

9 Following the Traces of Hybridization: The Stages of Initiation in Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*

I will begin by discussing Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*. A detailed analysis of this text will show that it was a book of initiation, and in this respect it was of great importance to Annie Besant. Indeed, Besant claimed that she received her first visit from a master after having read *The Voice of the Silence* (see below). In this work, Blavatsky discusses several stages of initiation. The “elements” of these stages were transferred to Blavatsky's work from Manilal Divedi writings, while Blavatsky herself provided the “structures” in which these elements were embedded into the grand scheme of Theosophical evolution. The idea of initiation with a specific purpose – which is, I argue, the main concern of Besant's early Theosophy – was developed within a discursive field in which several Indian Theosophists were involved. Their involvement will be illustrated by looking at the early reception of Advaita Vedānta in the Theosophical Society, first as presented in the pages of *The Theosophist* (Chapter 10), and secondly in relation to T. Subba Row's contributions (Chapter 12). These chapters, as well as those that follow, will illustrate and further conceptualize the hybridization processes which took place in diversified discursive fields within the Indian Middle Class and beyond.

9.1 The Gurvi and her Disciple: Annie Besant's Initiation and *The Voice of The Silence*

Blavatsky's small booklet was composed at Fontainebleau during the summer months of 1889 and published the same year. Besant first read it while visiting Blavatsky at Fontainebleau together with Herbert Burrows, with whom she attended the International Labour Congress in July. The same night, Besant had her first visit from a Theosophical master, whose name she gives as Morya.¹²⁰ Nethercot's account of this episode is based on a number of sources. The story of the reading of *The Voice of the Silence* was first given by Annie Besant in her autobiography.¹²¹ The visit of the master was, according to Nethercot, described in

¹²⁰ Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*, 177.

¹²¹ Annie Besant, *Annie Besant: An Autobiography* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), Illustrated, 352–53.

an article in *The Westminster Gazette* years later in 1895.¹²² In this article, Besant does not mention *The Voice of the Silence* but she does mention the visit of the master, the date, and her visit to Fontainebleau.¹²³ It seems, then, that Nethercot constructed his statement by combining Besant's two accounts. The events described in the two accounts fit together chronologically, but it is interesting that Besant did not mention either *The Voice of the Silence* or Blavatsky in her account in *The Westminster Gazette*. This article, should, I think, be read in the light of the struggle over Blavatsky's succession, and understood as being aimed in particular at the discrediting of Judge's claims. One can only speculate about Besant's intentions in not mentioning Blavatsky and *The Voice of the Silence*, but it seems likely that she felt that mentioning Blavatsky here would have sent the wrong signal, as the main charge leveled against Judge was that he had forged his claimed Mahatma letters.¹²⁴

The Voice of the Silence is generally recognized as "one of the most popular Theosophical texts,"¹²⁵ and its importance for Annie Besant is documented by her biographers,¹²⁶ while its significance for later Theosophy has often been noted in the scholarship.¹²⁷ Despite this significance, it has never been examined in any great depth. Godwin summarizes the contents and points out the

122 The article is quoted, unfortunately without direct reference, in Theodore Besterman, *Mrs Annie Besant: A Modern Prophet* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1934), 170. The description names Fontainebleau and the year 1889 but does not directly refer to *The Voice of the Silence*, at least not in the paragraph given by Besterman. Similarly, Geoffrey West, *The Life of Annie Besant* (London: Gerald Howe Limited, 1933), 173.

123 Annie Besant, interview by "A representative of The Westminster Gazette," Wednesday, April 24, 1895, London; Mrs. Besant and the Mahatmas: How They Look and How They Are Scented; "Master Morya's" View of Mr. Judge.

124 Annie Besant, interview by "A representative of The Westminster Gazette". Interestingly, Blavatsky herself faced exactly the same charges concerning her own communications in what came to be known as the Coulomb affair. Richard Hodgson, who investigated the matter on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research, came to the conclusion that Blavatsky was, indeed, guilty of falsifying her claimed contacts. See Godwin, "Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy," 25–26.

125 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 235.

126 Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 248; Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*, 177. Not so Pécastaing-Boissière and Terrier, *Annie Besant*. Pécastaing-Boissière does not mention *The Voice of the Silence* or *The Path of Discipleship*. Indeed, the whole topic of initiation is marginalized in Pécastaing-Boissière's Besant biography.

127 Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 605. Zander not only points out the relevance of this little treatise for Steiner's personal "spiritual development," but also its practical dimensions. Zander claims that *The Voice of Silence*, in its German translation by Franz Hartmann (1893), was one of the sources for Steiner's "Schulungsweg."



Figure 4: Theosophical Convention. Standing, Babaji, and Olcott. Second row from right to left, Rudolf Gebhard, Franz Hartmann, Helena Blavatsky, and T. Subba Row. Between Blavatsky and Subba Row in the middle of the picture is Damodar Mavalankar. Front row with glasses and white moustache is Tookaram Tatya. For information on Rudolf Gebhard and Franz Hartmann who were both important figures in German Theosophical Society, see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 109–14, 281–85. For information about Mavalankar and Babaji, see Eek, *Dâmodar*. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Adyar, December 1884. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai.)

two paths and the “the great sacrifice of the Bodhisattva,”¹²⁸ but the practical dimensions of the work concerning the stages of initiation are neglected. Similarly, Campbell, notwithstanding that he shows a great familiarity with the work and that he provides the most comprehensive summary of it, cannot make intelligible why the book is considered to be among the most influential books in Theosophy.¹²⁹ The fact that the book is not commonly understood as a book of initiation may account for the neglect of this dimension of the text in particular. *The Voice of the Silence* is written in cryptic language and it is necessary to read it very closely in order to understand the hints given about initiation, including its

¹²⁸ Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 329.

¹²⁹ Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 48–51.

many assumptions about Theosophical concepts relating to bodies, evolution, the masters, and initiation. In the following *The Voice of the Silence* is examined in depth in order to bring out the practical dimensions found in the book and to map out the stages of initiation described therein.

9.2 The “Already Hybrids” of the Stages of Initiation in *The Voice of the Silence*

Blavatsky names three of her sources in *The Voice of the Silence*. Although she mentions them critically and as being unreliable – “how little one can rely upon the Orientalists”¹³⁰ – it seems that she nevertheless both read them and drew much of her information from them. In 1895, Emmet Coleman (1843–1909) published his article *The Sources of Madame Blavatsky’s Writings* wherein he traced, in a polemical tone, the sources she had used and accused her of plagiarism. He of course had his own agenda for doing so. As we are not primarily interested here in the manner in which Blavatsky composed her works, but rather in examining “hybridity” in Besant’s ideas on initiation, we can set aside the accusation of plagiarism and the motives of her accuser.¹³¹ Although Coleman focused mainly on *Isis Unveiled*, he also identified sources for others of Blavatsky’s writings, including *The Voice of the Silence*. He wrote that an enlarged version of his article with detailed accounts would be published soon, but, unfortunately, the work never appeared. Coleman identified several of the sources Blavatsky drew on for *The Voice of the Silence*. Some of these – mentioned above – Blavatsky named herself while others were not explicitly mentioned. Coleman states:

I have traced the sources whence it was taken, and it [*The Voice of the Silence*] is a hotch-potch from Brahmanical books on Yoga and other Hindu writings; Southern Buddhistic books, from the Pali and Sinhalese; and Northern Buddhistic writings, from the Chinese and Thibetan, – the whole having been taken by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky from translations by, and the writings of, European and other Orientalists of to-day. In this work are

130 Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence: Being Chosen Fragments from the “Book of the Golden Precepts”* (London, New York: The Theosophical Publishing Company; W. Q. Judge, 1889), For the Daily Use of Lanoos (Disciples), 88.

131 For more information on Emmett Coleman and his motivation for accusing Blavatsky of plagiarism, see Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 26–28; Jake Winchester, “Roots of the Oriental Gnosis: H.P. Blavatsky, W.E. Coleman, & S.F. Dunlap” (MA Thesis, Geschiedenis van de hermetische filosofie en verwante stromingen, University of Amsterdam, June 2015), accessed-February 28, 2019, 3–16; Jeffrey D. Lavoie, *The Theosophical Society: The History of a Spiritualist Movement* (Boca Raton: BrownWalker Press, 2012), 262–74.

intermingled Sanskrit, Pāli, Thibetan, Chinese, and Sinhalese terms, – a manifest absurdity in a Thibetan work.¹³²

Coleman’s polemical tone rings out undoubtedly in this statement. His article provides an interesting example in which several discursive fields are brought together by Coleman’s interaction with Blavatsky’s texts. Coleman’s take as a Spiritualist and lay scholar was embedded in several contexts which he connected by means of his publication, which was itself likewise supported by structures such as the Society for Psychical Research. It will be shown in the following that these multifaceted connections, which triggered the establishment of numerous relations and their manifestation in text forms, were not exceptional cases but were, rather, the norm. In other words, the discussion below will point towards hybridization processes involving already hybrid “elements” and “structures” that connect numerous discursive fields.

The three authors mentioned by Blavatsky and Coleman are Robert Spence Hardy, Emil Schlagintweit, and Joseph Edkins. In addition, Coleman also mentions “Dvivedi’s *Raja Yoga*, and *Raja Yoga Philosophy* (1888); also an article, ‘The Dream of Ravan,’ published in the *Dublin University Magazine*, January, 1854, extracts from which appeared in the *Theosophist* of January, 1880.”¹³³ *The Dream of Ravan* was initially printed over several volumes of the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1853 and 1854 and then republished in 1895 by the Theosophical Society, with a short introduction by G. R. S. Mead, through several of their publishing houses in London, New York and Adyar. Coleman’s publication was probably earlier than the republication of *The Dream of Ravan* and the latter is thus not included in his survey. However, this later republication, as well as the text’s broader reception by Theosophists, underlines the importance of *The Dream of Ravan* for the early reception of Indian thought in the Theosophical Society.¹³⁴ Dvivedi’s *Rāja Yoga* and *The Dream of Ravan* will be discussed further below.

Before turning to *The Voice of the Silence*, it will be useful to have before us a biographical overview of Schlagintweit, Hardy, and Edkins. This will provide the background against which I will develop my argument concerning the “already hybrids.”

132 Emmette Coleman, “The Sources of Madame Blavatsky’s Writings,” in *A Modern Priestess of Isis: Abridged and Translated on Behalf of the Society for Psychical Research from the Russian of Vsevolod Sergyevevich Solovyoff by Walter Leaf*, ed. Walter Leaf, Cambridge Library Collection. Spiritualism and Esoteric Knowledge (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895), 360.

133 Coleman, “The Sources of Madame Blavatsky’s Writings,” 362.

134 For the importance of *The Dream of Ravan* for the uptake of Indian thought, with special regard to *chakras*, see Baier, “Theosophical Orientalism and the Structures of Intercultural Transfer,” 327–31.

Robert Spence Hardy (1803–1868)	Hardy was a Methodist who joined the Wesleyan Mission, with whom he spent twenty-three years in Ceylon. During his time there, Hardy translated several Sinhala Buddhist manuscripts and worked on Pali texts. His book <i>Manual of Buddhism</i> , which was first published in 1853 and had its second edition in 1880 (Blavatsky probably used this later edition), was a pioneering work in Ceylon Buddhism. Hardy was an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society. After his return to England, he served as a minister in the Leeds district. ¹³⁵ Coleman suggests that Blavatsky used Hardy's <i>Eastern Monachism</i> in preparing her own writings.
Emil Schlagintweit (1835–1904)	Emil Schlagintweit was the youngest of the Schlagintweit brothers. The older three of the four brothers were passionate alpinists and studied geography and physics, with Hermann and Adolf pursuing the subject up to Habilitation level (Hermann in Berlin in 1850, Adolf in Munich in 1853), and the younger Robert earning a doctorate (also in Munich in 1853). The three brothers were chosen to lead an expedition in 1854 to the western provinces of India, backed by a collaboration between the Prussian King, the East India Company, and the Royal Society. Emil studied law and gained his doctorate in the subject in 1863. He was well acquainted with Tibetan culture and Language and published his book <i>Buddhism in Tibet</i> in 1863. ¹³⁶ This book was certainly used by Blavatsky (see below).
Joseph Edkins (1832–1905)	Edkins was a Protestant Missionary who was appointed to the mission in China by the London Missionary Society. He worked in China from 1848, first in Shanghai and later in Peking. He was one of the first Protestant missionaries to be allowed to live in Peking, where he remained until his death in 1905. Together with his colleagues, he translated the New Testament into Mandarin. He was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society's China branch and published many books on China and the Chinese language, including <i>Religion in China</i> and <i>Chinese Buddhism</i> , both dating to 1880. ¹³⁷ The latter was probably the work used by Blavatsky.

9.3 Why Do I Speak of “Already Hybrids”?

In the following, *The Voice of the Silence* will be read using the analytical tool developed earlier in this book. I will attempt to show, where possible, which

¹³⁵ F. W. Andrew, “Hardy, Robert Spence,” in Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, 280.

¹³⁶ Helmut Mayr, “Schlagintweit: z.T. bayer. Adel 1859,” in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, ed. Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 23 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007), accessed February 8, 1029, 24–25.

¹³⁷ Ralph R. Covell in Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, 194–95.

passages Blavatsky used from the books identified above. However, while these concepts can be traced back to the books and authors named above, it is necessary to clarify that they are also repeated throughout Blavatsky's own works and those of other Theosophists. Consequently, by the time she made use of them in *The Voice of the Silence*, they were already established within the Theosophical conceptual vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is important to make it clear that Blavatsky did indeed reference non-Theosophical books in *The Voice of the Silence*. The influence of Dvivedi's work, in particular, is striking and has been neglected thus far in the scholarship on Theosophy. Identifying these influences will draw attention to several “bundles of connections” within the discursive field which manifested as relationalizations in *The Voice of the Silence*. Following these traces will help in providing a description of the processes of hybridization which took place therein. In order to address the problem of the metaphor of “hybridization,” which implies the “mixedness” of initially “pure” elements, I will conceptualize here the idea of “already hybrids.” This notion is based on Bhabha's account of hybridity as a “historical necessity.”¹³⁸ Although the sources Blavatsky used were primarily European, I argue that they are already hybrid – even though they are written from a colonial Eurocentric perspective – because they are based on Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and other scriptures which were translated and interpreted in close collaboration with learned local informants. Hence, they can be understood as “already hybrids” in which multifaceted spaces were already connected. In the case of *The Voice of the Silence*, this view is especially instructive when considering Hardy and Edkins, who spent most of their lives in the countries they wrote about and mastered several local languages. Starting from the idea that actors and texts are the agents of encounters and that each encounter initiates processes of hybridization, it is argued that texts changed their recipients in a manner that was structurally similar to the way in which the recipient changed the texts.

This process can be seen in the example of Spence Hardy. Hardy maintains that he wrote his books as “an humble instrument in assisting the ministers of the cross in their combats with this master error of the world [Buddhism], and in preventing the spread of the same delusion, under another guise, in regions nearer home.”¹³⁹ This statement illustrates very unmistakably the missionary-colonial

¹³⁸ Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 41. See also chapter 3.2.6.

¹³⁹ Robert Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism: An Account of the Origin, Laws, Discipline, Sacred Writings, Mysterious Rites, Religious Ceremonies, and Present Circumstances of the Order of Mendicants Founded by Gótama Budha* (London, Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1860), (Compiled from Singhalese MSS. and Other Original Sources of Information); with Comparative Notices of the Usages and Institutions of the Western Ascetics, and a Review of the Monastic System, ix.

approach taken by Hardy and the source of his initial interest in Buddhism. At the same time, Hardy spent “twenty years in Ceylon, and several thousands of hours [. . .] with the palm-leaf in my hand [. . .] the ex-priest of Budha by my side, to assist me in cases of difficulty.”¹⁴⁰ This was an immense effort and one carried out in very close collaboration with his local informant. His unnamed informant also represented a specific school of Buddhism, a learned elite of Singhalese priests. The information Hardy received from him must surely have influenced Hardy’s reception of Buddhism. Hardy further explains that he had a “deep interest in the subject [. . . and a] constancy of intercourse with the sramana priests.”¹⁴¹ Furthermore, he maintained that he “endeavoured to apply the great lesson herein taught to a practical purpose,”¹⁴² which seems to imply that he also practiced Buddhism to some extent. Taken together, these points illustrate how Hardy worked and the manner in which he was embedded in the Singhalese society of Ceylon. More in-depth research and additional textual analyses would be needed to trace the hybridization of Hardy’s text further, but it is already possible to see the extent to which he was immersed in his subject of study and how closely he worked with locals. The particular texts Blavatsky made use of were, then, the product of a missionary working in another culture and, consequently, were “already hybrids” that were parts of a number of different discursive fields.

The example of Hardy is not the exception but rather the norm. The hybridization of these texts is not a reversible process and no “original” can be retrieved therein because there is no way of going back to a state before the hybridization took place. The relations which were established in these processes cannot be erased and it is thus impossible to “retrieve” the “original meaning” of any text. Instead, each text emerges as an interpretation that necessarily establishes new and altered relations itself. Nevertheless, the contextualization of texts allows us to identify these traces of relations and to identify certain spaces which have become connected therein. In the following, a close reading of *The Voice of the Silence* will enable us to identify and follow some of these traces, which will then provide the basis for a description of the hybridization processes manifested therein.

¹⁴⁰ Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, vi.

¹⁴¹ Robert Spence Hardy, *A Manual of Buddhism, in Its Modern Development: Translated from Singhalese Mss.* (London: Patridge and Oakley, 1853), ix.

¹⁴² Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, vi.

9.4 A Close Reading of *The Voice of the Silence*: Following the Traces of New and Altered Relations

I argue below that *The Voice of the Silence* is, at its core, a treatise that leads the reader along an initiatory path. Dvivedi's work, as one of the first "books of initiation" that circulated within the wider circle of Theosophists, will provide an important backdrop against which *The Voice of the Silence* and Besant's *The Path of Discipleship* should both be read. I argue that Besant wrote at least two books of initiation before 1900 and that the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* also have the same central concern (see Chapters 8 and 13). A detailed examination of its content, with special attention paid to the stages of initiation presented in the text, will provide support for this argument.

The Voice of the Silence is written as a dialogue between a master and his disciple. As discussed above, the dialogue form is used in a number of books of initiation (see Chapter 7.2) and its use in *The Voice of the Silence* suggests that it was intended to be such a book. In the preface to *The Voice of the Silence*, Blavatsky claimed that the work was a translation of a treatise called *The Book of the Golden Precepts*.

The Book of the Golden Precepts – some of which are pre-Buddhistic while others belong to a later date – contains about ninety distinct little treatises. Of these I learnt thirty-nine by heart, years ago. To translate the rest, I should have to resort to notes scattered among a too large number of papers and memoranda collected for the last twenty years and never put in order, to make of it by any means an easy task.¹⁴³

As indicated above, I will not discuss whether – or to what extent – Blavatsky plagiarized other works, but it is notable that she herself claims that *The Voice of the Silence* is a translation. This claim is interesting because it serves the master narrative: "Some years ago" can be read as referring to her alleged stay in Tibet, during which she allegedly visited the masters. However, it is also noteworthy that Blavatsky refers to philology as a means by which to reveal the secret doctrine. The form of the dialogue in which *The Voice of the Silence* is written again points towards the need for a mediator between the higher knowledge and the educational epistemology. This double-sided strategy reflects the two apparently competing dimensions of the Master Paradox which I have described elsewhere.¹⁴⁴

In the following three subsections, *The Voice of the Silence* will be outlined and analyzed, making it clear that the idea of the stages of initiation was at the

¹⁴³ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, ix.

¹⁴⁴ Mühlematter, "Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge".

forefront of Theosophical thought as far back as Blavatsky. The analysis will also draw attention to the multifaceted connections which manifested as traces of relations in Blavatsky's writings.

9.4.1 Part One: The Stage Terminology and the End-States of these Stages

Blavatsky's text begins by explaining how the idea of a different reality dawns in man and how he slowly but irreversibly starts to seek for something beyond this world. This search culminates in being accepted by a teacher, "whom yet thou dost not see, but whom thou feelest."¹⁴⁵ This idea that a teacher is found not through sight but through some sort of internal "sense" points towards a form of initiation. In Besant's *In the Outer Court*, this search for a "different reality" and the longing for a master are closely linked to the "Quickening of Evolution" and are parts of the preliminary stages of initiation (see Chapter 8.2).

In often cryptic language, *The Voice of the Silence* indicates the preparations that should be undertaken in order to ensure that an aspirant for initiation will be accepted by a teacher. The criterion for this acceptance lies not in social status, class, or caste, but in an earnest wish to become a student. This criterion reflects the idea of Buddha's teachings, teachings which are open to all regardless of the individual's social position.¹⁴⁶ Although similar ideas about the universality of a given teaching are common in the European tradition, the reference to Buddhism would have stood out to readers in India as indicating that Theosophy was open to everybody. Blavatsky would probably have been aware of the Buddhist version of this idea, since it is discussed in several of her sources.¹⁴⁷ This general openness fits well with Theosophy's "goals."

In the following, we will look a little more closely at the last two stages described by Blavatsky. They follow in their order of succession the presentation of Patanjali's yoga given in Dvivedi's *Monism or Advaitism*.¹⁴⁸ However, while Dvivedi presents "the eight divisions of *Yoga – Yama, Niyama, A'sana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, Samādhi*,"¹⁴⁹ *The Voice of the Silence* lays out only seven stages through which the chela passes on the way to

¹⁴⁵ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 16.

¹⁴⁶ Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism*, 56.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, 17–18.

¹⁴⁸ Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism? An Introduction to the Advaita-Philosophy Read by the Light of Modern Science* (Bombay: Soodha Prakasa Press, 1889), 27–30.

¹⁴⁹ Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism?*, 36.

adeptship.¹⁵⁰ The sixth of these is “Dhâranâ.” The master tells his disciple in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Thou art now in DHÂRANÂ the sixth stage. [. . .] When thou hast passed into the seventh, [. . .] And this, O Yogi of success, is what men call *Dhyâna* [In the glossary: *Dhyâna* is the last stage before the final *on this Earth* unless one becomes a full MAHATMA.], the right precursor of Samâdhi [In the glossary: *Samâdhi* is the state in which the ascetic loses the consciousness of every individuality including his own. He becomes – the ALL.¹⁵¹]¹⁵²

Although Blavatsky wrote about seven stages, Samâdhi was included but was, in contrast to Dvivedi’s presentation, not enumerated as an independent stage. Rather, it is described as a change of perception that takes place when the disciple “loses the consciousness” of separateness and becomes “the ALL.” A close examination of Dvivedi’s writings (see below) reveals numerous possible dependencies between his work and that of Blavatsky. Not only did Blavatsky rely on Dvivedi in her descriptions of yogic states as stages of initiation, but Dvivedi also included this idea in the second edition of his *Râja-Yoga*. In the first edition of Dvivedi’s *Vakhya-Suddha* translation, the word “stage” does not appear, but in the second edition he added a commentary in which he wrote:

The first stage is *Dhâranâ* or simple fixing of the mind for any possible moment on one fixed idea or object. When the time of such fixing is increased to the extent of unifying the *vṛtti* with the object or thought in contemplation, the stage of *Dhyâna* is reached. *Samâdhi* follows when the *vṛtti* so far identifies itself with the object as to forget itself and become the object. [. . .] All the three stages *dhâranâ*, *dhyâna*, and *savikalpa-samâdhi*, are external as well as internal; and indeed it is usual with practitioners of Râja-yoga to devote as much time to internal as to external processes, every time they sit for them.¹⁵³

There is no direct connection to initiation here, but it is striking that Dvivedi adopts the terminology of stages during the time between his first and second edition. The second edition of the *Râja-Yoga* appeared a year after the publication of *The Voice of the Silence*, and Dvivedi’s adoption of the stage terminology can be read as a direct reaction to Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence*. Dvivedi also talks frequently of initiation, but this is usually in connection with the requirements for

¹⁵⁰ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 14–15.

¹⁵¹ This is again very close to the description given by Dvivedi: “Then follows *Dhyâna* or meditation, leading to *Samâdhi* or complete absorption in the eternal self.” Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism?*, 30.

¹⁵² Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 19–20.

¹⁵³ Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, *Râja-Yoga: Being a Translation of the Vakyasudha or Dṛgdr̥śyaviveka of Bhāratitīrtha and the Aparokṣānubhūti of Śrī Sankarāchārya*, 2nd ed. (1st 1885) (Ahmedabad: Aryodaya Press, 1890), (translations) 9–10.

being accepted by a guru in the Advaita tradition.¹⁵⁴ This reception of the Advaita tradition will provide another pivotal context for understanding the hybridization processes from which the idea of the stages of initiation emerged in the Theosophical Society.

9.4.2 Part Two: The Two Paths; Compassion, Bodhisattvas, and the Good of Humanity

We can turn now to the two paths. Blavatsky has the teacher explain: “The Paths are two; the great Perfections three; six are the Virtues that transform the body into the Tree of Knowledge.”¹⁵⁵ Blavatsky explains that “the ‘tree of knowledge’ is a title given by the followers of the *Bodhidharma* (Wisdom religion) to those who have attained the height of mystic knowledge –adepts.”¹⁵⁶ It is unclear from where Blavatsky takes the idea that the “tree of knowledge” became an actual title for persons who attained Buddhahood. The reference to the bodhi-tree under which Siddhartha became Buddha is, however, plain. It is also interesting that Blavatsky uses the term “Bodhidharma,” and that she translates it as “Wisdom religion.” “Wisdom religion” is a term frequently used in Theosophy.¹⁵⁷ Edkins has it that “Bodhidharma, [. . .] became the chief founder of the esoteric schools”¹⁵⁸ of Buddhism in China, a view that would fit well with Blavatsky’s idea of “Bodhidharma” as both an abstract concept that restored the “true Wisdom religion” and also a member of the Brotherhood who taught the “Wisdom religion.” This is only one of the instances in which early orientalist such as Edkins used terminology which fits well with perennialist concepts. Several other passages below will further highlight the shared terminology in these discursive fields. This common terminology points to numerous shared fields in the global colonial discursive continuum.

154 For the “Requirements of Discipleship” in the Advaita Vedānta tradition, see Anantanand Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview: God, World, and Humanity*, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 19–29. For its uptake by Dvivedi, see Chapter 11.

155 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 23.

156 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 82.

157 It is already made clear in *The Secret Doctrine* that Buddhism is one of the sources of the Wisdom religion. However, all religions contain parts of this Wisdom religion, which is the “inheritance of all the nations.” The assumption of this Wisdom religion is one of the core concepts of Theosophy. Cf. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, 2.

158 Joseph Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism: A Volume of Sketches, Historical, Descriptive and Critical* (London: Trübner & Co., 1880), 155.

In *The Voice of the Silence*, several elements of the Buddhist and Hindu tradition – especially yoga, as received through the mediation of Manilal Dvivedi and the early orientalist mentioned above – were translated by Blavatsky into her Theosophy. *The Voice of the Silence* was not only written for a “Western” audience but also addressed Indian Theosophists and the Indian Middle Class in general. As we can see from the quotation above, the purpose of the book was to describe the path to becoming an “adept,” a term that is deeply rooted in Theosophy.¹⁵⁹ Dvivedi used the same term to describe initiation, claiming that everyone who talks about initiation must understand certain doctrines “of Adepts and their laws, of the true and real significance of the secret doctrine.”¹⁶⁰ The term “adept” is also used by Edkins, although he does not explain it further. It is possible, however, that “adept” in Edkins’ work might also mean someone who possesses higher knowledge (or even occult knowledge).¹⁶¹ Throughout the following paragraphs – drawn mainly from the second chapter of *The Voice of the Silence* – I will highlight the two structures of a) initiation as steps and b) the notion of teleological progression that underlies it, as well as a number of key elements, such as the term “adept” or the titles of the steps of initiation. This will provide the background against which I describe and analyze the hybridization processes manifested as relationizings in *The Voice of the Silence*.

The Two Paths and The Great Renunciation

As mentioned above, *The Voice of the Silence* is structured as an exchange of questions and answers between the student and the teacher. This is especially significant for the second chapter, in which the student enquires about the right way to wisdom. “O Teacher [he asks], what shall I do to reach to Wisdom? O Wise one, what, to gain perfection?” The teacher responds: “Search for the Paths. But, O Lanoo, be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting.”¹⁶² The next step is to look for the “eternal and the changeless SAT, mistrusting fancy’s false suggestions” and to be drawn towards the “Diamond Soul.”¹⁶³ The term “SAT,” used in this passage, is more usually found in Advaita philosophy, where it describes one aspect of *brahman*.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ For more information on the “adepts,” see French, “The Theosophical Masters”; see also Chapter 7.

¹⁶⁰ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 6.

¹⁶¹ Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 164.

¹⁶² Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 25.

¹⁶³ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 26.

¹⁶⁴ Malinar, *Hinduismus*, 249.

Dvivedi used “sat” in a similar sense to Blavatsky when he claimed that “the Absolute is all *Sat* which means more than a predicative of mere existence; it implies real conscious existence, a reality entirely wanting in the Unknowable of European philosophy. The unknowable is an indefinite negation; the Absolute is a finite position.”¹⁶⁵ In *The Dream of Ravan*, “the word *Sat* [means] primarily *Being*, and secondarily, *Truth* or *Goodness*, because that which *beeth* is alone *true*, and alone *good*.”¹⁶⁶ The quality of “existence” is stressed in Dvivedi’s account. It is interesting that he connects this idea with “conscious existence.” It will be seen below that “consciousness” is one of the key notions in Dvivedi’s work. By contrast, this connotation cannot be detected in *The Dream of Ravan*, in which the connection between “being” and “truth” is given the central position. Blavatsky explained concerning the quotation above that the “‘Diamond Soul’ ‘Vajrasattva,’ [is] a title of the supreme Buddha, the ‘Lord of all Mysteries,’ called Vajradhara and Adi-Buddha”¹⁶⁷ and that “Sat” is “the one eternal and Absolute Reality.”¹⁶⁸ By relationizing Buddhism and the idea of “Sat,” Blavatsky employs a strategy of equalizing – to speak in terms of Berner’s *Instrumentarium* – Buddhist elements and Advaita elements. This equalization in turn points to a process of hybridization that was induced by several encounters, one of which was with Schlagintweit’s *Buddhism in Tibet*. Schlagintweit explained in his chapter on the “System of Mysticism” that in “the Kâla Chakra System” it is believed that there is a hierarchy of Buddhas and that there is at the top of the hierarchy “a first, chief Buddha, Adi Buddha,” who “has the soul of a diamond (Vajrasattva).”¹⁶⁹ Blavatsky used almost the same terminology, but in a de- and recontextualized form.

Another trace of this hybridization process can be found in the identification of the truth beyond illusion within man himself. Blavatsky explained that one’s identification with one’s body was illusory, and that the real Self was rather inside, because “thy body is not self, thy SELF is in itself without a body.” Therefore, “look inward: thou art Buddha.”¹⁷⁰ The exact phrase “thou art Buddha” can be found in Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*, where it is spoken to

165 Dvivedi, *Râja-Yoga*, 27.

166 George Robert Stow Mead, *The Dream of Ravan: A Mystery* (London, New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path; The Theosophist Office, 1895); Reprinted from “The Dublin University Magazine,” 1853 & 1854, 40–41.

167 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 83.

168 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 83.

169 Emil Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet: Illustrated by Literary Document and Objects of Religious Worship* (Leipzig, London: Brockhaus, Trübner, 1863), With an Account of the Buddhist Systems Preceding It in India, 50.

170 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 26.

the infant Siddhartha by a seer.¹⁷¹ In a rereading of the work, the beginning of *The Light of Asia* can be understood as an allegory of Buddha's renouncing of Nirvana, thus accounting for the subtitle of the work: *The Great Renunciation*. In this light, the phrase "thou art Buddha" has the same meaning in *The Light of Asia* as it has in *The Voice of the Silence*. The seer can then be understood as the voice of the teacher who tells the aspirant to look inside and to understand that liberation is already manifested within one's self. This renunciation is the core of the idea of the two paths laid out in the second chapter of *The Voice of the Silence* and is also the cornerstone of Besant's ideas on initiation and the "Quickening of Evolution" (see Chapter 8).

Esoteric and Exoteric Knowledge: Eye and Heart Doctrine

Describing the two paths in more detail, Blavatsky declares that "false learning is rejected by the Wise, and scattered to the Winds by the good Law. Its wheel revolves for all, the humble and the proud. The 'Doctrine of the Eye' is for the crowd, the 'Doctrine of the Heart,' for the elect."¹⁷² In her glossary, she maintains that "THE two schools of Buddha's doctrine, the esoteric and the exoteric, are respectively called the 'Heart' and the 'Eye' Doctrine."¹⁷³ This idea of an "esoteric" and "exoteric" school of Buddhism was, as mentioned in passing above, put forward by Edkins. Evidently, Blavatsky refers to Edkins here, since she uses the "Tsung-men and Kiau-men"¹⁷⁴ schools as examples, which Edkins gives as examples in his own distinction between "esoteric" and "exoteric" schools. The terminology of the "Eye" and "Heart" doctrine is also most likely derived from Edkins, who associated "esoteric" and "exoteric" doctrines with those terms. For Edkins, "the exoteric is for the multitude of new disciples. The esoteric is for the Bodhisattwas and advanced pupils."¹⁷⁵ He further explained that the "heart-seal" of the Buddha, which was the symbol for the "esoteric" doctrine, was "called *svastika*. It contains within it the whole mind of Buddha. It was the monogram of Vishnu and Shiva, the battle-axe of Thor in Scandinavian inscriptions, an ornament on the crowns of the Bonpa deities in Thibet, and a favorite symbol with the Peruvians."¹⁷⁶ This is another instance in which orientalist discourses fit into the perennialist agendas of the Theosophists. It is likewise an instance of the "already

171 Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia, or: The Great Renunciation; Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1879), 8.

172 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 27.

173 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 82.

174 Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 141.

175 Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 43.

176 Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 63.

hybrid,” since Edkins follows a strategy of equating several traditions with each other. The adoption of the element of the “eye” and “heart” doctrine into her Theosophy is another instance of the de- and recontextualization manifested in Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence*. It is also an instance of hierarchization. Blavatsky obviously values the “esoteric” doctrine more highly than she does the “exoteric,” an evaluation that is linked directly to the idea of the *philosophia perennis* taught by the “esoteric” doctrine.

The separation of a “true” and advanced “esoteric” doctrine from an “exoteric” doctrine for the masses, as well as the claim of the universalism of the esoteric doctrine can easily be found in Theosophical works. This goes hand in hand with Blavatsky’s further explanations in *The Voice of the Silence*. Real knowledge, she maintained, was to be distinguished from false knowledge. True knowledge will rely on the immortal and will understand that all is done for eternity, that is, it will understand the law of *karma*. Blavatsky therefore argued that action is necessary, but so too is love and compassion: “Believe thou not that sitting in dark forests, in proud seclusion and apart from men; believe thou not that life on roots and plants, that thirst assuaged with snow from the great Range – believe thou *not*, O Devotee, that this will lead thee to the goal of final liberation.”¹⁷⁷ While upholding the ideal of Buddha and his merciful teaching to the crowds, *The Voice of the Silence* formulates a command for merciful action in the world: “Sow kindly acts and thou shalt reap their fruition. Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.”¹⁷⁸ So, while working in the world the aspirant needs to have three qualities:

[1] Have patience, Candidate, [. . .] [2] Have perseverance as one who doth for evermore endure. [. . .] If thou would’st reap sweet peace and rest, Disciple, sow with the seeds of merit the fields of future harvests. [3] Accept the woes of birth. [Because] Out of the furnace of man’s life and its black smoke, winged flames arise, flames purified, that soaring onward, ’neath the Karmic eye, weave in the end the fabric glorified of the three vestures of the Path.¹⁷⁹

Working in the world, gaining experience, and “weaving” these experience into “the fabric glorified” means that through karmic merits the bodies are purified and made fit for liberation. There is one supreme rule to be followed while working in the world: “to benefit mankind.”¹⁸⁰ A similar motif can be found in

177 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 30.

178 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 31.

179 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 31–32.

180 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 33.

Besant's writings where she talks about "service."¹⁸¹ Working for the benefit of mankind is the primary objective, "to practise the six glorious virtues is the second."¹⁸² These virtues are explained by Blavatsky as part of becoming "a Yogi, with a view of becoming an ascetic."¹⁸³ These virtues, together with a life lived for the benefit of mankind, prepare the aspirant "to reach Nirvana's bliss, but to renounce it, is the supreme, the final step – the highest on Renunciation's Path."¹⁸⁴ This theme, that service for others is the highest aim in life, appears repeatedly on the following pages.

Those knowing less should be told "that he who makes of pride and self-regard bond-maidens to devotion; that he, who cleaving to existence, still lays his patience and submission to the Law, as a sweet flower at the feet of Shakyathub-pa,¹⁸⁵ becomes a *Śrôtâpatti* in this birth."¹⁸⁶ In addition to the reference to Buddha and his role as teacher, this passage also refers to the master narrative in the Theosophical Society. The master/disciple relation in which the whole of *The Voice of the Silence* is embedded is here given as a mission. Blavatsky explains that the "*Śrôtâpatti* or 'he who enters in the stream' of Nirvâna, unless he reaches the goal owing to some exceptional reasons, can rarely attain Nirvâna in one birth."¹⁸⁷

The two paths, then, are the "exoteric" and the "esoteric." "The PATH is one, Disciple, yet in the end, twofold. Marked are its stages by four and seven Portals. At one end – bliss immediate, and at the other – bliss deferred."¹⁸⁸ And again, the main difference between the two paths lies in the renunciation of the nirvanic bliss. The way of renunciation of Nirvana was identified by Blavatsky as the "esoteric" or Theosophical path. The second chapter of *The Voice of the Silence* ends with a promise that everyone can take this path: "Thou hast the knowledge now concerning the two Ways. Thy time will come for choice, O thou of eager Soul, when thou hast reached the end and passed the seven

181 See, for example, Besant, "General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament," 161; Besant, *Karma*, 33–34; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 15. There are many other passages in which Besant talks about service to other men as the basic principle for worldly activities. Of course, this service is meant to be in accordance with the divine will and this kind of action will, therefore, accelerate evolution on Besant's understanding.

182 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 33.

183 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 85.

184 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 33.

185 This Tibetan name for the Buddha Shakyamuni is found in Schlagintweit. The other authors do not mention this name. Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, 96.

186 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 37.

187 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 85.

188 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 41.

Portals.”¹⁸⁹ It would go beyond the scope of the present book to identify all of the numerous traces of hybridization in the passages above, but the discussion so far should suffice to make it intelligible that elements and structures from various traditions, especially Buddhist and Hindu, were translated into Theosophy by Blavatsky. In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss the “seven portals” mentioned by Blavatsky. The “seven portals” will be identified as stages of initiation that are directly connected to certain virtues, with these virtues being described by Blavatsky as the “keys” that unlock the portals. This discussion will provide the basis for the further analysis of these concepts throughout the remainder of the book.

9.5 Part Three: The Seven Portals, or: The Stages of Initiation

The third part of *The Voice of the Silence* is concerned with the explanation of the “seven portals.” We have already seen that the first step can be achieved by those who are devoted and are accepted by the teacher. In doing so, they become the “Srôtâpatti.” “Be of good cheer, Disciple; bear in mind the golden rule. [. . . T]hou hast but seven other births before thee, O thou of adamantine Will.”¹⁹⁰ We read about the “adamantine Will” as the first characteristic of the chosen chela. As the aspirant in the first verse of the third chapter of *The Voice of the Silence* says: “the choice is made, I thirst for Wisdom. [. . .] Thy servant here is ready for thy guidance.”¹⁹¹ Blavatsky explains the meaning of “Srôtâpatti” in the following while indicating the further steps that are to follow.

Srôtâpatti-(lit.) ‘he who has entered the stream’ that leads to the Nirvanic ocean. This name indicates the *first* Path. The name of the *second* is the Path of *Sakridagamin*, ‘he who will receive birth (only) once more.’ The *third* is called *Anagâmin*, ‘he who will be reincarnated no more,’ unless he so desires in order to help mankind. The *fourth* Path is known as that of *Rahat* or *Arhat*. This is the highest. An Arhat sees Nirvana during his life. For him it is no post-mortem state, but *Samâdhi*, during which he experiences all Nirvanic bliss.¹⁹²

Blavatsky further affirms that:

the four names just explained are given by R. Spence Hardy as: 1. Sowân; 2. Sakradâgâmi; 3. Anâgâmi, and 4. Arya. By the Rev. J. Edkins they are given as: 1. Srôtâpanna; 2.

¹⁸⁹ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 42–43.

¹⁹⁰ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 46.

¹⁹¹ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 45.

¹⁹² Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 87–88.

Sagardagam; 3. Anâgânim, and 4. Arhan. Schlagintweit again spells them differently, each, moreover, giving another and a new variation in the meaning of the terms.¹⁹³

Her own account parallels the description found in Schlagintweit.¹⁹⁴

The path leads through “seven portals,” Blavatsky maintains, which all require a key to open. Interestingly, the list given here by Blavatsky as her “seven portals” is similar to that of the *Paramitas*, virtues, described in Buddhism. The number of these virtues varies between six and ten. Hardy provides a list of ten virtues, explaining that each has three different levels of accomplishment and that there are thus thirty different qualities of virtues to be accomplished.¹⁹⁵ Schlagintweit gives a list of six virtues and adds another four in the footnote. However, he only gives English translations for each.¹⁹⁶ Edkins provides a list of six virtues in English and also adds the Indian equivalents.

The expression *Tau-pi-an*, ‘Arrival at that shore,’ is explained as the Chinese equivalent of *Paramita*, embracing the six means of passing to the Nirvâna. These are – 1. ‘Charity’ (or giving), *Dâna*; 2. ‘Morality,’ *Shîla* (good conduct); 3. ‘Patience,’ *Kshânti*; 4. ‘Energy,’ *Vîrya*; 5. ‘Contemplation,’ *Dhyâna*; 6. ‘Wisdom,’ *Prajna*.¹⁹⁷

This list comes closest to that given by Blavatsky (see below). Blavatsky’s list can be understood as a result of multiple encounters, some of which were with the texts of Edkins, Schlagintweit, and Hardy.

Blavatsky’s list of the “keys” is embedded in the dialogue between the master and his disciple. During the inquiry by the student in *The Voice of the Silence*, the aspirant says to his teacher:

Yea, Lord; I see the PATH; its foot in mire, its summits lost in glorious light Nirvanic. And now I see the ever-narrowing Portals on the hard and thorny way to Gnyana.

Thou seest well, Lanoo. These Portals lead the aspirant across the waters on ‘to the other shore’. Each Portal bath a golden key that openeth its gate; and these keys are: –

1. DÂNA, the key of charity and love immortal.
2. SHÎLA, the key of Harmony in word and act, the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for Karmic action.
3. KSHANTI, patience sweet, that nought can ruffle.
4. VIRAG’, indifference to pleasure and to pain, illusion conquered, truth alone perceived.
5. VIRYA, the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH, out of the mire of lies terrestrial.

¹⁹³ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 88.

¹⁹⁴ Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, 26–27.

¹⁹⁵ Hardy, *A Manual of Buddhism, in Its Modern Development*, 102.

¹⁹⁶ Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, 36.

¹⁹⁷ Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 417.

6. DHYĀNA, whose golden gate once opened leads the Narjol toward the realm of Sat eternal and its ceaseless contemplation.
7. PRAJNA, the key to which makes of a man a god, creating him a Bôdhisattva, son of the Dhyānis.¹⁹⁸

Nonetheless, we see that there are differences between this list and that of Edkins. The most striking is the fourth virtue in Blavatsky's list, "Virag'," which cannot be found in any of the overviews of the *Paramitas* in the works considered here. It also does not appear in other books by Blavatsky. However, it seems likely that "Virag'," refers to *Vairāgya*, which is a common prerequisite in Advaita Vedānta for being accepted by a guru,¹⁹⁹ and is included in the list of stages of "Rājayoga" given by Manilal Dvivedi (see Chapter 11.4), one of the main sources for Besant's *The Path of Discipleship*.

9.5.1 Gaining the Keys to the Portals as Practical Advice

If we trace Blavatsky's stages of initiation, it seems that they have a practical dimension, that of the master/disciple relationships discussed above which aim "at changes in the disciples' consciousness and their personality."²⁰⁰ The keys to the seven portals – to retain Blavatsky's language – must be gained by certain virtues. 1) The aspirant is told to "learn to part thy body from thy mind [. . .] and to live in the eternal."²⁰¹ 2) To "be in full accord with all that lives" and to "bear love to men as though they were thy brotherpupils."²⁰² 3) The aspirant must be able to respond "to the tuneful breath of the GREAT WORLD-SOUL."²⁰³ The idea of the "tuneful breath of the GREAT WORLD-SOUL" expressed here fits well with what Besant later explained concerning the vibrations that are sent by the Īshvara. These vibrations set human bodies into motion and these bodies must be purified if they are to be able to resonate in harmony with the subtle vibrations coming from the masters.²⁰⁴ 4) Then, when the aspirant by love and his insight into the eternal and the underlying unity, is full "of Charity, of love and tender

198 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 47–48.

199 Anantanand Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview: God, World, and Humanity*, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 22–23.

200 See Chapter 7.

201 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 49.

202 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 49.

203 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 49.

204 This was most prominently discussed by Besant in *Man and His Bodies*. Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, 73, 86, 102, 130, 148.

mercy,”²⁰⁵ he can pass through the first gate. The second stage is then passed through: 5) “Harmony in word and act.” This means that the mind now controls the body and leads it without desire. As a result, no karmic effects will be produced. But while the *karma* is used up, the aspirant will face a more difficult path than before. Consequently, the third gate’s key is 6) “patience.” This patience is a result of 7) “*Virâga*[, which] is that feeling of absolute indifference to the objective universe, to pleasure and to pain.”²⁰⁶ When the third gate is approached, “the last great fight, the final war”²⁰⁷ between the *Higher* and the *Lower* Self,²⁰⁸ takes place. Advancing further along the path now becomes more difficult. “But once that thou hast passed the gate of [8]) Kshanti [. . .] Thy body is thy slave. Now, for the fourth prepare, the Portal of temptations which do ensnare the *inner* man.”²⁰⁹ For the next step, the power of the “*inner* man” must be known. The results of these powers, which up to this point had been produced unconsciously for the most part must be made “harmless [. . .] thy own creations, the children of thy thoughts, unseen, impalpable, that swarm round human-kind.”²¹⁰ These are the thought-powers, the thought-forms which work on the higher planes of being for the good or for the harm of all around. 10) It must be understood that there is nothing except the inner Self. When this is realized, all the longings for “Maya’s gifts” will perish. 11) Mastery over the thoughts and the soul must be attained and the mind must be centered on the “One Pure Light, the Light that is free from affection.”²¹¹ The idea of the “Pure Light” which is the all and into which one must dissolve is formulated in *The Dream of Ravan*.²¹² When this gate is left behind, all desires are conquered forever more, but the aspirant must make sure to 12) “protect thy mind from pride and satisfaction at thoughts of the great feat achieved.”²¹³ The next step is to 13) become indifferent towards one’s own pains and sorrows but compassionate towards those of others.

205 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 52.

206 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 90–91.

207 A similarly martial terminology can be found in Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*, in the scene of the final liberation of Buddha under the Bodhi tree. Arnold, *The Light of Asia*, or, 157–60.

208 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 55.

209 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 55.

210 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 55–56.

211 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 58.

212 George Robert Stow Mead, *The Dream of Ravan: A Mystery* (London, New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path; The Theosophist Office, 1895); Reprinted from “The Dublin University Magazine,” 1853 & 1854, 46.

213 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 59.

Thou hast estranged thyself from objects of the senses, travelled on the 'Path of seeing,' on the 'Path of hearing,' and standest in the light of Knowledge. Thou hast now reached Titiksha state. [In the Notes: *Titiksha* is the fifth state of *Raja Yoga* – one of [14]] supreme indifference; submission, if necessary, to what is called 'pleasures and pains for all,' but deriving neither pleasure nor pain from such submission – in short, the becoming physically, mentally, and morally indifferent and insensible to either pleasure or pain.²¹⁴

By reaching the "Titiksha state," the aspirant crosses the fifth gate and is "now on the way that leadeth to the Dhyâna haven, the sixth, the Bodhi Portal."²¹⁵ The sixth gate, however, is finally opened only by crossing the fifth. Now the aspirant became a Narjol that is a "saint, an adept."²¹⁶ Henceforth he is "a new soldier in the army of those who work for the liberation or salvation of mankind."²¹⁷ Finally, when "plunged in Dnyan Marga, [15] mind and Soul] mirror nought of Maya's realm illusive,"²¹⁸ and then will "the Portals that thou hast to conquer on the Path fling open wide their gates to let thee pass, and Nature's strongest might possess no power to stay thy course. Thou wilt be master of the sevenfold Path."²¹⁹ But "now bend thy head and listen well, O Bôdhisattva – Compassion speaks and saith: 'Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?'"²²⁰ The answer is of course, no, there can be no bliss when the rest of mankind is still suffering. Thus when passing the seventh gate one shall "refuse to pass into the Nirvânic state [. . .] as it would then become beyond their power to assist men."²²¹ Now it is declared: "A NEW ARHAN IS BORN."²²² This means that "a new and additional Saviour of mankind is born, who will lead men to final Nirvâna i.e., after the end of the life-cycle."²²³ Thus, *The Voice of the Silence* ends with that which is the goal of Besant's "Quickening of Evolution." This idea of self-improvement through the practice of virtues in order to become a saviour of humanity is pivotal for Theosophy.

214 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 64.

215 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 64.

216 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 48.

217 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 63.

218 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 60.

219 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 61.

220 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 71.

221 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 95.

222 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 72.

223 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 97.

9.5.2 Summary of the Stages of Initiation in Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*

Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence* is by no means an easy read. It is full of references to numerous traditions and includes a wide range of terms that refer to similar concepts. It is a paradigmatic example of multifaceted relationalizations. Several of these relationalizations have been discussed above, and the possible sources from which the specific elements and structures were recontextualized pointed out. Further research will be needed to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the references and modes of relationizings in *The Voice of the Silence*. The main focus of the above discussion has not been to provide such an analysis, but rather: a) to illustrate that the elements recontextualized into and translated to *The Voice of the Silence* were already hybrids; b) to show that stages of initiation were discussed already by Blavatsky in connection to virtues, with the aim of inducing a certain lifestyle; and c) to show that the goal of initiation in the Theosophical Society was to gain certain powers in order to help humanity.

To facilitate future research and as a basis for the analyses of the stages of initiation pursued below, it will be useful to summarize the steps of initiation as they appear in *The Voice of the Silence*.

9.6 Preliminary Conclusion: The Hybrid Voice of the Silence; A Book of Initiation Based on "Already Hybrids"

The Voice of the Silence appears to have been intended to describe a path of initiation (see Table 5). The description given therein is framed as a conversation between a student and a teacher, a feature that is characteristic for books of initiation. This should be unsurprising given the centrality of the student/teacher relation within the Theosophical hierarchy, which extended into higher spheres of being via the master narrative.²²⁴ The path of initiation introduced in *The Voice of the Silence* is presented using a wide range of vocabulary drawn from Indian religions, especially Buddhism, in its Tibetan and Chinese denominations, and "Hinduism," understood in terms of the advaita vedāntic *rājayoga* tradition in particular. It will be seen in Chapter 11 that much of the Theosophical conception of *rājayoga* emerged from the encounters with Manilal Dvivedi.

²²⁴ French, "The Theosophical Masters," 3.

Table 5: The steps of initiation according to Blavatsky. By the author.

The Steps of initiation in <i>The Voice of the Silence</i>	
The three qualities	1) Patience. 2) Perseverance. 3) Accepting the woes of birth. All three are connected to karmic “justice,” the idea that one “reaps” what one “sows.”
The four steps (paths)	1) Srôtâpatti: “he who enters in the stream.” 2) <i>Sakridagamin</i>, “he who will receive birth (only) once more.” 3) Anagâmin, “he who will be reincarnated no more.” 4) <i>Rahat</i> or <i>Arhat</i>. This is the highest path. An Arhat sees Nirvana during his life.
Keys to the portals	1) DÂNA, the key of charity and love immortal. 2) SHÎLA, the key of Harmony in word and act. 3) KSHANTI, patience. 4) VIRAG’, indifference to pleasure and to pain. 5) VIRYA, the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH. 6) DHYÂNA, whose golden gate once opened leads the Narjol toward the realm of Sat eternal and its ceaseless contemplation. 7) PRAJNA, the key to which makes of a man a god, creating him a Bôdhisattva, son of the Dhyânis.
The keys to the portals as virtues and the gates (stages)	1) “Learn to part thy body from thy mind [. . .] and to live in the eternal.” 2) To “be in full accord with all that lives” and to “bear love to men as though they were thy brotherpupils.” 3) The aspirant must be able to respond “to the tuneful breath of the GREAT WORLD-SOUL.” 4) Becoming full of “charity” and “love” by insight into unity — First Gate 5) “Harmony in word and act.” The mind fully controls the body that acts without desire. This eliminates karma.

Table 5 (continued)

The Steps of initiation in *The Voice of the Silence*

Second Gate

- 6) Patience which is a result of
- 7) Virāga, “absolute indifference to the objective universe, to pleasure and to pain.”
- 8) “Kshanti,” making the body one’s “slave.”

Third Gate

- 9) Knowledge of the power of the “inner man” – mostly the thought powers.
- 10) Understanding that there is nothing else than the Self – all longings for “Maya’s gifts” perish.

Fourth Gate

- 11) Mastery over the thoughts and the soul.
- 12) “Protect thy mind from pride and satisfaction at thoughts of the great feat achieved.”
- 13) Become indifferent towards one’s own pains and sorrows but compassionate towards those of others.

Fifth Gate

- 14) Titiksha state: “becoming physically, mentally, and morally indifferent and insensible to either pleasure or pain.”

Sixth Gate: One becomes a Narjol, that is a “saint, an adept.”

- 15) [Mind and Soul] “mirror nought of Maya’s realm illusive.”

Seventh Gate

- 16) Above all: “Compassion,” which is the nature of Alaya (Atman).

“Refuse to pass into the Nirvānic state.”
 “A NEW ARHAN IS BORN.”

Meanwhile, as I have argued above, most of the Buddhist vocabulary and concepts were received via early orientalists. Several of these terms had already become well established in Theosophy as a result of Blavatsky’s use of them in her writings prior to *The Voice of the Silence*. This means that, although Blavatsky does at times refer directly to Schlagintweit, Hardy, and Edkins, these terms were already part of an incipient tradition of repetition in the Theosophical Society. Indeed, the works Blavatsky used were already hybrid texts in the sense that they were produced by Westerners in close collaboration with local informants. Hence, the elements and structures found in *The Voice of the Silence* can be described as

already hybrids in two dimensions, the first deriving from the work of the early orientalists and the second through repetition in the Theosophical tradition.

Reflecting on the work of Homi Bhabha, and especially on his idea of hybridity as a historic necessity, I have argued that this is entirely normal. Understanding hybridization as an inherent characteristic of all knowledge production implies that it is untenable to identify any “pure” “Eastern” or “pure” “Western” sources. Blavatsky’s reception of “Hinduism” in *The Voice of the Silence* is a good example of this. The most important source for her adoption of the stages of initiation was Manilal Dvivedi, although, as seen above, the influence was mutual, with both Blavatsky and Dvivedi developing their concepts of initiation in complex encounters within the global colonial discursive continuum. This mutual interaction will be discussed further in the following chapters. The *Voice of the Silence* is the product of several processes of hybridization, including translation, de- and recontextualization, and repetition. “Repetition” as a process of hybridization will be discussed in the next section in more detail, where I will suggest that it is the main characteristic of “tradition.”

I argue that *The Voice of the Silence* was the blueprint for Besant’s formulation of the stages of initiation as part of the Theosophical tradition, as the similarities, which extend down to the level of terminology, demonstrate. The Savors described by Blavatsky in her *The Voice of the Silence* have structurally similar functions to Besant’s “Paramahamsas” or “Arhats” (see Chapter 8.2). Already in Blavatsky’s presentation of them, the Savors not only “quicken” their own evolution but also significantly “quicken” the evolution of mankind as a whole. The idea of quickening, then, does not originate with Besant but is already present in Blavatsky’s ideas about the masters and the steps of initiation. Those concepts constitute the principles of the Great Brotherhood. Blavatsky did not elaborate on the concept of initiation but rather choose to frame it in distinctly opaque language. She also did not provide a concrete notion of the “Quickening of Evolution” as a ladder with defined steps. I argue that Besant systematized Blavatsky’s concept in order to provide a practical guide to initiation. Besant took Blavatsky’s claims seriously: On the one hand, she sought out additional information about the path of initiation in the works mentioned by Blavatsky, mainly in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*; on the other hand, she described a path of initiation which built on Blavatsky’s ideas, making more explicit the ideas set out in a less than clear form in *The Voice of the Silence*. It will further be seen that the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* similarly develop these ideas and that the path of initiation is concretized in these works as a set of ethics and a specific manner of conduct that will eventually lead the student to Arhatship.

9.7 Results and Traces of Hybridization, “Already Hybrids,” and Tradition Through Repetition

A close reading of *The Voice of the Silence* has drawn attention to three theoretical considerations: 1) a conceptualization of the “already hybrids,” 2) the idea of “repetition” as a hybridization process that is closely linked to 3) a conceptualization of tradition.

1. As previously mentioned, Bhabha maintains that “hybridity” is an intrinsic quality of culture – and, indeed, of everything else – and a “historical necessity”²²⁵ because it is only if “meaning” cannot be “totalized” that it can possibly be transferred, translated, and repeated. I have pointed towards this characteristic of “hybridity” in my discussion of the example of Spence Hardy. Every concept is “already hybrid” because it can only gain meaning in relations. As for the examples in the present chapter, these show that the concepts Blavatsky used were not simply “orientalist” or “Western,” but, rather, the products of numerous earlier interlocking processes of hybridization. Blavatsky’s usage of these concepts is another act of hybridization in which they are not simply “absorbed” into Theosophy but are embedded in numerous new and altered relations. However, as has been repeatedly noted throughout this book, this does not mean that the previous relations of these concepts are eradicated. Terms always connect to numerous spaces (see Chapter 4.4.2) and therefore they carry multifaceted connotations. In Bhabha’s words, they “resist totalization.”²²⁶

2. The basic idea of repetition was identified as a “result of the hybridization process” in Chapter 8.4. In addition, it would also make sense to understand it as a particular process of hybridization that is connected to tradition. In discussing Krech’s take on succession in Chapter 7.3, I maintained that,

succession tries to provide evidence by referring to the common (often transcendent) origin of all those in the lineage in the Theosophical Society via the master narrative. Simultaneously, it must mediate between several synchronic claims of authority and it therefore includes a range of different positions. I argue that this mediation is a form of “relationizing” and, thus, of hybridization.²²⁷

Concepts are repeated within a certain reference group while maintaining an “original” meaning that is understood by every member of this group. But repeating this concept in numerous contexts necessarily hybridizes it. Hence the

²²⁵ Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 31–55.

²²⁶ Bhabha, “DissemiNation,” 314.

²²⁷ This book, 133.

use of concepts within a tradition – be this from one day to another, or in asynchronous situations over longer periods or in numerous spaces – “hybridizes” them. Hence, I understand tradition as a process of hybridization by repetition. It differs from de- and recontextualization in that it describes a more specific process within one reference group (See also overview of the “parts of hybridization,” Chapter 4.6).