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How “Neo” is Swami Vivekananda’s Vedānta:

A Response to Rambachan

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Introduction

The Limits of Scripture: Vivekananda’s Reinterpretation of the Vedas (1994) by Rambachan has been a path-breaking work for initiating a critical examination of Swami Vivekananda’s epistemological teachings. Rambachan challenges the trend adopted by some modern commentators to equate the teachings of Śaṅkara and Vivekananda. He observes that they overlook the “[f]undamental differences” between the two and present the latter “merely as a reviver of the Advaita of Śaṅkara.”¹ Opposing the trend, Rambachan follows Paul Hacker in projecting Vivekananda as a proponent of “neo-Hinduism”² as distinct from the traditional Hinduism.³ He argues that while Śaṅkara regards the Vedas as a “unique and self-valid source”⁴ of Self-knowledge, Vivekananda denies that the Vedas can confer the direct knowledge of the Self and proposes the state of *samādhi* as the direct means which can be attained alternatively through any of the four yogas of *Jñāna*, *Bhakti*, *Karma* and *Rāja*. Importantly, Rambachan argues that the reason Vivekananda did not accept the Vedas to be a “self-valid” source of Self-knowledge was because of his desire to reconcile Hinduism with the intellectual discourse of his time which was skeptical towards the traditional notions of scriptural authority and encouraged scientific scrutiny of religious teachings. However, Rambachan concludes that Vivekananda’s “reconstruction of the basis of knowledge in Advaita is far from successful” as “it presents innumerable problems, leaves many questions unanswered, and, on several crucial issues, contradicts fundamental Advaita propositions.”⁵

Given his argument that Vivekananda's teachings are fraught with problems, Rambachan poses a "challenge" to "the direct heirs of Vivekananda's legacy" and others "who have come under his influence, to provide a consistent and coherent account of the synthesis that he attempted." He further, appeals to the scholars "who argue for a continuity between neo-Vedānta and its classical roots and who see no deviation between Vivekananda and Śaṅkara" to address the "significant divergences" between Vivekananda and Śaṅkara "that have been established in" his study.⁶ It is to be noted that by alluding to the label of "neo-Vedānta" used by Paul Hacker to discredit the teachings of modern Vedāntins such as Vivekananda, Rambachan questions the authenticity and credibility of Vivekananda's teachings. As it will be shown, like Hacker, Rambachan also attributes political motives to Vivekananda's "reinterpretation" of Vedānta.

The over two-decades old work of Rambachan continues to be cited by several scholars in support of the "Neo-Vedānta" thesis. Particularly, scholars cite the work to argue that Vivekananda inauthentically deviated from the 'traditional' understanding of the epistemological role of the Vedas due to the influence of the colonial Indian circumstances and western ideas. For instance, in his review of Rambachan's work, Coward concludes that Vivekananda's "uncritical embracing of *samādhi*" in response to "the nineteenth-century challenge of science" "has left Hinduism with a flawed legacy that needs critical reexamination".⁷ Michelis, who writes that Vivekananda's "understanding of (Neo-)Vedānta" was based on the teachings he absorbed from a "Western cultic entourage"⁸, bases many of her arguments on Rambachan's observations. Similarly, Webster opines that Vivekananda's concept of "superconscious experience" originated in the "situations of British India"⁹, while Baier argues that Vivekananda's teaching was "influenced by the European Enlightenment and the empiricism of modern European natural science."¹⁰

In contrast to the above scholars, Madaio argues against locating the "development of Vivekananda's theological innovativeness in terms of colonial period nationalism and, in particular, Western influence."¹¹ He points out that Rambachan among other scholars adopts "Hacker's and Halbfass's" "explanatory framework" of relying "on the historical Śaṅkara as the backdrop for drawing out the newness of Neo-Vedānta, while overlooking medieval and early modern developments"¹² While Madaio questions the "Neo-Vedānta" thesis by pointing out the precedents of Vivekananda's *samādhi*-based epistemology in traditional Advaitic texts such

as the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* and *Jīvanmuktiviveka*,¹³ Maharaj (2018) argues that “the aim of at least some modern Vedāntins” including Vivekananda “was not to promulgate a *new* Vedāntic philosophy” as suggested by the label of “Neo-Vedānta”, “but to recover and revive the original Vedānta embodied in traditional Indian scriptures such as the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā.”¹⁴ Further, Madaio and Maharaj (2020) posit that Vivekananda is better described as a forerunner of a “cosmopolitan theology” and “cosmopolitan Vedānta” respectively, who critically engaged with both Western and indigenous sources to present a renewed understanding of Vedānta in a global philosophical and theological context.

In this article, I respond to Rambachan’s critique of Vivekananda, in line with Madaio and Maharaj’s observations. I show that Vivekananda, while rooted in the Upaniṣads, builds on the teachings of texts such as the Patañjali *Yogasūtras* and *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, and adopts a pluralistic attitude taught by his Guru Sri Ramakrishna to present a “cosmopolitan” Vedānta.¹⁵ Granted that Vivekananda deviates from Śaṅkara on certain issues, I argue that Rambachan belittles the scriptural and logical underpinnings of Vivekananda’s teachings by needlessly attributing Western influence and political motives as the *principal* reason for the deviation. Secondly, I show that many of the “problems”, “contradictions” and the charge of being “neo” raised by Rambachan are superficial and drawn from a selective and out-of-context reading of Vivekananda’s works.

Section 1 provides an overview of Rambachan’s critique of Vivekananda and rebuts the charge that Vivekananda’s downplaying of the epistemological role of the Vedas was primarily influenced by his desire to satisfy the “demands of science” and the skepticism towards scriptural authority championed by the Brahma Samaj leaders. I discuss the references from Upaniṣads and logical reasons presented by Vivekananda to argue that scriptures can only guide the religious aspirants to personally realize the Self but cannot *independently* “generate” or “produce” Self-knowledge as maintained by Rambachan. Section 2 shows that contrary to Rambachan’s assertion, Vivekananda identifies a clear source of Self-knowledge, and explains the removal of *avidyā* through the concept of *superconscious* perception. Secondly, I point out that the divergence in Vivekananda and Rambachan’s epistemological position is because of a fundamental difference in their understanding of the nature of *avidyā*. I argue that Vivekananda’s position on removal of *avidyā* is more consistent with the Upaniṣads than that of Rambachan. Section 3 challenges Rambachan’s claim that Vivekananda’s doctrine of four yogas is focused

more on furthering certain political motives and fails to convincingly address the Advaita concepts of *avidyā* and *mokṣa*. I discuss the rationale behind Vivekananda's doctrine of four yogas and argue that it is consistent with the teachings of the Upaniṣads. Finally, I summarize the key arguments of the article and conclude that while Vivekananda diverges from Śaṅkara in certain aspects, his epistemological views are not only consistent with the Upaniṣads, but bring to the fore their underappreciated diversity and "cosmopolitan" relevance.

1. Rambachan's Critique of Vivekananda's Epistemological Views: An Overview

Rambachan's critique of Vivekananda is essentially a critique of Vivekananda's position that the study of Vedas cannot be a "self-sufficient end" in attaining liberation.¹⁶ In contrast, Rambachan contends that Śaṅkara considers the Vedas to be the "self-valid source" of Self-knowledge and liberation to be "the immediate result of understanding the words of the *śruti*." He adds that "[f]or a qualified aspirant, nothing beyond a proper investigation of the meaning of those sentences in the *śruti* revealing *brahman* is required."¹⁷ In his earlier work, *Accomplishing the Accomplished: The Vedas as a Source of Valid Knowledge in Śaṅkara* (1991), Rambachan defines the self-validity of the Vedas as the ability of the words of the Vedas to "generate valid knowledge independently of other means."¹⁸ He further argues that the knowledge thus generated is an end-in-itself and no further "certifying experience" is required to make it valid. In *The Limits of Scripture*, Rambachan extends this argument to Vivekananda to oppose his distinction between mere "reading" of the Vedas and the practical "realization" of their teachings.¹⁹ He also points out that Vivekananda proposes the four yogas of *Jñāna*, *Bhakti*, *Karma* and *Rāja* as the means of direct knowledge of the Self in order to make up for the inability of the Vedas to confer the same.²⁰

Commenting on the reasons for making such a move, Rambachan writes that "[i]n an age when science . . . seemed ready to subject all areas of human knowledge to its criteria and methods, Vivekananda felt that faith in the *śruti* as the source of *brahmajñāna* was irrational", and thus attempted to propose a method of attaining knowledge which "satisfied the demands of science."²¹ Reiterating this argument in a later work, Rambachan neatly traces Vivekananda's downplaying of the epistemological role of scriptures to the influence of the intellectual discourse in colonial India in which reliance on scriptural authority was heavily criticized. Pointing that this had led the Brahmo Samaj to replace the authority of Vedas with "intuition" as

the source of “religious knowledge”, Rambachan opines that Vivekananda too “inherited the skepticism and mistrust of scriptural authority championed by Brahma Samaj leaders and contributed to re-casting Hindu epistemology on the model of his understanding of scientific inquiry.”²²

However, in my opinion, a more fair assessment of the reason for Vivekananda’s downplaying of the role of scriptures requires giving due importance to his stance that the liberating knowledge is “within” everyone which has to be realized through spiritual disciplines, and cannot be independently attained through any external means like the scriptures. Rambachan only briefly mentions it and presents it as a departure from Śaṅkara’s position that knowledge has to be attained by scriptural inquiry.²³ Without adequately examining the logical arguments put forth by Vivekananda to explain the limitations of the scriptures, Rambachan goes on to make a rather strong assertion that Vivekananda uses the spiritual disciplines like “the *sādhana-catuṣṭaya* to argue against scriptural necessity, to denounce the need for study and learning”²⁴ On the whole, he suggests that Vivekananda had very low regard for the scriptures and their usefulness as he “never seemed to miss an opportunity for deprecating their importance and calling into question their usefulness.”²⁵

About the doctrine of four yogas, Rambachan raises several issues. Firstly, he derides the doctrine as a hollow idea which has a “liberal appeal” and is used “to argue apologetically for the inclusiveness of Hinduism” but is not “rationally convincing”.²⁶ To elaborate, Rambachan argues that the doctrine does not convincingly address the “basic Advaita propositions about the nature of *avidyā* and *mokṣa*” nor explain “the connection between a particular method and the attainment of *mokṣa* in the Advaita sense”.²⁷ Secondly, Rambachan alleges that Vivekananda’s “principal concern” in proposing the doctrine was to “contrast” “what he saw as the liberal and universal claims of Vedānta” “with the exclusivism, particularly of Christianity”.²⁸ Thirdly, referring to Vivekananda’s syncretic approach of incorporating the teachings of divergent philosophical systems like the Sāṅkhya and Yoga, and the teachings of Ācārya Rāmānuja into his exposition of the four yogas, Rambachan echoes Hacker’s accusation²⁹ that it was aimed at promoting “Indian national unity” by emphasizing “the common basis of the Indian spiritual tradition”. He concludes that this “is an example of political considerations influencing the shape of theology.”³⁰

In the subsequent sections, I counter these and a few other specific arguments raised by Rambachan. By drawing attention to crucial passages from Vivekananda's works which are not duly discussed by Rambachan, I point out the scriptural and logical basis of Vivekananda's epistemological views.

1.1. The Upaniṣadic Basis of Vivekananda's Epistemological Views

At the outset, it should be stated that Rambachan's sweeping comment that Vivekananda never left an opportunity to denounce and deprecate the scriptures and question their usefulness belies Vivekananda's committed embracing of the scriptural teachings. Vivekananda emphatically proclaims that he preaches "only the Upaniṣads" and has "never quoted anything but the Upaniṣads".³¹ Elsewhere he affirms that "[i]t is only the pure Upaniṣadic religion that I have gone about preaching in the world."³² In fact, even Vivekananda's rejection of the "self-validity" of the Vedas is not an effect of yielding to "the demands of science", nor is it "inherited" from the Brahmo Samaj leaders, but based on the teachings of the Upaniṣads:

. . . the truth came to the Ṛṣis of India — the Mantra-drashtās, the seers of thought — and will come to all Ṛṣis in the future, not to talkers, not to book-swallowers, not to scholars, not to philologists, but to seers of thought. The Self is not to be reached by too much talking, not even by the highest intellects, not even by the study of the scriptures. [*Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 3.2.3/*Kāṭhcopaniṣad* 1.2.23]. The scriptures themselves say so. Do you find in any other scripture such a bold assertion as that — not even by the study of the Vedas will you reach the *Ātman*?³³

Revealingly, Rambachan cites the initial part of the above quote to point out Vivekananda's preference for direct realization over intellectual study of the Vedas, but omits the passage from the Upaniṣads.³⁴ This is to be specially noted as Rambachan claims that Vivekananda's views were shaped by the colonial intellectual discourse rather than the scriptures.

Moving on, according to Vivekananda, the reason scriptures cannot confer the direct knowledge of the Self is because it is our own inner being; therefore, it cannot be objectified by any external source of knowledge including the scriptures. As Vivekananda puts it: "You cannot know your own self; you cannot move it out and make it an object to look at, because you are that and cannot separate yourself from it."³⁵ The Self can only be realized by transcending the subject-object duality of relative existence. Consequently, Vivekananda holds that even

preoccupation with scriptural study binds one to relativity and becomes an impediment to realization. In fact, Vivekananda advises a disciple to avoid being bound to the scriptures and strive instead to go beyond “relative knowledge and ignorance.”³⁶ Citing the Upaniṣadic statements: ““whence words fall back with the mind without reaching it” [*Taittīryopaniṣad* 2, 4.1/2, 9.1]; “There the eyes cannot reach nor speech nor mind” [*Kenopaniṣad* 1.3]; “We cannot say that we know it, we cannot say that we do not know it” [*Kenopaniṣad* 2.2]”, Vivekananda affirms that they denote the state beyond all the “limitations” of relative existence where one realizes that “I and the whole universe are one; I and Brahman are one.”³⁷ Elsewhere, he once for all concludes that “The only way to understand” *ātman* “is to go beyond reason, beyond consciousness.” In what appears to be a rendering of passages from the *Bhagavadgīta*, he affirms that “[w]hen thou goest beyond the heard and the hearing, the thought and the thinking, then alone wilt thou come to Truth [*Bhagavadgīta* 2.52-53].’ ‘Go thou beyond the scriptures, because they teach only up to nature, up to the three qualities [*Bhagavadgīta* 2.45].”³⁸

Nevertheless, Rambachan insists that according to Śaṅkara, the Upaniṣadic statements which declare the Self to be beyond the reach of words only express “the difficulty of defining *brahman* through the generally accepted forms of word usage”³⁹ Rambachan explains in his earlier work that the difficulty posed due to the limitation of words in “defining” Brahman is overcome by applying the method of *lakṣaṇā* in which the “ordinary meaning” of a word is rejected and its “implied meaning” is retained. He affirms that through the method of *lakṣaṇā*, “the word denotation is freed of its finite associations. It is then acceptable for defining *brahman*.”⁴⁰ Therefore, according to him, “Śaṅkara is able to accept *śruti* statements such as “Failing to reach which (*brahman*) words, along with the mind turn back” (TA.U. 2.4.1). and still maintain the adequacy and effectiveness of the *śruti* as the *pramāṇa* of *brahmajñāna*.”⁴¹ Based on these arguments, Rambachan insists that as per Śaṅkara, “the Upaniṣads impart positive knowledge of *brahman* . . .”, and that Śaṅkara “regarded the *śruti*” to possess the “capacity to produce *brahmajñāna*.”⁴²

While it is beyond the scope of this article to examine in detail Śaṅkara’s understanding of the function of Vedas as a *pramāṇa*, it appears that he flatly rejects that the Vedas “impart positive knowledge” of the Self. Affirming that “the Self is self-evident”, Śaṅkara adds that “what is called the ‘self’ does not remain unknown to anyone.” He then clarifies that the scriptures qualify as the *pramāṇa* of Self-knowledge not “by virtue of making some unknown

thing known”, but by “merely negating superimposition of qualities that do not belong to the Self”.⁴³ Elsewhere, he argues that “just as for knowing one's own body there is no need of any other (external) means of knowledge so also there is no need of any other means of knowledge, for the realization of the Self . . .”⁴⁴

Going back to Rambachan’s argument about the method of *lakṣaṇā*, it is difficult to accept that the words of the Vedas can independently generate the direct knowledge of the infinite Self no matter how sophisticated the method employed to interpret them. The Upaniṣads render such a position impossible by declaring that the Self is “unspeakable”⁴⁵ and “uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable”.⁴⁶ Mirroring the Upaniṣads, Vivekananda states that “[a]ny imagination, any concept” in comprehending the Self “is in vain. . . . for even to think is to limit and so to lose.”⁴⁷ He therefore holds that books can do no more than “point the way to a higher life” or provide “a motive power to us to dare to make the same experiences and discover” the knowledge of the Self in the same way as the sages originally did.⁴⁸

2. The Source of Self-Knowledge and the Nature of *Avidyā* according to Vivekananda

If not the Vedas, what according to Vivekananda is the source of Self-knowledge? And how is *avidyā* ultimately removed if inquiry into the words of the Vedas cannot do it? As per Rambachan, Vivekananda does not establish a convincing source of Self-knowledge and explain the removal of *avidyā*. In arguing thus, Rambachan does not accurately represent Vivekananda’s position on these aspects. Firstly, regarding the source of Self-knowledge, based on Vivekananda’s arguments that the Self is realized in the state of *samādhi* and that Self-knowledge is spontaneously attained by observing the mind internally, he presumes that Vivekananda regards *samādhi* and mind themselves as the sources of Self-knowledge.⁴⁹ Apart from arguing that both these positions are inconsistent with Śaṅkara’s teachings, Rambachan contends that they are hard to sustain in the context of Advaita Vedānta.⁵⁰ However, according to Vivekananda, *samādhi* is only the state in which Self-knowledge is attained, and the mind is the locus of that knowledge. The source of Self-knowledge is the Self itself! Referring to Yājñavalkya’s rhetorical question in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 2.4.14, Vivekananda argues that the very nature of the Self makes it inaccessible to any other means than itself:

Through whom we know this universe, through what to know Him? How to know the knower? By what means can we know the knower? How can that be? Because in and

through that we know everything. By what means can we know Him? By no means, for He is that means.⁵¹

For Vivekananda, the way to attain the Self-knowledge is through its “revelation” or “reflection” in a pure and calm mind: “He who cries out with his whole heart, “O Lord, I want but Thee” — to him the Lord reveals Himself. Be pure, be calm; the mind when ruffled cannot reflect the Lord.”⁵² Elsewhere, he states that when the mind “becomes calm, . . . a glimpse of the Infinite beyond, where words cannot reach nor the mind go, is revealed to us.”⁵³ Though Rambachan does not discuss Vivekananda’s point about revelation of the Self being the source of its knowledge, in what could be an objection to the idea, he argues that for Śaṅkara “the self-revelatory nature of the *ātman* does not imply or is not equivalent to a knowledge of its true nature, and he does not suggest that *brahmajñāna* is somehow spontaneously manifest without *pramāṇa* inquiry.”⁵⁴ Be that as it may, the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* 1.2.23 and *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad* 3.1.9 declare that the Self has to be known through its own revelation:

“This Ātman cannot be attained by the study of the Vedas, nor by intellect, nor even by much learning; by him it is attained whom it chooses,—this, his (own) Ātman, reveals its own (real) form.”⁵⁵

By means of thought one should know the subtle truth of the atman within the body, . . .
When that (thought) is purified, the Self shines forth.⁵⁶

Since the Self itself is the source of its knowledge, Vivekananda concludes that its knowledge has to be sought from within and not through any *external* book: “The book is all in us. Fool, hearest not thou? In thine own heart day and night is singing that Eternal Music—Saccidānanda, soham, soham—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, I am He, I am He.”⁵⁷ However, as he states elsewhere, the Self residing within cannot be realized without a heart purified by spiritual practices: “. . . spiritual illumination shines of itself in a pure heart, and, as such, it is not something acquired from without; but to attain this purity of heart means long struggle and constant practice.”⁵⁸ Note the strikingly similar statement of the Upaniṣads: “The Self . . . is lodged in the heart of (every) creature. A desireless man sees that glory of the Self through the serenity of the organs, and (thereby he becomes) free from sorrow.”⁵⁹

2.1. The Nature of *Avidyā* and the Method of its Removal

As far as the concept of *avidyā* is concerned, Rambachan argues that Vivekananda's doctrine of the four yogas as alternative paths to liberation "leaves us unconvinced and with many unanswered questions" regarding "the Advaita definition of ignorance (*avidyā*) and the nature of bondage" ⁶⁰ Elsewhere, he asserts that in Vivekananda's explanation of the four yogas, "[w]e appear to have to accept that *avidyā* vanishes inexplicably." ⁶¹ However, it is most important to note that Rambachan's arguments are based on the assumption that "bondage is only a notional problem resulting from a mental confusion of mutually superimposing the Self and non-Self" ⁶² Elsewhere, he states that the "Words can liberate where the problem is only a notional one of incorrect understanding." ⁶³ His dismissal of Vivekananda's doctrine of four yogas as direct alternative paths to Self-realization as unconvincing seems to be based on the argument that the notional *avidyā* cannot be eliminated by any means except the knowledge of true nature of the Self derived from scriptural inquiry.

However, Rambachan fails to note that Vivekananda does not understand the problem of *avidyā* and the experience of bondage as merely a result of notional misunderstanding. Vivekananda explains *avidyā* in accordance with *Yogasūtra* 1.4 ⁶⁴ stating that the "mingling" of the Self's reflection with the "waves" (*vṛttis*) of the mind give rise erroneous cognition of the Self:

Different waves in the Citta rise and cover the Soul; we only see a little reflection of the Soul through these waves; so, if the wave is one of anger, we see the Soul as angry; "I am angry," one says. If it is one of love, we see ourselves reflected in that wave, and say we are loving. If that wave is one of weakness, and the Soul is reflected in it, we think we are weak. These various ideas come from these impressions, these Saṃskāras covering the Soul. The real nature of the Soul is not perceived as long as there is one single wave in the lake of the Citta; this real nature will never be perceived until all the waves have subsided. ⁶⁵

Elsewhere, he explains that the various names and forms which are experienced because of the *vṛttis* of the mind cannot be dismissed as "delusion" because "[s]o long as the wave existed the form was there, and you were bound to see the form." ⁶⁶ Therefore, the erroneous cognition of the Self caused by *avidyā* is real for all practical purposes and can remain even after one theoretically comprehends the real nature of the Self through scriptural inquiry. It can be

eliminated only in the *superconscious* state where the *vṛttis* giving rise to the erroneous cognitions are subdued.

While none of the Upaniṣads states that *avidyā* vanishes through intellectual understanding of their word-meaning, Vivekananda's position that it is removed in the *superconscious* state finds support in the *Māṇḍukyopaniṣad*. According to *Māṇḍukyopaniṣad* 7, "all phenomena", the effect of *avidyā*, "cease" in the "indescribable" fourth state of consciousness above the wakeful, dream and deep-sleep states.⁶⁷ Vivekananda refers to such a state as the *superconscious* state. But it has to be noted that, according to Vivekananda, the *superconscious* state is none other than the state of *samādhi* defined by *Yogasūtra* 1.2.⁶⁸ Objecting to this, Rambachan comments that in spite of being aware of the significant differences between the Sāṅkhya system (from which the Yoga system derives its metaphysics) and Advaita Vedānta, "Vivekananda neglects their significance in proposing *samādhi* as the authoritative source of *brahmajñāna*."⁶⁹ To be sure, Vivekananda rejects the dualistic metaphysics of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system⁷⁰, but he does not seem to differentiate between Advaita Vedānta and the Yoga system as far as their views on the nature and method of removal of *avidyā* through the state of *samādhi* is concerned.⁷¹ Explaining that the "duality of relative existence becomes one in the pure Brahman" in the *superconscious* state, he quotes the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, an Advaita Vedāntic text traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara, to define the *superconscious* state: "stimitasalilarāśiprakhyaṁākhyāvihīnam— It is like an ocean perfectly at rest and without a name" (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 410).⁷² It also appears that he interprets the "knots of the heart" mentioned in *Kāṭhcopaniṣad* 2.3.15 and *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 3.2.9 to be referring to the "mingling" or the mutual superimposition between the *vṛttis* of the mind and the reflection of the Self:

This mind has to be divested of all modifications (*Vṛttis*) and reconverted into the transparent lake, so that there remains not a single wave of modification in it. Then will Brahman manifest Itself. The scriptures give a glimpse of this state in such passages as:

"Then all the knots of the heart are cut asunder"⁷³

Anyway, referring to Vivekananda's point that the mind has to transcend its normal functioning to attain the state of *samādhi* and realize the Self, Rambachan contends that "[t]here is no evidence in the commentaries of Śaṅkara to suggest that he conceived *brahmajñāna* as occurring only through a transcendence of the ordinary level of mental functioning."⁷⁴ However,

Kāthopaniṣad 2.3.10 describes the “highest” state of yoga, which even Śaṅkara posits as the method of realizing the Self, as one in which the mind comes to rest and the intellect ceases to function. Contrary to Rambachan’s claim, Śaṅkara too comments that in that state the mind is “weaned away from (its functions of) thinking etc.” and the “intellect” “does not engage in its own activities.”⁷⁵

3. Four Yogas as Direct Alternative Paths to Self-realization

Strangely, Rambachan does not find Vivekananda’s attempt to accommodate diverse religious beliefs and promote religious harmony through the doctrine of four yogas to be important or genuine enough.⁷⁶ He alleges that Vivekananda conceived the doctrine mainly to contrast the liberal character of Hinduism with the “exclusivism” of Christianity and to promote Indian nationalism. In all fairness to Vivekananda, the doctrine of four yogas cannot be reduced to such a political scheme. Nor can it be derided as a rationally unconvincing and merely apologetic doctrine. For Vivekananda, the doctrine is based on the argument that different “outward forms and observances” can aid humans to “awaken” their “inner powers” which are needed to realize their “real nature”. Lamenting that people “[i]n every country” that he visited had forgotten the ideal of realization and were instead fighting over differences in “outward forms and observances”, he adds that “Shri Ramakrishna came to show the truth of this.”⁷⁷ This is a reference to Sri Ramakrishna’s teaching that there are infinite valid paths to achieve the ideal of God-realization.⁷⁸

Vivekananda systematically develops Sri Ramakrishna’s teaching in an effort to counter the fanatic tendency of religions to insist that their own doctrines are “the only true ones”.⁷⁹ He proposes the idea of “universal religion” to recognize “the natural necessity of variation” and affirms “that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways” each of which may be valid.⁸⁰ The idea of “universal religion” argues that all the various religious paths to realization can be classified under one of the four yogas: *Jñāna*, *Bhakti*, *Karma* and *Rāja*. The four yogas correspond to the four different types of religious aspirants classified based on the nature of their minds: the “philosopher”, the “emotional”, the “active worker”, and the “mystic”.⁸¹ Through the combination of the four yogas, Vivekananda declares that he wants to end the conflict among the aspirants of different religious paths and “propagate” “a religion that will be equally acceptable to all” of them.⁸²

Vivekananda is able to argue thus as he is clear that scriptural inquiry is not the direct means of Self-knowledge, much less the only way. Based on his argument that the Self reveals itself to the *superconscious* mind, he proposes that there are multiple ways to attain the revelation. The essential thing, however, is to concentrate the mind:

We have to seize this unstable mind and drag it from its wanderings and fix it on one idea. Over and over again this must be done. By power of will we must get hold of the mind and make it stop and reflect upon the glory of God.⁸³

The doctrine of the four yogas is based on the argument that the “power of will” can be exercised in multiple ways:

The will concentrates the mind, certain things excite and control this will, such as reason, love, devotion, breathing. The concentrated mind is a lamp that shows us every corner of the soul.⁸⁴

The will can be made strong in thousands of ways; every way is a kind of Yoga, but the systematised Yoga accomplishes the work more quickly. Bhakti, Karma, Rāja, and Jñāna-Yoga get over the ground more effectively. Put on all powers, philosophy, work, prayer, meditation — crowd all sail, put on all head of steam — reach the goal. The sooner, the better. . . .⁸⁵

Thus the four yogas are to be understood as practices which aid in attaining a concentrated state of the mind, or in other words, the *superconscious* state. This puts to rest Rambachan’s assertion that Vivekananda does not convincingly establish the connection between the individual yogas and the attainment of Self-knowledge.

Nevertheless, Rambachan’s contention that, for Śāṅkara “the function of *karmayoga*, as of all other methods, techniques, and disciplines” is only to develop “appropriate qualities” required for inquiring “into the words of the Upaniṣads” and they “themselves never replace the valid sources of knowledge” needs to be addressed.⁸⁶ Rambachan’s argument is that as per Śāṅkara, Self-knowledge is unattainable without “inquiry into the Upaniṣads” subsequent to the practices like *Karmayoga* or other spiritual disciplines. He also points out that Śāṅkara “specifically rebuts the argument that *mokṣa* can be obtained through concentration of the mind”⁸⁷ However, Śāṅkara’s larger point in denying yoga or concentration of the mind as a path to *mokṣa* is that cessation of the *vṛttis* of the mind taught by the yoga system “is not known as a means of liberation” because “[i]n the Upaniṣads nothing is spoken of as a means” to liberation

“except the knowledge of the identity of the self and Brahman”. He adds that “we know of no other means of liberation except the knowledge of Brahman.”⁸⁸ Clearly, Śaṅkara’s argument assumes that the cessation of the *vr̥ttis* of the mind is incapable of leading to the knowledge of Brahman. According to Vivekananda, however, the mind divested of all the *vr̥ttis* reflects Brahman in its true nature and leads to its knowledge.

While this could be a point of divergence between Śaṅkara and Vivekananda, the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* 1.3.12 supports Vivekananda’s view by stating that the Self is “seen through a pointed and fine intellect.”⁸⁹ Similarly, the *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad* 3.1.8 states that one who “becomes purified in mind” sees the “Self through meditation.”⁹⁰ None of the Upaniṣads states that the inquiry into their word-meaning is ultimately the only means of attaining Self-knowledge. On the contrary, it should be remembered that *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad* 3.2.3 and *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* 1.2.23 even deny that intellectual studies can lead to Self-realization. While the *Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad* 4.4.22 does state that the “[t]he Brāhmaṇas seek to know [the Self] through the study of the Vedas, . . . ,”⁹¹ the very next *mantra* tellingly adds that the person who knows about the nature of the Self “becomes self-controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, enduring and concentrated, and sees the Self in his own self (body).”⁹² As if to echo the *Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad*, Vivekananda states: “First hear, then understand, and then, leaving all distractions, shut your minds to outside influences, and devote yourselves to developing the truth within you.”⁹³

Notwithstanding differences with Śaṅkara, Vivekananda’s explanation that the direct knowledge of Self is realized in a state of concentration and not by study of the scriptures is consistent with the Upaniṣads. However, Rambachan’s arguments that these teachings of Vivekananda contradict certain Advaita propositions remain to be addressed. First, referring to Vivekananda’s statement that Brahman “becomes manifest” only in the *superconscious* state of the mind, Rambachan argues that it imposes “limitation” on Brahman which is “always manifest and available” as per Advaita Vedānta.⁹⁴ This is a far-fetched argument as Vivekananda does not really mean that Brahman is unmanifest in states other than the *superconscious* state. Though his words are prone to such an interpretation, from his explanation of *superconscious* perception, it is clear that according to him, it is the *reflection* of Brahman and not Brahman itself which “becomes manifest” in its real nature in the *superconscious* mind. It is also clear from his explanation that the reflection of Brahman is always present in the mind, but in states other than

the *superconscious* state it gets superimposed on the *vṛttis* of the mind and causes erroneous cognition of the Self.

Coming to the second objection, Rambachan accuses Vivekananda of drawing “dubious analogies” with science in his explanation of Rājayoga. This is a reference to Vivekananda’s position that Rājayoga is a “scientific” method which enables the direct perception of the Self through internal observation of the mind.⁹⁵ Rambachan argues that holding Brahman to be an object of “perception” denies its “very nature” by objectifying it.⁹⁶ However, he fails to note how Vivekananda clarifies elsewhere that even though Self-knowledge is above duality, he is helpless in terming it as a matter of “perception” owing to the limitation of language:

The real fact is that there is a state beyond the conscious plane, where there is no duality of the knower, knowledge, and the instrument of knowledge etc. When the mind is merged, that state is perceived. I say it is “perceived,” because there is no other word to express that state. Language cannot express that state. Śāṅkaracharya has styled it “Transcendent Perception” (*Aparokṣānubhūti*).⁹⁷

Further, the apparent duality between the *superconscious* mind and Brahman does allow for describing the attainment of Self-knowledge using terms like “perception”.⁹⁸ Shortly after the above quote, Vivekananda suggests how the subtle nature of the mind enables it to serve as the locus of “perception” of the Self: “When the mind composed of subtle matter is quelled, the ātman is effulgent by Its own radiance.”⁹⁹ For Vivekananda, such a “perception” allows for “verification” of the “religious truth” taught by the Vedas.¹⁰⁰ As a result, a religious aspirant need not just “live upon” dogmatic belief in the authority of “words” of the scriptures but can practically “experience truth for himself.”¹⁰¹ As to the duality between mind and the Self, it appears that according to Vivekananda the duality ceases when “the mind will merge in the unbroken Ocean of Intelligence” which is the Self.¹⁰² Notably, the *Kāthopaniṣad* 2.1.15 similarly compares the state of a realized person to the merging of pure water in another body of pure water leading to the end of all duality.

Coming to Vivekananda’s point of Rājayoga being a method of internal observation, Rambachan mockingly comments “I fail to see, however, how full knowledge of the ātman can be gained by any kind of observation, internal or external.” He adds that the Self “is the very content and basis of the observer and therefore not available as an object of observation.”¹⁰³ However, in reality, far from reducing the Self to “an object of observation”, Vivekananda states

that the mind has to be made to turn inwards to observe its own cognitions as a method to concentrate on itself:

We know that there is the power of the mind called reflection. I am talking to you. At the same time I am standing aside, as it were, a second person, and knowing and hearing what I am talking. You work and think at the same time, while a portion of your mind stands by and sees what you are thinking. The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself, and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its own innermost secrets.¹⁰⁴

Because the method of Rājāyoga can exclusively rely on the mind's inherent ability to concentrate on itself and directly realize the Self even without the aid of any extraneous "beliefs", Vivekananda affirms that Rājāyoga "fits inquirers of all classes with or without any belief" and affirms that it is a scientific method of religious inquiry.¹⁰⁵ It is therefore true that Vivekananda seeks to reconcile Advaita Vedānta with modern science--especially while explaining the path of Rājāyoga. However, it is not because he lacked trust in the scriptures. Vivekananda states that in the modern times, religions had acquired ill-repute for fanatically imposing their beliefs without giving any "standard to judge".¹⁰⁶ He finds a solution in Rājāyoga, which can stand independent of any belief and provide an inquiry-based method to "verify" the claims of religion.

3.1. The Upaniṣadic Basis and Universality of the Four Yogas

Vivekananda points out the underappreciated fact that even the Upaniṣads teach multiple ways to realize the Self.¹⁰⁷ While Rambachan is unconvinced by Vivekananda's claim, and faults Vivekananda for not citing any supporting references,¹⁰⁸ it is for anyone to see that the Upaniṣads do teach different ways of realizing the Self. They could even be classified on the lines of Vivekananda's four yogas. For instance, the teaching of *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 3.2.3 that the Self reveals itself to the mind which hankers or prays for it corresponds to the path of bhakti yoga. The *Kaṭhopaniṣad* 2.1.1 rendered by Vivekananda as: "The Self-existent One projected the senses outwards and, therefore, a man looks outward, not within himself. A certain wise one, desiring immortality, with inverted senses, perceived the Self within"¹⁰⁹ sounds similar to the method of Rāja yoga. The *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 3.1.9 which states that the "Self reveals Itself distinctly" when the mind becomes purified supports Vivekananda's doctrine of Karmayoga

where he states that when “your hearts gets purified by work, you will come to feel the truth that your own Self is pervading all beings and all things. Thus it is that doing good to others constitutes a way, a means of revealing one’s own Self or *ātman*.”¹¹⁰ In *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 2,4.5, we find the so-called triple method of *Śravaṇa-Manana-Nididhyāsana*, the most well recognized method in Advaita Vedānta. It could be classified under Jñāna yoga, which Vivekananda explains as follows:

Next is Jñāna-Yoga. This is divided into three parts. First: hearing the truth — that the *Ātman* is the only reality and that everything else is *Māyā* (relativity). Second: reasoning upon this philosophy from all points of view. Third: giving up all further argumentation and realising the truth. This realisation comes from (1) being certain that Brahman is real and everything else is unreal; (2) giving up all desire for enjoyment; (3) controlling the senses and the mind; (4) intense desire to be free. Meditating on this reality always and reminding the soul of its real nature are the only ways in this Yoga.¹¹¹

Additionally, Vivekananda argues for the universal applicability of the four yogas. Particularly in the case of Rājayoga and Karmayoga, he confirms that they work effectively regardless of the doctrines and beliefs upheld by aspirants belonging to different religious paths.¹¹² This brings us back to Vivekananda’s argument that the fights between different religions over “outward forms and observances” that he witnessed are futile as each of them can lead to Self-realization in the end. As per Vivekananda different “doctrines and dogmas” like worshipping an “image” or a “great man” which belong to different religious traditions can be adopted for achieving the goal of Self-realization, because the “doctrines and dogmas do not mean anything; what you are is what matters.”¹¹³ In other words, the ability to attain Self-realization essentially depends on the inherent nature of all humans rather than on any external “doctrines and dogmas” developed by different religious traditions. As he adds later, by sincerely practicing any external doctrines, “[y]our heart, which contains all truth, will unfold itself chapter after chapter, till you know the last truth, that ‘I and my Father are one’.”¹¹⁴ Thus according to Vivekananda, the four yogas are universally applicable paths which can accommodate diverse religious beliefs, and through which humans can exercise their innate ability to discover their real nature.

Conclusion

It is unfortunate that Rambachan and other critiques, who argue that Vivekananda's downplaying of the role of scriptures is primarily shaped by the modern scientific outlook, ignore that the Upaniṣads themselves declare the Self-knowledge to be unattainable through intellectual study of the scriptures. To say the least, Rambachan grossly underestimates the Upaniṣadic basis of Vivekananda's teachings by dismissing them as a heedless reaction to the circumstances of colonial India. Rambachan's "challenge" "to provide a consistent and coherent account of" Vivekananda's epistemological views, which mainly has to do with the supposed inconsistencies regarding the source of Self-knowledge and the method of removing *avidyā* gets addressed by a more considerate and wider reading of Vivekananda's works. To reiterate, Vivekananda identifies the "revelation" or "reflection" of the Self in the *superconscious* mind as the source of its knowledge, and the four yogas as alternative paths to attain the *superconscious* state. He explains that the *avidyā* is removed when all the *vṛttis* of the mind which veil our real nature and cause erroneous cognition of the Self are subdued in the *superconscious* state. In view of the Upaniṣadic teaching that the Self is the subject of all knowledge and reveals itself to the seeker, Vivekananda's argument that it has to be directly "discovered" or "realized" in the *superconscious* state is more plausible than Rambachan's argument that its knowledge has to be "generated" or "produced" from an external source of knowledge, namely, the Vedas.

As to the relation between Vivekananda and Śaṅkara, it was noted that Śaṅkara's *Bṛhadāraṇyakabhāṣya* rejects *samādhi*, which is central to Vivekananda's epistemological position, as a means of Self-knowledge. However, there is a need to enquire why Śaṅkara does not agree that *samādhi* leads to the spontaneous realization of the self-evident Self. If as Rambachan argues, Śaṅkara considers Self-knowledge to be unattainable without inquiry into the scriptures subsequent to the practice of spiritual disciplines, even then it is not clear why it should be the case. For Śaṅkara himself posits the self-evident nature of the Self as the reason to argue that no external means of knowledge is required to know it.

Nevertheless, Rambachan rightly argues that Vivekananda should not be seen as a mere reviver of Śaṅkara Vedānta. As he points out, Vivekananda's doctrine of four yogas is opposed to Śaṅkara's position. However, Rambachan's questioning of continuity between Vivekananda and the "classical roots" of Vedānta can only be sustained by slighting the Upaniṣadic basis of Vivekananda's teachings and conflating "Advaita Vedānta with the eighth century Śaṅkara."¹¹⁵

Coming in an age characterized by conflict between science and religion on the one hand and religious fanaticism on the other, Vivekananda did not simply reiterate the views of Śaṅkara. Inspired by Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, Vivekananda shed fresh light on the pluralistic teachings of the Upaniṣads, and incorporated the *Yogasūtra*'s approach of experiential-inquiry to propose the path of Rajayoga as a "scientific" method of attaining Self-knowledge. Secondly, through the concept of "universal religion" and the doctrine of four yogas, he strove to present a non-sectarian approach to religion.

To conclude, it is only fair to reject the demeaning label of "neo-Vedānta", and consider Madaio and Maharaj's argument that Vivekananda presents before us a "cosmopolitan theology" or "cosmopolitan Vedānta": A Vedānta which recognizes the innate capacity of every human to realize their real nature regardless of their religious affiliations, which accommodates diverse religious beliefs or no belief at all, and considers multiple paths as valid means to Self-realization.

Notes

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1. Rambachan 1994, p.3.

2. *ibid.*, p.2.

3. See "Aspects of Neo-Hinduism as Contrasted with Surviving Traditional Hinduism" in *Philology and Confrontation*, Hacker 1995, pp.229-255.

4 Rambachan 1994, p.3

5. *ibid.*, p.136.

6. *ibid.*, p.137.
7. Coward 1995, p.47.
8. Michelis 2005, p.113.
9. Webster 2015, p.31.
10. Baier 2019, p.254.
11. Madaio 2017, p.1.
12. *ibid.*, 2017, p.4.
13. *ibid.*, 2017, p.5.
14. Maharaj 2018, p.46.
15. See Medhananda 2020, pp.7-14 for a detailed discussion of Vivekananda's pluralistic approach to religion inspired by Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. My attempt in this article is limited to address Rambachan's critique of Vivekananda's argument that multiple paths can lead to Advaitic Self-realization.
16. Rambachan 1994, p.46.
17. *ibid.*, p.3.
18. Rambachan 1991, pp.20-21.
19. This argument mirrors the long-standing debate between the Vivaraṇa and Bhāmati schools of Advaita Vedānta. While the former argues that the final liberating knowledge of the Self is directly conferred by Vedic dictums like "thou art that", the latter maintains that it is attained through the mind purified by manana and nididhyāsana. See Vedānta Paribhāṣa pp.212-216 for an overview of the debate.
20. Rambachan 1994, p.65.
21. *ibid.*, p.136.

22. Rambachan 2013, p.5.
23. Rambachan 1994, p.51.
24. ibid.
25. ibid., p.49.
26. ibid., p.133.
27. ibid., p.132.
28. ibid., p.91.
29. According to Hacker, Vivekananda's "ideas reveal clearly that Nationalism is the origin and driving force of the Neo-hindu conception of unity." Hacker 1995, p.324.
30. Rambachan 1994, p.135.
31. CW8, p.267.
32. CW6, p.470.
33. CW3, p.283.
34. Rambachan 1994, p.45.
35. CW2, p.134, cited in Rambachan 1994, 109.
36. CW7, p.211.
37. CW3, p.282.
38. CW2, p.449.
39. Rambachan 1994, p.123.
40. Rambachan 1991, p.75.
41. ibid.
42. ibid., p.72 and pp.77-78.
43. Gambhīrānanda, *Bhagavadgītā with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya* 2.18, p.62.

44. *ibid.*, 18.50, p.563.
45. Gambhīrānanda, Eight Upaniṣads Vol-1, Kaṭhapaniṣad II.ii.14 p.210.
46. Gambhīrānanda, Eight Upaniṣads Vol-2, Māṇḍukyopaniṣad 7, p.206
47. CW7, p.74.
48. CW4, p.191 and CW6, p.14.
- 49 See Rambachan 1994, pp.120-123 and pp.124-125.
- 50 For Rambachan's critique of Vivekananda's presentation of *samādhi* see *ibid.*, p.131.
51. CW2, p.419. See Mādhavānanda, *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.14. p.373 for the original *mantra*.
52. CW6, p.88.
53. CW3, p.253.
54. Rambachan 1994, p.75.
55. Sarvananda, Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 1.2.23, p.67
56. Sarvananda, Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.1.9, p.65
57. CW7. p.20.
58. CW4 p.436.
59. Gambhirananada, Eight Upaniṣads Vol-1, Kaṭhapaniṣad I.ii.20, p.153.
60. Rambachan 1994, p.120.
61. *ibid.*, p.132.
62. Rambachan 1991, p.85.
63. *ibid.*, p.78.
64. "At other times (other than that of concentration) the seer is identified with the modifications." Translation by Vivekananda, CW1, p.203.

65. CW1. p.234.
66. CW2. p.136.
67. Gambhīrānanda, Eight Upaniṣads Vol-2, Māṇḍukyopaniṣad 7, p.206.
68. “Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (Citta) from taking various forms (Vṛttis).” Translation by Vivekananda, CW1, p.200.
69. Rambachan 1994, p.131.
70. In “Sāṅkhya and Vedānta”, CW2, pp.454-462, Vivekananda reasons out why the dualistic metaphysics of Sāṅkhya is unsustainable and upholds the Advaita Vedāntic view of non-duality.
71. See Madaio (2017) for an insightful discussion on how the “Yogic Advaita” presented in the medieval Advaita Vedāntic texts might have shaped the *samādhi*-based epistemology of Vivekananda.
72. CW7, p.196.
73. *ibid.*, pp.195-196. Vivekananda could be referring to *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* 2.3.15 and *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad* 3.2.9 which state that a person who is freed from “the knots of the heart” attains immortality.
74. Rambachan 1994, p.121.
75. Gambhīrānanda, Eight Upaniṣads Vol-1, Kaṭhōpaniṣad II.iii.10, pp.223-224.
76. See “The Ideal of Universal Religion” CW2, pp.375-396. Also, see Medhananda 2020, pp.9-14 for a helpful discussion on how Vivekananda’s doctrine of four yogas helps to harmonize different religions.
77. CW7, p.210.
78. See Maharaj (2018) *Infinite paths to Infinite Reality* for a comprehensive discussion on Sri Ramakrisna’s doctrine of infinite paths.

79. CW2, p.377.
80. *ibid.*, pp.382-383.
81. *ibid.*, pp.385-386.
82. *ibid.*, p.387.
83. CW8, p.47.
84. CW7, pp.59-60.
85. *ibid.*, p.71.
86. Rambachan 1994, p.120.
87. *ibid.*, p.124.
88. Mādhavānanda, *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.7, p.132, cited in Preti 2014, p.727.
89. Gambhīrānanda, *Eight Upaniṣads Vol-1, Kaṭhōpaniṣad* I.iii.12, p.171.
90. Gambhīrānanda, *Eight Upaniṣads Vol-2, Muṇḍakōpaniṣad* III.i.8, p.155.
91. Mādhavānanda, *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.22, pp.748-749.
92. *ibid.*, 4.4.23, pp.764-765.
93. CW1, p.177.
94. Rambachan 1994, p.124.
95. See CW1, pp.128-129.
96. Rambachan 1994, p.109.
97. CW7, p.142.
98. The Upaniṣads too, in a similar way, state that the Self is “seen” through a concentrated mind. See for instance *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* 1.3.12 and *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad* 3.1.8.
99. CW7, p.142.
100. *ibid.*, p.9.

101. CW1, p.128. Interestingly, even Śāṅkara states that the “result” of Self-knowledge is subjectively experienced by the knower. He adds that the Self-knowledge “gives one the conviction that [they have accomplished their objective], and it requires no other witness than the testimony of one's own experience.” Mādhavānanda, *The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.8, p.733. (I have slightly modified the translation as indicated in the brackets).

102. CW7, p.143.

103. Rambachan 1994, p.110.

104. CW1, p.131.

105. CW8, p.154.

106. CW1, pp.125-126.

107. CW6, p.182.

108. Rambachan, 1994, p.65.

109. CW2, p.175.

110. CW7, p.112, cited in Rambachan 1994, p.72.

111. CW8, pp.154-155.

112. CW1, p.131.

113 CW3, pp.536-537.

114. *ibid.*, p.537. Note how Vivekananda freely quotes from the New Testament (John 10:30) while explaining Self-realization from an Advaita Vedāntic perspective. This is consistent with his view that despite differences in external doctrines and dogmas, different religious paths can be equally valid path towards the end-goal of Self-realization. (I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out that Vivekananda is quoting from the New Testament).

115. Madaio 2017, p.5.

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