

Śāntamūrti

The Legitimate Disposition(s) of the 'Temple of Peace' Social Network

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Abstract

This paper provides a typology of the various groups identified within the social network of the Shanti Mandir, 'Temple of Peace' organisation. This new religious movement was founded in 1987 by the current spiritual head, Swami Nityananda Saraswati. The social network consists of thousands of people spread throughout a global network of devotees. I first met Nityananda in 1998, when he visited Australia. Since that time, I have been a casual interloper and visitor to his ashram. During multiple visits, between 2006 and 2013, I conducted more than 12-months of ethnographic fieldwork in the organisation's main ashram, which is located on the west coast of India, near the city of Valsad, Gujarat. I met many people from all across the globe, who came to explore and consume a particular neo-Hindu spirituality and establish an internal definition of self,¹ which is based on the 'authentic' and 'legitimate' yogic identity promoted by Shanti Mandir (See JENKINS 2008:12).

In this paper, I begin by asking the following question: What makes the groups different? I answer this question through employing Legitimation Code Theory's first analytical dimension, namely, Specialisation. This is done to identify the various ways in which the symbolic exchanges of capital between the groups occur, how the internal nature of the competition for status and recognition determines legitimate participation, and how the distinct hierarchies operate based on observations of the spatial and gendered relations between the groups. This research demonstrates that the hierarchic structure of the network is not linear, but, instead can be seen more like a three-sided pyramid, with each group working interdependently to support the guru's mission, yet engaging in intra-group competitions for status and symbolic resources.

Keywords

Legitimation Code Theory, Shanti Mandir, Social Network, New Religious Movement, Anthropology, Yoga, Neo-Hinduism, Temple of Peace

¹ See McCartney (2018) for a comprehensive discussion of Shanti Mandir's legitimate identity, which is premised by the notion of 'embodying quietude', which is known in Sanskrit aesthetic theory as *śāntamūrti*.

1. Introduction

As people line up in the temple to take *darśana*, they begin to look like pearls connected by a string. The lines of devotees crisscross, forming an intricate ‘web of devotion’, as they shuffle around taking *darśana* of the various deities stationed around the temple. Watching this, I began to think about what the markers of distinction are that separate and distinguish these groups from each other, and what the symbolic dimensions involved might be. First, the Renunciants take *darśana*, followed by the Scholars, and finally the Patrons. But, why? The structures of this social network mean I cannot choose which group I want to belong to. As for everyone else, this is chosen for me. I wonder, then, if it is possible to change my station?²

(Field Notes 04 October 2013)

Between 2006-13, I spent in excess of 12-months conducting ethnographic field work³ in the Shanti Mandir ashram.⁴ An ashram is a cloistered, intentional community, which is often physically set apart from the world to reduce the influence of the perceived profanity of the secular world. It is a place where individuals can focus on their *yoga-sādhanā* (diligent practice of yoga). Shanti Mandir, which means ‘Temple of Peace’, is a new religious movement that was inaugurated in 1987 by the current spiritual head, Swami Nityananda Saraswati. Nityananda (b. 1967) describes an ashram as:

[A] place where people can come, to chant, to meditate and sit. It's a sort of retreat, or even a resort. But it's not an external resort or retreat. It's where you are just enjoying your own company. Learning to be with other like-minded people and thus slowly raising the vibrations by being in that space of love with yourself.

(*SHANTI MANDIR* 2013)

The typology, outlined below, does not essentialise complex phenomena. Rather, the aim is to thoroughly examine the inter-group alliances between pre-existing social categories within the ashram community. While limiting this enquiry to observations made within the four walls of the ashram, this paper highlights the intimate nature of the relationships among the groups through explicitly demarcating this field of practice.

² For the purpose of reducing conceptual ‘noise’, I have chosen to use English lexemes instead of local Sanskrit terms for these groups. However, we could instead use the following terms *saṁnyāsins*, *paṇḍitas* and *māthavas* respectively.

³ I also made this film *Ek Din Hamaare Ashram Mein – A Day in Our Ashram* (MCCARTNEY 2014a).

⁴ <http://shantimandir.com> (retrieved 20 July 2016).

It achieves this by focusing, sociologically, on understanding the types of knowledge and knowers privileged by Shanti Mandir, and what the emic assumptions are regarding a legitimate 'yogic' identity.⁵

This paper is an attempt to challenge my initial theory (Figure 6), which represented a rudimentary, static, monolithic, linear hierarchy that positioned the guru on top and the subsequent groups below. It became clearer, over time, that these groups had dynamically characteristic levels of access and proximity, not only to the guru, but also to various domains within the cloistered community. I asked myself: What separates these groups? And, can people move between these groups?⁶

Building upon Durkheim (1995) and Bernstein (2000), we can appreciate that

⁵ I define a legitimate identity as one that is sanctioned, approved and allowed by a community. A legitimate identity is also essential for acceptance in order to become part of any in-group. In order to gain access into a group, one must begin to understand the often implicit enculturation process and the performativity required to gain peoples' trust specific to any field of social practice and learning (See MCCARTNEY 2018). In every field, there is always knowledge and there are always knowers. Every field aims to teach specific knowledge and/or to develop specific knower dispositions (VORSTER AND QUINN 2012:72). Shanti Mandir's pedagogical system emphasises a devotional aestheticism where emotions, intuitions, and subjective mystical insights take precedence as legitimate forms of knowledge over rational or logical conclusions towards the production of thoughtless affects (BRENNAN 2004:116). While Balzani (2007:27) referred to the affective quality of religious performances and their role in cultivating particular emotions, Bailey explains that this particular model of cultural performance: '[C]ontemplates conduct that is profoundly disintellectual. As modelled, the performance is not, even when it purports to be, an invitation to be rational, to doubt, to ask questions even-handedly. It is an enticement directly to feeling, to unquestioning belief; an implantation of values and in that respect a form of 'diseducation' it is designed to make people not think, not question, not calculate, only to feel and ultimately to act on the 'truth' that is presented to them is that' (BAILEY 1996:5). The potentially liberating consequence of knowledge is mediated by an individual's ability to access and embody what Shanti Mandir envisages is *the* legitimate yogic disposition. This access is formalised through the *satsaṅga* arena. See Dubois (2013:104), Singh (2006:94), Thrasher (1993:4), Timalina (2009:370), and McCartney (2018). People do not necessarily 'choose' which subgroup they belong to. Neither do they necessarily engage, initially at least, in rational choices towards this end. For most, the entry into this field comes from a sincere desire to find a group of like-minded people within a supportive epistemic community. However, over time they might aspire towards belonging to another group within Shanti Mandir's network than what they were initially assigned. Through conversations with several Patrons, it became clear that some of them aspire to become Renunciants and enter the monastic tradition of *saṁnyāsa*. Some of the Patrons also aspire to become Scholars.

⁶ One main analytical point is that the competition for status and prestige remains internal within each group. For instance, a Patron cannot compete symbolically against a Scholar or Renunciant, as these groups rely on different portfolios of symbolic capital and *relations to* knowledge. This *relation* to knowledge is explained below and in Section 3. Expressions of spirituality and legitimacy are nuanced through individual and organisational levels of economic vitality. Works, such as constructing new buildings or feeding people on a daily basis, cannot happen without significant and regular investments of capital, which come through the financial donations made primarily by the Patrons.

specialised divisions of labour require specialised forms of consciousness (MATON and MULLER 2007:28). The distinct subgroups (Renunciants, Scholars and Patrons) work together, respectively investing their predominant species of capital (social, cultural and economic) to support the guru's *sañkalpa* (intention), in exchange for the symbolic capital of learning to be *like the guru*, which I define through the term: *śāntamūrti*.⁷

The Renunciants, Scholars and Patrons work synergistically in various divisions of labour to support the guru's mission, which is to guide 'seekers to the direct experience of divinity through Sanskrit chanting, silent meditation, study of sacred texts, the offering of service, and participation in sacred rituals' (SHANTI MANDIR 2016a).

From a distance, we can view all the devotees (*bhakta*s) as a homogenous group. However, zooming in to the social network, it becomes clear that the individuals within these groups are restricted, symbolically-speaking, to endogenous (within their own group) competitions for the guru's attention and grace. The crux of my observations is that an individual cannot belong in two subgroups at the same time. It is also generally not possible to migrate to another subgroup. However, it is not impossible. Individuals negotiate their access and ascension through the various hierarchies of the network by investing, trading and accumulating various species of capital, which are group specific and symbolically legitimate to each hierarchy.

This heuristic explication of the social network found within Shanti Mandir's ashram builds upon Jenkins' (2008:12) discussion of Barth (1998:10), regarding the social processes that produce, reproduce, organise, and maintain the boundaries of identification and differentiation between ethnic groups. These ideas, related to ethnic group boundaries, are used to look within the seemingly homogenous 'ethnic' group of Nityananda's devotees, to understand the boundaries of the different groups present within the social network.

⁷ Nityananda's vision focuses on 'guiding seekers to the direct experience of divinity' (SHANTI MANDIR 2016a). The guru's intention is quite often misrecognised as a disinterested promotion of divinity and a palpable experience of tranquility through the aesthetic mood of *śāntarasa*. *Śānta* (tranquility) is the ninth and principle *rasa* (mood) discussed in various branches of South Asian knowledge systems, such as: epistemology, aesthetics, literature and philosophy. For millennia, the literati have discussed the concepts of *śānta* and *rasa*. They are central to the transmission of affect (emotion) during religious and cultural performances (NAIR 2014; THAKARAN 2010; MASSON and PATWARDHAN 1969). The performance attributed to Shanti Mandir's religious practice cultivates a mode of being in and enjoying the world that remains grounded in transcendence (See Visuvalingam 2006). *Śāntarasa* is also fundamental to Shanti Mandir's legitimate yogic identity and the fetishised cult worship that underpins the *guru-bhakti-yoga* (the yoga of devotion to the guru) of Shanti Mandir's religious practice. As Shanti Mandir's name suggests, an emphasis on embodying tranquility is also fundamental. This is why I explored the concepts of *śānta* and *rasa*, and invoke the concept of *śāntamūrti*, which refers to an 'embodier of tranquility' as representative of Shanti Mandir's legitimate identity. For a comprehensive discussion of the habitus of Shanti Mandir, and its relation to these concepts, see McCartney (2018).

To accomplish this analysis, the first *code*, namely, *Specialisation*, of the analytical method of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), was adopted (explained in Section 3). LCT is an analytical methodology that is primarily used by sociologists of education. It was chosen, specifically, for this reason, as Shanti Mandir is, primarily, an organisation that promotes a particular type of knowledge, from within a particular cultural field, which ultimately requires a particular type of knower to be cultivated. Application of this method is a productive way to explore the religiously-focused educational field that, so far, has not been scrutinised by the LCT community.

As a representative case study, and acknowledging that each ashram-community is unique in some ways, this example is still able to explain some underlying structural qualities to the exchanges occurring within the moral gift economy, which sit at the heart of gurudom's feudal class structure. Or, as Sharma (2003) explains, 'the institution of the intermediary', where the guru replaces god.

Therefore, through problematising the Shanti Mandir social network in this way, a typology develops (discussed in Section 5 and the Concluding Remarks), which presents a more complicated concept of this community's internal structure (Figures 7, 10 and 11). This also includes extending the range of LCT's Specialisation Codes to include: Economic Vitality (EV+/-), which is also discussed in Sections 5 and 6 and the Concluding Remarks. For now, it is worth appreciating that the EV+/- code is a heuristic development, which helps to understand the role of economic capital specific to this field. While it is not currently a feature of LCT's Specialisation Codes, the deficit in LCT's explanatory capacity, to deal with the idiosyncrasies of the Shanti Mandir field, required it.

Engaging with a grounded theoretical method, the concepts presented below result from first participating in as much of the daily life within the ashram as possible. This includes: participating in the maintenance of the ashram through painting, sweeping, gardening, repairing the paths, fertilising the mango trees, working in the library to reconfigure the catalogue and shelving, teaching an ESL (English as a Second Language) class and an introductory Hindi/Sanskrit class for the more studious devotees, cutting and peeling vegetables, and, on occasion, leading the chanting in the temple. This intimate involvement in the regular daily schedule was combined with observing how Nityananda's devotees take turns to receive his formal blessing during *satsaṅga* (literally *sat*-truth + *saṅga*-confluence).⁸

An illustrative example is Figure 1, which demonstrates the various lines of people eating lunch, and that the women sit separately from the men. Just like in the temple, individuals are not able to sit wherever they want. There is a symbolic system that determines where each individual is allowed to sit.

⁸ *Satsaṅga* is often translated as, 'being in the company of the Truth'. Central to *satsaṅga* is the concept of *darśana*, which involves seeing and being seen by the deity. The expectation central to the *darśana* experience is that a transference of the guru's power will occur, which will lead to a transformation (LUCIA 2014a).



Figure 1. Lunch in the Ashram (Source: Author)

One way to visualise the arrangement of the social network is in the form of a three-sided triangle (See Figure 7). Each side represents one of the different groups. The guru sits atop the hierarchical network, while there are commensalic relations between the three subgroups. While each subgroup aims to embody the subgroup's variant of the legitimate disposition through mimetic adaptations. Learning the behavioural *rules of the game* are important. I explain, below, in Section 3 how the dominant modality for gaining legitimacy relies on a *social relation* to knowledge.⁹

Within the Shanti Mandir ashram, emulation of the guru's own disposition is considered the dominant or legitimate mode of achievement. An individual's legitimacy is constantly measured against the standard set by the ideal knower, as Nityananda represents the 'ruler' by which all are measured, he is also the 'ruler' who has the final say regarding an individual's legitimacy and perceived spiritual development (See LUCIA 2014a, b, c).¹⁰

⁹ Ultimately, the duration and vitality of one's performance of devoted service (*sevā*) is a (or *the*) primary determinant in gaining legitimacy in any of the subgroups. This is a particular type of *social relation* to knowledge that is facilitated by decades of unwavering devotion, commitment and *sevā*. All of which are required to achieve the symbolic/religious capital of becoming a Renunciant (*saṁnyāsin*). Equally important is an individual's *relation to knowledge*, which is also predetermined, in some ways, by various standpoint theories, like gender and ethnicity. This relation to knowledge implies a particular level of 'purity', which is a central aspect to Hinduism and the legitimising strategies of the priestly class (from which the Scholars come from) through the concept of Sanskrit being the *devabhāṣā* (language of the gods). Sanskrit, it is believed, is able to purify and sanitize space, communities, and destinies (See DOUGLAS 2003 [1966]; HASTINGS 2008, MCCARTNEY 2014b; TAMBS-LYCHE 2011).

¹⁰ I contend that it is not possible to become an ideal knower, nor to be considered on par with the guru, as this would negate, or at least reduce, his own status. Instead, there are different levels and types of legitimacy, which are accessible depending on an individual's gender and ethnicity. These in turn regulate the strategies and practices

So that the reader can better understand salient aspects of this particular field, Section 2 provides a brief introduction to Shanti Mandir's knowledge and knowers. In Section 3, more contextual information about Shanti Mandir is provided. Section 4 briefly explains the *principles of legitimation* and the first analytical dimension of LCT—Specialisation Codes. Section 5 describes the spatial and gendered relations between these groups located within the dining hall and temple. Section 6 demonstrates various ways in which we can understand the hierarchical relationships among the groups through introducing ways to *re-code* the social network.

2. A Brief Introduction to Shanti Mandir's Knowledge and Knowers

Before delving into social theory and ethnographic observations, this section provides some brief information about the distinct groups. At the time of conducting the field work, there were only four Renunciants living in the community.¹¹

The three female Renunciants were Swami Sundarananda, Karunananda and Komalananda. All three were initially devotees of Baba Muktananda (1908-1982),¹² who chose to follow one of his successors, Nityananda, after Muktananda passed. According to the typology and my discussions with members of the community, none of these women consider themselves as Scholars—specialist knowers of Sanskrit and ritual. Neither are they wealthy Patrons. While each of these women continue to play prominent roles in the administration, logistics and outreach programs of the community, having personally known these women for almost two decades; and, based on my discussions with them

available for the individual to adopt, as they try to ascend the hierarchies of knowers to become a more legitimate, i.e. 'yogic' member of this epistemic community.

¹¹ The male Renunciant had, for all intents and purposes, retired. He had lived in the ashram for several years, since originally taking his vows of renunciation from another guru. As an eccentric recluse, that barely interacted with anyone, he did not have any official role in the organisation. Although, one occasion is mentionable. At *holikā dahana*, just prior to the pyre being set ablaze, he took his chair and positioned it at the base of the Holika pyre, insisting that he be allowed to remain there, even after the pyre was lit.

¹² From a sociological perspective, Shanti Mandir is an offshoot that resulted from the schism that occurred within Muktananda's Siddha Yoga empire (HEALY 2010). Harris (1994) provides a lucid overview of this situation. Jain (2014) explains how Muktananda is described as an entrepreneurial godman who broke into the competitive spiritual market. He cemented his position in the 1970s by prescribing solutions for the perceived ills of modernity. The monolithic identity he constructed for his Siddha organisation offered a sense of re-enchantment and remystification of the world (BOGDAN 2010; VON STUCKRAD 2010). Through this process his status as a *siddha* (perfected individual) was established through the misrecognition of his divinity (JAIN 2014:50-1). Shanti Mandir operates within the shadow of Muktananda's spiritual legacy, utilising a similar discourse of offering solutions to disaffected individuals seeking to replace the hyper-regulated world with a transcendent subjective idealism.

and other members of the community, the consensus is that they have demonstrated, over several decades, an unwavering sense of devotion, support and commitment to the guru's project through service (*sevā*). As one long-term devotee explains:

See, look at whom Gurudev (Nityananda) has initiated into *saṁnyāsa*. They don't know much Sanskrit, not like the teachers and students. They have been in the ashram, or the one before this one, for decades. They have done nothing for themselves. Their focus has been on serving the guru. This is how you get rewards here, through *gurusevā*.

(INTERVIEW 11 December 2012)

The Scholars consist of two groups: 1) the teachers and 2) the students. The teachers are all traditionally-trained Sanskrit specialists of various limbs (*aṅga-s*) of Sanskrit knowledge. They each are involved in facilitating the transference of knowledge in the various post-graduate streams the students will eventually filter through in their final years at the Sanskrit college, which forms a central part of Shanti Mandir's identity. Depending on the students' inclinations, they will choose a major discipline to become, either: ritual specialists, grammarians, or teachers of philosophy, grammar, or history/mythology. Of course, the students' future careers are not limited to these options alone. Many have aspirations to become international cricket players, join the defense force, or become a public speaker.

The age range of the students is between 10-25 years. The number of students at the college is steadily growing. In 2012, the number of students was about 70. However, in 2018, the number has increased to approximately 120. Nityananda intends to have 1000 students. The students and teachers predominantly come from North India. There are several students from Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, while other students also come from Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Nepal. The teachers come from similar states to the students. Some of the students enroll at the college because they already know one of the teachers, a sibling, or another student from their village who has reported favourably about the college and ashram life. The rising number of awards the students receive in the various national scholarly competitions and statewide examinations they attend demonstrates to the community the efficacy and perceived authenticity of the education. Some of the students have now become teachers and administrators within the Shanti Mandir community. Anyone considered 'staff' is paid a monthly salary. The figure depends on their role within the organisation and their level of qualification. Some staff members, even though they are eligible for a salary, donate all of their earnings to the community.

The global network of Shanti Mandir devotees consists of thousands of people from several countries. Most of the devotees, regardless of origin and ethnicity, come from

middle to upper-middle classes.¹³ For instance, individuals with professional skills that the organisation can make use of are quite often recruited to help where they can. People with multi-media, sound recording and videography skills might be asked, or offer, to make promotional videos. Someone with web design skills may help upgrade the website, a lawyer may provide free legal advice, an architect may be involved in designing and managing the building projects, a person with business and organisational acumen may get involved in managing the organisation and helping with the necessary logistical manoeuvres of the guru's world tours. As an example, Ajay, an architect from Mumbai, has overseen the construction of almost every building in the ashram. He once told me that, 'Gurudev gives us everything, his grace is everything. I can only do this little thing to help, so I do what I can' [20 December 2012].

The majority of 'local' Indian devotees are a mix of those that reside in Mumbai, Delhi, or somewhere in between. The NRIs, OCIs and PIOs¹⁴ tend to come from the United States of America, Singapore or Australia. Most also come from the Brahmin *varṇa*, or, they are at least twice born, meaning that they come from one of the three upper *varṇas*, namely *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya* or *Vaiśya*. There are a few millionaires and even a handful of billionaires, of both Indian and non-Indian ethnicity, who also patronise this organisation. They support their guru's vision through significant annual donations, which might include paying for most of the construction costs of a new building. Some have made annual USD100,000-plus donations since the ashram opened. Alex, a very successful business person from Australia, explains how, even though they donate annually, 'they [Shanti Mandir] just asked me the other day to give another USD100,000 to pay for fixing the roof, even though I have already given that amount only a couple of months ago' [23 September 2012].

While some individuals prefer to make specific and anonymous donations, on occasion, an individual may receive public acknowledgement for their large contribution. While investments of economic capital may not directly translate into spiritual capital, they do enable the individual to gain a certain amount of social capital through entering this gift economy and displaying their enthusiasm and commitment to support the organisation. A. M. Naik is a successful businessman, who received special mention for his

¹³ They have the economic security that affords them the luxury and privilege to remove themselves from their daily routines and devote time to their spiritual practices through either extended or concentrated periods of time in the ashram. During their stays, the disciples are expected to perform 'selfless service' (*karmayoga*), which is, essentially, unpaid voluntary work. This spiritual practice involves the regulation and expression of emotion either in exchange for a wage, for status or for the guru's grace (See HOCHSCHILD 1983). The particular *sevā* an individual is assigned depends on their gender, economic status and class. Generally, if an individual is considered to have status they will be assigned less menial or ritually polluting tasks that carry greater status or responsibility.

¹⁴ Non-Resident Indians, Overseas Citizenship of India, and People of Indian Origin are different statuses for Indian citizens who live abroad or who may have renounced their Indian citizenship in favour of another.

contribution of necessary 'funds required for the construction of three buildings in the ashram' (DEVAYANI 2014). The following excerpt reveals the extent of his generosity:

Shanti Mandir global community wishes to deeply acknowledge Mr. Anil M. Naik, Group Executive Chairman of Larsen & Toubro, for his generous offering. He is single-handedly donating the amount required for three buildings at Shanti Mandir Magod:

- Shri Muktananda Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya (school).
- Permanent accommodations (a hostel) for the growing number of students (194+ beds).
- Residence for Acharyas and their families

(DEVAYANI 2014)

Another excerpt from the same email reveals how grace is conceptualised as bi-directional:

Please consider directing your grace towards Shanti Mandir Walden in your giving plans for the year and ensuring a sustainable future for the activities that improve people's lives in countless ways. You can donate by mailing a check or clicking <http://www.shantimandir.com/donate/>. Your donations made online are individually seen by us, and they will be used as specified in your communication via the website.

(DEVAYANI 2014)

While Shanti Mandir acknowledges they personally sight each donation, this implies that the guru is cognisant of each transaction and, therefore, knows where to direct his grace in return. This reveals an implicit acknowledgement of the social contract involved in the moral gift economy that is fundamentally not disinterested for both parties. It also belies a metaphysical assumption in the non-local transference of energy (in the form of 'grace' or *saktipāta*) between the guru and disciple.

3. More Information About Shanti Mandir

Prior to the formation of Shanti Mandir, Nityananda was part of the global meditation movement, Siddha Yoga. He was a co-guru with his older sister, Chidvilasananda (See KOTTLER 2011; SABHARATHNAM *et al.* 1997). The founder of Siddha Yoga, the infamous tantric god-man, Baba Muktananda, transferred his authority to the siblings only months before his death, in 1982 (See ALTGLAS 2007; MAHONEY 1997;

THURSBY 1991; WILLIAMSON 2005). By 1985, Nityananda was forced to renounce his claim to the Siddha Yoga empire, due to what is described as his ‘youthful transgressions’ (ANONYMOUS 1986; HEALY 2010; *SALON* 2010).

I was told by Mukesh, a senior member of the organisation that, it was while standing in a mango orchard in the late 1970s that Baba Muktananda claimed it would become the location of a ‘great ashram’ [19 December 2011]. In 1998, Nityananda accepted this very parcel of approximately 20-acres from a devotee, and began to fulfill his guru’s prophecy. This land is close to the Arabian Sea, near the coastal ‘resort’ town of Valsad, in southern Gujarat, India. Over the past 20 years, this established mango orchard has slowly transformed into a community of over 100 full-time residents. Most of the residents are students (plus their teachers and their families) at the traditional Sanskrit college Shanti Mandir funds through the generous donations of its devotees. This is one of Shanti Mandir’s ‘charitable works’ (*SHANTI MANDIR* 2016d). Enticing videos are used to promote the project and invite investments of capital (*SHANTI MANDIR* 2016c). The promotion of a traditional Sanskrit education and lifestyle is central to Shanti Mandir’s aesthetic and validation as an education provider and epistemic community. Shanti Mandir creates an ‘authentic’ identity through its claims to provide a ‘Vedic way of life’ (*SHANTI MANDIR* 2016a). Figure 2 shows the promotional photo from Shanti Mandir’s website, which shows the students and teachers sitting in the temple with Nityananda.

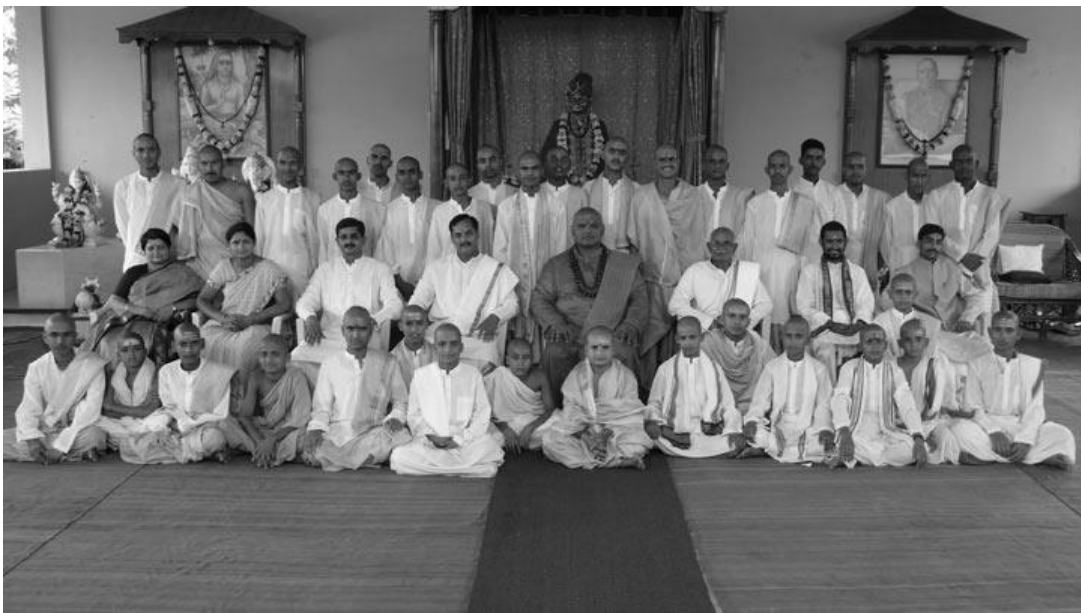


Figure 2. Nityananda, the Sanskrit students and teachers

(Source: MANDIR 2016d)

The ashram is located amongst a matrix of other villages that include up to seventeen different castes. Some of these villages are limited to only one caste, while others are mixed. In a sense, the ashram is one of these little hamlets situated in a quiet, rural setting only one-kilometre from the coast and approximately ten-kilometres from the centre of Valsad, where approximately 80,000 people live.

At certain times of the year, either when the weather is more conducive, or peaks in the ritual calendar occur, people come from as close as the next village or from as far away as the opposite side of the world. For those that have further to travel it goes, almost without saying, that a certain level of income is required to cover travel expenses. Board and lodgings in the ashram vary depending on an individual's nationality and length of stay. For instance, an Australian, who chooses to stay for only a few nights, would be expected to make a 'donation' of USD25 per night for the most comfortable level of accommodation. This includes a shared room with an en suite that has hot water and three meals each day. However, this price would reduce to approximately USD16 per day if the individual stayed for several weeks.

Staying for extended periods of time is not uncommon amongst the non-residential devotees. While some might regularly make the three-hour journey from Mumbai on the weekends, others from Delhi or Sydney, for instance, might choose to stay for one or two months, or even longer. For earnest devotees who have a limited budget, arrangements can be made that allow for a more intense exchange of labour to compensate for their lack of funds. While each 'devotee' is expected to commit to a couple of hours of *sevā* each day, those with an agreement may be bonded to several hours of service. At the other end of the financial spectrum, some wealthy devotees who make significant financial contributions, and are not as anxious about their relative position in the network, may be disinclined to participate in any *sevā*, as they consider their financial investments enough of a contribution.

People mostly come to participate in the collective religious practice and 'Vedic lifestyle' that can be summarised as a type of neo-Hindu¹⁵ aesthetic devotionalism, which includes components of an older Vedic, Brahminical religion. Modern Soteriological Yoga (MSY) is also a key component of Shanti Mandir's legitimate yogic identity (See DE MICHELIS 2005, SARBACKR 2011). Jain (2014:49) explains how MSY emphasises 'traditional devotion to guru figures' and maintains 'strict organizational structures and doctrinal commitments'. However, due to the market and consumptive forces found operating within the yoga industrial complex that is euphemistically referred to as *yogaland*, Modern Postural Yoga (MPY), which focuses on the physical aspects of the yoga episteme, has increasingly come to play a more prominent role in Shanti Mandir's marketing and legitimating strategies. For instance, Shanti Mandir increasingly promotes its own brand of *hatha* yoga (i.e. MPY), meditation retreats and yoga teacher-

¹⁵ Larios (2017) explains the processes involved in the blending of Vedic and post-Vedic deities into a syncretic neo-Hinduism that includes idol worship. Historically speaking, idol worship is not 'Vedic'. This syncretism has caused internal disputes amongst the Brāhmanical orthodoxy for many centuries (VON STIETENCROON 2005). Jaffrelot refers to this mechanism used by Hindu nationalist groups to justify their existence through reinterpreting their own traditions in the light of the 'other' as 'strategic mimetism' (JAFFRELOT 1994a). This can be seen within the context of the angst experienced by the Brahminical community as a 'sense of the community under siege' (BAIRY 2010:171-172).

training courses, when previously these were not as central as they are today.¹⁶

It is worth considering that the transglobal yoga, spiritual tourism and wellness industries are valued at over USD4 trillion (*IPSOS PUBLIC AFFAIRS* 2016, *INVEST INDIA* 2015, *GLOBAL WELLNESS INSTITUTE* 2014). Exchanges of capital occurring globally within the broad wellness industry represent significant competitions for not only profit but also an ‘authentic’ and ‘legitimate’ yogic identity. While this is interesting, this is not the remit of this paper.¹⁷ Instead, in Section 4, we move to a brief methodological overview of how Legitimation Code Theory was employed.

4. Legitimation Code Theory

Building upon a Durkheimian perspective of increasing divisions of labour, Bourdieu’s relatively autonomous ‘worlds’ enable a visualisation of variegated and overlapping social fields of activity (BOURDIEU 1994:73). From such a perspective, a sophisticated analysis of an individual’s social position becomes possible. This is based on one’s relational position within this field of practice *and* their awareness of such a position (MATON 2003). Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) operationalises Bourdieu’s Field Theory. It conceptualises what the organising principles of dispositions, practices and fields are through its legitimation codes. These codes are inspired by Code Theory (BERNSTEIN 2000). They act as a type of currency that is used to structure the field and determine relations between individuals and groups. These codes represent an abstract interpretation of an exchange rate mechanism between these currencies, or what is considered legitimate knowledge and behaviour (MATON 2013:37). Social fields of practice are then shaped by the dominant or legitimate codes. The analysis of social fields using legitimation codes enables the exploration of what is possible for whom, where, when and how and also who is able to determine these possibilities.

Shanti Mandir is an epistemic community¹⁸ that can also be thought of as a ‘tribe’. A

¹⁶ In fact, ten years ago there were no yoga or teacher-training courses offered. I recall a conversation that occurred during my master’s fieldwork in 2009, how some senior devotees explained that they had heard Nityananda say these types of courses would never be run in his ashram, as they were not ‘real yoga’. One of the other reasons I chose to focus on the concept of *śāntarasa* is because the yoga business, Shantarasa Traditional Yoga (henceforth STY) facilitates Shanti Mandir’s MPY/MSY courses (*SHANTARASA YOGA* 2015a, b). ‘Shanti Darshanam: Complete Yoga Studies’ courses are now an annual opportunity at Shanti Mandir ashrams in India and the United States of America (*SHANTI MANDIR* 2017, *SHANTARASA YOGA* 2015c). As is obvious from the organisation’s name, this concept of ‘tranquility’ (Shanti/*śānti*) is central to the organisation’s identity, spiritual practice, and ontological and soteriological aspirations.

¹⁷ McCartney (2017) provides a broader discussion of the politics and economics of the imaginative consumption of yoga-inflected lifestyles.

¹⁸ An epistemic community shares, and learns through repeated attendance, how to

tribe is a group of like-minded people clustered around a particular value system or cultural model. The social network is ordered by a code of conduct whose members use legitimised artefacts, idols and language to shape their 'schema of perception' (STRØM 2006). This schema plays an important role in representing widely held beliefs and values in, not only defining, but also, helping to defend its identity and domain (ARBEE 2012; BECHER 1989; D'ANDRADE 1992). The legitimate identity is also dependent upon the methods and praxis recruited that enable introspection and internal growth of the individual. This 'growth' is central to the popularity of yoga that is part of a bigger 'meditation revolution' through which Baba Muktananda rose to prominence during the 'second wave' of Indian *yogis* and took this alternative lifestyle to the global level (PECHILIS 2004:34-35).

The guru stands between appearance and reality, acting, primarily, as the dynamic and transformative force of the divine, rather than as a static, paradigmatic lawgiver. The individual seeker aims to align with the guru's schema of perception, which organise a person's conception of reality, while also motivating and guiding action (D'ANDRADE 1992:30). Undergoing this transformation to become (like the) guru is the central task of the disciple. This ought not to be taken in the sense of gaining a position, status, acquiring an ashram, or a following of people. Instead, it refers to what Brooks (1997:335-336) describes as the attainment of the guru's state of 'inner self-perfection'. It is the guru's gaze that cultivates in the devotees the urge to undergo this transformation.

In the following example, Nityananda explains, through panegyric components of honoring and serving the guru, how the highest state is supposedly attainable. It also includes a narrative component of explaining the tension between the aspirant's wants and what the guru is alleged to know the aspirant needs.

The whole process of *sāadhanā* can be seen as a tussle between the disciple saying this is my situation, and the Guru saying, no, you are greater than that. The last line of verse 53 in the Guru Gītā says, '*Prāptum tat sahaṃ svabhāvam-anīṣaṃ sevadhvam-ekaṃ gurum*'. Lord Śiva says the highest state 'is attainable' *tat sahaṃ*, just naturally. All you have to do, he says, is 'go to one Guru, do his sevā. Serve him'.

(*SHANTI MANDIR* 2011:6).

Below, in Figure 3, we see a typical scene from a Sunday morning *satsaṅga*. Seated in front of the male Patrons are the Scholars (students and teachers who are dressed in white). Nityananda sits facing his audience in front of a picture of his guru, Baba Muktananda. The student standing next to Nityananda explains his experience of being

understand the linguistic and cultural nuances particular to its field. This occurs through generating an epistemic relation to knowledge (MOHANTY 2000:133).

in the ashram, the benefits of studying Sanskrit, and his pledge of fidelity to Nityananda and the tradition.

When the cultural capital of knowledge dominates as the favoured rate of exchange, as in the ashram, the field can be conceptualised to identify the hierarchical arrangement of knowers by their *social relation to this knowledge* (MATON and MOORE 2010:161). With more experience, and subsumption of knowledge, in every field, an individual is able to ascend up the hierarchy of knowers; however, they

are limited by the *relative strength or weakness* of their social relation, which is shaped by the type of gaze operating in the field. Arbee (2012) explains how the role of epistemological access allows entry and ascension into various fields of learning, regardless of whether they are academic or otherwise:

Being accepted as an insider to a discipline thus involves more than familiarity with its knowledge base; it also requires acquisition of the disciplinary values and ‘ways of being’. Acceptance as insiders to an academic tribe is important not just for academics but also for students; epistemological access involves being inducted into a discipline and taking on its characteristic ways of knowing and being. And because the social and epistemological aspects of disciplines are in practice so tightly bound together, lecturers often interpret students ‘non-compliance’ with disciplinary social norms as cognitive deficit.

(ARBEE 2012:20)

In the ashram, this ‘non-compliance’ is generally rationalised as resulting from someone not being ‘ready to accept the teachings’, they are ‘too impure to belong’, ‘their *karma* prevents them from understanding’, or their ‘big ego will not let them surrender to the guru’. Arbee (2012:38) refers to Webb *et al.* (2005:xi), who explains that each field has a *doxa* (a set of core values and discourses) that articulates fundamental principles as inherently ‘true’ and ‘necessary’, and that each individual must identify and adopt them before successful participation in a field can occur. During struggles for recognition and accumulation of symbolic capital, individuals, and researchers alike, attempt to impose their limited perspective on a field by finding a necessary niche of ‘truth’ to distinguish themselves with. The heterogenous nature of the global yoga industry is testament to such a situation, where countless yoga teachers, studios, styles and organisations assert



Figure 3: A Typical Scene from Sunday Morning Satsaṅga (Source: Author)

their style is more 'authentic' and 'legitimate' and closer to the 'truth' than the rest. This is one reason why we have such a growth in the types of yoga. 'Yoga' is an empty signifier. This is why we have such things as 'goat yoga', 'beer yoga', 'weed yoga', 'HIIT yoga', 'penguin yoga', and 'death metal yoga'.

According to LCT, the basis of distinctiveness, authority, and status is determined by whether a *knowledge structure*, *knower structure*, neither, or both represents the dominant form of achievement (MATON 2013:109). Knowledge structures conceptualise the arrangement of knowledge within fields. Whereas knower structures conceptualise the arrangement of knowers (MATON and MOORE 2010:161). In hierarchical knower structures, similar to what is present in the Shanti Mandir ashram, the aspiring knower is motivated by their capacity to reflect the gaze (ideas or practices) of the legitimate knowers already present in the field (MATON 2013:212-13). This reflection of the legitimate (i.e. the guru) knower's gaze refers to the ability of the subordinate knower to emulate the legitimate disposition through emulation and reproduction of consonant discourse and behaviour. An individual's ability to reproduce this knowledge increases their status within the community, which results in acceptance into and ascension within the hierarchies of knowers.

4-1. Specialisation Codes

LCT is an analytical methodology that has five 'dimensions'. Specialisation is the first and most theoretically developed tool. The Specialisation codes enable the identification of the different groups within the ashram reflecting the process of legitimisation for each group. Specialisation uses codes that are distinguished by the *epistemic relations* (ER) between knowledge and its object AND the *social relations* (SR) between knowledge and its subjects, actors or authors. Maton explains that:

[T]hese relations refer to two empirically co-existing but analytically distinguishable dimensions of knowledge and practice, namely that knowledge claims are by somebody and about something: the epistemic relation (ER) is between knowledge and its proclaimed object of study; the social relation (SR) is between knowledge and its author, the subject making the claim to knowledge.
(MATON 2005:53)

Another way of explaining it is this: *the epistemic relations refer to 'what' is known and social relations refer to the 'type of knower' the individual is required to be(come) in order to be seen by any community as an 'authentic' embodiment of knowledge.* Maton explains how Specialisation 'establishes the ways agents and discourses within a field are constructed as special, different or unique and thus deserving of distinction and status' (MATON 2005: 90).

The four Specialisation codes (ER+/-, SR+/-) are further elaborated by strong ('+') or

weak (‘-’) classifications. These variations in strengths reflect either an emphasis on explicit knowledge, skills and procedures (Epistemic Relation—‘ER+’) or an emphasis on a particular disposition of knowers relevant to the specific field (Social Relation—‘SR+’) (Vorster and Quinn 2012:72). Figure 4 is a graphic representation of the legitimation codes in relation to the knowledge-knower structures (MATON 2013:53). For the purpose of this explanation the focus is on the upper and lower quadrants on the right side of the diagram, which represent the two modalities prevalent in the Shanti Mandir field.

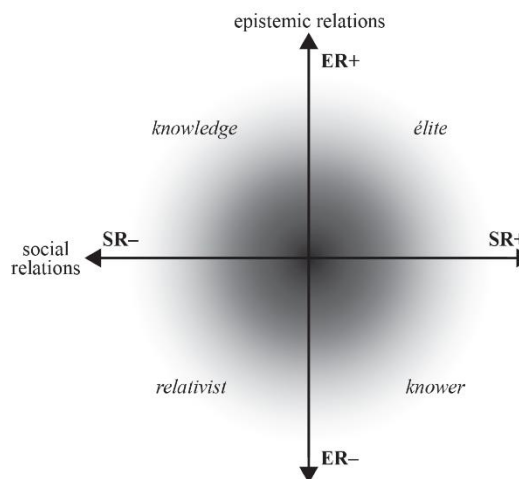


Figure 4: The Specialisation Plane
(MATON 2013:30)

The symbolic capital that each group competes for has a social relation and an epistemic relation to the knowledge produced within this field (i.e. the Shanti Mandir ashram). While all of the devotees present in the field have access to the social relation through coming into daily contact with the guru and each other, the only group that has access to the restricted epistemic relation is the Scholars. This is not to say that the Renunciants and Patrons do not also have a certain epistemic relation, instead it refers to the emphasis laid on it as a ruler of achievement or measurement of access into this group. This is a reflection of distinction that results from the Scholars technical mastery as opposed to practical mastery. Through their traditional ‘Vedic’ education, they become ritual and linguistic specialists, who officiate and perform at all the daily religious events. They have accumulated the institutionalised cultural capital of becoming knowers of the orthodox Brahminical Sanskritic tradition of Hinduism (See GEROW 2002; MICHAELS 2004; SCHARFE 2002; LARIOS 2017).

This combination of both relations to knowledge (ER+, SR+) represents an *Élite Code*. The Scholars have learnt to embody the legitimate disposition while also gaining both *knowledgeable* and *practical* mastery of the tradition. In comparison, the dominant Specialisation code for both the Renunciants and Patrons is a non-specialist relation to knowledge that consists of limited, practical mastery. This Knower Code is represented by the modality (ER-, SR+). This demonstrates that the emphasis within this social field is on the social relation, i.e. *the disposition* rather than any technical knowledge/mastery of linguistic and ritual procedures.

The third code, which is not present in the ashram field is a *Knowledge Code*. It is represented by (ER+, SR-). This suggests that specific knowledge is more important over a particular disposition. For instance, in a laboratory, a scientist could have any disposition and identify with any sub-culture. As long as their technical skills are good,

it should not matter if they are vegan, a metal-head, smoke a pipe, ride a bicycle, or have any particular fetish. The same cannot be said for admission into the Shanti Mandir network, as learning to behave in a specific way is central to gaining legitimacy. This is why a Knower Code is prevalent. The fourth code is a *Relativist Code* (ER-, SR-). This is also not present in the Shanti Mandir field. It suggests that neither a disposition nor a set of skills is necessary to gain access into a particular community.

A hierarchical knowledge structure epitomises the hard sciences where principles are rarefied into higher orders of abstraction. In contrast, (ER-) is indicative of a horizontal knowledge structure, where knowledge is segmented and relies less on cumulative progression of learning and knowledge building. The horizontal knowledge structure lends itself more towards relativism and the non-arbitrary or subjective/transcendental idealist nature of the spiritual experience and learning process. Anyone can define their internal spiritual experience without the possibility of it being critiqued. This is typical of the post-modern, epistemically relative, subjectivist emphasis of the pedagogical system within Shanti Mandir, which suggests, through a utopian frame and subjunctive mood, that people base their assessment of their relation to the phenomenal world on their personal experience, in relation to 'possible worlds' and alternative 'ways the world might be' (See HEIL 2010; LUTGENDOR 1997; RICOEUR 1986; STALNAKER 1987). Flanagan and Jupp (2016:18) explain that:

Spirituality is not only about what is beyond human limits; it is the sensibility of incompleteness in the journeying. For something so intangible, spirituality produces its own tangibilities felt and known by those with the wisdom to quest and perhaps to find. Those with spiritual powers know what it is to be touched by them. Yet, oddly, those who come closest to the realms of spirituality seem to be struck dumb in articulating adequately what they feel they discerned. Oracles, prophets and seers exercising spiritual powers of vision belong to worlds of anthropology, but also to those sociology inhabits. These powers bear reflection in mysticism and meditation. They come to be embodied in Weber's notion of charisma, the wild card that wields such authority.

The fundamental philosophy and epistemology of Shanti Mandir is the non-dualistic (*advaita*) Vedānta, which was popularised by the ninth-century philosopher Śaṅkarācārya (See DUBOIS 2013; FORT 1984; GUPTA 1998; HACKER and HALBFASS 1995; HATCHER 2007) and the nineteenth-century neo-Hindu reformer Swami Vivekānanda (See MALHOTRA 1970; NANDA 2004; SHARMA 1999; VIVEKANANDA 2006). Advaita Vedānta is typically described as a form of transcendental or subjective idealism.¹⁹ While each individual may experience the world differently, gaining

¹⁹ One of the main differences between Śaṅkarācārya and Vivekānanda is their positions on whether phenomenal reality ought to be considered 'unreal' or not.

legitimacy still requires that a particular disposition be embodied. An email response from questions I asked Gareth, a retired Australian who has been involved with Siddha Yoga and Shanti Mandir for several decades wrote:

As you would appreciate, in the intellectual realm (as in other realms), things are seen and interpreted through a particular window. However much we Westerners may think we are open-minded, there remains our own unique, prevailing (culturally/socially formed) paradigm through which everything is filtered. Perhaps that is why some may conclude that the dispositions/beliefs/values/ways of others can only be the result of a form of "indoctrination" (I feel a more accurate word is "enculturation"). However, if one is blessed to have a genuine, direct experience of the divine, it is SOOOO powerful that a lot of the prior conditioning gets blown away — leaving only the truly pure and untainted together with whatever tendencies remain as a result of residual karmas. [04 March 2013]

Gareth appears to have a problem with certain Western values, particularly intellectualism and a critical realist epistemology, which he considered an inferior epistemology, when compared to a 'genuine, direct experience of the divine' that enables for a 'truly pure and untainted' and unmediated experience. This sort of negative response was typical of many devotees, whose attitude toward my 'intellectual pursuit' of 'chasing a degree' was a clear sign to many in the community of my 'advanced ego' and 'lack of spiritual development'. One particular occasion is worth mentioning. I was talking to Sanjay, a retired railway worker from Kanpur, about his aspirations for being in the ashram, when, all of sudden, he stopped mid-sentence, and asked me, 'Actually, Patrick, why are you bothering with this? You should just drop this silly PhD nonsense and come chant with us. All the knowledge is within anyway. So, this external world is an illusion, why worry about it' [17 February 2013]. This shows how different types of knowledge have varying symbolic and epistemic values, and which *knowledge-currency* is favoured more in symbolic exchanges for prestige within Shanti Mandir.

Before dividing the various groups, we are able to regard the devotees of the guru as a homogenous collection. We can determine that, at one level, the dominant modality within the Shanti Mandir network is a Knower Code (ER-, SR+) that emphasises a practical mastery and a social relation to knowledge. A few examples of this include learning how and where to sit in the temple, what clothes are tolerated (length, colour, style, fabric), how to approach the guru, and what are the tolerable limits of conversations in group discussions (e.g. not talking about politics). Individuals, up to a certain extent can wear whatever they want; however, they run the risk of being chastised for not wearing appropriate clothing. I observed the efforts of more established

devotees to socialise *videśin*²⁰ women, who did not understand the more conservative dress code: that a woman should not wear revealing or tight-fitting clothing. This includes using a scarf (*dupattā*) to cover the outline of one's breasts. Priya, a philosopher from Melbourne with Indian-Malaysian heritage, who was a first-time visitor to India and the ashram, told me how:

Some of the western devotees were so concerned about my breasts, they kept telling me I had to cover them with a scarf. But I didn't have one. This policing of the body was such a preoccupation for some people. These people didn't know me yet they kept telling me how I ought to be. [03 March 2015]

Apart from the Scholars and Renunciants, the Patrons are able to wear casual clothing, including jeans and shorts. However, if one wants to be accepted more readily, then they will adopt traditional Indian clothing, such as: a *sārī*, *śalwar kamīz*, *kurtā pāyjāmā*, or *lungī*. Even in the temple, male Patrons might wear jeans and even shorts; however, the wearing of shorts is only tolerated if it is done by young boys. Some devotees have special 'temple clothes' that they only wear after showering. They will remove them before eating or engaging in any other 'non-temple' activity. This clothing is normally white. This demonstrates that, even within the ashram, certain domains are considered to require extra levels of purification before entering. The belief held by most devotees regarding the influence of clothing is articulated by The Spiritual Science Research Foundation, which explains that 'spiritual clothing' is able to receive and transmit 'positive and divine frequencies' while protecting against negative energies. 'Spiritual clothing' is determined by the following categories: type of material, amount of stitching, colour of the cloth, design and print on the cloth, condition of the clothes, length of hemline, style, and borrowing clothes from someone else (*SSRF* 2015).

The principal reason that anyone, regardless of various standpoint theories, is able to spend time in the ashram and learn from the guru and his or her devotees, about how to adopt what they consider an authentic yogic disposition to be, is that, unlike the technical linguistic and ritual knowledge that the Scholars train specifically to accumulate, access is open to everyone at this level. This is due to the privileging of cultivating a particular disposition, which is represented by the Knower Code modality (ER-, SR+).

Along with an analysis of capital, the Specialisation codes demonstrate how individuals are restricted to internal competitions for status within their own group. This is because different 'rulers' based on symbolic capital are used to measure the success of one's enculturation. This negates the possibility of trying to compete for status with individuals from other groups. Even though the organising principles and internal

²⁰ *vi* (out) + *deśin* (belonging to a country), i.e. 'a foreigner'.

structure of the legitimate disposition (i.e. *śāntamūrti*) are universal across the three groups, the emergent properties, such as: external appearances, spatial relations and practices, vary. The guru's grace and attention is something all of the devotees are consciously aspiring to accumulate.

There is very little profit for a Patron to try and compete with, or compare him or herself, to a Renunciant or Scholar, much less trying to pretend to be one through adaptations of an external appearance, especially without having obtained the technical mastery of Sanskrit and its allied religious praxis. This is one reason why I felt it necessary to advance LCT through developing a code modality that makes room for economic capital. It is obvious that the main species of capital invested by the Patrons is either direct investments of capital, through donations, or through volunteering their labour in various ways.

There are three distinct hierarchies, where the possibility of migration into another group is quite limited. The ideal knower sits atop all three groups, as everyone is trying to become like the guru, so they can be in and see the world from his point of view. At the time of writing there has not been one Scholar who has become a Renunciant. It is virtually impossible for either Renunciants or Patrons to become Scholars. This is because, generally speaking, they are too old to begin studying and stick to the rigorous discipline required over several years.

5. Spatial Relations Based on Symbolic Capital

In this section, the spatial and gendered relations in the food hall and temple are discussed. In the food hall, each of the subgroups has their own location during meal times. Normally, Nityananda eats alone in his cottage after he has supervised the distribution of food. Occasionally, he eats with his devotees, particularly if there are VIPs attending lunch. When present, Nityananda sits in the principal position. Several long carpets are rolled out where people sit on the floor to eat. Nityananda is the only person who eats from a small wooden table. Next to him, in a descending order of prestige, sit both the male and female Renunciants, Senior Scholars (i.e. teachers) and qualified special guests. All of this prestigious *élite* sit on a more comfortable double-layered rug. This demarcates their prestigious position within the community. To sit on this rug, one must have either become a *śamṇyāsīn* (Renunciant) or an *ācārya* (teacher—but specifically related to a traditional degree in Sanskrit, i.e. a Scholar). Generally, individuals not associated with the college, or who do not have a traditional degree in Sanskrit, are not permitted to sit amongst this symbolically *élite* group.

There are some exceptions to this rule. If a long-term devotee who regularly stays in the ashram is male and of a similar age to the boys attending the college, regardless of

him not being a student of Sanskrit, then he may be invited to sit amongst the students while eating. This is the case with a few of the young men who come regularly from Mumbai or Delhi, who are friends of some of the students.

They may not be studying Sanskrit, but because of the similar age and gender, they are able to blend in more easily and be accepted by the students. Due to my humble knowledge of Sanskrit, perceived gender and inculcation into the ashram habitus, I was permitted, but more importantly, invited to sit amongst the students. This was, however, only if I wore the traditional attire, which means wearing a *lumgī* (sarong). Although, I was not able to sit amongst the Senior Scholars and Renunciants on the more comfortable rug. On the occasion that I did try to sit amongst the students, in normal ‘western’ clothing (i.e. wearing denim jeans), my transgression was immediately critiqued by several students, who ushered me to the general rug for male devotees.

Men and women are also separated and sit in distinct lines, as in the temple (See Figure 1). If there is an abundance of men, then they sometimes sit in the same row as the women; however, there will be a visible gap of two to three metres. When this distinction breaks down is at the table and chairs. These are used mostly by the elderly and the *videśī* devotees, who find sitting on the ground to eat challenging. Men and women who choose to sit in the non-spicy section are mixed together. This relaxing of the gendered spatial regulations is a pragmatic decision that makes it easier for the food dispensers.

In an effort to make the guests as comfortable as possible, they might also be offered cutlery. However, for those that choose not to use cutlery, and, instead, eat with their hands, the common reason given for this preference was explained through the popular belief that food eaten with hands is more easily digested. The second most popular response was that individuals wanted to fit in and eat the same way as the majority. This demonstrates one way in which individuals choose to observe and emulate what they consider to be the legitimate disposition through a social relation.

Figure 5 shows the layout of the food hall. Typically, the Renunciants and Scholars sit on western side of the hall, while the male Patrons sit in the middle, and the female Patrons sit along the northern and eastern boundaries. At the southern end of the area, just before the tables and chairs, is the non-spicy line.

In the middle of the food hall, there is a low table where the steel buckets (*bāḷṭīs*) filled with food are placed en route from the kitchen to service area. During the invocatory prayer at lunch, which is normally the seventh

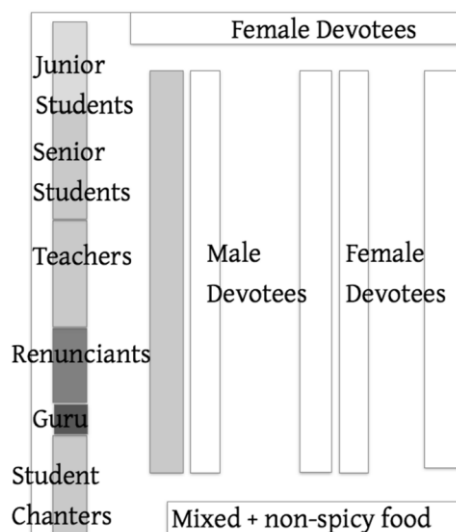


Figure 5: Layout of Mess Hall

chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, the students distribute a stitched banana-leaf plate and, perhaps, one or two similarly constructed bowls, and a stainless-steel cup. A simple diagnostic to assess the emic understanding of a newcomer is whether they know which way the banana-leaf plate is meant to face. The stitching is more pronounced on one side, and is meant to face up. Generally, by the time the prayer has concluded, each person has received their food and water. There are two settings, both at lunch and dinner, as not everyone is able to eat at the same time. This is because some students are rostered to set places, serve food, and chant the lunchtime text (See MCCARTNEY 2014a).

When the meal is completed, everyone is expected to wait until one student has announced that the service has concluded. This can cause embarrassment for new arrivals that do not know the routine. They may try and leave before they are supposed to, because they assume that, since they have finished eating, they can leave. This, generally, causes all present to wonder what the individual transgressing the often-unspoken rule is doing. On more than one occasion, I was sent after a new international arrival by the students, who implored me to stop the person leaving, and escort them back to his position seated next to me. The students believed it was my responsibility to socialise these new arrivals.

Meal service, like most activities in the ashram, is normally concluded with the Hindi utterance *Sat-guru-nāth mahārāj kī jay*. This is a common utterance within the community that can be translated as, 'Victory to the lord, great king, and true guru'. Sometimes, announcements concerning alterations to the daily schedule or ritual calendar may also be made at the end or beginning of the meal. Like in the temple, as a display of respect for the Renunciants and Scholars, they are allowed to leave first, followed by the students and then the devotees.

The section described the spatial distribution of the various groups in the mess hall and the temple. Next, Section 6 explores how these hierarchies can be framed using the data.

6. Recoding the Social Network

It is in this section that the typology of the social network is explicated. There are various ways to understand the hierarchical system in the ashram. As mentioned above, based on observations made in the temple and mess hall, I initially thought there was only one linear hierarchy, which positioned the guru at the top, followed by the Renunciants, Scholars, and Patrons. Building upon the overly simplistic Figure 6, which is an ordinal ranking system based on *darśana*; below, I provide other ways to conceptualise the social network.

It is the Patrons who have the least amount of spiritual or religious capital due to their

‘worldly attachments’ and lack of ritual expertise. This opens up a discussion regarding the construction of personhood that we know occurs through various mediums of exchange. The ethno-sociological model of India’s caste system by Marriott and Inden (1989, 1977) were initial attempts to formally conceptualise, through local concepts, the dynamic fluidity of the person/self. Sax (2002) describes the inherent challenges in this project result from a lack of any ontological primacy, as the ‘self’ in South Asia is considered an unstable and temporary object. Fowler (2005:122) nuances this by explaining how permeable selves constituting ‘different social groups pursue different exchange strategies in the attainment of personhood’. These are based on caste identities and ‘modified according to gender, age/life-stages, cult affiliation and other factors’. Essentially, the Patrons do as best they can, with the varied levels of cultural experience to replicate the disposition of the symbolic élites. The strategy afforded is the opportunity to invest their economic or institutionalised cultural capital towards the further development of the community. In other words, an individual gains acceptance by proving to be useful and committed.

The purpose of representing the different groups in this way is to demonstrate their discreteness and independence of each other, but to also show the proximal relationships that each group has in terms of status, prestige and purity. The Patrons cannot become Scholars, but, very rarely, they can become Renunciants. This, however, takes decades of commitment and sacrifice.

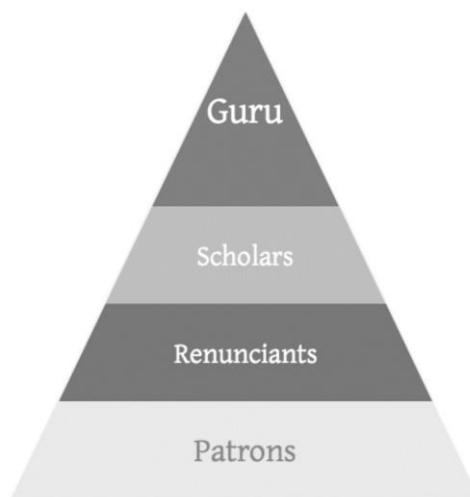


Figure 6: Hierarchical Representation

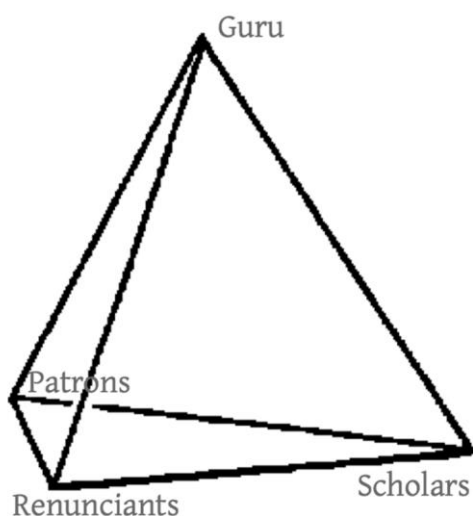


Figure 7: Hierarchies in the Ashram

Figure 7 represents several components of this dynamic community. First, each distinct hierarchy is independent of the other groups, yet it also relies on the others for meaning and support through bridging capital, which brings different groups together. At the apex of the three-sided pyramid sits the guru. As the ideal knower, his cultivated gaze entrains the individual habituses towards becoming *śāntamūrti*'s. The base of the pyramid represents the cultivated gaze that he uses to inculcate his devotees into the legitimate

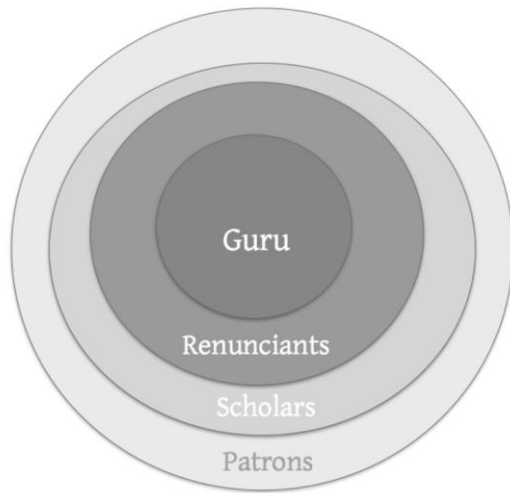


Figure 8: Central-peripheral Levels

disposition. At the same time, each base point represents the social gaze that is keeping the groups apart as discrete entities.²¹ As individuals ascend vertically through their hierarchy, their proximal and symbolic relationship to the guru intensifies, as does their prestige, authority and legitimacy.

Figure 8 provides a topographic representation of the relationship of purity between the different groups in the ashram. It presents the relations in a central-peripheral configuration rather than a hierarchical ordering (See

RAHEJA 1988). The guru is considered the source of purity, followed by his group of Renunciants. Due to their shared symbolic capital, which is sourced from their symbolic renunciation of worldly affairs, the impurity attributed to attachments belongs to those who have not already taken such vows. According to Roberts (2015) and Guha (2013), Dumont's religious explanation of caste based on purity is limited. Roberts argues that this is because symbolic markers like 'purity' are only useful or available as a resource if they are rigorously policed, while purity ought to be interpreted, instead, as an expression of status, and not its essence.

If we look at the Shanti Mandir community as a village, with its own *varṇa-jātī* system, we can appreciate how the *vidēśī* Patrons can be viewed as a lower caste trying to emulate the superior group's cultural forms. Aligned with Latour (2003), Mosse (2012) explains the limitations involved in seeing these groups as essential or substantial identities. Instead, Mosse argues that caste ought to be viewed as networks of attachments that bring about action, in the sense of 'actor networks'. Roberts (2015) builds upon Srinivas (1956, 1959), and explains how success is not necessarily only achieved through emulation, but is also determined by accumulation of economic and political power. 'Loyalty to norms, generosity, and allegiance are some of the forms of symbolized social capital' that are used to disguise economic exchanges as merely social (MATIASKE 2012:192-193). With economic power, it is possible to gain success through political power located in the hierarchic strata of administrative positions, such as being on the board of trustees or as a country manager (i.e. managing Shanti Mandir's affairs and accounts in Australia). Commitment to the community through becoming embedded in the organisational hierarchy demonstrates success and, possibly, closer and more

²¹ LCT conceptualises how four different types of gaze are determined by the social relation to knowledge. It is the strength of knower-grammars that help shape the conditions for entry, position and trajectory within a field's hierarchies. See Maton (2013:137) for an in-depth discussion.

frequent interactions with the guru. Guha (2013) asserts that closer access to the perceived source of purity is only one of several possibilities for creating distinction and that, perhaps, the concept of honour is a more prominent pathway through which social precedence is negotiated and expressed.

The 'model citizen' of the Shanti Mandir community can be viewed through the institutional model proposed by Moskos (1986), where values like 'duty', 'honour', 'country' and 'self-sacrifice' are pivotal. However, honour is commonly seen as an internal quality that often overlooks the external component that relies on sharing an agreed standard (OLSTHOORN 2005). This standard is an external acknowledgement of the claim made by the individual as an estimation of his own worth (PITT-RIVERS 1974).

In a casual conversation with an older student of Shanti Mandir's Sanskrit college, Abhinav explained how he wants to work as a travelling storyteller (*kathanika*), who specialises in the didactic performance of the Bhagavatkathā (See Taylor 2015). One Sunday afternoon, which is a time during the week where people have some free time, I was sitting with some of the students whom I worked with to make the ethnographic film about life in the ashram (MCCARTNEY 2014a). Some people were sitting nearby at another table. This included the Student-Scholar Abhinav (24 years old), who was talking to an ethnically non-Indian Australian woman of a similar age.²² Based on my observations of body language and the topic of conversation, which was somewhat salacious, I noticed there was an element of coquettish flirtation to this conversation, which occurred in English. Switching to Hindi, I asked Abhinav if he was 'flirting'. His tone changed immediately. Deflated by my comment, with a forlorned expression on his face, he left this group and slumped down in the chair opposite me.

We spoke, in Hindi, for the next hour about the concepts of honour, perception and integrity. A prominent point in the conversation came when he explained to me that, 'It doesn't matter what my intentions are with a girl, it ultimately depends on how others see it' [07 March 2013]. My naïve, and somewhat flippant, comment exposed a great source of tension for Abhinav, and, by extension all the other students, who are constantly under pressure to conform to, and perform, the ideal disposition. The constant emotional and behavioural policing are indicative of Surface Acting (SA).²³

²² Who was engaged to, and later married, an Indian man from Mumbai, whom she had met during her many stays in the ashram. As is common, the ashram is also a place where social/legal ties, like marriage, are fostered and celebrated. An ashram, is very much a part of the social fabric. It is not simply a liminal space between the tangible and intangible or profane and sacred realms.

²³ This concept was originally proposed by Hochschild (1983). SA includes vigilant management of observable expressions and is contrasted by Deep Acting (DA), which is the 'intrapyschic process of attempting to experience or alter feelings so that expected emotional displays may naturally follow' (Kiely 2008). This move from SA towards DA is one way of conceptualising the process of learning to embody the legitimate disposition, which should ultimately be expressed naturally and spontaneously. It is worth noting that in verse 15 of the medieval treatise on emotion, the Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu, the concealment of emotions is referred to as *avahitthā* (Gosvamin

The conversation evolved into a retelling, by Abhinav, of a story from the Rāmāyāna, about the time when Lakṣmaṇa let Sītā, his half-brother's wife, rest her head in his lap, because she had a headache. This story was used by Abhinav as an allegory towards right conduct in the presence of (married) women. During this passionate and entertaining storytelling, it was clear that Abhinav has a bright future ahead of him as a *kathanika*. However, it is difficult to know whether he was using this story as a way to demonstrate that people will form their own perceptions, or, rather, to shift the potential blame onto the woman he was talking to. Perhaps, by retelling the story, it showed a process of atonement for his transgression of the adopted moral standard?

In a related way, Figure 9 demonstrates the offer Shanti Mandir makes to its Patrons to use the technical mastery of the Scholars to perform their filial duties towards their ancestors. This is one expression of Shanti Mandir's 'Vedic way of life', in which it is explained that, 'the scriptures describe three types of debts or obligations we are all born with; towards the deities (देव ऋण), sages/Guru (ऋषि/गुरु ऋण) and ancestors (पितृ ऋण)' (SHANTI MANDIR 2016b).

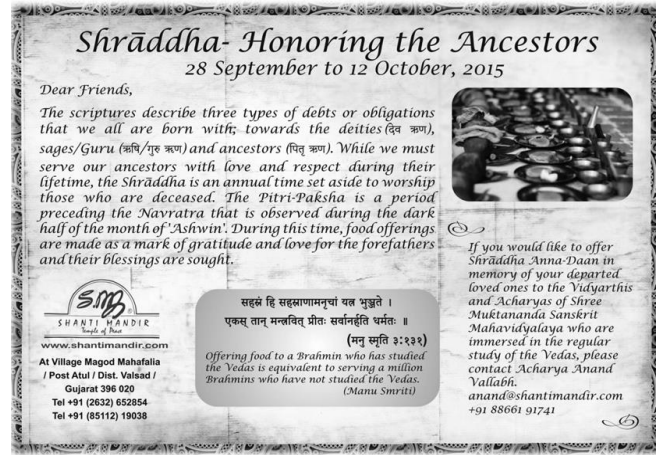


Figure 9: Shrāddha—Honoring the Ancestors
(MANDIR 2016b)

The Vedic-derived logic of Brahminical Sanskrit Hinduism provides a framework of debt for Brahmin males, who must work towards paying off the debts of their ancestors through becoming fully versed in Vedic knowledge, performing their religious duties, and producing sons (OLIVELLE 1992, 1993). Graeber (2011:56-57) adds that:

Actually, even the very earliest Vedic poems, composed sometime between 1500 and 1200 BC, evince a constant concern with debt—which is treated as synonymous with guilt and sin. There are numerous prayers pleading with the gods to liberate the worshipper from the shackles or bonds of debt. Sometimes these seem to refer to debt in the literal sense—Rig Veda 10.34, for instance, has a long description of the sad plight of gamblers who "wander homeless, in constant fear, in debt, and seeking money." Elsewhere it's clearly metaphorical.

While this is not possible for everyone, today, it is the Scholars that act as intermediaries between the 'sacred' and 'profane' realms through the 'purifying' effects

of their vocal utterances and ritual performances. As a result, they play an integral part in the community, and are rewarded with a particular status not available to the other groups. This status comes at a cost; however, because their does seem to be more flexibility for the Patrons, who do not have to be as constantly vigilant regarding their emulation and performance of the legitimate disposition, as compared to the Scholars or Renunciants. This exchange and interdependency between the subgroups is part of a commercial industry concerned with the production of tangible and intangible goods. It is part of transnational flows of religious commodities and the ‘merchandizing’ of Hinduism (SINHA 2011:3).

Figure 10 demonstrates an overall understanding of the Shanti Mandir field based on the Specialisation codes of LCT. These hierarchies are conceptualised as: 1) a knowledge hierarchy, 2) a purity-knower hierarchy, and 3) an economic hierarchy. Each of the hierarchies has a predominant species of capital and an LCT code attributed to it. The three subgroups have been ranked accordingly to the status they have within each hierarchy.

Knowledge Hierarchy	Knower Hierarchy	Economic Hierarchy
Cultural Capital	Social Capital	Economic Capital
Élite Code (ER+/SR+)	Knower Code (ER-, SR+)	*Economic Code (EV+/-)
1) Scholars	1) Renunciants	1) Patrons
2) Renunciants	2) Scholars	2) Renunciants-Scholars
3) Patrons	3) Patrons	

Figure 10: The Three Hierarchies

The Scholars share the Élite Code with the guru; however, in terms of status the Renunciants still have more prestige. This is demonstrated by the Renunciants being at the head of the queue when it comes to *darśana* in the temple, and at meal times, where they are followed by the Scholars and then the Patrons. Even though the Patrons sit atop the economic hierarchy, because they are the financial providers who invest directly in the community, the moral impurity connected to the Patrons’ attachment to the mundane world sees them at the bottom of the symbolic hierarchies related to purity, and, because of their lack of technical mastery, they are also at the bottom of the knowledge hierarchy.

7. Concluding Remarks

This overview of the relationships between the various groups, and their symbolic or pragmatic functions, shows the legitimate species of capital that each group relies upon and uses in its transactions with the other groups. The use of Legitimation Code Theory also shows how the Élite Code (ER+, SR+) and the Knower Code (ER-, SR+) operate in the network to highlight the social and epistemic relations to knowledge. It also

demonstrates how this impacts on an individual's access to prestige, authority, and legitimacy.

As Scott (2017:8) explains, social network analysis is a collection of methods that can be used to understand the political, economic and social opportunities that 'actors' within 'networks' engage in to enhance their advantages and opportunities. From first identifying the network, I explored the ways in which individuals enter and ascend the various hierarchies, and the limits to which their movement can go. Beginning in Section 1, I explored the ways in which economic capital plays an important part in distinguishing the different groups. This is why LCT's Specialisation codes were modified to include economic capital through the code modality: Economic Vitality (EV+/-). This allows for a richer description of the dynamic complexities particular to this field; which result in the following code modalities for each subgroup (Figure 11):

Renunciants	(ER-, SR+, EV-)
Scholars	(ER+, SR+, EV-)
Patrons	(ER-, SR+, EV+)

Figure 11: Subgroup Code Modalities

Combined with the addition of the Economic Vitality Code (EV+/-), an even clearer picture of the symbolic dimension, and role of capital, was presented. While the Renunciants have an esteemed position, due to their religious capital, they do not have the prestige afforded to the Scholars, whose specialist-technical knowledge of Sanskrit is unavailable to them and, also, to the Patrons. Regardless, if it were not for the cultural and religious capital of the Scholars and Renunciants, it is unlikely that there would be as much interest or investment by the Patrons. This suggests that the transubstantiation of capital is quite complicated and constantly renegotiated by actors in the network. While economic capital is fundamental to the growth of the community, it is the exchange that occurs within the symbolic dimension of gaining legitimacy and authenticity that allows and entices the groups to participate and invest in the ways they do.

The Patrons, principally, use their investments of economic capital. But, they are also able to negotiate with cultural capital such as their professional skills that can be used by the organisation to achieve certain goal-oriented ends, like significant and costly capital works to increase the accommodation capacity and subsidise the cost of boarding, education and salaries of the students and teachers. However, the Patrons' ability to exchange economic capital into spiritual or religious capital is restricted, regardless of the size of the donations given. Even though these rational acts are often misrecognised, they are a fundamental part of the community's operation.

The embodiment of a social relation to knowledge, as a *śāntamūrti*, is valorised over an epistemic relation, or an abundance of economic capital. A Patron might be able to donate unlimited amounts of money, but, if they are not able to at least outwardly display a more compassionate, tolerant and 'peaceful' embodiment of the characteristics associated with a *sāttvika* (pure) disposition, which is related to the idea of the embodier of quietude—*śāntamūrti*—then, within the eyes of the community, they will not be considered a legitimate practitioner, *yogin* or knower of this epistemic community.

Even though the discrete groups work synergistically to create and sustain a viable community, there is limited opportunity for individuals to migrate to another group. This, in part, explains why internal competitions for prestige and legitimacy, as well as recognition as ideal knowers, occur *within* each subgroup and not *between* them.

Recognition of being an ideal knower is partly based on an individual's ability to explain the value of the discrete social worlds that are valorised by the community and the movement between those in which they live after leaving the liminal space of the ashram. For the permanent residents of the ashram, the movement is more static and durable than what the more casual visitors experience. This allows the resident to more readily accumulate the epistemic capital and social relation to knowledge that this community values. This is something that everyone needs to accumulate, and not just the guru. The acquisition of epistemic capital is essential in the individual's learning of the normative rules of the field, in order to adopt, explain and express (effortlessly) the legitimate disposition.

Fundamental to all exchanges is economic capital. Regardless of whether an individual is able to cover the costs themselves, or they are subsidised by someone else (as in the case of the Scholars and Renunciants being sponsored by the Patrons), this allows the individual to develop the social and cultural capital of learning how to behave with regard to the expectations (or cultivating gaze) of the community. This is done in order to negotiate attainment of an agreed standard of conduct. Through gaining some awareness of the essential components, the individual is able to develop their epistemic capital; which, I argue, is a higher order species of capital that consists of both an epistemic and social relation to knowledge. To accumulate spiritual or religious capital, the individual must be able to articulate verbally, and demonstrate corporally, their relationship to, and understanding of, the social and metaphysical worlds. Therefore, this hierarchy of different species of capital can be conceptualised as such (Figure 12).

Figure 12 highlights how the tangible species of capital are catalysed into the intangible species through the instrumentality of epistemic capital and the embodiment of cultural capital. The exchanges of capital that underpin the existence of Shanti Mandir are intimately linked to the legitimate ways in which individuals can negotiate access into, and ascension within, the discrete but interdependent hierarchies present within the social network.

Through using a combination of LCT and an emphasis on an analysis of the field, in terms of the symbolic exchanges of capital, we gain conceptual clarity in understanding the commensalic processes involved for the various individuals within the discrete hierarchies of Shanti Mandir's social network, who work together to support the community, but also compete amongst each other, not only for distinction, but also for the guru's attention.

Having taken inspiration from the structural concepts that Marriot and Inden (1977) provide in their study of caste, I aimed at furthering the anthropological project through synthesising the ideas of Durkheim (1995) and Bernstein (2000), whose respective contributions relate to the sociology of religion and spirituality, and the way in which pedagogy is intertwined with symbolic control and identity. In this humble contribution, I explicated how the specialised divisions of labour, particular to Shanti Mandir's epistemic community of knowers require specialised forms of consciousness, which are indelibly linked to various species of capital, particularly knowledge *as a form of capital*. Using this case study as a representative for possible future research targeting other similar communities might prove productive, as there are seemingly countless gurus and yoga-inspired communities around the world that run on similar, if not identical, logic.

Still, this contribution might help others in understanding how other communities, unrelated to the yoga-Sanskrit episteme, function. I see this possibility through the sharing of an unregulated, informal, educational domain. In a similar way to James (2015), I appreciate both Nancy Fraser's and Pierre Bourdieu's use of *méconnaissance* (misrecognition). While seeking to avoid simply focusing on questions of (group) identity and concepts related to the tacit understanding one requires to simply 'fit in', I worked to provide a window into the bigger issue related to 'participatory parity' and the redistribution of resources. This is partly due to the commensalic nature of the various tangible investments and symbolic exchanges within Shanti Mandir, which ultimately merge on an intangible, otherworldly goal.

The specific settings of the social and epistemic relations to knowledge within this field create tacit acceptance of a perpetuating social differentiation, which is premised by a variety of stand points and allied legitimate capital. While these hierarchies mentioned above are partial, it is through the arbitrary distinctions reflected in the pedagogy, which demands unquestionable loyalty. It is here that participants learn to see these hierarchies and dispositions as total and natural; and, as necessary to attain various immanent and numinous aims. While the field is set in such a way that willing

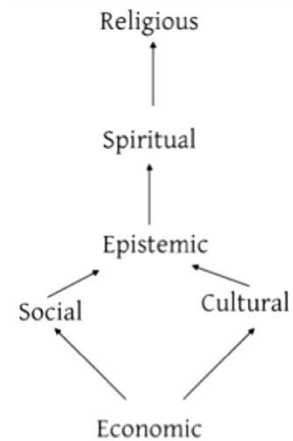


Figure 12: Hierarchy of Capital and Flows

participants in this network misrecognise the economic intent behind these transactions, it is a thoroughly undemocratic network where the unequal 'social order' is essentialised through belief in the idea that many people in the ashram explain, that: 'Everyone is equal under the guru'.

While Godrej (2016) offers a creative reading of core yoga texts as a potential emancipatory tool against the governmentality of neoliberal policies, which prefer docile consumers to active democratic citizens; in a complementary way, Lucia (2018) accents how the neo-liberal/consumerist-focused analytical approach limits a more nuanced understanding of global yoga networks and the participation of its various actors. Through Lucia's 'missiological' framework that explores the export-led migration patterns of yoga as a 'portable practice' through tourism, proselytisation and conversion, it is interesting to align this with James (2015:107), who, based on the warranted pessimism of Bourdieu, discusses the tensions around the neoliberal-inspired individualistic notions of self, which are considered by many to be axiomatic. Yet, even though this unit of analysis is taken for granted, there is an interesting tension between the identity of the 'self' promoted by Shanti Mandir, and the preferred social 'self' prominent in the globalised, neo-liberal yoga market.

Finally, there are broader structural issues that are also often misrecognised through the naturalisation of privileging the Brahminical or *suvarṇa* (of a 'good caste') point of view, which is undeniably the preeminent *habitus* legitimised, promoted and aspired to within the general realm of global yoga's epistemology and ontology. These issues relate specifically to the global exportation, or obfuscation, of social inequalities, which are related to how caste is tacitly embedded within the portable yoga lifestyle. However, the average yoga consumer/convert typically has little interest in what can be described as the 'grittier', mundane reality of the poverty-stricken 'real India'. Even if yoga tourism promotes *sevā* (selfless service) to the global south through voluntourism, it reflects the inequalities inherent in the privileged mobility and access of 'yoga missionaries' from the global north, to where millions of India's citizens live, and reinforces well-meaning paternalism through the 'transformation economy' (HENRY 2016; CLEMMONS 2018). While the locals are trying to work to provide for their families, the tourists relax into some *downward dog*, while being entertained as part of some *serious*, or even *casual*, project-based leisure pursuits related to the imagined 'yoga lifestyle' (STEBBINS 2015).

The non-Indian yoga tourist-pilgrim to India possibly travels straight from Mumbai airport to their guru's secluded ashram in a pre-booked taxi. This is common practice for many Shanti Mandir devotees who, arrive at Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai, and directly take the three to four-hour car journey to the Magod ashram.

Due to an intense focus on their yoga 'journey' and spiritual practice, coupled with a general aversion to politics and social issues in one's country of origin, and more so in India, plus an overwhelming sense of fear, at least for many 'first-timers' to the Shanti Mandir ashram, many people might not even venture out of the compound during their

stay. For seasoned non-Indian devotees to the ashram, they might not see any profit in leaving the ashram once they arrive, as they have ‘seen all India has to offer’. For many, regardless of their longevity in the community, leaving the ashram is ultimately rationalised as a distraction. For these reasons, even amongst people that have been travelling to India for decades, there is an overwhelming preference not to focus on the plight of India’s poor.²⁴ This is also rationalised through the ubiquitously well-known idea of *karma*.

Ultimately, however, there is a lack of understanding when it comes to the dynamic and complex socio-political issues that India faces. It is probable that most consumers of yoga are possibly not interested in travelling to India, let alone sully the journey with worrying about the suffering of others. For most yoga consumers, their experience of yoga occurs at the local gym or yoga studio. It begins with a few ‘oms’ and ends with a dreamy ‘namaste’. However, I propose that, whatever level of engagement with the yoga industrial complex an individual has, there is a default myopic privileging of a Brahminical gaze, which ultimately exacerbates the silencing of marginalised voices, not only in India, but also abroad amongst the South Asian diasporas and the multi-cultural communities they live amongst. The portability of caste in the United States of America is cogently analysed by Zwick-Maitreyi *et. al.* (2018). Even though this report does not discuss yoga *per se*, the issues involved are part of the general *méconnaissance* promoted via the global popularity of yoga. If anything, from a macro perspective, perhaps this paper also throws some light on these larger complex issues.

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²⁴ Shanti Mandir does facilitate charities to alleviate the suffering of people in the local area. Lucia (2014c) adds that the philanthropy and charitable works of transnational gurus is another strategy to gain legitimacy within the broader community. As the organisation grows, it requires more economic capital; however, to justify the investments it seeks, the organisation branches out into charitable works. Pinkney (2013) explains that, within the Indian context, *the gift* is conceptualised as not just an economic transference. Instead, it is also said to involve the transference of the giver’s moral impurity.

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