capacity to aspire,"—the culturally mediated capacity to wish for a better

future. Yet, it is not only aspiring for a better future that propels devotees; there is something looming in the horizon of a life misled.

Across decades of research with ISKCON and Bengali Gaudiya Vaishnavism, I heard framings of the future that influence the way in which devotees live. The notion of karma and the consequence of living immorally motivate many to seriously consider changing their life. The doctrine of karma has a variety of applications and meanings in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Among devotees, as in other traditions, "the idea of debt is moralized in the notion of karma" (Laidlaw 2002, 320). One's present life circumstances can be accounted for by one's past actions. Conversely, the future is affected by the actions of one's present doings. The ever-present time frame of cosmic time propels many devotees to seize the opportunity of this particular life to migrate to Mayapur and give themselves and their families their best chance at a "real" life beyond the "rat race of the material world." Karma, cosmic time, reincarnation, and a ticking clock for when the world as we know it will end are added laminations of why devotees migrate to Mayapur.

5.3.1 Dystopia and Kali Yuga

The following are apocalyptic narratives that frame being a devotee living in Mayapur as the most logical decision for devotees. Though this chapter focuses on mothers' narratives and tropes of entrapment and deception by the world, the following two accounts are from male converts who also discuss entrapment, albeit not in terms of motherhood, but rather as being trapped by time.

5.3.1.1 "Five Thousand Years to Get Out"

The excerpt below is from a conversation with Omkara, a European man in his twenties. We were discussing the auspicious time of becoming a devotee.

> We live in a very fortunate time. Mahaprabhu came to distribute the *mahamantra* five hundred years ago so that we could chant, and be happy, and get out the misery of this material realm. [...] Prabhupada said that there are only five thousand years to get out [of the material realm]. That's not a long time if you think of it. That's only about 62 lifetimes if you live until 80 years old each time. And that's only if you come back as a human. You could come back a cow, and

> get slaughtered within a couple years given how people are. Or, be a tree and stand wherever for hundreds of years if you don't get chopped down. But in this moment, in this human form of life, you have the tool to progress and to get out.

The "tool to progress and get out" refers to the *mahamantra*[10] that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu introduced in the sixteenth century in the Bengal region.[11] Chanting the *mahamantra* is considered the only way to exit the material realm and return to Krishna in *goloka*, Krishna's planetary abode that exists beyond the material. This place is unlike the Christian heaven, which devotees are always quick to remind newcomers to the cosmology. Heaven, their guru described, is still material; it is where celestial beings such as angels and demigods live. Heaven is opulent and beautiful but limited; there is always the assurance that one accrues karmic debt and reactions and therefore risks returning to Earth or downgrading to "hellish" planets. To escape this cruel game of the material existence, devotees chant the *mahamantra*, hoping at the very least, that they will be able to be reborn to devotee parents who can help them continue unfettered in their *bhakti* or devotional life with Krishna.

5.3.1.2 "What is Happening Now, is Actually Nothing."

Gopal, a middle-aged Indian convert to Gaudiya Vaishnavism, recounts the end of our world as a matter of fact in a scripture class. He holds as self-evident that climate change today is proof of the dystopia that started five thousand years ago and will reach completion in four hundred and thirty-two thousand years—a prediction in which any actions combating climate change have no bearing on the inevitability of Earth's destruction.

> God shows up in many forms. From the first *avatara*, Matsya [the fish avatar of Vishnu], the world was covered in a flood, one man was saved by Matsya. This was in Satya Yuga [the Golden Age]. [...] Since then there have been many *avataras*, Rama, Krishna, Buddha. [...] The last *avatara* of Vishnu is called Kalki. [...] The Puranas say [Kalki] will come on a white horse and destroy this world through fire, the world has already been destroyed by water, and next

10 Devotees are encouraged to chant the *mahamantra* as much as possible every day: *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa | Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare | Hare Rāma Hare Rāma | Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*.

11 Chaitanya and the mantra have been discussed in chapter 4.

> by fire in 432,000 years. [...] But now we have only five thousand years to get out and go back to Godhead. After that, there will be so much degradation. God's name will not be here. People will be like animals, and will not be able to think of God. We see it starting already. Actually it started five thousand years ago when Krishna left. Kali Yuga began at that time. What is happening now, is actually nothing. The planet will grow hotter. Everything will continue to degrade. The social fabric of society will break even more. The water. The air. The land. The animals. There will be no food, no milk. Vedas says people will eat each other, like snakes. People will look like humans but behave like animals. Everything degrades in Kali Yuga. In 432,000 years, it can only be destroyed before Satya Yuga can start again. But for now, Kali Yuga. The age of quarrel and hypocrisy. In this form of human life, only the most fortunate souls will heed Prabhupada and Krishna Consciousness. "Chant Hare Krishna. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way."

These accounts had become familiar to me over a decade of my inquiring about the material realm and why devotees feel the need to chant constantly, as many do: "There is no other way" to get out of the material realm unless one chants this *mahamantra.* Krishna's abode (*goloka*) beyond time and space, and beyond the material, is where devotees aim to go through service and chanting which purifies their soul. This phrase is canonical in the devotee community. It is taken from the translation of their guru (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.52), who was describing the end of the fourth age before Satya Yuga (the Golden Age) can begin again. The children in Mayapur know this phrase by heart. When a lecturer in temple scripture class or in their classroom begins to utter the following in Sanskrit, the children and adults join in emphatic resonance:

harer nāma harer nāma

harer nāmaiva kevalam

kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva

nāsty eva gatir anyatha

Name of Hare, Name of Hare, Name of Hare.

There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.

For Gopal, the end is imminent and pressing, even though five thousand years is considered far into a very distant future among non-devotees. Temporality is culturally configured; and cosmic time is near.

This reckoning resembles discourses on climate change that predict imminent doom in the twenty-first century. The changing planet is far and near simultaneously, because many people read the changes in weather as indexes of the not-too-distant future's end of time. For devotees, experiencing the body that you get in your next lifetime is dictated by a handful of factors, the most important one being "your consciousness" and your karma in this lifetime.

5.3.2 Deep Cosmic Time

Cosmic time is my expansion of a geological concept of deep time (Baxter 2004), coined by James Hutton (1726–1797) to describe geologic time which spans billions of years.[12] Cosmic time is something that links multiple lifetimes and epochs to the now. The body points to the past. One's behavior points to the future. Cosmic time here is an infinity loop that is bracketed linearly.

To understand the ways in which time impacts devotees' migratory trajectories, I draw from Keane's (2007, 20) "semiotic ideology," where he views "words and things together within one frame [... to] see how they interact within a single representational economy such that changes in some domains can have consequences in others." In other words, the way one draws lines between a material world or a spiritual world, for example, can change how time is viewed between these worlds, which can then change how a parent views their child's best trajectory in the spiritual world as opposed to a material one, which can then change whether they want to live in an urban setting close to the top schools or in the rural religious homeland to foster their spiritual education and so forth. Semiotic ideology, then, "is a reflection upon, and an attempt to organize, people's experiences of the materiality of semiotic form. Not only language but also music, visual imagery, food, architecture, gesture, and anything else that enters into actual semiotic practice functions within perceptible experience by virtue of its material properties" (21).

12 Hutton was able to counter his eighteenth century contemporaries who posited that Earth was six thousand years old by showing the contact and effects of two sedimentary rock in Scotland. Through Hutton's work, modern day science began to recognize Earth's billions of years history.

Cosmic time and the semiotic ideology it entails partly account for why Sundari, an eight-year-old who was a participant in this research, was not allowed to have a bunny. In addition to the extra work her mom, Sharada, would have in caring for it, she did not want Sundari "to get attached." This problem arose when I bunnysat my downstairs neighbor's two rabbits for one month. Sundari quite frequently came to visit my home, knocking on my door and chatting about the day's activities; but when I had the bunnies at my place, she came over every day to check on them. One afternoon, her mom came to pick her up, and Bali, the bunny, hopped next to Sundari. Sundari leaned over and kissed Bali on the nose. Her mother gasped slightly and said, "Sundari, you never told this was going on." Sundari shrugged and leaned into her shoulders; she was immediately regretful. After that, Sundari could not come to my house until the bunnies were gone. Her mother had on earlier occasions told me that to become so attached to an animal is not good. Instead, children are encouraged to attend to their own altars and deities with great affection and care. Deities need to be awakened, bathed, dressed, fed breakfast, fed again for lunch, given a midday rest, awakened, fed dinner, and finally laid to rest for the night. This is how a child's time should be spent—ideally, it is how all devotees' time should be spent, for it is the deities who should be cared for and loved, not a bunny.

Fostering an attachment to deities as opposed to pets is not only about adhering to religious principles, but also about setting up one's mental life to dwell on Krishna. This creates a trajectory to be eligible for entry into Krishna's abode. As consciousness dictates the body one will get, it renders attachments to a creature as foolish. One risks becoming that creature in the next life. In this light, it is understandable why Sharada would often scoff at devotees like my neighbors who would keep animals in the house.

Another example of how a concept of cosmic time laces through an experience is through the witnessing of a white British man in his early twenties who slept with a few young women in the community, engaging some and then breaking off those engagements systematically. He was a shocking presence in the community and eventually asked to leave Mayapur on probation for a few years. I was told that his behavior was akin to a dog; and that if men chase after women like dogs, they become dogs or women. If you behave like a dog you become one; or, if you meditate constantly about women,

you become one. The type of woman you become is dependent on a variety of factors from your past karma. One white North American preacher who was paraphrasing Prabhupada told me: "If a man wishes to enjoy women like a dog in heat, then it's the ultimate kindness that he should get the body to maximize his happiness, isn't it?" Similarly, devotees recounted the story of when Prabhupada warned a newcomer about his love of surfing, remarking that he should not surf, because he will become a fish in his next life. My consultant continued, "Human life is for advancement of consciousness. If a man wants to use his body like an animal, then he is in the wrong body, no?"[13] The future here is a wish-fulfilling space in which one is granted the body commensurate with the lifestyle that they lived and wanted in earlier lifetimes—thus, meaning a man can frolic and fornicate with no consequence as a happy dog would. But take caution; it can also be scary, for you might get neutered and then have to return for a second lifetime as a dog to fulfill that karma. Moving back up to the human form of life takes many lifetimes.[14] Underlying all of this is a ticking clock: you only have five thousand years to get out before Earth becomes an even more hellish place than it already is, so wasting a lifetime or several as a dog, tree, cat, fish or any other life form is not ideal for devotees.

Humans are not the only beings in this cosmology with "high" consciousness; indeed, they are in the middle of the consciousness hierarchy. Demi-gods, celestial beings (Apsaras, Kinnaras, Uragas, Patagas, Siddhas, Charanas, Kimpurushas, and Gandharvas, among others), ghosts, witches, and Rak-

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13 Humans and animals are here divided by the presence of cultural customs, and how a human behaves in the sexual arena becomes a key dividing line for whether one is human or animal. The devotees articulate a logic similar to zoomorphism in ancient India. In Doniger's (2005, 25) analysis of human and animal interactions in epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, "sexuality makes humans into animals; language makes animals into humans." Gaudiya Vaishnava devotees do not reference these texts in their logics for what qualifies someone as a human being or not. Authority is relegated to their guru's translations of the *Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

14 It took me a while to realize how opinions surrounding contraception in the community were actually informed by scriptural master narratives of cosmic time and karmic consequence. For example, to abort a fetus is considered by the majority of devotees as sinful. An understanding that did not dawn on me until the end of fieldwork was that the soul, who must yet again take birth in a womb, undergoes a process that all devotees cast as incredibly painful. Being in the womb is considered a type of hell, as growing a body is considered very painful. I asked Sharada, one of the Indian mothers, about pregnancy from the perspective of the child in the womb, and she said, "The worms bite the child in the womb [implying that the mother eats food and the child passes stool, in the stool there are parasites]. Those parasites attack the child. It is hell to be born. Some children remember their last life or lifetimes and are conscious in the womb. Can you imagine? Horrible. Ay Chaitanya!" Only when babies exit the womb do they mostly forget where and who they have been in prior lives.

sasas (demons) are all different forms of life that appear to be human in that they have the face and body of a human. Human beings, however, are considered very special to Krishna for their simple minds. This is why devotees give so much thanks to Vishnu for reincarnating as the Golden Avatara, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who distributed the *mahamantra,* considered a very easy "prescription" for the stupid humans in the Age of Kali.

This description is not to cast devotees as constantly meditating or obsessing on the end of Kali Yuga and the forms of life that they could become. I provide this account as a backdrop to understand another lamination upon devotee experiences of the now. Cosmic time is felt, and the consequences of an ethical life are recounted when necessary. This tale of the future is a metaphysical umbrella over my respondents, all of whom converted to this sect of Gaudiya Vaishanvism. Most left Abrahamic time and Christian time and embraced a future of billions upon billions of years with no end of life or any one particular afterlife in sight or imagination. There is also a ticking clock of five thousand years to leave this particular cycle of birth and death which, for a devotee, is not a lot of time to "get out."

5.4 Concluding Thoughts

The material world is cast as an apocalyptic dystopia by the male devotees interviewed, who pointed to macro frameworks of time and earth's destruction as the predominating trap on earth. Devotee mothers focused on their own life stories of being trapped by "society" and tricked by feminism to pursue educational and work opportunities rather than focus on their families.

The devotee mothers' life history narratives bridge their realizations prior to conversion to their migration to the Gaudiya Vaishnava homeland in Mayapur. They all attended university; only one dropped out before completing her degree. Their initial turn away from the world revolved around children and their belief that no one was protecting them or putting children's needs first. The prior modern self that left "the material world" is framed as a formerly trapped woman who had been duped by society to work for the nation, thus being a feminist. This is especially salient in Gita's story. There is an unequivocal sense that both she and the other women interviewed had done the right thing for

their children by bringing them to Mayapur to experience community away from the "material world." Crucially, mothers did not want their children to be tricked, as some felt they had been, by the world.

Some of these mothers were born into the movement, others converted. Gita's story about her exposure to poverty and alcohol in Australia, in tandem with her experience with her first boyfriend, a non-devotee, propelled her to return to ISKCON. It also inspired her to move to Mayapur and protect her children from those environments and circumstances. Indulekha did not want her daughters to believe in buying things and being "the best." Although the world is framed as a trap, Mayapur represents freedom to escape from that trap. It occupies the imaginative space for those feeling under pressure to conform to a modern world requiring two-incomes. Women migrated to Mayapur, first and foremost, for the children. As will be seen in chapter 6, their migration opens up communicative possibilities for children in this utopia; and in chapter 7, the chastity and innocence their mothers migrated to Mayapur to maintain, is made into an elastic concept affording for religious transformation.

CHAPTER 6

Linguistic Empathy among Highly Mobile Children

A paper ball flies across the classroom and hits the back of Madhu, a Russian ten-year-old boy who attends the Sri Mayapur International School, affectionately called SMIS by the community. Madhu hollers to his Bengali classmate, Vish, "HEY(.) PAGOL." Vish smiles, and says, "You're the pagol (.) PAGOL." The school bell rings, Vish runs to hit Madhu, and the two race outside for recess and a game of tag.

Pagol is a Bengali curse word meaning "crazy person" that can index solidarity, start a fight, or calm a friendly quarrel between *bondhra*, a Bengali word for "friends." Despite their different national, ethnic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds, Vish and Madhu are *bondhra*. The English "friends" is interchangeably used to describe their relationship. For jest, they play with saying "bondhus," the singular Bengali word *bondhu* with an English plural marker "-s." They chuckle at the sound of this blended word, knowing it is not "right," but reveling in sharing it. After all, no one would really say "bondhus" in conversation, but among friends it is safe to play with language.

This chapter discusses language sharing, invention, teaching, and *linguistic empathy* among highly mobile children within their bi- and multilingual peer groups. Mobile children are migrant children "below 18 who experience fluxes and movements in different contexts (familial, social, political, cultural, material, symbolic, and so on) and periods of life related to migration" (Fresnoza-Flot and Nagasaka 2015, 30). They encompass a wide-array of migrant children including poor migrant children (Parreñas 2005) who, for example, accompany the parent for job-necessitated relocation, as well as those subsumed under highly racialized and classed terminology such as "expatriates" (Cohen 1977;

Tanu 2014) and "third culture kids" or TCKs[1] (Pollock and Van Reken [1999] 2009) who also move due to their parents' job relocation but occupy the mobile "professional" class and are often white-skinned. The move to discussing "mobile children" is an attempt to discuss theories of children's movement without promoting two canons of research, one for "migrants" in migration studies and the other privileged for upper class and white-skinned "expatriates" often found in tourism and "mobile professional" studies. Though race and class (among other things) affect migratory experiences, all people migrating are nonetheless "migrants" and should be called as such. When skin color makes a difference, as it most certainly does, it can be marked perhaps as "white immigrants"; but euphemisms like "expatriate" hide the racist undertones of such a label as if "expatriates" are not "migrants" and thus theories from one group cannot be utilized to understand the other. The language we use is what breathes life into those distinctions and I will not support it. White-skinned mobile children are immigrants when they leave their home countries and migrate elsewhere. They will be referred to here as such.

A growing body of scholarship has explored whiteness and power asymmetries in the Global South, where foreigner elites form exclusive clubs and send children to international schools, in which they do not learn local languages (Fechter 2012, 2016; Hindman 2013; Tanu 2013, 2014; McIntosh 2014). This literature depicts a bleak continuance of racial, class, and linguistic divides, a type of de facto "linguistic apartheid" (Simo Bobda 2004; cf. Reagan 1987). Tanu's (2013, 85–107) research on transnational youth in Jakarta, for example, found that Asian and Euro-American children oriented towards American English as their lingua franca and emblem of Euro-American-centric cosmopolitanism, ostracizing kids with other accents or who use languages other than English.

By contrast, data from Mayapur's highly mobile devotee children suggests that children evidence what I call *linguistic empathy*.[2] Empathy will be discussed more in this chapter, but here I note that lin-

1 A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person "who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture" (Pollock and Van Reken [1999] 2009, 13). This term was used to describe diplomat children or those living in military bases.

2 This is different from linguistic empathy as discussed in theoretical linguistics which deals with anaphors and coreference in sentences (Kuno 1987).

guistic empathy stems from a personal experience of not understanding the many languages in one's environment and results in a patience for multilingual language learning and conversational "mistakes" or rather "attempts" to communicate. This culturally-fashioned empathy becomes a basis for listening to, playing with language among, and brokering for non-native peer speakers in interactions regardless if they speak the target language or not. In a review of ethnographic research on empathy cross-culturally, Hollan (2017, 343) asserts that in many parts of the world an "empathic response to another is in one's action or inaction with regards to the other's needs and concerns, not in one's mere understanding of another, no matter how accurate that understanding might be." Building on that framing of empathy-as-doing, my argument is that even though children in Mayapur share an experience of, or awareness about, being highly mobile, their empathy is not limited to merely understanding that shared experience but that it propels them to use linguistic resources to aid one another in communication or learning how to communicate. Data in this chapter show how linguistic empathy emerges through interactions at the children's peer group level. Furthermore, this ethos of linguistic empathy, I argue, then socializes a "learning disposition" to "persist when it's difficult" (Carr 1997) using whatever linguistic resources available, which may contribute to a wider cooperative ethos that promotes multilingual maintenance in Mayapur's international community.

6.1 Language Contact and Multilingualism

Linguistic anthropologists have documented the fate of languages and linguistic competencies in situations of language contact through scholarship in language socialization and language ideologies (e.g., Kulick 1992; Zentella 1997; Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002; Garrett 2005; Makihara and Schieffelin 2007). Language ideologies—understood as the beliefs and feelings people have about languages and speakers—mediate the relationship of language use to linguistic structures to sociocultural context (Silverstein 1979; Kroskrity 2010). Language socialization research investigates how children are socialized into becoming competent members of their communities through the use of language while they learn how to use language(s) in culturally appropriate ways (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984, 2011; Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002; Kulick and Schieffelin 2004; Duff 2010; Duranti, Ochs, and Schieffelin

2011). Language contact may lead to the obsolescence (Dorian 1989) of minority languages as communities shift towards dominant languages. Such shift is often afforded by language ideologies that map language "onto the concept of a nation in ways that idealize a monolingual homogeneous people and pathologize multiculturalism or multilingualism" (Makihara 2009, 250; see Silverstein 1996), together with socialization practices that discourage younger generations' language learning (Kulick 1992; Meek 2007; Bunte 2009). Other scenarios may result in the maintenance or expansion of multiple languages, registers, or genres (Kroskrity 1998; Garrett 2005; Minks 2006; Jaffe 2007; Makihara 2009).

Socialization in the peer group (Goodwin and Kyratzis 2011) is central to the transformation of linguistic repertoires, as it is here "that the identities of participants are negotiated within and through talk" (M. H. Goodwin 2006, 3; see M. H. Goodwin 1990; Cekaite et al. 2014), and that children form ideas and stances about their peers' language practices (Paugh 2012; García-Sánchez 2014). Since these are necessarily informed by "more broadly held ideologies about the relationship and meanings of the two [or more] languages" (Schieffelin 2003, 158), the peer group is an integral site for investigating the nexus of ideologies and socialization practices (Riley 2011) in relation to the loss of languages and multilingual competence in situations of contact, but also their maintenance.

In Corsica, for example, a "polynomic" language ideology celebrates variation and variability and promotes recognition and tolerance of multiple languages in explicit opposition to purist ideologies (Jaffe 2007). On Corn Island, Nicaragua, Miskitu children move "easily across social and linguistic boundaries" (Minks 2006, 125) in peer-group interactions. In such bilingual and multilingual settings, speakers often possess varying "translingual" competencies (García 2009; Creese and Blackledge 2010; see also Makoni and Pennycook 2007), translingualism understood here as bilingualism or multilingualism "without diglossic functional separation" (García 2007, xii), i.e., a continuum of fluency. Similarly, to theorize Miskitu children's varying competencies, Minks (2006, 2010) extends Bakhtin's ([1975] 1981) notion of "heteroglossia" to describe partial fluencies and hybridized speech (see also Bailey 2007). These studies offer lenses for understanding multilingualism in Mayapur, yet, different from Corsica or Corn Island, Mayapur is a community comprised of people from widely variant national origins, representing multiple non-indigenous languages, cultures, and ethnicities.

Migration to industrialized countries and regions resulting from global forces unleashed by late capitalism has led to a variety of language contact situations. Multi- and translingual settings in the Global North have been investigated by sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists (Rampton 1995; Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Pennycook 2007; Collins, Slembrouck, and Baynham 2009; Blommaert 2010) more recently in relation to "superdiversity" (Vertovec 2009; Blommaert and Rampton 2011).[3] In a review on language socialization in children's peer groups, Kyratzis and Goodwin (2017, 8) review the research in post-colonial and transnational settings highlighting European immigrant children in the Global North returning from vacations in Asia (Melander 2012) or refugee children relocating from Africa to European countries (Cekaite 2012).

In in the Global South, however, similar research investigating how white and non-white children become communicatively competent in multiple languages both within and outside of school settings has not been done. As mentioned above, here post-colonial spaces usually manifest "linguistic apartheid" (Simo Bobda 2004), where white-skinned global elites keep to themselves and interactions with local population are usually confined to different kinds of service encounters and highly unequal in character. Located in a rural area in the Global South, Mayapur presents a stark contrast to these.

Besides this dissertation research, there is one well-documented case that showcases the linguistic and cultural sharing made possible between unlikely *bondhra* (friends) in the Global South. Perry Gilmore (2015) writes the story of her son, Colin and his Samburu friend, Sadiki in post-colonial Kenya in the 1970s. Colin and Sadiki were between the ages of five and six when she collected data of a pidgin language they invented combining aspects of Swahili, Samburu, and English. Colin's family was in Kenya for a year conducting a research project, and he and Sadiki played unsupervised for hours on the hillside. As neither boy knew the other's language, they created one together, which Gilmore calls "Kisisi." She writes that Kisisi allowed the boys to "interrupt the oppressive hegemonic colonial social and symbolic order around them through their everyday playful and loving verbal interactions" (xvi).

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3 Superdiversity aims at conceptualizing urban heterogeneity resulting from recent transmigration in Europe (Vertovec 2009).

Interrupting the orders around children such that they can create new orders is the stuff utopia is made of. Indeed, in highly structured orders there is little room for "liminality"—the creative space "where [everyday] social relations may be discontinued, former rights and obligations are suspended, the social order may seem to have been turned upside down" (Turner 1974, 24, 27). I cannot claim that Mayapur is a successful utopia, linguistic or otherwise, for the faults in their religious city-making project are evident to any resident or long-term visitor (see Conclusion). It is nonetheless remarkable as an example of a post-colonial language sharing achievement existing in its liminality, and perhaps perpetually so as migrants come and go. It is distinct from the existent literature on language contact, with thousands of Indian (mostly Bengali), Russian, European, North American, Chinese, Japanese, Ghanian, and more immigrant children sharing much in life, including repertoires and parts of their languages. Bengali and non-Indian adults who grew up in Mayapur in the 1990s evidence a more complete multilingual conversational fluency in Bengali, Spanish, and English—the main linguistic communities of the time. The SMIS children during my research years (2015–2017), however, are not wholly fluent in their peers' languages like those I met from Mayapur's 1990s cohorts and do not invent pidgins like Colin and Sadiki did. They do share languages (Paris 2009), code-switch, and teach one another while interacting frequently at school, in the temple, the neighborhoods and in each other's homes, evidencing what I call linguistic empathy.

6.2 Empathy

The subject of empathy in anthropology has been recently addressed by Doug Hollan and Jason Throop (2008, 2011; see also 2017). Their timing coincided with the recent discovery of "mirror" neurons in the human brain that fire without movement and "provide a flexible coding of actions of self and others" (Iacoboni 2009, 660), prompting renewed interest in the origin of empathy across the sciences. Hollan and Throop lament that prior to their inquiry into how empathy manifests in everyday behavior around the world there was little anthropological attention on the subject (2011, 5–7). Speculations they provide for the dearth of research into the matter are its resemblance or perceived conceptual overlap with other attitudes and behaviors of anthropological interest such as "intersubjectivity,"

"compassion," "sympathy," and "pity." They also note that in "From a Native's Point of View," Clifford Geertz (1984) criticizes empathy as a mere projection of one's own feelings and thoughts, and that his negative stance on the empathy concept was so powerful and influential that it stunted anthropological inquiry into the subject for almost thirty years (Hollan and Throop 2011, 6). Hollan captures this reticence:

> Geertz's warnings about the fallibilities of naive empathy and the dangers of ethnocentrism and the unwitting and unrecognized projection of one's own feelings and experiences onto others was a message that resonated deeply in the anthropological community. It brought to the surface and made explicit the ambivalence about empathy that many anthropologists had always intuited, and it helped create a conceptual climate in which anthropologists would be less likely to investigate empathy very actively or explicitly—since empathy was now thought to possibly impede rather than promote understanding—much less extol its value to the ethnographic enterprise. (2017, 341)

Hollan and Throop (2011, 19) attempt to revive anthropological interest in empathy and do what anthropologists do: complicate the universalist claims of human behaviors, thoughts, and feelings present in other fields by bringing ethnography to the fore as a chief method for attending to what is truly universal about humanity and what is more culturally shaped and varied. Among the many definitions of empathy, they adopt Karsten Stueber's (2006) suggestion that empathy be conceived of as a complex process involving both "basic" and "reenactive" parts (Hollan and Throop 2011, 4). "Basic empathy" here points to the physical mechanisms such as the mirror neuron system that allows humans to read into other people's emotional state. "Reenactive empathy" refers to the other cognitive and deliberative "capacities that allow actors to reenact or imitate with our mind the thought processes of the other person [such that] we are able to conceive of another person's more complex social behavior as the behavior of a rational agent who acts for a reason" (Stueber 2006, 21). Hollan and Throop (2011, 5) argue that reenactive empathy "emphasizes the doubly culturally and historically bound nature of empathic awareness and knowledge: that is, the fact that the subjects of our empathy are people who think and feel and act in very specific culturally and historically constituted moral worlds while we ourselves, as empathizers, are similarly bound and constrained." Empathy here appears as a feedback loop whereby those sharing a cultural and historical moral world are thus able to understand those from that very world. Yet, in what ways does empathy emerge when the lifeworlds are constantly shift-

ing and very different in highly mobile and diverse contexts like Mayapur? Conversational encounters among children suggest that it emerges in assisting others while communicating, a shared problem in the community.

6.2.1 Intersubjectivity and Empathy

Empathy, *Einfühlung* (literally, "feeling into") was first coined by psychologist Theodor Lipps (1851–1914). There are many discussions on the concept of empathy in the sciences (Kögler and Stueber 2000). As it is beyond the scope of this chapter to cover the nuances and debates through Lipps' coining of it onward, I will instead lean on the exegeses of present-day philosophers (May 2017; Prinz 2011) and anthropologists (Throop 2008; Duranti 2009, 2010, 2015) and then discuss what I mean by *linguistic empathy*.

Philosopher Joshua May (2017, 169) discusses the philosophical distinctions between intersubjectivity and empathy, stating that intersubjectivity describes how one is mentally connected with and distinguished from others, whereas empathy, though related to intersubjectivity, refers to the ability to take on a perspective and inhabit what we imagine are similar feelings and maybe thoughts of an other. Intersubjectivity in this sense is related to discussions on theory of mind and the human capacity to be aware of others, while empathy, according to May, is an extension of that intersubjective possibility and moves more into the realm of being able to feel similar to the other. This understanding of empathy as the human capacity to not only think in the perspective of an other but also feel is in concert with Prinz (2011) and May (2017, 170), who assert that empathy is a "morally neutral aspect of the mind." Empathy can manifest as compassion for others or it can manifest when a sadist, for example, uses this ability to manipulate or harm based on the feelings they empath (170). May likens empathy to a tool that is shaped and deployed by context and "when empathy meets intersubjectivity, we encounter some of the most exciting questions about our social lives, such as altruism, compassion, self-interest, immortality, and the connection between morality and rationality" (170). The meeting of intersubjectivity and empathy is my anthropological interest, as I see it as a relevant part of Mayapur's

children's socialization into particular ways of attending to other highly mobile devotee children who cannot speak their language(s).

Intersubjectivity in anthropology has been recently addressed by Alessandro Duranti (2009, 2010, 2015). He draws from the works of philosopher Edmund Husserl, who approaches intersubjectivity as "more than shared or mutual understanding and … closer to the notion of the possibility of being in the place where the Other is" (Duranti 2010, 1). This possibility, Duranti argues, includes "a mode of participation in the natural and material world that does not even require an immediately perceivable human presence" and does not always need to be "achieved or negotiated through verbal communication or other means" (1). Attending to something which is then present, culturally fashioned, socialized (Duranti 2009) but not always perceivable, and does not require negotiation through verbal means or otherwise, is a challenge to showcase linguistically.

The following sections show how interaction can reveal when empathy transpires in the often imperceptible yet present pivotal space where intersubjectivity meets empathy (May 2017, 170). If you were there, you could feel it in the room—the sense that one tries to communicate and others help you. One may not know a word, words, or even the whole language, and others will attend and wait, and then secure a spot for one to tell their story (transcript 6.1). A knowledge that your friend will correct the word as you improve your fluency (transcript 6.2). An awareness that you do not need to be "right" (transcript 6.2). A sense that you are welcome to play along with your friend's dad's well-known genre, his "dad-joke" where he uses ad hoc newly-minted bivalent terms of Kazakh and Bengali (transcript 6.3). And where your invitation to sing along and share in a cultural song from your country will be shared among your friends (transcript 6.3).

Linguistic empathy draws upon one's experience of not knowing and manifests in helping others communicate. It manifests through language and is about language. Consider, for example, Mayuri, a fourteen-year-old girl from Brazil whose family first moved to Mayapur when she was six. Mayuri was

my neighbor for two years. I tutored her in linguistic anthropology once a week,[4] since she expressed interest in learning about "other people," a fascination in common with many of Mayapur's teenagers who wonder about the "material world." When I asked her if she could recall coming to Mayapur, she said,

> Yeah, of course. [...] To get here, finally a place full of devotee kids. But I couldn't speak English, so class was hard. I knew Sanskrit words, so it was easy in the temple program but no one speaks Portuguese here. So it's hard to get here and only be able to talk to your family. [...] I know what it's like, you know, so I try to help new kids when I can.

When discussing how she gets by now that she can speak English, she commented,

> It's easier of course than when I first got here. I wish my Bengali was better. I can speak English now. And I'm better at Bengali than my parents so I help them when I can. I want to learn more, it will be easier I think later.

This sentiment that there is struggle in communication as par for the course of migration is where linguistic empathy is a useful frame to understand children's attention toward language brokering and patience for and encouragement in speaking other languages in conversations. Empathy-as-helping-others is in line with what social psychologist, Dan Batson (2011) calls the "empathy-altruism hypothesis," which states that empathy for those in need induces altruistic motivation to help, without an "ultimate, non-instrumental, or intrinsic motive." "Help," I suggest, extends to be not only assisting peers in speaking (see below, transcript 6.1), but also in correcting (see below, transcript 6.2) as well as letting a space exist for others as they try or persist in learning or participating in a language that is not their home language (see below in transcript 6.3). In analyzing linguistic empathy in the examples that follow, I draw from different frameworks to illuminate what is co-operatively (C. Goodwin 2018) emerging in the conversations.

4 Mayuri was homeschooled for most of the time that I was in Mayapur, except that she would attend any guest lectures that I would give in the school.

6.2.2 A Cautionary Stance with Empathy as Altruism

Empathy does not always manifest as altruism, as May was careful to point out, which are applications of the empathy concept pushed forward in optimist philosophy (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, 6.3) and biopsychology (Brothers 1989; Batson et al. 2002). I highlight this tension to point to an issue in locating empathy in culturally varied ethnographic contexts. Displaying empathy may or may not be situationally or otherwise socio-culturally preferred. It is for these many shades of empathy that Hollan asks that

> our research definitions of empathy remain open and flexible enough to capture the varieties of empathic processes and expressions we find around the world, rather than arbitrarily exclude forms that may fall outside these relatively arbitrary (and perhaps ethnocentric) definitions. It is for this reason that I regularly refer to "empathy-like" phenomena, to indicate that phenomena under discussion may be similar to the kinds of empathy discussed in the research literature, but may not be identical with them. (Hollan 2017, 343)

This stance is taken up in this chapter, which attends to empathy-like phenomena as they appear to be happening in Mayapur's space, where multilingualism and language learning abound and where children broker for, listen to, and encourage peers in their efforts to speak non-native languages. Empathy here seems to lie somewhere in this realm of attending to others' linguistic needs. I surmise that this empathy-like phenomena stem from having walked a mile in another's shoes, as migrants themselves. I see children assisting others in communication and I infer that it is afforded by a space of shared experience.

6.3 Empathy and Conversation

Conversation is a primary medium for establishing connections to and boundaries from others. Linguistic anthropologists have long held that "conversation plays a vital role in establishing and maintaining cultural habits of individuals and communities—identities, subjectivities, ideas, categories, attitudes, values, and more" (Keating and Egbert 2004, 169). The language socialization paradigm contends that it is through communicative practices that children become "speakers of culture" (Ochs

and Schieffelin 2011, 7), i.e., that they acquire the social and cultural competence necessary to function as members of a given community or communities (see Ochs 1988; Kulick and Schieffelin 2004), what Bourdieu ([1972] 1977, 1990) calls a "habitus." It is through ordinary conversation that social actors "construct particular contexts and activity types, socialize new members of society, build or resist authority, organize hierarchies, use literacy, produce multiple identities, worship, argue, imagine" (Keating and Egbert 2004, 170). Conversations are built together with others and require, as Charles Goodwin notes, "co-operative action"—that is, multiple parties contributing "different materials to common courses of action in ways that preserve with modification contributions provided by earlier actors" (C. Goodwin 2018, 9).[5]

The link between empathy and building worlds through built-upon units of conversation is a journey that should already have been traversed, yet it has not. In a recent Routledge handbook (Maibom 2017) on the topic of empathy, thirty-three chapters are dedicated to empathy in philosophy, film, moral responsibility, psychopathology, gender studies, music, painting, literature, and cultures (Hollan 2017), but none to language or conversation. It is a baffling omission, as language and other semiotic systems build realities and make possible shared understanding.

In an attempt to discuss empathy and conversation, I analyze how children build geo-politically unusual friendships in a fifty-year-old religious utopia project comprised of diverse inhabitants from around the world, speaking multiple languages, who are each part of different linguistic communities, and occupy an array of class, race, ethnic, religious, and gendered backgrounds.

6.4 Spontaneous Brokering of a Three-Year-Old

Vanimali has lived in Mayapur for two of the three years of his life with his Russian parents. While he can speak in English, his language of comfort is Russian. Nitai, a three-year-old monolingual Spanish-speaking Argentinian boy arrived recently to Mayapur. Both Nitai's parents speak Spanish at home

5 Goodwin (2018, 9) distinguishes this from cooperation as theorized in biological anthropology where it means "costly behavior performed by one individual that increases the payoff of others" (Boyd and Richerson 2009, 3283).

and can converse minimally in English. One day at nursery school, Nitai tries to tell a story about a spider, but does not have the English or Russian word "spider." He wiggles his fingers in a crawling fashion. Vanimali eventually asks in English, "Spider? [...] Is that spider?" Through this intervention, Nitai's story is understood. This is made possible because of the empathic co-operative interaction with Vanimali and, later, their teacher.

Vanimali and Nitai do not speak each other's languages but Vanimali nevertheless tries to broker Nitai's communication with the Russian-speaking nursery teacher, utilizing facial expressions, gesture, and English. The teacher, Priya, is from Ukraine and has lived in Mayapur for more than five years. Languages that she uses in daily life include her mother tongue, Ukrainian, and Russian, as well as English and basic conversational Bengali. She works in the nursery every day and attends to its fluctuating class of approximately fifteen children. Six of the children are Indian, with varying home languages: Bengali (two children), Kannada (one child), Hindi (one child), and Oriya (one child). All the Indian parents of this cohort of nursery children speak English, but when asked what they speak at home, they say that they speak their respective "home" languages as well as some English. One girl speaks two languages at home, Latvian with her father and Bengali with her mother. The other eight children are not ethnically Indian. They emigrated from Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, the United States, and South Africa (all white children), and Argentina (a biracial black and white child). It is an ESL curriculum and the only native speakers of any variety of English in the classroom are two children from South Africa and the United States, and me.

In the interaction below, Nitai is trying to tell the teacher, Priya, something that seems important (lines 1–21). His main obstacle is that he does not speak any of the languages in Priya's repertoire: Russian, Ukrainian, English, or Bengali. Moreover, Priya does not have the time to address Nitai's concern as she is preoccupied with getting the children ready and lined up for recess (line 32). Nitai's communication would have been lost, except that Vanimali, a Russian and ESL classmate decides to broker his communication in lines 33–50. From lines 1 to 21, Nitai attempts to tell his story to Priya, while four other children watch him struggle to converse (see figure 6.1). He secures Priya's attention,

calling her "Mataji"[6] in line 1. She turns her gaze to him. Nitai uses his entire right hand and wiggles all his fingers saying, "this- this." Figure 6.1 below shows the gesture he made in line 3.

Transcript 6.1

1	NITAI:	Mataji::
		(.9)
2		[I di- di- (.2) this (.) this- rou-
3		[*((raises right hand palm down and begins to move fingers in crawling gesture))*
		(.8)
4		Y I- (.) [I- (.) e- I throw water
5		[*((drops arms and moves both forward in dangling motion))*
		(.6)
6	PRIYA:	Yeah, you don't need to ta[ke this
7	NITAI:	[No [↑NO?
8		[*((raises hand))*
9		*((gestures crawling motion with right hand [continuously))*
10		[This=
11	PRIYA:	=[This
12		[*((gestures thumb up))*
13	NITAI:	[NO ↑NO?
14		[*((raises hand higher continuing crawling gesture))*
15		Thi- this
		(.9)
16		I- [↑round?
17		[*((makes round shape with two hands))*
		(.4)
18		[↑Y- (.) >y I throw?<
19		[*((puts hands together and stretches arms in front of himself))*
20		*((drops arms))*=
21		=°↓water.°
		(2.9)

6 *Mataji* is a respectful address term for all women in the devotee community. It is comparable to "madam" or "ma'am" in English.

Figure 6.1: Nitai's crawling gesture

Priya makes two attempts to understand what Nitai is trying to communicate. She first assumes that he is asking for something and responds, "Yeah, you don't need to take this." Nitai interrupts "No ↑NO?" and repeats his spider crawling hand but this time moving it across in space. "This," he announces is what he is trying to talk about. To Nitai's frustration, Priya makes a thumbs-up hand gesture resulting in more "NO NO" and an uptick of forceful spider crawl gesturing from Nitai. At this point, Priya watches him attempt to verbalize a sentence, as he utters, "I- ↑round? (.4) ↑Y- (.) >y I throw?<" He is gesturing with both hands at that point and drops his hands before uttering "º↓water.º" Priya and the four children watch him but are unable to understand what he means.

In multilingual and other settings, gesture has been shown to be an important communicative strategy (Iverson and Goldin-Meadow 2005; Morgenstern et al. 2010; Sunaoshi 2000). In her work on interactions between Japanese and English-speaking Americans in a Japanese auto factory located in the United States, Sunaoshi (2000) shows how gestures emerge and are codified when interactants have a limited shared repertoire. She found that repetition of one iconic gesture "served both parties as a reference point and helped to focus on the common topic of interest" (83). An iconic gesture is one that "expresses some aspect of the content of what the speaker was saying" (Kendon 1994, 183), for

example, a hand that clasps the fingers together to look like a circle can be an iconic gesture. It is a sign that, like all signs, relies on interpretation. Where one person might read the circle hand gesture as representing a circle-in-space, another person might interpret that gesture as an insult, calling them an "asshole." Here, the problem for Nitai is that the teacher, Priya, cannot interpret what wiggling fingers means for Nitai. She discovers later that he intends it to mean "spider," but at this point she simply produces a "thumbs-up" gesture in line 12 to continue with what seems to be her main goal, to get the children to line up for recess—much to the frustration of Nitai. She turns her gaze away to deal with the little girl shown in figure 6.1, and in this moment, one of the children watching the scene, Vanimali, takes it upon himself to figure out what Nitai is saying. Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show Vanimali interrupting the dyadic exchange between Priya and Nitai and inserting his whole body between them (line 22), while saying "↑What do you say.=°Talk to me?°"

Transcript 6.1 continued

22	VANIMALI:	[*((moves into facing formation with Nitai))*
23		[↑What do you say.=
24		=[°Talk to me?°
25		[*((raises right hand with index finger up))*
		(.5)
26	NITAI:	>I *((shrug))* ↑know?< (.) [Uhh
27		[*((puts hands together))*
		(.2)
28		I- [I- thro
29		[*((mimicks throwing bucket of water))*
30		*((raises right hand again* [*and does crawling gesture))*
31		[from this (.) look (.3)

Promoted by Vanimali, Nitai repeats his story using gestures, a shoulder shrugs, and the following English words: I, know, throw, from, this, look. Knowing the end result of Nitai's story and reading those English words in sequence, ascertaining that he somehow threw water on some crawling thing seems easy to discern. However, in the moment, these meanings were difficult to establish. At the end of the 69 second exchange we learn that the story Nitai wanted to tell was that he found a spider in the

Figure 6.2: Vanimali begins to move into facing formation with Nitai

Figure 6.3: Vanimali and Nitai in facing formation

washroom sink and threw water on it, which made it go down the sink. Nitai's communicative success is very much reliant on Vanimali, who makes repeated efforts to interpret Nitai's gestures and, after their meaning as a crawly spider has emerged, to confirm his own understanding of those gestures (lines 33–45). In this way, gestures can become a vehicle for linguistic empathy in interaction.

Transcript 6.1 continued

32 *((Priya has turned to interacting with other children and teachers and is ignoring the two boys.))*
33 VANIMALI: [Sp↑ider?=
34 [*((raises right hand and mirrors crawling gesture))*
35 NITAI: =*((nods head))*
(.4)
36 *((slight head nod 'yes'))*
(.3)
37 VANIMALI: You [touched (.) the sp↑ider,=
38 [*((repeats crawling gesture))*
39 NITAI: =*((nods head 'yes'))*=
40 =Yeah.
41 VANIMALI: [Is that sp↑ider.
42 [*((repeats crawling gesture))*
43 NITAI: *((nods and* [*tilts head))*
44 [Ye[↑A::::::H=
45 VANIMALI: [*((turns toward the teacher and* [*reaches forward))*
46 [↑MATAJI (.3)

Nitai nods his head "yes" to Vanimali's three clarification questions and verbally assents in increasing intensity for each inquisition. Nitai, who is striving to achieve understanding, is only able to communicate because Vanimali is acting as an interpreter of his gestures and limited vocabulary.

Charles Goodwin (2018) analyzes a case that has a family resemblance with the one I just described. Chil, a man with aphasia communicates by using a three-word vocabulary, prosody, and gesture. His utterances are interpreted by his family and friends, who all together help him "become a powerful speaker, able to produce complex propositions, by co-operatively incorporating with transformation into his own actions rich language structure created by others" (68). This is made possible by the fact

that the people in his environment are family and longtime friends who have an already established and shared lifeworld with him. They are thus able to draw from their memories, stories, and mutually known environment to build conversation.

Conversely, in the present example, Nitai is a newly arrived three-and-a-half-year-old foreigner to the village who does not share a language with anyone else in the classroom let alone a deep lifeworld they could draw from in order to communicate successfully. With almost three months in the SMIS nursery he has come to grasp that he needs to use English words to communicate and in fact only uses one Spanish word, *y* (and), in the entire sequence noted above. His utterances are fragmented with nested gestures, and his story calls out for someone to interpret and broker possible meanings for others. Locating an individual who can and will display what I call linguistic empathy among strangers is difficult. Children have been shown to overcome such language and social barriers in play activities in which there is often a framework in which rules are understood and verbal communication is not imperative (Paugh 2005, 2012; de León 2007; Minks 2013; Cekaite and Aronsson 2014). But for Nitai's narrative there is no play frame from which to extrapolate meaning and no bond beyond these three months of class that would allow Vanimali a breadth of experiences with Nitai. As soon as Vanimali is sure that his interpretation is correct, he turns to the teacher trying to get her attention to transmit Nitai's story to her.

Transcript 6.1 continued

47	VANIMALI:	↑MATAJI PRIYA.
48		*((pulls her shirt))*
49		Он хотел тебе сказать что он он потрогал
		On hotel tebe skazat' chto on on potrogal
		он хотел тебе сказать что он он потрогал
		3SG.M want.PST.3SG 2SGACC tell that 3SG.M 3SG.M touch.PST.3SG
		He wanted to tell you that he he touched
50		s- sp- паука
		pauka
		spider
51	PRIYA:	*((looks at Vanimali))*
		(.5)
52		*((looks at Nitai))*

53 PRIYA: Sp↑ider. (.) ⌈You took a sp↑ider.
54 NITAI: ⌊*((nods head))*
(1.9)
55 NO⌈ I- >↑I throw it< ↓wa:ter.
56 PRIYA: ⌊*((to other child))* Come Nara.
(1.4)
57 You turn ↑water on him.
58 NITAI: *((nods head))*
59 PRIYA: And then what happened to spider,
(1.1)
60 NITAI: ⌈↑Fell ↓down.
61 ⌊*((gestures down movement))*
(.5)
62 PRIYA: You see, maybe spi- the sp- ↓the spider it die::d.
(.6)
63 ⌈*((waves index finger in negation))*
64 ⌊Don't do like that.
(.6)
65 Kay? (.) Let's go,

In line 49, Vanimali code-switches into Russian and tells Priya "Он хотел тебе сказать что он он потрогал s- sp- паука" (He wanted to tell you that he he touched a spider). Vanimali searches for the Russian word for "spider," repairing an English start of "s- sp-" in line 50 before finding паука (spider).[7] Vanimali moves behind Nitai, pointing to him, thus emphasizing on whose behalf he is speaking. Vanimali is not fully translating for Nitai, as he only has one word confirmed that Nitai wants to discuss: "spider." Vanimali also added a story surrounding the spider: "He wanted to tell

7 The Russian-speaking children often speak to Priya in Russian. In an interview, Priya recounted that the main difficulty that she faces is that when there are more Russian children in class, there is no imperative for Russian children to speak English. In earlier nursery cohorts, non-English speaking parents would complain their children were returning home speaking Russian and not knowing how to converse in basic English. For the two years I was present in SMIS, the classrooms had a more even distribution of Indian, Russian, and other international students. Russian language shift did not surface as an issue in the nursery or higher grade levels. Russian is nonetheless an influential linguistic presence in the community and alongside Bengali, Sanskrit, Spanish, and English, a general knowledge of Russian is helpful to get by in Mayapur.

you that he touched a spider." We learn that this is not the case, but that Nitai actually put water on the spider, and it fell down the drain (lines 55–60). Vanimali is thus not translating for Nitai, but brokering his communication.

Language brokers "are usually involved in informal negotiation for one or both of the parties for which they serve as a liaison, mediating communication rather than merely transmitting" (McQuillan and Tse 1995, 195). Brokers are also often said to be lower in the hierarchy than the people for whom they are brokering and who are "normally under the authority or supervision of one of the beneficiaries" for whom they are brokering (McQuillan and Tse 1995, 195; see also Morales and Hanson 2005; Orellana 2009). Language brokering scholarship centers on children mediating for their elders or siblings, where the child engaged in brokering is in a position to choose what words or sentiments are translated or not, often subverting the authority of the adult or older person (see Reynolds, Orellana, and García-Sánchez 2015). Though there is arguably a power asymmetry between Vanimali and Nitai, in that Vanimali speaks Russian and more English than his Argentinian classmate and can garner the attention of the teachers and classmates utilizing his linguistic repertoire, there exists no generational asymmetry, as when a child becomes a language broker for an an adult. I witnessed such spontaneous brokering events in other scenarios among peers in Mayapur. Also notable is the age of the language broker. Vanimali is three years old; his metalinguistic and social awareness of Nitai's predicament and his own confidence in providing an interpretation is a prime example of linguistic empathy emerging early in life in an affectual environment that fosters a multilingual "learning disposition" (Carr 1997).

A learning disposition is "a tendency for children to respond to learning experiences in a particular way [... and] dispositions incline children to focus on some parts of their experience and not on others, and they incline children to interpret interactions and experiences in certain ways" (Carr 1997, 9). Cultivating an environment in which a child is disposed to attend to and broker communicative efforts creates a feedback loop of support for children encouraging them to talk. Moreover, Nitai's "persistence when it's difficult" (Carr 1997, 10; 2006) is an imperative frame of mind to foster in times when "engaging with uncertainty, being prepared to be wrong, risking making a mistake" are required of children who must engage with constant change. The highly mobile devotee migrant children are

used to constant change, such that "persisting when it's difficult" may be a widespread learning disposition in the community's children at large. Nitai's persistence in telling his story, regardless of whether or not he has the target language vocabulary to do so, indexes the affordances of linguistic empathy and multilingualism prevalent in Mayapur.

6.5 "Nearly Right"—Empathetic Peer Correction

This chapter began with a vignette about Madhu and Vish, two ten-year-old boys. Madhu is Russian but born in Australia, he and his family have moved between Mayapur and Australia since he was approximately five or six years of age. Vish is Bengali and was born and raised in Mayapur. Madhu's parents' desire to live in their Gaudiya Vaishnava spiritual homeland and experience religious community are two motivations for why Madhu's family moved from Australia to Mayapur in 2010, but in no way is Madhu the lone foreigner in his classroom. Similar to the SMIS nursery, Madhu and Vish's sixteen other fifth grade classmates are both Bengali and international, with classmates registered in the school as Bengali, Kannadiga,[8] Russian, North American, South African, Israeli, Korean, and Dutch.

I continued to follow this class into sixth grade and shifted my focus to the girls' peer groups, as the boys would often clam up at the sight of a "mataji" watching them play at recess. Over the course of two years in the field, they no longer giggled and hid their faces when I would approach their play groups. A few boys later asked me if they could take part of the study, so they could wear the GoPro body camera which allowed the focal girl children to film their own break and lunchtime activities and conversations. I allowed boys whose parents had signed consent forms to wear the camera during some break times to mitigate growing jealousies.

The following is an example of linguistic empathy between Krishangi and Gopi, both eleven-year-old sixth grade girls playing in Krishangi's family village, located about thirty-five kilometers away from Mayapur (approximately a one-hour drive). Gopi is from Kazakhstan and Krishangi was born

8 Kannadigas are an ethnolinguistic group from Karnataka, India.

Figure 6.4: Krishangi and Gopi in Krishangi's family's village

and raised in Mayapur. Krishangi's parents, Lila and Mukunda, watch after Gopi often, as she and Krishangi have been friends since they were four years old. Mayapur is a small place, and international and local parents with toddlers soon get to know one another, especially when the population was limited to a few hundred before the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium construction began in 2006, attracting thousands.

When Gopi's father left the family for another woman, Mukunda and Lila made conscious efforts to be more present neighbors in Gopi's life, inviting her on family trips such as this one to their home village. They stayed overnight and they had lots of adventures in the village, often consisting of climbing trees, visiting Krishangi's uncle's cows, and chasing the goats and chickens in the village. In the following exerpt, Krishangi and Gopi are in a large tree in their village and Gopi begins singing in Bengali that she wants a coconut (line 3): "Ami coconut lagbe::::"

Transcript 6.2

1	KRISHANGI:	I like sliding down (1) like this.
		(1.2)
2	GOPI:	I don't know, I want a coconut.
		(1.1)
3		*((singing))* Ami coconut ↑lag↓be:::::
4	KRISHANGI:	Amar coconut lagbe.
5	GOPI:	Uh m .hh uh::m *((slight giggle))*=
6	KRISHANGI:	=Doesn't matter?
7		Nearly:: (.) right,
		(3)
8		There we go. (.6) What.
9	GOPI:	*((singing))* Amar coconut- .hhhuh Wo::w, this small ja:::ckfrui:t.
10	KRISHANGI:	Eww. I think we should go from here.

Krishangi corrects her in line 4 and says, "Amar coconut lagbe," meaning "I want/need a coconut." *Amar* is the genitive case pronoun, which by itself means "my" and the verb *lagbe*, (to want) requires genitive when expressing needs or wants. Gopi uses the incorrect nominative pronoun *ami* (I) in line 3, drawing from her knowledge of English and Russian that uses the personal pronoun in the nominative case to express needs or wants (I want or я хочу). Krishangi's correction is classified as an "other-correction," that is, a correction made by someone other than the speaker (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977, 361). Other-correction has been discussed as a dispreferred type of repair in adult conversation, however, not as infrequent when one speaker evaluates the competence of the other as less. In this vein, other-correction "appears to be a vehicle for socialization" and a "device for dealing with those who are still learning" (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977, 381; see also Norrick 1991, 68). Among children, other-correction is more frequent. Marjorie Goodwin has documented what she terms "aggravated correction" in play among children who "blatantly signal the need of a correction or perform that correction themselves" (M. H. Goodwin 1983, 658; see also M. H. Goodwin 1990). Krishangi replaces Gopi's *ami* with *amar*, but the tone is playful, rather than mocking. Following Krishangi's correction, Gopi giggles as if accepting the correction and laughing at herself. Krishangi

Figure 6.5: Gopi in a tree

then softens the correction in line 6: "Doesn't matter. You're nearly right." She does not aggravatingly or aggressively assert her superiority with Bengali language over Gopi.

Signaling the need for correction or performing that correction oneself is an issue of epistemic authority. If one party acknowledges the other's authority or rights to correct, then doing so need not necessarily be classified as "aggravated," which does imply a sense of face-threatening behavior. In a paper on other-correction in L2 settings, Norrick (1991, 79) questions Schegloff et al.'s implication that other-correction is universally dispreferred: "Other-correction need not severely threaten face, either because the first speaker willingly accepts the role of learner or because he or she attaches greater value to factual correctness or to the task at hand than to considerations of face." If a speaker relies on another for correction then *not* doing so might be face-threatening. I add here that in a community where there are multilingual language experts abounding across age groups, there are potential teachers and experts around every corner. The opportunities to learn from skilled peers is taken for granted and interestingly, rather than develop a shy learning disposition (Carr 1997) about one's own linguistic ability, children in Mayapur are open to correction and assistance as they expand their repertoire.

After 2.3 seconds of silence, Gopi resumes singing but this time says the grammatically correct Bengali "Amar coconut-" (line 9). She corrects herself and throughout the rest of the day she uses the grammatically correct form of *amar ... lagbe*. She learned, and there was nothing aggravated or face-threatening about it.

6.6 Playing with Language

The following excerpts capture all three points of interest in this chapter: linguistic empathy, language sharing, language play. Krishangi and Gopi are in Krishangi's village. Before lunchtime, Krishangi and Gopi are sitting on an almost queen-size wooden bed under a tree in Krishangi's grandparents' courtyard (see figure 6.6). This is a common-space bed for guests and family to sit on and enjoy a cool breeze, much like a sofa in a living room. Krishangi's elder female cousin is sitting on the bed at the start of the interaction. Her grandfather lays down behind at the back of the bed shortly after the family and Gopi start discussing Kazakhstan.

6.6.1 The Trouble with "kaj"

The transcript starts after we had all been chatting about *kul*, a small Bengali fruit that we had been snacking on when the conversation turned toward travel. I stopped eating and began filming.

Krishangi's father, Mukunda, mentions Rajasthan in line 1. Those who know Mukunda know that the smile in his voice means he is beginning a play sequence, a typical jocular mood for him. The play sequence continues to launch when he mentions Kajikistan (line 3) as part of a list in response to places his daughter, Krishangi, might like to visit. He has a joking undertone to his voice and another adult, her uncle, goads Mukunda on repeating ">Kajikis<." Here comes the joke in line 5: "°Yeah° there is so mus- so many kajus there?" Gopi smiles, she knows where he is going. The two girls in unison loudly pronounce "KAZA:::KH" in line 6.

Figure 6.6: Krishangi and Gopi chatting on courtyard bed

Transcript 6.3

1	MUKUNDA:	Rajasthan.
		(.4)
2	KRISHANGI:	Uh huh?
3	MUKUNDA:	Kajikistan
		(.2)
4	UNCLE1:	>Kajikis<
		(.3)
5	MUKUNDA:	*((smiley voice))* ºYeahº there is so mus- so many kajus there?
		(.3)
6	GOPI:	It's (.) ⌈KAZ:A:::KH
7	KRISHANGI:	⌊KAZ:A:::KH
		(.4)

Getting this joke requires a bit of Bengali knowledge and names of eastern European countries, two subject matters known to the girls. Kajikistan is not a country but it does sound like one, Tajikistan. Replacing the [t] with [k] transforms this place into a whole other thing, into a joke and it opens a field of language play, where the girls are placed as experts, as opposed to Mukunda, the joking doesn't-know-geography dad.

The joke does not make sense without knowing that *kaju* means "cashew" in Bengali. The "-sthan" in "Rajasthan" and the "-stan" in many Eastern European countries including this made-up one, "Kajikistan," mean that the region or area comprises people from that space. Therefore, if a place is named "Kaji-ki-stan" then of course it is a place full of cashews, full of cashew people. Ha ha. In the United States this is called a "dad joke," a genre well-known to anyone privy to its familiar funny-but-not-really-but-also-tell-me-another-one vibe. Mukunda is the king of dad jokes. The girls do not laugh, but Gopi lets a sly smile out. It is unclear if the girls think the country of interest was Tajikistan or not, but they correct him saying "Kazakhstan," the country where Gopi was born, in lines 6 and 7. Krishangi reiterates the country's name in exaggerated exclaim, "Ka::za::::khs:ta:n" (line 12) in conjunction with Gopi's attempts at rectification in lines 11 and 13.

Transcript 6.3 continued

8	UNCLE1:	K┌a<u>zakh</u>
9	MUKUNDA:	└K<u>aza::khhh</u>
10		*((smiley voice))* So that means there is so many <u>ka:zu::::</u>
11	GOPI:	No: it mea┌ns there is lots of-
12	KRISHANGI:	└Ka::<u>za::::khs</u>:ta:┌n
13	GOPI:	└It means there is lot's of (.4) u┌h peopu-
14	KRISHANGI:	└Kazi

This little dad joke transforms when Krishangi unwittingly adds an element of Bengali wordplay. In line 14 Krishangi says, "Kazi," which sounds like "kazji." Immediately her uncle chimes in with the Bengali word *kaj* meaning "work" (line 15) asking: "okhane kaj nei?" (There's no work there?).

Transcript 6.3 continued

			((parallel conversation of adults branches off))
15	UNCLE2:		ওখানে কাজ নেই? Okhane kaj nei? **There is no work there?**
16	GOPI:	No, it's (.) the people:: (.) uh::	

17	UNCLE1:		তার মানে ওখানে কোন কাজ নেই তাই তো? Taar mane okhane kono kaj nei tai too? **That means there is no work there?**
18	GOPI:	The- the people are called kazakhs.	
19		⌈Kazakhi kazakhi	
20	MUKUNDA:	⌊Kazakhstan, that is the place I know.	
		(1.3)	
21	GOPI:	It's next to Russia, (during) the Russian Federation,	
22	UNCLE2:		ওখানে কোন কাজ নেই রে (ভাই?) Okhane kono kaaj nei re (bhai?) **There is no work there?**
23	KRISHANGI:	º(the Russian (.) Fed'ration)º	
24	UNCLE1:		তো এইসে গিইয়েছে এখানে তাই তো? To eisheye giyiechey ekhane taai too? **So have you come here?**
25	GOPI:	*((singing to herself))* Russian Federation, .hhh	
26	MUKUNDA:		এখানিছে। Ekhanichey. **Here.**

The layers of language play continue. In Bengali, there is no phonemic difference between English phonemes /z/ and /ʒ/ transforming "kaz," the beginning of Kazakhstan, and *kaj* (work) into temporary bivalent terms. Bivalency is the "use of words or segments that could 'belong' equally, descriptively and even prescriptively, to both codes" (Woolard 1998, 7).[9] Thus "kaz" could refer to the people of Kazakhstan and "work," or even "cashew" in Bengali. Mukunda knows this so Cashew-stan could become Work-stan, if he decides to bring their observation of the similar sounding words into the conversation. A speaker of Bengali and English can definitely get this joke. As an aside, her uncles speak some English, enough for us to have a comfortable Benglish (Bengali and English) conversation, but it is unclear if they understand that this conversation has nothing to do with *kaj* (work) or if they are playing along. Nonetheless, this byplay (Goffman [1979] 1981), meaning "ongoing talk subordinate

9 Woolard (1998) explores the humorous potential of bivalency in her work on comedians' performances in Barcelona.

to a main storyline" (M. H. Goodwin 1990, 156), that main participants may take up or not is available for Mukunda, Krishangi, and Gopi, who know enough of both languages to have this sort of bilingual language game. Though the *kazi-kaju-kaj* word play could continue, Mukunda does not immediately decide to shift the conversation to the topic of work and only returns to *kaj* when making a more serious inquiry about Gopi's on-again-off-again father and whether he is in Mayapur, which would inform Mukunda if he is instead working in Kazakhstan (line 31). Before that shift though, the children are about to launch a game of their own.

6.6.2 The Russian Federation Song

As Gopi clarifies that the "kaz" in Kazakhstan refers to the people of Kazakh (line 11 and line 13) and Mukunda accepts her correction (line 20), she proceeds to share where it is located in the world (line 21): "It's next to Russia, (during) the Russian Federation." The byplay between the uncles continues but as the jocular mood over Cashew-stan has subsided, their talk no longer seems as if in the mood of play but an actual inquiry about the state of her home country's working opportunities. Uncle 2 asserts that "there is no work there" and Uncle 1 asks "so you have come here?" (lines 22 and 24). Mukunda finally responds to this conversation and answers them, "Here" (line 26). It is unclear what he his referring to and perhaps he is agreeing that Gopi's family came here for work, as her father is a musician and plays in the community occasionally.

As that subordinate talk is happening in Bengali, Gopi starts to sing softly to herself: "Russian Federation, .hhh Tajikistan" (line 25). Krishangi smiles widely at Gopi and Gopi smiles back continuing to sing, "Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan." Mukunda interjects with a question, "Your dad is here?," but he is ignored. Gopi continues, "Kazakhstan." And Krishangi joins her "Kyrgyztan, Ukraine, Moldova." The entire song sequence is below:

Transcript 6.3 continued

25 GOPI: *((singing to herself))* Russian Federation, .hhh
27 *((singing softly))* Tajikistan,
28 KRISHANGI: *((turns head, looks at Gopi smiling))*
29 GOPI: *((looks and smiles back))*
30 *((singing softly))* Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan,
31 MUKUNDA: Your dad is here?
(.2)
32 GOPI: *((singing louder))* Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Moldova,
33 KRISHANGI: Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Moldova,
34 *((singing))* Georgia, Belarus
35 GOPI: *((singing))* Georgia,
36 *((spoken to Mukunda))* Yeah.
37 KRISHANGI: *((singing))* Azerbaijan
38 GOPI: *((singing))* Azerbaijan *((nods head 'yes' looking at Mukunda))*
39 MUKUNDA: Your dad is here?
40 KRISHANGI: *((singing))* And Armenia °these are the countries of the°
41 GOPI: *((singing))* And Armenia *((raises arm))*
42 MUKUNDA: So your dad is uh doing those::: things
43 Like (.) guitar and things?
44 KRISHANGI: *((singing))* Former USSR.
45 GOPI: *((mimicks playing guitar, clicking her tongue and nodding her head))*

I watched these girls grow from grades five through seven (ages 10–12), and witnessed many exchanges take place between them that favored Russian at times, others Bengali, and much of their conversations would take place in English. Krishangi liked to learn the Cyrillic script, and Gopi enjoyed chatting in Bengali with Krishangi's family, most especially when it involved food. Across eighteen months of research, I heard children singing this anthem-like song for the countries that were part of the former USSR only twice: once in Krishangi's village and again passing children of unknown national origin on the dirt path between the walled-in Mayapur community and Gauranagar, the adjacent town. It is a children's song that some Russian parents living outside of Russia sing to their children. Gopi is ethnically Russian though born in Kazakhstan; and there is pride in Russian literature, language, and

history in her house. Gopi told me she has "always" known this song, and Krishangi learned it from Gopi. They practiced it "a long time ago," Krishangi told me.

Why did Gopi sing? Returning to the beginning of this sequence when Mukunda jokes about a country named Kajikistan (line 3), Gopi did not immediately correct him. She could have, as we now know she can recite all the names of the former USSR. Instead, the conversation moves through the kaju-cashew-stan joke and playful corrections that result in Mukunda confirming that Kazakhstan is the place that he knows. After this, Gopi starts to sing. It is a catchy tune, one that anyone would be hard pressed to forget. Perhaps, in singing it, Gopi prevents any further mishaps about where she is from and other countries she could have originated from. Or maybe the mere mention of "Kajikistan" prompted her memory of the song. Knowing the intimacy between Gopi and Krishangi's family, where Mukunda teases her as he would his own daughter and she talks back (respectfully) in jocular tones alongside her best friend, Krishangi, there is no reason for her to not issue a correction here. Of all the conversational possibilities, singing the Russian Federation song is definitely a marked behavior. It struck me as interesting the way that Gopi, an extremely well-versed child on Russian geography and literature (her mother makes her read Russian books at home) does not correct Mukunda. After ruminating on this clip for many hours, I place it here among my key examples of linguistic empathy as I see Gopi not overpowering the situation flaunting her epistemic position as a Kazakhstani citizen and Russian speaker. She lets Mukunda tell his joke and run its course. She invites Krishnangi into a song that clears up the matter for everyone (including me—I will now always know the former USSR countries). The two of them have clearly rehearsed many times, as Krishangi's pronunciation and cadence is in sync with Gopi's. Though Krishangi is not fluent in Russian, and Gopi is not fluent in Bengali, the two of them code-switch, play with language (Cekaite and Aronsson 2005, 2014), and "share language" (Paris 2009). Language play or "nonserious language actually constitutes an integral part of second language (L2) use and learning [... and] encourages students to expand their vocabularies but also generates activities that can be seen as preparations" (Cekaite and Aronsson 2014, 194). They unite in song, and even though Krishangi is not fluent, her pronunciation is very good. In research on the efficacy of singing in foreign-language learning classrooms, Good et al. (2015, 637) demonstrate

that children in L2 classrooms who learn songs in another language are better at pronouncing words, especially vowels, at later stages in language learning than those who did not sing. Children with the "song advantage" also have larger vocabulary recall: "the dual encoding of lyrics and melody [when they] become integrated in a such a way that recall of one facilitates recall of the other" (Good, Russo, and Sullivan 2015, 637). Krishangi and Gopi sing in each other's languages. Gopi sang "amar coconut lagbe:::" in an earlier example (see transcript 6.2 in section 6.5), and Krishangi sang a song that Russian children in Mayapur sing.

6.7 Utopia—Spaces of Abeyance

Little anthropological research has investigated language use in multiethnic youth spaces, especially beyond the classroom setting. Ben Rampton's (1995) sociolinguistic and ethnographic study of language use in a multiethnic youth community in Britain sheds a rare light on the relation between ethnicity and language among multiethnic adolescents. He investigates a phenomenon he refers to as *language crossing*, "the use of a language which is not generally thought to 'belong' to the speaker. Language crossing involves a sense of movement across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries, and it raises issues of legitimacy that participants need to reckon with in the course of their encounter" (Rampton 1998, 291). In "plural ethnicities" individuals blurred lines of linguistic and cultural ownership. Youth in schools do mock-ups of the various ethnic languages for each other, but not in a derogatory way (cf. Ronkin and Helen 1999; Chun 2004; Hill 2008). Rampton's analysis is helpful but does not quite extend to the brokering, space-to-speak, and the space-to-let-others-fail observed in Mayapur.

Django Paris' (2009) work on *language sharing* examines the use of African American Language (AAL) by African American, Latino/a, and Pacific Islander peers in a multiethnic urban high school in the United States. Across ethnic groups, peers shared linguistic features and vocabulary that linguists would classify as belonging to AAL, but whose users cross ethnic and racial lines. Paris examined how their common language use

> challenged notions of difference and division rather than reinforced them. Employing the words, the grammar, and the speech acts of black language provided a space of local youth prestige against the backdrop of shared marginalization in a white language- and white culture-dominated society. It was a shared counterlanguage that resisted the dominant norms of school and society. (Paris 2009, 443)

Paris laments that there is no space for AAL or AAL features in the classroom and that this dismissal at school affects students both inside and outside of educational spaces.

These two studies are similar in that they concern multiethnic youth in urban environments. They differ in methodologies and aims, but also in setting. Rampton's research was conducted in Britain and outside of the school (e.g. neighborhoods), while Paris' study was conducted in the United States and inside the classroom and schoolyard. Place stunted AAL language sharing or crossing in Paris' research and allowed crossing to flourish in Rampton's study. Both of these observations take place in the Global North.

In studying the contexts where language crossing emerged in interaction, Rampton argues that it "either occasioned, or was occasioned by, moments and activities in which the constraints of ordinary social order were relaxed and normal social relations couldn't be taken for granted" (Rampton 1998, 291). Daily life and the "normal social order" were partially suspended when crossing occurred in settings like games, cross-sex interaction (most participants in Rampton's study were discouraged from cross-sex interaction), ritual cries, performance, and more. I would add that these *spaces of abeyance* are where routines can be halted or where "routine assumptions about social reality are temporarily loosened" (298). I return to a quote by Victor Turner featured at the onset of this chapter about how in highly structured spaces there is little room for "liminality":

> During the intervening phase of transition [...] the ritual subjects pass through a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo which has few [...] of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent social statuses or cultural states [...] In liminality, [everyday] social relations may be discontinued, former rights and obligations are suspended, the social order may seem to have been turned upside down. (Turner 1974, 57, 59)

Turner suggests that liminality gives way to creativity. In Mayapur, I observed girls in school, in the neighborhood, at home, in market places, on class fieldtrips, and on a visit to a village. I documented

children's creative ways of attending to peers who have been plucked out of their home countries and placed in the middle of a devotee hub bent on building a community and a temple. Mayapur is transient, liminal, and new for the children and their families, as there is constant community renewal from the levels of temple management to the new kid in nursery. Every year brings a set of new faces, new habits, new languages. The children move and change social circles often. The rare long-term relationship allows children like Krishangi and Gopi to see one another every year or every other year, except for some summers when Gopi's family leaves for Kazakhstan to renew their visas. Even then it is unclear if her visa will be approved to return to India.

What type of linguistic practice can emerge in such a community? Linguistic empathy. When Nitai did not have the words, Vanimali intervened to guess. He asked three times to clarify if he interpreted "spider" correctly. He placed himself behind Nitai as he brokered Nitai's communication in Russian. He gave Nitai the space to tell his story. At three years of age, it is surprising to see this kind of communicative competence, as well as metacommunicative competence, that is, knowing when to use your competence and when to withhold it, be patient, ignore mistakes. Eleven-year-olds often code-switch and share languages. While Krishangi and Gopi are climbing trees, Gopi incorrectly sings that she wants a coconut in Bengali. Krishangi corrects her pronoun and follows it with "Doesn't matter. Nearly right." In Gopi's next turn, she sings the correct version; and after that one moment, she continues in Bengali using the correct form. There is linguistic empathy in correcting. There is also linguistic empathy in dismissing the importance of correct grammar and recognizing that someone is "nearly right."

6.8 Concluding Thoughts

This chapter attended to linguistic empathy and the environments that afford it, such as highly mobile multilingual peer groups in Mayapur. Linguistic empathy may be manifest in other densely multilingual spaces, especially in communities that do not promote a monoglot language ideology (Silverstein 1996). In a world where differences (linguistic and otherwise) are more widely experienced by increas-

ingly mobile populations, shifts in affect toward linguistic difference could occur. India, a country characterized by vast autochthonous cultural and linguistic diversity, with a long history of multilingualism, language mixing, and grammatical convergences across language boundaries (Gumperz and Wilson 1971) is an interesting place to investigate linguistic empathy,and no doubt affords a conducive backdrop for devotee children, who are enjoined to appreciate life and the people living in an Indian Vaishnava Holy Dham (holy place).

This chapter began with a depiction of Madhu, an Australian (ethnic Russian) white-skinned migrant child, inventing a new word "bondhu-s" (friends) with his best friend Vish, a Bengali local and classmate. Language invention and sharing are not surprising among children, but in the post-colonial Global South, white-skinned immigrant children are often insulated from local, non-white skinned children and treated as privileged "expatriates" who do not need to converse in local languages, thus perpetuating "linguistic apartheid" (Simo Bobda 2004). In this geo-political context, language sharing and linguistic empathy among children is hard to promote.

The notion of linguistic empathy as manifested in conversation provides a way to discuss an affective climate that affords the possibility of communicative help, beginning in early childhood. Indeed, the cultivation of linguistic empathy may be foundational to Mayapur as a utopian community. I propose that a fruitful place to study empathy is in moments of communicative abeyance, when, for example, a child's undecipherable utterance is held suspended, beckoning an interlocutor to collaboratively, intersubjectively, and, compassionately produce meaning.

CHAPTER 7

Mobile Children, Contextual Morals

Children and youth have been undertheorized as key agents in globalization and transnational processes (Maira and Soep 2005). Migrant children "are rarely regarded in migration studies as social actors who construct their own social world but instead are usually considered as passive dependents" (Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot 2015, 4) or "things" or "luggage" (Orellana 2001, 578) transported by adults. Migrant children's ideas, words, and sentiments are also theorized as unidirectionally bestowed by their parents or transposed from the home country, or both. Children have become significant in transnational studies predominantly in the scholarship on transnational families, especially in accounts of women's migration (Parreñas 2001, 2005). Recent research examines transnational childhoods and family migration effects on "mobile children"[1] (Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot 2015; see also Maira and Soep 2005; Orellana 2009; Tetreault 2015) and children who are left behind when mothers migrate for jobs (Parreñas 2005). This research considers mobile children across ethnographic contexts, considering mobile children's agency, shifting care arrangements across borders, affectual (mis)alignment with parents' migration decisions, music, schooling, effects of citizenship status, and language policies in the arrival state (Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot 2015). As Boehm notes,

> Children and youth, at the nexus of rupture and the everyday, are important for an examination of changing ideologies of social reproduction in the context of global migration. As the impetus for family migration, those at the center of decision-making processes, or migrants themselves, young people have at times been overlooked or understudied, and their agency is often downplayed in scientists' discussions of migration. [...] Not only are children at the center of social

1 See chapter 6 for a discussion of the concept of "mobile children," who are "below 18 who experience fluxes and movements in different contexts (familial, social, political, cultural, material, symbolic, and so on) and periods of life related to migration" (Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot 2015, 30).

> reproduction, they also have a central role in the production of new, emerging, and necessarily complex subjectivities that arise in the context of global migration. (Boehm et al. 2011, 18)

In an effort to address the "complex subjectivities" that arise in the context of global migration, this chapter attends to how mobile children in Mayapur attempt to socialize one another into religious identification, intensified by global migration. It examines the everyday discursive practices through which they influence one another to adhere to standards of moral personhood within the peer group. How might the peer group monitor and motivate religious convictions? Mobile children frequently grapple with differences in normative expectations regarding conduct in contexts outside Mayapur. Sometimes they appreciate foreign ways of behaving (section 7.1), at other times they chastise a peer for emulating these behaviors (section 7.2). In Mayapur, where children frequently migrate to and from the utopian community throughout their childhood, religious tenets are often debated among the children who have different ways of applying religious concepts in their everyday life.

Children who experience radical societal shifts cope with tensions between conforming to traditional expectations and adapting to innovation (Bucholtz 2002, 529; Erikson 1968). With respect to religious practice, this tension can result in syncretic practices. Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (1994, 1) note that "in the present era of displacement, migration, urbanization, global capitalism and generally increasing 'cultural compression,' syncretic processes are multiplied and intensified." Children are not only the demographic most affected by social change, they are also the agents who transform moral frameworks for future generations. Yet, as children mix and form syncretic religious practices, issues surrounding what is morally correct amid these changes come to the surface.

7.1 "She'll Remember"

In the following example, a devotee girl entertains the possibility that female chastity is not so much a comportment that one must always perform (for example, attending to one's husband and children, covering up one's body, speaking "sweetly," i.e., no cursing or gossiping), but rather a comportment that is morally gradient depending upon social setting. In this example, a chaste girl is rendered as

someone who can both wear a bikini in Australia but must know to swim in a *shalwar kameez* (pant suit) with *dupatta* (scarf) in West Bengal. Here, the girl's awareness of location sets parameters around Mayapur's strict moral systems of religious logic among mobile Hare Krishna devotees. The girls' talk evidences an awareness of what I call a "moral spectrum," wherein what is deemed morally (in)correct in one context is not necessarily so somewhere else. Such a moral spectrum came to my attention when visiting Krishangi, a Bengali devotee girl (age 11).

During a routine morning bike ride, I saw Krishangi standing outside her apartment building tinkering with her bicycle and decided to stop over for a chat. As we talked, we saw her friend from Kazakhstan Gopi and her father cycle by us. Gopi was wearing a tankini[2] bathing suit with a *dupatta* around her neck and plastic knockoffs of the vegan shoewear, Crocs. She was heading to the river to swim. In West Bengal, an eleven-year-old girl should know to wear cotton pants and a long shirt while swimming. Grown women swim in a full *shalwar kameez* (pant suit) in the rivers, as do most teen girls. In this context, Gopi did not look like she was wearing a bathing suit but rather, she appeared half naked as she biked past Krishangi, other Bengali villagers, and me. Little children ran to see the almost naked "foreign girl." As Gopi continued on the village road with her father, Krishangi commented,

KRISHANGI: She still thinks she is in Kazakhstan.
TERUKO: Why? What do you mean?
KRISHANGI: She hasn't remembered where she is.
She can't wear that here. ((pause))
She just got back.
She'll remember.

Gopi had returned to Mayapur from a two-month visa-renewal trip in Kazakhstan over the school's break (June–July 2016). It was August and very hot, perfect for wearing minimal clothing. But in many places in India such as in rural West Benga l, wearing a tankini or bikini is not something women do when swimming. Perhaps she was not more of a spectacle because Gopi is still a child[3]

2 A tankini is a two-piece bathing suit that is similar to a bikini and differs only in that it covers the stomach.

3 Although Gopi is not legally an adult, in rural West Bengal, she is close enough to the age of girls who do get married. Though child marriage has continually been on the decline, it is nonetheless a perduring concern in India. According

and accompanied by her father, but she was nonetheless a sight to be seen, as children ran out to watch her. Why Gopi would wear this suit or why her parents thought this was okay are questions that I did not explore. I rather dwelled on Krishangi's reaction. "She hasn't remembered where she is. [...] *((pause))* She just got back. She'll remember." Krishangi reflects on Gopi's behavior and quickly supplies a thrice-repeated logic that explains her attire without casting Gopi as a moral offender: she "hasn't remembered where she is." This reflection resembles what Jarrett Zigon (2007, 133) calls a "moral breakdown," a moment that "shakes a person out the everydayness" and requires one to "consciously consider or reason about what one must do." Krishangi attempts to figure out why Gopi is wearing a tankini on a village road in India. It is potentially a face-saving activity, so that I do not misconstrue what I am seeing. But more than providing an excuse, she is vocally grappling with the scene. She repairs for herself what is a transgression of norms. Whatever the motive for glossing Gopi's swim attire, Krishangi's reaction is interesting because she cites setting and forgetfulness as to why Gopi is doing this, not her chastity, which is the usual moral umbrella shrouding women's behavior in the community.

Another eleven-year-old girl, Amrita (Bengali and white, raised mostly in Australia) enjoyed twirling in her long skirt with her hair down in the park. Mothers gossiped about how she will be "trouble for parents." Another mother asked, "How can her father just let her be like this. I would never let [my daughter] behave like this. So unchaste. Can you imagine?" Tall for her age, Amrita looks like a teenager and has reached puberty before other girls her age. As widely noted, gossip reveals normative expectations within a community (Gluckman 1963; Haviland 1977; Brenneis 1984; Besnier 2009). Twirling as a child is not an activity that can jeopardize your chastity outright, but it is something that can get a physically mature eleven-year-old girl like Amrita gossiped about.[4] Gossip

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to a study on child marriage in West Bengal between 1996 and 2001, there were 33,202 girls married under the age of thirteen (Ghosh and Kar 2010). The survey was of six hundred households in twenty-eight rural settlement in West Bengal, showing that forty-eight percent of marriages were child marriages, understood as marriage under eighteen years of age.

4 In the following example, the girls whom I recorded cornered Amrita for not being chaste on account of her playing with the classroom boys at recess.

has been shown to strengthen female solidarity (Coates 1989) as well as mark boundaries of a group, sanctioning and excluding others (M. H. Goodwin 1982a, 2006). Where the stakes are high for girls and women, one noticed major slip up such as pre-marital sex can mark one as unchaste. In Mayapur, women have been asked by the ISKCON administration to leave a function and sometimes the community for allegedly flirting with married men.

In this light, for Krishangi to cast Gopi's wearing of a tankini as not a problem of chastity but rather one of a mobile girlfriend not yet remembering where she currently is, constitutes a major departure from Mayapur's meticulous adherence to female purity. If a Bengali girl behaved as Gopi did, Krishangi might have joined others in rebuking her. Krishangi's gloss for Gopi's behavior exemplifies a tension between the "morality of reproduction" and the "morality of freedom" (Robbins 2009). Morality of reproduction refers "to the existence of clear norms to which people adhere, whether consciously or non-consciously" and in the morality of freedom "people recognize that there is no single norm that must guide their behavior in order for it to be moral, and they are thus highly aware of the freedom they have to choose which course of action they will take and will thereby promote as morally correct" (278). The devotee girls toggled between Mayapur's adults' normative expectations and creating for themselves flexibility within religious frameworks. They verbalized moral flexibility in everyday assessments of their own and others' behaviors. Mobile devotee children faced tensions between tradition and innovation as they adjusted to gender expectations every time they migrate to a new devotee community in a different country. For Amrita, who enjoys twirling and laughing loudly, she has not adjusted to life as a teenager in Mayapur. She has spent the last few years in Australia, where twirling among devotees may likely not index a lack of chastity. Krishangi gives Gopi the benefit of the doubt, assuming that she wears the tankini because she has not remembered that she is West Bengal.

Most devotee children are children of converts. This status complicates notions of tradition and innovation, as most of these children, in contrast to their parents, have grown up only in devotee communities. As such, they could be considered native experts on their religion. A loose analogy might be a linguistic contact situation in which children innovate a creole as their first language. Just

as children innovate upon the pidgin they grew up around, devotee children innovate with the religious culture that they are expected to master as the first generation born and raised mainly in Mayapur. The devotee children are grappling with diverse moral frameworks generated by their parents' constant migration. They are figuring out for themselves the extent to which, in Robbins' terms, they can adhere to norms of the community at hand or recognize that there is no single set of moral precepts guiding their behavior.

The dismissal of certain rules and the application of others across generations and community settings bring criticism from many older adult devotee community members. They lament that the devotee youth (ten years old and older) "are picking and choosing," while "the laws of nature are not flexible." "Laws of nature" refer to moral codes that dictate what happens to the soul during and after one's life—specifically issues of karma and rebirth. For a devotee woman, chastity and her devotion to Krishna and family are within her realm of control. Yet, in a utopian community comprised of constituents with different ways of displaying that chastity and devotion, debates swirl around devotee authenticity and "etiquette" in the temple, homes, neighborhoods, classrooms, and, as we will see in section 7.2, in rickshaws. Thus, the effects of mobility are not restricted solely to devotee children; for mobile adult devotees as well, the question of whether a tankini is a chaste outfit transforms into "is it a chaste outfit in India?"

The tankini scene occurred after the first year of fieldwork was completed and the community's children were seeing who returned to Mayapur after the monsoon season had ended in July 2016. Through experiences with Krishangi and Gopi as well as with other mobile children, I came to know that the re-entry period back to Mayapur for both local and non-local children carried an adjustment period. Krishangi's immigrant devotee friends brought new experiences and perspectives from abroad; and while living in West Bengal, these friends adjusted to certain expectations of proper comportment (among other things) of life in India. Mayapur's mobile devotee children exemplify the importance of morality and ethics research within anthropology.

As Didier Fassin (2012, 15) notes, "When we become conscious of the fact that the moral and ethical order we regard as obvious, or natural, or simply good, could have been different, then we can

start asking ourselves what has been gained and what has been lost in this process of making it what it is." Among Mayapur's highly mobile children, moral standards are held up for inspection. Rather than outright condemnation, they can recognize that standards for public conduct may vary. This is not always the case, as the children argue over what "correct" behaviors are, as in transcript 7.1 in section 7.2. Yet, in arguing in the first place, a norm is questioned and held up for inspection. More than a theory of cultural relativism that could render religious dogma superfluous, the children are able to assume a "theoretical attitude" (Husserl [1913] 2014). As Alessandro Duranti (2009, 213) notes, "we enter the 'theoretical attitude' at any time when we make a particular experience into an object of our reflection (e.g., the object of an evaluation)." Mayapur's mobile devotee children assume a theoretical attitude when they switch between moral frameworks, debating and displaying a meta-awareness of their religio-cultural practices. Michael Lempert (2014, 469) argues that "reflexivity (and reflection [Robbins 2009, 278]) need not involve 'self-consciousness,' and only in special cases does it even involve denotational explicitness, in which one literally talks 'about' something, someone, or some event." Lempert expands the discussion of morality toward "ethical problematization" in conversation such as cutting someone off or markedly long pauses—behaviors which call out others as "inappropriate" and open space for repair. Among Hare Krishna children, however, there are frequent explicit reflections on moral and appropriate behavior. Religious debate is normalized. Pointing out incongruities between girls' behaviors and normative community standards and interculturally translating someone's behaviors as Krishangi does arose multiple times in fieldwork. Krishangi's statement "She just got back. She'll remember," evidences the problematics of what we might call "moral-code switching." In linguistic code-switching a speaker may switch their code or register to suit or transform the situation (Auer 1999). While not a perfect analogy, the notion of moral-code switching captures the sense that devotee kids learn to switch to and even objectify moral orientations that satisfy local expectations, similar to anthropologists and cosmopolitans. Indeed, we might describe it as a moral shape shifting, an embodied stance indexed by the clothing that they wear. It is telling that Krishangi, who has never lived anywhere else except Mayapur, is aware and accepts that Gopi behaves differently when not in Mayapur.

The official ISKCON stance is that women and men should appear as devotees in *all* settings (hair, clothes, tilak on the forehead, and jewelry). But children's and teenagers' Facebook accounts reveal that many devotee youth mirror the attire of wherever they are (except that they keep the tulsi necklace on) while otherwise adhering to religious and cultural principles (such as chanting, eating *prasadam*, attending temple, among other practices). The next time that I saw Gopi swimming in the river she was wearing *shalwar kameez* (pant suit) with her *dupatta* (scarf) close by to cover her when she exited the water. In photos of her swimming and playing with cousins in Kazakhstan, she was wearing her tankini. Switching attire is apparent among other devotee girls and teenagers, who wear short party dresses and heels when going out with their friends, or bikinis when swimming in "the West," or "karmi"[5] clothes (t-shirts, dresses, jeans) when working or attending school outside of devotee contexts.

Devotee girls' switching attire to accommodate environments reconfigures the parameters of a religion that imposes strict codes of conduct and that views a female as categorically chaste or not chaste: either a woman shows or does not show her legs to men who are not her husband (hence no revealing swimwear); she either has or has not had sex, and so forth. In contrast to these stipulated polarities, among mobile children emerges a spectrum across the moral poles of their religious community and the world-out-there. The mobile devotee children can switch in and out of clothing and environments without fully jeopardizing their chastity in the eyes of their peers. Such moral shape shifting is not always tolerated and can be contested by members of a girl's peer group, as the next example demonstrates.

7.2 "You're Not Chaste"

The excerpt below illustrates the collaborative construction of "chastity" among an international and multilingual group of girls in this community. In the episode we see how an eleven-year-old girl's

5 Karmi is a cover term that devotee use to material people, especially those who work in the material world without consideration of God. It can be used as a noun when referring to people, or an adjective to describe the actions or behaviors of material people, such as wearing "karmi" clothing.

deviation from religious norms about women's chastity depicted in religious texts and adult scripture classes is the object of reproach by her same-aged peers. The analysis builds on Marjorie Goodwin's (1990, 2006) and Heather Loyd's (2012) studies of how girls fiercely monitor their moral and social landscape, and Jean Briggs's insight (1998, 206) that, "children have everyday experiences that support and confirm the messages contained in the dramas [of everyday life]. At the same time, the dramas are a vital force in maintaining those everyday plots, indeed they recreate them cognitively and emotionally in every new generation."

The sixth-grade class earned a reward for a month of good behavior: "You have three choices: go to the temple here, have a pizza party in class, or go to Jagganath *mandir* [temple] in Rajapur," a temple in a neighboring town. Gopali mataji, a primary school teacher from Brazil, had been teaching at the Sri Mayapur International School (SMIS) for a few years, and like many school teachers in Mayapur, enjoyed taking the children to temples in the area. The students chat among themselves and point out that they could get pizza whenever they wanted, but if they pick Jagannath *mandir*, then they could go on the rickshaws together and get out of school early. The class planned their twenty-five minute rickshaw ride to Jagganath temple, a place of worship dedicated to an incarnation of Vishnu.

That Friday morning the children were giddy with excitement. After morning prayers at 9:15 a.m., they skipped, ran, and walked hurriedly to the rickshaws waiting outside the school gates. I was assigned the duty of "adult-in-charge" for one rickshaw; and as I often filmed the girls, I brought my camcorder to document the ride. "I'm going with Teruko mataji!" yelled Krishangi. "Me too!" echoed Gopi and Yashoda. Bhumika and Amrita followed suit jumping into the rickshaw. Figures 7.1 and 7.2 show the seating arrangement from my perspective. I am seated next to Bhumika directly across from Krishangi. Due to the angle of the camera, Gopi and Bhumika's faces are rarely captured by the camera. The conversation is mainly between Amrita and Krishangi, but the other three girls chime in evaluating the veracity of the claims made about chastity.

Amrita, Krishangi, Yashoda, Bhumika, and Gopi are eleven years old and consider each other friends, though Amrita is at the periphery of the friend group. They hang out at recess and attend each others' birthday parties. Krishangi (Bengali) and Gopi (Russian from Kazakhstan), whom we

Figure 7.1: Girls sitting in rickshaw

have already encountered in the previous chapter, are best friends and have known each other since four years of age. Yashoda is from South Korea and has lived in Mayapur for two years.[6] Bhumika is from Russia and moved to Mayapur with her parents and little sister when she was six. At the time of this conversation, Amrita had just returned to Mayapur two months earlier after a few years of living in Australia.

Amrita used to live in Mayapur when she was a toddler but, as is often the case for the devotee children, she lived between the home countries of her parents and various other temple communities around the world. Amrita is half Bengali and half Scottish Australian. Her Bengali father is a renowned classical musician, famous both within and outside devotee circles. Amrita's own skill set as a *mrdanga* (classical drum) player is a source of competition between her and Krishangi, and the two extend their competitive spirit into conversation as will be seen below.

About two minutes after the girls enter the rickshaw, they begin singing a prayer for protection to Lord Narasimha, a part lion, part man avatar of Vishnu who destroys evil and any impediments

6 Yashoda and her family returned to South Korea after she completed sixth grade.

Figure 7.2: Bhumika and Gopi in rickshaw

for His devotees. Death can always come, so the children do as the community members do: invoke Lord Narasimha before starting any journey especially in any motorized vehicle in India. Krishangi glosses their activity for me. As the children sing His prayers, Amrita gazes out of the rickshaw and says, "↑Creepy man, time to cover my head. ↓I'm a mataji."[7] She moves her right hand to the side of her head and guards her face.

With no uptake from the other girls she continues, "There's a creepy man looking at me." Amrita adjusts her *dupatta*, a scarf around her shoulders. Still no uptake from her peers, so she adds, "Not into the dirty looks." Almost fifteen seconds pass and then finally Bhumika mimics her by lifting her own *dupatta* and then comments, "You loo(h)k wei(h)rd" (line 21). Amrita smiles and responds, "I'm a mataji, I don't want anyone looking at me::." She continues to try and establish shared attention to

7 *Mataji* literally means "honored mother." As noted before, among devotees it is a term for any adult woman who is not your actual mother.

Figure 7.3: Amrita placing her *dupatta* over her head

what she is doing (lines 22–28). It is unclear at this point if Amrita is trying to launch a story. She tries for almost twenty-six seconds to secure attention to how she is being looked at by a "creepy man," how she is "not into the dirty looks," and later announcing to me that she would like my *chaddar* (a larger piece of cloth) to cover her more fully (line 25). The other girls ignore her, continuing to instead sing the Lord Narasimha prayers. Amrita is competing with the main task at hand, with little success at diverting the other girls' attention.

Transcript 7.1

((first few lines omitted, see the appendix for full transcript))

6	KRISHANGI:	*((looks over at Amrita as if to check that she is singing))*
7	AMRITA:	*((returns her gaze))*
8		*((looks out of the rickshaw))*
		(2.6)
9		*((looks back at the others))*
10		↑Creepy man, time to cover my head. ↓I'm a mataji.
11	BHUMIKA:	Ohhhuh
		(1.6)

12 AMRITA: There's a cr<u>ee</u>py man looking at me.
13 *((adjusts her dupatta))*
(.7)
14 <u>Not</u> into the dirty looks.
15 *((moves the dupatta from her neck to her head, so it becomes a headscarf))*
(2.5)
16 *((Gopi and Chandra do something funny off camera))*
17 YASHODA: Hah(h)a(Hh)ha
(14)
18 GOPI: *((inaudible speech))*
19 *((mimics Amrita covering her head))*
20 BHUMIKA: *((also hides her face with* dupatta*))*
(.5)
21 You loo(h)k wei(h)rd.
(3.6)
22 AMRITA: I'm a mataji, I don't want <u>any</u>one <u>loo</u>king at me::.
23 *((pulls the* dupatta *down to cover her entire face))*
(1.1)
24 *((lifts the* dupatta *up again so it only covers her hair))*
25 *((to Teruko))* Mataji at this point I want your chaddar.
26 *((holds the* dupatta *up with both hands so her face is only visible to those inside the rickshaw))*
(5.3)
27 *((still holding the scarf up with her hands))*
28 No one's gonna look at me.
(1)

Stories often emerge in the course of conversation, but they require social uptake from interlocutors (M. H. Goodwin 1990; Ochs and Capps 2001; Sacks 1972). Amrita does not direct questions to her friends, her statements do not pique interest, and she continues to be ignored. Then she tries one more time to secure attention, escalating her self-evaluation to a provocative topic: chastity. She lifts her *dupatta* (scarf) from her neck and wraps it around her head.

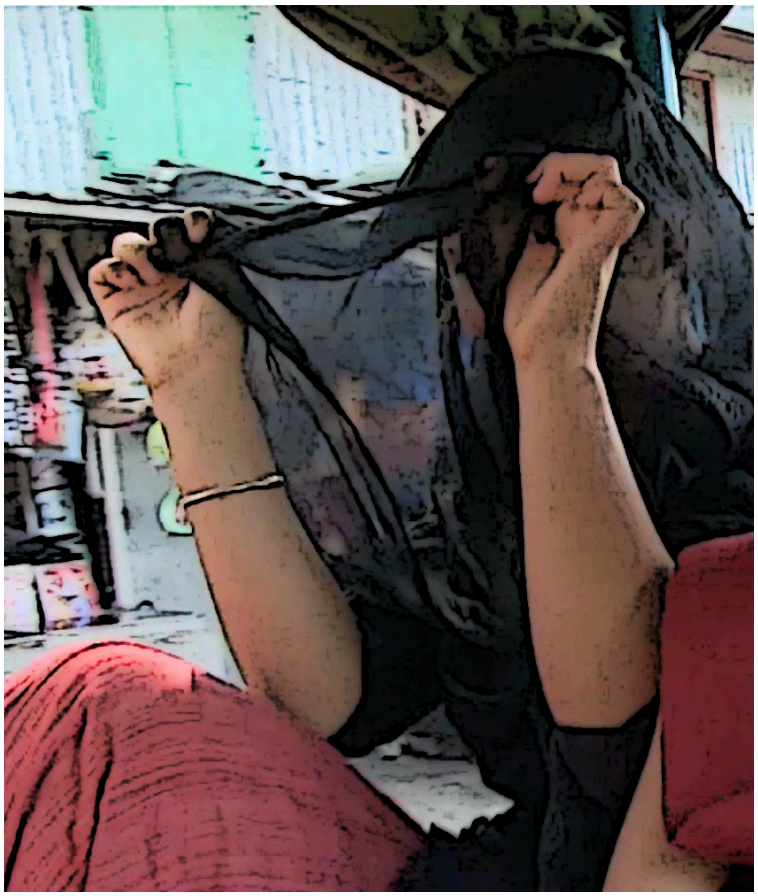

Figure 7.4: Amrita covering her face

Transcript 7.1 continued

29	BHUMIKA:	*((inaudible in Russian to Gopi))*
		(.4)
30	AMRITA:	I'm a very cha:ste mataji.
31	KRISHANGI:	*((Krishangi looks over at Amrita with a smirk while singing Nrsimhadeva prayers))*
32	YASHODA:	⌈Why you-
33		⌊*((looks at Amrita))*
		(.6)
34	BHUMIKA:	⌈*((laughs))*
35		⌊*((Nrsimhadeva prayers end))*
36	YASHODA:	*((laughter))*

Figure 7.5: Krishangi looks at Amrita

Amrita assumes a grown-up role, using the scarf to enact a performance of maturity. Krishangi immediately looks over at Amrita and smirks (line 31, see figure 7.5). Yashoda starts to direct a question to Amrita, but stops. Bhumika laughs. The prayers end. Krishangi re-directing her gaze towards me, asks me: "Mataji, do you know my mothe- (.) My auntie's mother?" (line 37). I answer, helping launch Krishangi's own story about chastity.

Transcript 7.1 continued

37	KRISHANGI:	Mataji, do you know my mothe- (.)
38		My auntie's mother?
39	TERUKO:	Uh h[uh.
40	KRISHANGI:	[She's very chaste, she [always (.) uh::::::
41		[*((swipes her left hand over her face))*
42		[Covers her face-
43	AMRITA:	[Covers her head, [that doesn't mean she's chaste.
44		[*((pulls the* dupatta *back so it only covers her hair, not her face))*
45	KRISHANGI:	*((turns her head to look at Amrita))*
46		*((looks back at Teruko))*
47		[She always covers her face, she doesn't see any man's face.
		(.2)

In line 40, Krishangi states that her auntie's mother is very chaste, as evidenced by her covering her head. Cutting her off, Amrita objects, "Covers her head, that doesn't mean she's chaste"—an odd correction given that her own claim before was that she is herself a chaste *mataji* because her *dupatta* covered her head and most of her face. Lempert (2014, 469) discusses "minor moral breakdowns" that can be locally occasioned and involve ethicalizing reflective practices such as "moral repair" of breaches. Moral reflection surrounding what constitutes chastity and its potential breaches continues as Krishangi clarifies her auntie's mother's comportment: "She always covers her face, she doesn't see any man's face" (line 47). It is a subtle correction aimed at Amrita. This correction foreshadows her later, more explicit repair of Amrita's earlier boastful statement that she is a "very chaste mataji." It also references ideals of chastity as recounted in the Indian epic the *Ramayana* when Sita is kidnapped by the demon Ravana but does not look at him so as to not betray her husband, Rama. The epic love story of Sita and Rama is retold in the community, and children and teenagers put on community plays lauding her chastity, that was so impeccable that it protected her as she walked through fire.

Krishangi's account of her auntie's mother infers that Amrita's covering her face after being viewed by a man on the street is not what constitutes being a chaste woman. After hearing this account, Amrita objects. What ensues is a co-constructed, co-authored narrative about chastity, with all five girls debating its meaning and who among them is chaste. As Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (2001, 2–3) assert, "narrative activity becomes a tool for collaboratively reflecting upon specific situations and their place in the general scheme of life." "Commiserating, gossiping, philosophizing, exchanging advice, and other informal discourse interlaces lives and builds common ways of acting, thinking, feeling and otherwise being in the world" (8). In this co-constructed narrative, the girls untangle chastity, contesting its assignability and protesting its invocation by any girl who interacts unrestrictedly with boys who are not relatives. In so doing, the peer group becomes the site where meaning is made as their moral compass is directed, shaped, and modified by one other.

In this episode, Amrita, who recently returned to the group after a couple of years away in Australia, does not think that covering her head and avoiding seeing any man translates into chastity, a position her classmates strongly protest. Amrita does not state what the qualifications are for a girl's

chastity, opting rather to argue against Krishangi's claims about it. And in a strict sense, all the girls are chaste in that they have not had sex. They also do not have boyfriends or classroom romances that would invite direct questioning about whether they were still chaste. Nonetheless, they point out the discrepancies in Amrita's claim of being a "chaste mataji." The most apparent contradiction is that while they are discussing chastity, Amrita waves to a fruit man from the rickshaw and Gopi retorts, "See? You said 'hi::' to a boy?" Amrita defends, "No, that's my uncle." The "uncle" here is not her blood-kin uncle, but a man who sells her family fruit and she affectionately calls "uncle." Amrita tries to restrict the conservative gaze of the group to the immediate past action of her only interacting with that uncle, a fictive kin member, and therefore within the boundaries of men with whom chaste women can interact.

Transcript 7.1 continued

((several lines omitted))

73	AMRITA:	↑HI::::: ( ) *((looking out of the rickshaw))*
74		*((waves to man at fruit shop))*
75	GOPI:	You always-
		(.4)
76	AMRITA:	That's ↑my uncle.
		(.4)
77	TERUKO:	Yeah?
78	GOPI:	See?=You said (.) hi::::: to some m:[a::n
79	AMRITA:	[No, that's my uncle.

Bhumika objects in the form of a joke: "So you play with the boys, then you are a very cha::ste girl." Amrita exclaims again, "He's my uncle!" But rather than quell the debate on her chastity, this retort prompts a host of polarity expressions, "NO," from the other girls. Amrita attempts to carve out a moral space for herself, insisting that she is a chaste girl. The other girls look at her, as each one in turn offers a damning data point about her continuous playful interactions with classroom boys:

Transcript 7.1 continued

80	BHUMIKA:	And you play with the boys (.) then you are very <cha::ste girl>.
81	AMRITA:	He's ↑my ↑uncle.
82	BHUMIKA:	NO:::
83	GOPI:	Yeah::
84		*((all look at Amrita))*
85	KRISHANGI:	NO↑::::::
86	YASHODA:	NO:: YOU PLAY IN CLA:SS
87	KRISHANGI:	CLASSROOM ↓boys.
88	AMRITA:	*((looks at Krishangi))*
89	GOPI:	You pla::y with them
90	BHUMIKA:	You pla::y with them
91	KRISHANGI:	YOU PLA::Y with them

Amrita laughs and defends her behavior, "Well that's called being f- flattered or I-." Gopi cuts her off with an ironic joke, "Very chaste!" The girls deny that her behavior is anything positive and they declare: "That's not chaste" and "That's not fun." Goodwin (2006, 107) analyzed asymmetrical relations among nine- to fourteen-year-olds and found that those children who position themselves as leaders in a group do not ask permission or provide justifications for their actions. Instead, they "use bald imperatives, pejorative address terms, insults, accounts that index arbitrary needs and desires of the speaker rather than requirements of the group, and explanations that allude to the speaker's ultimate control." Although Amrita is alone in her defense and position on chastity against the other girls, she works at holding her own. She contradicts Krishangi's initial claim that her aunty is chaste because "she covers her face." After Krishangi's repair that she meant that her aunt does not see a man's face, Amrita does not object. Amrita fails in her attempts to gain ground, however, in saying that she only waved to the fruit man because he is her uncle. The girls point out a history of her unchaste behaviors like playing at school with the boys.

During this class fieldtrip Amrita tries to affiliate with these girls, but usually at school her main friends are in seventh grade. She is considered "cool" by Krishangi and other classmates for being a great *mrdanga* drum player. Unfortunately for Amrita's reputation, the class boys have made it clear that she is the resident beauty, and they have crushes on her. In sixth grade, collecting boy crushes is

not a way to accrue points when chastity (through marriage) is the currency of female power. Gopi, Yashoda, Bhumika, and Krishangi position themselves as guardians of the moral order. They move on to comparisons of each other's chastity.

Transcript 7.1 continued

93	AMRITA:	*((smiling))* ↑W<u>e</u>ll (.2) that's called being f- flattered or- I
94	GOPI:	Very chaste (1.9)
95	KRISHANGI:	That's n<u>o</u>t chaste *((shaking her head))*
96	AMRITA:	(That's) fun.
97	GOPI:	Or fun
98	KRISHANGI:	Or fu↓::::n
99	BHUMIKA:	*((chuckles))* (.3)
100	KRISHANGI:	It's cha<u>r</u>::::ste.
101	BHUMIKA:	I ( )
102	GOPI:	I'm chaster than you::. ( )

Gopi's declaration, "I'm chaster than you::" creates a cline of chastity with Amrita at the bottom. At this point in the conversation it is unclear who is on top of this hierarchy, although Krishangi and Gopi usually co-rule the girls around them, Gopi with the Russian children and Krishangi with everyone else. Within this dynamic alliance, Amrita stands little chance at breaking up the four-girl tag team that knows how to deploy counterfactuals to Amrita's claims of chastity. Indeed, Amrita gives in, "Ok, whatever, I'm going to stop it." Having triumphed, Krishangi poses a test (line 105): "O↑K let's ↑see. I'll test for you. You can not play with the classroom boys. Not even one boy in the whole school. Let's see how you can do it." This test is one they know Amrita will fail at. But she agrees, "Ok, let's do it. Starting from now. See?"

As she cannot immediately show that she will not play with boys, Amrita chooses another visible index of her altered moral stance and bends her head towards her knees while covering the sides of her face as if they were horse blinders preventing her from seeing anything but feet. For a woman to look only at the feet of men is a trope of chastity in the community that is often recounted in the stories of princess Sita and her husband Rama mentioned above from the *Ramayana*. Sita did not look at men,

Figure 7.6: Monitoring Amrita as she ducks her head between her legs

and even her own brother-in-law recounted that he respected Sita so much that he too only saw her feet. That level of chastity is not sustainable by Amrita or anyone. Yet, she is challenged by Gopi to hold the position of her head down for "one month" (line 113).

Transcript 7.1 continued

103	AMRITA:	Ok, whatever I'm going to stop it. ( )
104	BHUMIKA:	And ME::
105	KRISHANGI:	O↑K let's ↑see. I'll test for you.=
106		=You can not play with the classroom boys.=
107		=Not even one boy in the whole school.
108		Let's see how [you can do it.
109	AMRITA:	[Ok, [let's go.
110		[*((bends down with dupatta covering full face))*
111		Starting from now. See?
112	KRISHANGI:	[↑OK.
113	GOPI:	[Starting from now, uh::: (.) one month.
114		↑Month.

Amrita breaks her downward gaze, smiles, and admits that she cannot do it.

Transcript 7.1 continued

114	GOPI:	↑Month.
115	AMRITA:	Hey. No (.) that's that's that's-
116	KRISHANGI:	Why?=
117	GOPI:	Why?=
118	AMRITA:	=I can't do -that.=
119		*((pulls the* dupatta *back again, revealing her face))*
120	BHUMIKA:	*((points at Amrita and laughs))*
121	KRISHANGI:	=Yeah, well gir- chaste people do it for their whole li::fe.
122	GOPI:	( ) chaste is forever.
		(.5)
123		Yea:::h
124	KRISHANGI:	They do it for their whole life,

The responses are unforgiving. And here comes the peripeteia (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1452a, as cited in Bruner 2002, 4), the sudden reversal in circumstances that swiftly turns around a story's plot line. A concerted cornering of Amrita into admitting her moral weakness becomes redirected towards the group of girls who claimed moral high ground. Amrita accuses Krishangi: "You're not chaste!" There's the rub. Krishangi, the gatekeeper of morality in this episode, the one who launched the corrective narrative meant to put Amrita in her place as she put on airs of being chaste, is herself unchaste.

Transcript 7.1 continued

123	GOPI:	Yea:::h
124	KRISHANGI:	They do it for their whole life, how could you-
125	AMRITA:	You're not chaste?
126	KRISHANGI:	I know I'm not chaste?
127	GOPI:	( ) ↑I'm chaste for one day.
128		And then *((puts hand over eyes and looks down))*
129	AMRITA:	Ha(h)ah(h)ha
130	BHUMIKA:	Ha(h)ah[(h)ha
131	KRISHANGI:	(n- n- n- n- n-) >next day,<
132		↑HI:: HI:: everybody *((in high-pitched sing-song voice))*
133		*((puts her arm up and waves))*

Figure 7.7: Amrita defends herself with a comeback

Krishangi admits in the most "duh tone" (what everyone already knows) possible, "I know I'm not chaste." Indeed, Krishangi too plays with boys, as do Gopi, Bhumika, and Yashoda. Yet, when Krishangi plays with boys her mode is competitive. Conversely, Amrita is coded as flirtatious because she laughs, lightly hits, and jokes with boys. This episode is very much in the vein of play and is wrought with contradictions: all the girls contesting Amrita's chastity are not moral authorities on the subject but police Amrita nonetheless. Perhaps they are doing what Bambi Chapin (2014, 121) describes in her work in Sri Lanka when a friend group temporarily ostracized one girl who excelled in a sport on the grounds that "friends should be equal to each other." Heather Loyd (2012) also frequently observed a similar "shut down" strategy among Neapolitan girls living in the impoverished neighborhood of Quatieri Spagnoli:

> Since [Quatieri Spagnoli] girls are constantly under fire through the policing performed by others, most girls become adept at neutralizing and countering facethreatening attacks. Girls become clever and quick at issuing dismissals, discounts, and denials, often indirect and metaphorical, as defensive strategies to protect their status when another girl is trying to shut them down or gain status at their expense. (Loyd 2012, 346)

It is possible that the girls in my study are trying to bring Amrita to their level or remind her that she is no different from them. But the girls do think that they are different and that though un-chaste, they are, as Gopi said, "chaster than" Amrita. They have created a spectrum of chastity and Amrita is on the negative polar end. Such a moral spectrum contrasts with the categorical religious concept of chastity.[8] Attempting to take Amrita down a peg or two may also be part of the reasons that Amrita's chastity is contested; the dispute establishes a moral hierarchy within the group. Amrita and Krishangi compete for moral authority over the group's activities, but Amrita's attempts to steer the group are rarely taken up by others. Amrita was not totally unsuccessful in making her point: they are all unchaste and thus cannot continue to single her out on those grounds. With this revelation the conversation simmers down. Eight seconds later, the girls are off to a new topic and different debate. They cycle back to chastity one hundred conversational turns later, when Gopi places her feet on Amrita's lap, and the girls debate whether showing one's ankles and putting one's feet up in public makes you unchaste. Gopi and Amrita affirm that it has nothing to do with chastity and that this behavior "doesn't matter," if the person who has the feet on their lap approves. Similar to the tankini swimming episode, during which Gopi's chastity is not questioned by Krishangi when she wears such clothes in Kazakhstan, chastity's significance is interpreted contextually rather than as according to the clear-cut dichotomy preferred in the adult community.

Returning to the beginning of the rickshaw episode, Amrita tried for forty seconds to launch a conversation about not being seen by "creepy men." The girls were ignoring her, engrossed in their protective prayers to Lord Narasimha. Her narrative repeatedly "fails to launch" (Ochs and Capps 2001, 118–9). Only when she makes a claim that she is chaste as the reason she put on the head scarf, do the girls respond. Amrita is, as Goodwin (1982b, 802) discusses, "instigating" a future drama and invites the debate. She repeatedly counters Krishangi's understanding of "chastity" in relation to her auntie's mother-in-law and provokes the peer group to engage in children's morality play. In *Inuit Morality Play*, Briggs (1998, 2013) considers the import of morality play for community and shared values. Briggs'

8 In this community chastity connotes a woman's virginity before marriage, and then once married, a woman can remain chaste if she is devoted to her husband and children.

work concerns playful inquiries posed to one Inuit child, Chubby Maata. Briggs (1992, 27) casts these questions as morality plays that "raise to consciousness issues that the child will perceive to be of great consequence for his or her life." The chastity spectrum that the Mayapur devotee girls co-construct resembles such "morality plays." The girls "play" with a community master script, which prepares them for moral controversies when they transition to adult devotee *matajis* (honorable women). The gossip of the older women in Mayapur about other women and girls require one to defend oneself and police the chaste or unchaste behaviors of other females. Although Amrita occupies the fringe of this particular friend group, she fights back. She is learning a crucial skill for a respectable woman's life in Mayapur: how to defend one's chastity. Her tactic here is to point out the hypocrisy in all the girls around her.

The beloved princess Sita in the epic *Ramayana* was not merely a damsel unprotected; she had her chastity, which guarded her through fire after her rescue and subsequent public trial of her chastity when kidnapped. But the ending of that epic is not one in which the king and queen live the remainder of their days happily ever after with their children. For even though Sita's chastity was proven to be intact (i.e., she had been not raped by her captor, Ravana), the people of Ayodhya (Rama's kingdom) still questioned her chastity, for they could not believe that she never looked into her captor's face or was otherwise molested by him. Her husband believed her; the fire proved she was chaste; but the people still gossiped about their king and queen. In order to save her husband's reputation and show the people of Ayodhya that Rama did not accept back an unchaste wife, Sita decides to go to the forest, give birth away from the kingdom, and then finally be swallowed up by the earth, *bhumi* (her mother). This sacrifice of putting her husband and the community above her own truth is the epitome of traditional women's chastity as recounted among Hare Krishna devotees. It is a tall order and the children know they cannot be Sita, for they have looked many men in their eyes and have played soccer and tag with boys. Sita is held up as an ideal woman nonetheless. Being able to defend oneself and walk through the fires of conversational accusations are skills that Amrita and other girls will continue to co-develop. "The formation of values, the management of conflict, and the development of skills relevant to coping with an environment fraught with dangerous uncertainties" was a chief concern in

Figure 7.8: Eighteenth century painting of Sita, Rama, and his brother Lakshman in the forest[9]

Briggs' ethnography. Children are apprenticed not only through adult community's master narratives, but also through narratives transformed within children's peer groups. Once Amrita, Krishangi, and the others enter puberty at twelve or thirteen, the danger of losing moral status becomes imminent. For now, the girls can debate among themselves and do so passionately, while the consequences of

9 From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indischer_Maler_von_1780_001.jpg, accessed on May 25, 2019.

being unchaste are not too damning. Danger, as Briggs (1992, 34) notes, "can be fun when one feels safe."

7.3 Concluding Thoughts

Devotee children display flexibility and reflexivity regarding religious dogma. This chapter discussed how religious dispositions regarding chastity are reflected upon both in girls' conversation among peers and others. In one case, the strict moral code of a chaste devotee female is treated by girls as contextually variable. They recognize that guidelines for a female's attire are not uniformly adhered to across global contexts. In the other example, a turn-by-turn dialogue among girls in a rickshaw debates whether or not chastity requires covering one's face and not seeing any man's face, a religious ideal of the princess, Sita. They cast chastity along a spectrum: some girls can be "chaster" than others. In a world where even devout females are unchaste by Princess Sita's standard, the girls construct a gradient of morality wherein once black and white codes of conduct (chaste vs. not chaste) are rendered shades of grey.

As Hare Krishnas migrate frequently and encounter difference in how devotees practice religious principles constantly, mobile children experience more variable instantiations of chastity than the single principle promoted in Mayapur. Devotee girls and women when outside India wear tankinis or bikinis, and some chaste women have jobs outside the home. Rather than treating these behaviors as contradictions or hypocrisies, the children do not always adhere to Mayapur's particularly fundamentalist doctrines across contexts, but rather adjust according to the environment in which they are situated. "Although young people's experiences of potentially socially threatening phenomena are thought to be the result of dramatic cultural changes that create unprecedented psychological pressure, there are creative dimensions to these responses to new cultural circumstances" (Bucholtz 2002, 531–2). The mobile devotee girls' creative response to competing norms of chaste behavior is to form a flexible spectrum of moral behaviors, where some can be more or less chaste than others.

Conclusions

This dissertation examined the concept of utopia as a response to perceived pressures of family life in a late-capitalist globalized world as well as the consequences of the utopian project for language use. From the development of utopia within the communitarian tradition in Europe to its exportation to India in the eighteenth century, this study has identified ways in which utopia shaped the creation of Mayapur, a modern religious utopian community in West Bengal. Using ethnographic participant observation, interviews, and video recordings, the study offers anthropological insight into how ideologies surrounding of utopia are configured and transformed in the course of everyday life among those living in intentional and utopian communities. Intentional communities require the community *to be the activity* that unites people. I argue that "utopian" communities are a type of intentional community distinct in outward world-reformation stance and de-emphasis on communal living (i.e., the community does not require the shared distribution of material goods within the community). Communities like Mayapur are also *communities of practice* par excellence. What distinguishes the study presented here from other discussions of utopian projects is the close analysis of the ordinary practices of mothers and children who embarked on a world-making journey to build for themselves, as well as the world, a model for an ideal life (chapter 1).

Utopia is a frontier logic. In a globalized capitalist world, this logic is born out of the frustrated desire that some have to escape; they search for new frontiers for change—an appealing and perhaps psychologically necessary quest for those vested in Western narratives of progress and change. Chapter 3 discussed the utopian concept that the lived reality of "progress" in a material world is an illusion, rendering one feeling "stuck" (Hage 2015, 33). Some turn to Utopian thought and community for inspiration and safety. Utopian thought and its lived radical alterity constitute a fruitful avenue for research in the anthropology of the future and social change.

This dissertation considered how mothers in the utopian community of Mayapur voiced their escape from perceived dystopia and the ideological creation of an Indian utopia in West Bengal. Chapter 4 focused on Mayapur's particular utopia, including the influence of the British novel within the educated, respectable Bengali *bhadralok*, specifically Vaishnava reformer, Bhaktivinoda Thakur. Bhaktivinoda Thakur crafted a vision of an international devotee base in the late nineteenth century. Across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries this vision was realized. Bengali guru Srila Prabhupada exported Bengal's Vaishnava religion and devotee utopia concept to many countries in the world, creating the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Indian and foreign ISKCON devotees began investing in and building their guru's city in rural West Bengal as a future safe haven from the "material world," a place destined to destruction as all life is understood to be living in the last age (Kali Yuga, the Iron Age) before destruction 432,000 years from now. Stuck on two levels—in the material world and in time—devotees reorient their energies to cultivating a spiritual life, disinvesting from the world, and focusing on living a "simple" life devoted to Krishna, who symbolizes the ultimate escape from the world and time.

The dissertation addressed the subjective, existential concerns of devotee women that led them to migrate from societies (see chapter 5). Based on the narratives of Indian and non-Indian devotee women in Mayapur, I have suggested that pressures on mothers in the working world has been a catalyst for migration to communal projects that uphold strict gender divides. Devotee mothers articulated feeling more at ease and happier when they were encouraged to be stay-at-home mothers. They also voiced that they felt more in control of influences over their children. The "material world" was framed by Mayapur mothers as an alluring but ultimately dangerous trap that had tricked them into placing "the nation," "society," or "the world-out-there" above their own families, especially their children. Once these women realized (what they understood as) "the trap" of the material world, they sought to escape from that world and seek out alternative community. I suggest that "utopia" as an ideological construct of hope and potential world making acts as a safe haven when one feels trapped. A possible implication is that the possibility of escape to locally fashioned utopian communities can mitigate social stress among mothers who feel under-supported. Childcare and control over the trajectories

of one's child as separate from mainstream culture were the main impetus for mothers to opt out of their societies. The main push for family migration was vested in protecting their children from "material world" logics, chief among them, feminism. For devotees, feminism stands as the trickster that duped them into engaging in social commitments for which they were not prepared, delaying motherhood in pursuit of education or career advancement, and placing money or society above one's family—all framed as anti-motherhood and ultimately practices that they as members of a community of like-minded devotees need to correct in order to birth the Vaishnava utopia envisioned by their guru.

Once families had migrated to Mayapur, children from around the world and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds began living in close proximity to one another in school, neighborhoods, the temple, and other community settings. This dissertation showcased the communicative possibilities in this utopian community, where the goal is the community. Due to frequent migration and ever-changing demographics, the community is in constant flux. In a place predicated upon a mobile constituency and liminality, I investigated the type of communicative dispositions made possible in Mayapur. Recorded social interactions among devotee children revealed that children assisted each other in language learning and displayed patience for conversational mistakes. I refer to this disposition as *linguistic empathy* and argue that it stems from children's repeated personal experiences of not understanding the many languages in one's environment. These experiences afford a willingness and impetus to translate (broker) for non-native peer speakers in interaction. A fruitful place to examine linguistic empathy is in moments of communicative abeyance, when interlocutors have an opportunity to "co-operatively" (C. Goodwin 2018) produce meaning. This chapter also emphasizes that linguistic empathy among children critically relies upon Mayapur's ideologically informed community design, which encourages children to cross national, racial, and linguistic boundaries to creatively engage one another.

Finally, this dissertation discussed how the life worlds of girls as highly mobile migrants promote religious flexibility regarding chastity among their generation. The girls transformed the Hare Krishna concept of chastity from a strict moral code with clear tenets into a demeanor that is contextually variable. Investigating religious change among mobile devotee girls complicates ideas about children's

role in migration as "passive" dependents who mirror the sentiments and ideologies of their parents. From the perspective of the girls' families, utopia is about protecting their daughters from the "world-out-there." Yet, because of their constant migratory experiences, devotee girls are periodically exposed to that world. Rather than categorically reject or embrace it, the girls displayed an ability to modify or switch moral frameworks surrounding chastity. For example, the girls may wear a bikini or tankini while swimming outside of India but a *shalwar kameez* (pant suit) in Mayapur. Bengali and immigrant devotee girls display an ability to question and argue about their religion, and create for themselves an ideological and practical spectrum of chastity, which allows flexibility in their moral comportment in array of international contexts.

Reflections on the Girls Now

Devotee girls living in Mayapur communicate across multiple languages, play at one another's homes, eat each others' food, and repeatedly observe and participate in shared cultural habits. They travel frequently with their friends' families to their home countries and temples and often attend local public schools in various countries. These practices are wholly integral to Mayapur's ideological principles. Yet, the cosmopolitan devotee girls' experiences also generate ideologies that are at odds with the community's gendered religious ideologies. Chastity, as discussed in chapters 5 and 7, is a religious concept that Hare Krishnas uphold as the main way for a woman to exit the material world (i.e., gain entry to Krishna's abode, *goloka*) by doing her *dharma* (duty) toward her husband and children. Women migrate to Mayapur to ensure their children are safe, and for many mothers in Mayapur, this means making sure their daughters are not duped by the material world into believing feminist principles such as working outside the home and thus jeopardizing one's chastity. Children in Mayapur acquire linguistic and cultural competencies that would serve them well in a globalized material world, but because the community negatively values that world, these cosmopolitan girls are often unable to pursue these pathways, even when they want to (see below). The girls' flexible, contextualized interpretation of doctrinal chastity may be their way to navigate the borderlands of these cosmologies.

Through conversation and interviews, Mayapur's mothers and girls indicated that utopian frameworks open certain possibilities while shutting down others. As of 2019, four out of the six focal girls in this study dropped out of school before completing eighth grade. Two girls' parents cited that their daughters are interested in pursuing other interests, such as art and devotional advancement. As devotees do not normally place a high value on succeeding in the "material world" and women's higher education, completing school is not a high priority for many families. For a girl like Krishangi, who wanted to be an archaeologist, the choice to pursue that professional desire becomes impossible without a high school diploma. Remaining in utopia is no longer a choice, but an inevitability. The devotee community is the ideal future that many parents envisioned for their children, but what happens when children want something outside of their parents' utopia? In these ways, utopia is not timeless. Indeed, utopian communities usually do not last more than a generation.

Yet, Mayapur has existed for over fifty years, with second generation devotees raising the third generation. The movement continues to attract newcomers but internal growth is a major factor in Mayapur's success. Children like Gopi make that possible. Gopi dreams of engagement when she turns seventeen and being a housewife. During one of our many conversations about the future, she told me that I was "still okay" for not having children, but that by the time she will be my age (which was twenty-six in 2016), she will already have two kids, "I'm going to live in Mayapur, mataji. With Krishangi, our husbands, and our children. You'll bring your kids too, right?" "Yeah, I will visit. You promise you'll be here?," I asked. Gopi smiled, "Of course, mataji. There's no place like Mayapur. This is my home."

An exploration into the history, motivations, and possibilities of life in utopia, *Moving Toward Utopia* is about highly mobile mothers and girls helping to build an infrastructure for making utopia tangible, motivating peers and progeny to cooperatively sustain it, and ultimately, ensuring that girls keep the vision alive, despite the pull of cosmopolitan influences with alternative visions.

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Appendix

Glossary of Key Terms

avatara manifestation or incarnation of a god, avatar

bhadralok British-educated Indian class working under the colonial administration

bhakta devotee

bhakti devotion to Krishna, more accurately to Radha-Krishna

bideshi foreign, foreigner

bondhu friend (pl. *bondhra*)

brahmacari celibate monk, also refers to the student phase of life for boys from 5 until 25 years of age

choli short shirt worn with saris

dham place, location

dhambasi inhabitant of a place

dharma duty

dupatta scarf

goloka the abode of Krishna and Radha, also *krishnaloka* or *gokula*

gopi female cowherd, Krishna's girlfriends

gopi skirt long pleated skirt that often covers a woman's belly button and goes to her ankles.

gopicandana yellow clay that devotees use to mark the *tilak* on their foreheads

goswami an Indian surname as well as a title, lit. "lord of cows" (*go*, cow; *swami*, lord); among Vaishnavas it refers to a hereditary Vaishnava leader of the Brahmin caste

grhastha householder

gurukul a type of boarding school led by gurus

harinama sankirtan the practice of saying the name *hari* in public with a group of others

japa-mala Vaishnava prayer beads that devotees use to count how many times they recited the Hare Krishna mantra

japa meditative repetition of a prayer

karatala cymbals

karma actions from a previous life

karmi Hare Krishna term for a non-devotee

kaupina loin cloth

khola drum

kirtan a Vaishnava ritual of singing and drumming in worship of Krishna

Krishna (Kṛṣṇa) incarnation of Vishnu

krishna katha speaking of Krishna

madhurya rasa taste between lover and beloved

mahamantra in devotee communities, this refers to the Hare Krishna mantra,
Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa | Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare | Hare Rāma Hare Rāma | Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

mataji lit. "honorable mother," used as a respect term for any woman among Vaishnavas

maya illusion

mongal arati Hindu religious ritual of worship, offering a flame to a deity in the morning between 4 and 4:30 a.m.

prabhu respect term for men

prasadam food ritually offered to a deity

Radha (Rādhā) Krishna's eternal consort

sabji vegetable

sadhana Hindu religious practices

sampradaya community

samskaras rites or a ceremony marking a major event in one's life that devotees who wish to conceive follow

sastra scripture

seva service

shalwar kameez pant suit

sikha lock of hair left on the back of otherwise shaved heads

suddha purity

śūdrāṇīs refers to females in the fourth caste

śudras the fourth caste in the *varnashram* system.

tilak two painted vertical lines on the forehead

tulsi necklace devotional necklace made of tulsi wood

upasana worship, prayer

Vaishnavism (Vaiṣṇavism) major Hindu denomination

varnashram divisional structure of Indian society

varnāśramadharma foundational religious system for traditional caste Hinduism

Vishnu (Viṣṇu) supreme Hindu deity in Vaishnavism

yuga period, age

The four ages or* yugas *in Hinduism:

Satya Yuga The Age of Truth, the Golden Age (also *Krta Yuga*)

Treta Yuga The Age of Three Avataras

Dvapara Yuga Two Ahead Yuga

Kali Yuga The Age of (the demon) Kali, the Fourth Age, the Iron Age

Transcript 6.1

1	NITAI:	Mataji::
		(.9)
2		I di- di- (.2) this (.) this- rou-
3		*((raises right hand palm down and begins to move fingers in crawling gesture))*
		(.8)
4		Y I- (.) I- (.) e- I throw water
5		*((drops arms and moves both forward in dangling motion))*
		(.6)
6	PRIYA:	Yeah, you don't need to take this
7	NITAI:	No ↑NO?
8		*((raises hand))*
9		*((gestures crawling motion with right hand continuously))*
10		This=
11	PRIYA:	=This
12		*((gestures thumb up))*
13	NITAI:	NO ↑NO?
14		*((raises hand higher continuing crawling gesture))*
15		Thi- this
		(.9)
16		I- ↑round?
17		*((makes round shape with two hands))*
		(.4)
18		↑Y- (.) >y I throw?<
19		*((puts hands together and stretches arms in front of himself))*
20		*((drops arms))*=
21		=°↓water.°
		(2.9)
22	VANIMALI:	*((moves into facing formation with Nitai))*
23		↑What do you say.=
24		=°Talk to me?°
25		*((raises right hand with index finger up))*
		(.5)

26 NITAI: >I *((shrug))* ↑know?< (.) ⌈Uhh
27 *((puts hands together))*⌋
(.2)
28 I- ⌈I- thro
29 *((mimicks throwing bucket of water))*⌋
30 *((raises right hand again* ⌈*and does crawling gesture))*
31 from this (.) look⌋
(.3)
32 *((Priya has turned to interacting with other children and teachers and is ignoring the two boys.))*
33 VANIMALI: ⌈Sp↑ider?=
34 *((raises right hand and mirrors crawling gesture))*⌋
35 NITAI: =*((nods head))*
(.4)
36 *((slight head nod 'yes'))*
(.3)
37 VANIMALI: You ⌈touched (.) the sp↑ider,=
38 *((repeats crawling gesture))*⌋
39 NITAI: =*((nods head 'yes'))*=
40 =Yeah.
41 VANIMALI: ⌈Is that sp↑ider.
42 *((repeats crawling gesture))*⌋
43 NITAI: *((nods and* ⌈*tilts head))*
44 Ye⌈↑A::::::H=
45 VANIMALI: *((turns toward the teacher and* ⌈*reaches forward))*
46 ↑MATAJI⌋
(.3)
47 ⌈↑MATAJI PRIYA.
48 *((pulls her shirt))*⌋
49 Он хотел тебе сказать что он он потрогал
On hotel tebe skazat' chto on on potrogal
он хотел тебе сказать что он он потрогал
3SG.M want.PST.3SG 2SGACC tell that 3SG.M 3SG.M touch.PST.3SG
He wanted to tell you that he he touched
50 ⌈s- sp- паука
pauka
spider
51 PRIYA: *((looks at Vanimali))*⌋
(.5)

52 PRIYA: *((looks at Nitai))*
53 Sp↑ider. (.) ⌈You took a sp↑ider.
54 NITAI: ⌊*((nods head))*
(1.9)
55 NO⌈ I- >↑I throw it< ↓wa:ter.
56 PRIYA: ⌊*((to other child))* Come Nara.
(1.4)
57 You turn ↑water on him.
58 NITAI: *((nods head))*
59 PRIYA: And then what happened to spider,
(1.1)
60 NITAI: ⌈↑Fell ↓down.
61 ⌊*((gestures down movement))*
(.5)
62 PRIYA: You see, maybe spi- the sp- ↓the spider it die::d.
(.6)
63 ⌈*((waves index finger in negation))*
64 ⌊Don't do like that.
(.6)
65 Kay? (.) Let's go,

Transcript 6.2

1 KRISHANGI: I like sliding down (1) like this.
(1.2)
2 GOPI: I don't know, I want a coconut.
(1.1)
3 *((singing))* Ami coconut ↑lag↓be::⌈::
4 KRISHANGI: ⌊Amar coconut lag⌈be.
5 GOPI: ⌊Uh m .hh uh::m *((slight giggle))*=
6 KRISHANGI: =Doesn't matter?
7 Nearly:: (.) right,
(3)
8 ⌈There we go. (.6) What.
9 GOPI: ⌊*((singing))* Amar coconut- .hhhuh Wo::w, this small ja:::ckfrui:t.
10 KRISHANGI: Eww. I think we should go from here.

Transcript 6.3

1	MUKUNDA:	Rajasthan.	
		(.4)	
2	KRISHANGI:	Uh huh?	
3	MUKUNDA:	Kajikistan	
		(.2)	
4	UNCLE1:	>Kajikis<	
		(.3)	
5	MUKUNDA:	*((smiley voice))* ºYeahº there is so mus- so many kajus there?	
		(.3)	
6	GOPI:	It's (.) ⌈KAZ:A:::KH	
7	KRISHANGI:	⌊KAZ:A:::KH	
		(.4)	
8	UNCLE1:	K⌈azakh	
9	MUKUNDA:	⌊Kaza::khhh	
10		*((smiley voice))* So that means there is so many ka:zu::::	
11	GOPI:	No: it mea⌈ns there is lots of-	
12	KRISHANGI:	⌊Ka::za::::khs:ta:⌈n	
13	GOPI:	It means there is lot's of (.4) u⌈h peopu-	
14	KRISHANGI:	⌊Kazi	
		((parallel conversation of adults branches off))	
15	UNCLE2:	ওখানে কাজ নেই?	
		Okhane kaj nei?	
		There is no work there?	
16	GOPI:	No, it's (.) the people:: (.) uh::	
17	UNCLE1:	তার মানে ওখানে কোন কাজ নেই তাই তো?	
		Taar mane okhane kono kaj nei tai too?	
		That means there is no work there?	
18	GOPI:	The- the people are called kazakhs.	
19		⌈Kazakhi kazakhi	
20	MUKUNDA:	⌊Kazakhstan, that is the place I know.	
		(1.3)	
21	GOPI:	It's next to Russia, (during) the Russian Federation,	
22	UNCLE2:	ওখানে কোন কাজ নেই রে (ভাই?)	

Okhane kono kaaj nei re (bhai?)
There is no work there?

23 KRISHANGI: º(the Russian (.) Fed'ration)º

24 UNCLE1: তো এইসে গিইয়েছে এখানে তাই তো?
To eisheye giyiechey ekhane taai too?
So have you come here?

25 GOPI: *((singing to herself))* Russian Federation, .hhh

26 MUKUNDA: এখানিছে।
Ekhanichey.
Here.

27 GOPI: *((singing softly))* Tajikistan,

28 KRISHANGI: *((turns head, looks at Gopi smiling))*

29 GOPI: *((looks and smiles back))*

30 *((singing softly))* Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan,

31 MUKUNDA: Your dad is here?

(.2)

32 GOPI: *((singing louder))* Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Moldova,

33 KRISHANGI: Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Moldova,

34 *((singing))* Georgia, Belarus

35 GOPI: *((singing))* Georgia,

36 *((spoken to Mukunda))* Yeah.

37 KRISHANGI: *((singing))* Azerbaijan

38 GOPI: *((singing))* Azerbaijan *((nods head 'yes' looking at Mukunda))*

39 MUKUNDA: Your dad is here?

40 KRISHANGI: *((singing))* And Armenia ºthese are the countries of theº

41 GOPI: *((singing))* And Armenia *((raises arm))*

42 MUKUNDA: So your dad is uh doing those::: things

43 Like (.) guitar and things?

44 KRISHANGI: *((singing))* Former USSR.

45 GOPI: *((mimicks playing guitar, clicking her tongue and nodding her head))*

Transcript 7.1

1	KRISHANGI:	We have to si:::ng Nrsimhadev's prayers before leaving? Like
		(.2)
2	YASHODA:	Yeah
3	KRISHANGI:	Before going somewhere?
		(.3)
4		So that we have (.) protection.
5		*((The girls begin to sing Nrsimhadeva prayers and continue for the next minute. The following interactions take place simultaneously while they are singing, stopping and resuming the song for verbal comments. Marked silences between turns/nonverbal actions are filled with song.))*
6	KRISHANGI:	*((looks over at Amrita as if to check that she is singing))*
7	AMRITA:	*((returns her gaze))*
8		*((looks out of the rickshaw))*
		(2.6)
9		*((looks back at the others))*
10		↑Creepy man, time to cover my head. ↓I'm a mataji.
11	BHUMIKA:	Ohhhuh
		(1.6)
12	AMRITA:	⌈There's a cre⌉epy man looking at me.
13		⌊*((adjusts her dupatta))*
		(.7)
14		⌈Not⌉ into the dirty looks.
15		⌊*((moves the dupatta from her neck to her head, so it becomes a headscarf))*
		(2.5)
16	KRISHANGI:	*((Gopi and Chandra do something funny off camera))*
17	YASHODA:	Hah(h)a(Hh)ha
		(14)
18	GOPI:	⌈*((inaudible speech))*
19		⌊*((mimics Amrita covering her head))*
20	BHUMIKA:	*((also hides her face with* dupatta*))*
		(.5)
21		You loo(h)k wei(h)rd.
		(3.6)
22	AMRITA:	I'm a mataji, I don't want anyone ⌈looking at me::.
23		⌊*((pulls the* dupatta *down to cover her entire face))*
		(1.1)

24 AMRITA: *((lifts the* dupatta *up again so it only covers her hair))*

25 *((to Teruko))* Mataji at this point I want your chaddar.

26 *((holds the* dupatta *up with both hands so her face is only visible to those inside the rickshaw))*

(5.3)

27 *((still holding the scarf up with her hands))*

28 No one's gonna look at me.

(1)

29 BHUMIKA: *((inaudible in Russian to Gopi))*

(.4)

30 AMRITA: I'm a ve<u>ry</u> cha:ste mataji.

31 KRISHANGI: *((Krishangi looks over at Amrita with a smirk while singing Nrsimhadeva prayers))*

32 YASHODA: Why you-

33 *((looks at Amrita))*

(.6)

34 BHUMIKA: *((laughs))*

35 *((Nrsimhadeva prayers end))*

36 YASHODA: *((laughter))*

37 KRISHANGI: Mataji, do you know my mothe- (.)

38 My auntie's mother?

39 TERUKO: Uh huh.

40 KRISHANGI: She's ve<u>ry</u> chaste, she always (.) uh::::::

41 *((swipes her left hand over her face))*

42 Covers her face-

43 AMRITA: Covers her head, that doesn't mean she's chaste.

44 *((pulls the* dupatta *back so it only covers her hair, revealing her face))*

45 KRISHANGI: *((turns her head to look at Amrita))*

46 *((looks back at Teruko))*

47 She always covers her face, she doesn't see <u>any</u> man's face.

(.2)

48 TERUKO: No::?

(.2)

49 BHUMIKA: WHO:: tha-

50 TERUKO: ↑She doesn't see or they don't see <u>her</u> face.=

51 KRISHANGI: =<u>She</u> doesn't see.

52 TERUKO: How does she ↑see in front of her.
(.4)
53 KRISHANGI: *((briefly looks at her feet))*
54 Footsteps.
(.3)
55 TERUKO: Uh She doesn't look up you mean.
56 KRISHANGI: *((shakes head "no"))*
57 TERUKO: I see.
(1.1)
58 AMRITA: That's not really being chaste,=
59 =that just means not seeing.
60 *((pulls the* dupatta *over her face again))*
61 GOPI: That's cha:::::ste
62 AMRITA: I mean, I could do that?=
63 GOPI: =That's cha:::::ste.
64 AMRITA: See I'm (.) doing it=
65 *((fully drapes* dupatta *over her face covering her upper body and bends over her legs))*
66 I'm not seeing any man.
67 *((covers her eyes with hands as if they were horseblinders))*
(1.3)
68 Except for you.
69 *((looks to Krishangi))*
(.2)
70 *((lifts* dupatta*))*
71 KRISHANGI: Ah ha:: Like I'm a ma::n.
72 AMRITA: Ha(h)hah(h)h
(1.3)
73 ↑HI::::: ( ) *((looking out of the rickshaw))*
74 *((waves to man at fruit shop))*
75 GOPI: You always-
(.4)
76 AMRITA: That's ↑my uncle.
(.4)
77 TERUKO: Yeah?
78 GOPI: See?=You said (.) hi::::: to some m:ra::n

79 AMRITA: No, that's my uncle.

80 BHUMIKA: And you play with the boys (.) then you are very <cha::ste girl>.

81 AMRITA: He's ↑my ↑uncle.

82 BHUMIKA: NO::::

83 GOPI: Yeah::

84 *((all look at Amrita))*

85 KRISHANGI: NO↑::::::

86 YASHODA: NO:: YOU PLAY IN CLA:SS

87 KRISHANGI: CLASSROOM ↓boys.

88 AMRITA: *((looks at Krishangi))*

89 GOPI: You pla::y with them

90 BHUMIKA: You pla::y with them

91 KRISHANGI: YOU PLA::Y with them

92 AMRITA: Hah(h)(h)a(h)

(.8)

93 *((smiling))* ↑Well (.2) that's called being f- flattered or- I

94 GOPI: Very chaste

(1.9)

95 KRISHANGI: That's not chaste *((shaking her head))*

96 AMRITA: (That's) fun.

97 GOPI: Or fun

98 KRISHANGI: Or fu↓::::n

99 BHUMIKA: *((chuckles))*

(.3)

100 KRISHANGI: It's cha::::ste.

101 BHUMIKA: I ( )

102 GOPI: I'm chaster than you::. ( )

103 AMRITA: Ok, whatever I'm going to stop it. ( )

104 BHUMIKA: And ME::

105 KRISHANGI: O↑K let's ↑see. I'll test for you.=

106 =You can not play with the classroom boys.=

107 =Not even one boy in the whole school.

108 Let's see how you can do it.

109 AMRITA: Ok, let's go.

110 *((bends down with* dupatta *covering full face))*

111 Starting from now. See?

112 KRISHANGI: [↑OK.
113 GOPI: [Starting from now, uh::: (.) one month.
114 [↑Month.
115 AMRITA: [Hey. No (.) that's that's that's-
116 KRISHANGI: [Why?=
117 GOPI: [Why?=
118 AMRITA: =I [can't do -that.=
119 [*((pulls the* dupatta *back again, revealing her face))*
120 BHUMIKA: [*((points at Amrita and laughs))*
121 KRISHANGI: =Yeah, well gir- [chaste people do it for their whole li::fe.
122 GOPI: [( ) chaste is forever.
(.5)
123 Yea:[:::h
124 KRISHANGI: [They do it for their whole life, how [could you-
125 AMRITA: [You're not chaste?
126 KRISHANGI: I know I'm [not chaste?
127 GOPI: [( ) ↑I'm chaste for one day.
128 And then [*((puts hand over eyes and looks down))*
129 AMRITA: [Ha(h)ah[(h)ha
130 BHUMIKA: [Ha(h)ah[(h)ha
131 KRISHANGI: [(n- n- n- n- n-) >next day,<
132 [↑HI:: HI:: everybody *((in high-pitched sing-song voice))*
133 [*((puts her arm up and waves))*
134 AMRITA: Well,
(.2)
135 YASHODA: *((turns to Krishangi))* But but- (.2) but
136 Even if [(.2) like, like (.) you [look at your brother ( )
137 [*((looks at Krishangi))*
138 AMRITA: [I don't know but that dude was (a bad guy and) that was my uncle.
139 (My auntie's.)
140 KRISHANGI: ↑Your ↑brother that's relative. *((turns around))*
(.2)
141 YASHODA: Ah::
(.5)
142 AMRITA: Yeah, >that's her point.<