

## INTRODUCTION

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Imbued with a knowledge of objective sciences by English education, our people will be able to comprehend subjective truths.

—Bankimchandra Chatterjee, *Anandamath*

IT IS A TRUISM, universally acknowledged, that English dominates the globe today as no language ever has in the recorded history of humanity. Despite the linguistic diversity of a world that features more than five thousand natural languages by some counts, a mere one hundred languages account for the mother tongue of 95 percent of the world's population, twenty-five languages for about 75 percent, and just twelve languages for about 60 percent.<sup>1</sup> Second in terms of total number of speakers, English dominates by virtue of its stranglehold on global organizations as an international auxiliary or link language. Barring theories of the monolingual origin of the species that can never be proven, the observer can only look at existing examples of linguistic globalization in recorded history in order to glean the evidence.

A comparison of the current dominance of English with that of other languages at different times leads to the discovery that empires and religions have been the two most obvious vehicles of linguistic universalism. Sometimes a universalizing religion inherited a language-vehicle from a successful empire, as the Catholic Church did from the Romans, thereby establishing Latin as an administrative and scholarly medium of communication across Europe for a millennium and a half. In the case of Arabic, the situation developed the other way around, whereby the political ambitions of the caliphs spread it around the Mediterranean and West Asia from Spain to Persia and India for at least half a millennium, even though various political empires had actually inherited the language from Islam's humble origins as an iconoclastic desert religion. Pan-Arabism has still kept modern Arabic alive as a viable lingua franca throughout western Asia and northern Africa, and to a limited extent in other places where Islam is a presence. Mandarin Chinese, demonstrably the tongue with the greatest number of speakers today, remains one of the stable legacies of Han imperial suzerainty, even if there is no significant religious impulse to spread it beyond familiar ethnic confines. The case of Sanskrit reveals a pattern of survival that is exactly opposite to that of Chinese. A largely sacerdotal language

with only sporadic instances of political backup, Sanskrit has nevertheless survived for well over three millennia. Although still very much in use for ritual and religious instruction throughout South Asia and wherever Hinduism has a foothold, from Bali to Trinidad, Sanskrit is now largely a dead, classical language imbued with symbolic meaning. Hindi and Bengali, two of Sanskrit's many descendants, are counted among the top ten spoken languages in the world, but there is considerable resistance in India to Hindi as a national language. German and Russian had correspondingly greater and lesser roles—now vastly diminishing—because of their histories of joint political dominance in central and eastern Europe, and for the latter, also in central Asia. Japanese is important in east and southeast Asia, but is becoming less so with the importance of English as an international auxiliary language. The role of Swahili, initially promoted by Pan-Africanists, has declined along with the other political goals of the movement. All the same, francophone Africa and the hispanophone Americas continue to sound their different imperial and postcolonial legacies. Spanish is certainly one plausible transcontinental alternative still competing with English.

Turning to the case of English, it is obvious that events have conspired (although by no means as irreversibly as some might assume) to give it its current status. That the world has moved from the dominance of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century to the United States as unilateralist hyperpower by the twenty-first century without having to change the language of imperial dominance (save dialectal differences from British to American English) is perhaps a fortunate (depending on already acquired English proficiency) or unfortunate turn of events for the new rulers as well as the ruled. It is not merely the political dispensation at hand that ensures English supremacy at this point: the cultural and technical vocabularies of science and technology, capitalist business economics, and television and media have instituted an even more important role for English to play as the ultimate knowledge base from which other languages can be launched or situated in relation to each other. English is still a minority elite language in the world, as any imperial or religious language always has been, to a lesser or greater extent. But English's strong connection with computers, medicine, business, media, higher education, and communications—well before all these areas exploded globally—makes its dominance even greater than did the twentieth century's handover of global political supremacy to the Americans. It is arguable whether a future Chinese domination of the globe (as some futurologists predict) would, if it did occur, nonetheless maintain the highly differentiated and specialized functions that English has already come to play, with ramifications that are legal, technical, and communicational.

While the simple abstraction of English-in-general has potentially a very long history ahead of it, there are also differentiations that occur within the language as it spreads itself. Languages do not always remain unified, as the history of Latin's or Sanskrit's multiple offspring demonstrates. This book focuses on the global impact of Indian English in the spirit of identifying a discrepant cosmopolitanism within it. Much has already been made of the peculiarities of English in South Asia, as a dialect and lingua franca with considerable cosmopolitan appeal. In terms of the total numbers of English speakers, India now ranks third in the world, after the United States and Great Britain. In India, maybe 3 to 5 percent of the population speaks English fluently (approximately 30 million to 50 million speakers), an especially significant minority constituting most of the elite and a section of the urban upper middle classes. If passive comprehension of English vocabulary were included, the figures would increase considerably. While such class parameters suggest that the language remains an *acrolect*—or a language spoken largely by elites—studying this language's iterations and performances leads to new and interesting discoveries. Before positing a historical essence (whether postcolonial, bureaucratic, or technological) bound up with English's role, significance, and global outcome, it would be best to track the many anomalous refashionings of the language and reflect on their variety.<sup>2</sup>

First introduced in South Asia by Christian missionaries in the seventeenth century, English made few inroads until the expansion of the activities of the East India Company. While Western colonialism and Christian evangelism often went hand in hand around the globe in the last few centuries, it is well known that the record in South Asia is especially complicated; from the outset, important conflicts arose between missionary and commercial agendas. The English Bible was one of the first texts to be translated into a number of South Asian vernaculars. Several outstanding discussions of the impact of the Bible in colonial South Asia have transformed our understanding of the consolidation of national identities as well as the elaboration of transcultural differences.<sup>3</sup> By 1823, learned natives such as Raja Rammohun Roy were petitioning the company's authorities to make English education, especially of the scientific and secular variety, more widely available. The culmination of this process was the much-discussed Macaulay Minute that was approved on March 7, 1835, a document that declared in the voice of the British rulers that they needed "a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." The same document also disparages native learning with the phrase that "a single shelf of a good European library [is] worth

the whole native literature of India and Arabia.” British imperial rule therefore unapologetically replaced Persian, the prestige language under the Mughals, with a new one, English.<sup>4</sup>

An Indian form of English—and therefore its development as a new South Asian vernacular rather than just as an imperial echo—first acquired recognition, paradoxically, when representatives of high Victorian imperialism dismissed it as a bureaucratic cant of the native functionaries and interpreters of the Raj, a “Baboo English” or “Cheechee English,” to be literally ridiculed and disparaged. Even lesser variants began to be recognized, such as Butler English, Bearer English, Box-Wallah English, Kitchen English, and Hinglish (Hindi-English).<sup>5</sup> By February 1830, the first issue of an English-language journal in Calcutta entitled *The Parthenon* called itself the voice of people who were “Hindu by birth, yet European by education”—in other words, the voice of those multilingual and bicultural intermediaries of imperial governance. While educational qualifications in the many vernacular languages conferred much less prestige, being a colonial functionary, or *baboo*, engendered considerable frustration and intellectual alienation from both the Anglo-Indian elite and indigenous traditions. The baboo began to be satirized as a volatile mixture of the dregs of imperialist culture and the heights of philosophical absurdity. The baboo stereotype—from Rudyard Kipling to Peter Sellars—features a singsong accent, clownish head-nodding, pretensions to erudition, credentializing anxieties, a moralistic tone, a liberal use of clichés and mixed metaphors, and incongruous literal translations into English from the vernacular. Baboo English (as Indian English) is also subject to interferences from typical features of South Asian languages that are uncommon in English—such as the function of word reduplication as an intensifier (“little little children”; “very very nice”). Recognizing this hybrid and ridiculous subject as an anomaly several decades later, in 1874 a writer in *Mukherjee’s Magazine* would metaphorically wring his hands in an article entitled “Where Shall the Baboo Go?”<sup>6</sup> Baboo (or Babu) English eventually became the butt of Victorian satire and the prized linguistic object of colonial lexicographies such as Colonel Henry Yule’s and A. C. Burnell’s famous *Hobson-Jobson*.

Sociolinguistics has attempted to separate analytically distinct aspects of Indian English, such as the instrumental function (in establishing prestige and social hierarchy), the regulative function (in law, administration, and business), the interpersonal function (as a link language within modernity), and the innovative function (in literature or cultural production).<sup>7</sup> While the first three aspects have always been very important, in the last two centuries of the reception of English in South Asia—and hence the ubiquity of the baboo stereotype—it is only

in recent decades that greater attention is being paid by the literati to the imaginative and innovative function of cultural production supported by dialectal—as well as political—independence. Post-independence writers from G. V. Desani to Salman Rushdie, and Indian cinema and media have since disseminated an Indian English dialect (with regional variants) that has gone global in its quest for new markets and audiences. India is among the ten largest book-producing countries in the world and the third-largest producer of English-language books after the United States and Great Britain. It produces more full-length feature films than any country in the world, in multiple languages, but frequently with significant English content. Even so, a recent comprehensive literary history of anglophone writing in India is scathing in its characterization of the imaginative literature, through its title, as *Babu Fictions*.<sup>8</sup> Old habits die hard, and older slurs find newer and more persuasive contexts for their justification: while from the British point of view, the indigenous speaker of English could never shed his “Indian-ness,” now it has become fashionable to assert that anglophone Indians can never shed their compromised elite status. To the extent that the English language is seen reductively as the expression of upper-class status and perspective alone, its capacity to represent the larger social whole is found lacking. Appearing to its speakers as a combination of prestige and disparagement, English represents a complicated status for South Asians that linguists have called *diglossic differentiation*, or the continual awareness of a relationship between high and low variations. Therefore, Probal Dasgupta calls Indian English an “auntie” (as opposed to mother) tongue, because “the meaning of English in India is not an independent referential potential, but a cross-referential or anaphoric meaning.” A dependent or diglossic relationship makes English in India refer itself either to non-English speaking natives (with implicit superiority), or non-native metropolitan speakers from Britain or the United States (with implicit inferiority). English nonetheless remains the pathway to modernity, science, and business opportunity. Even though India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and other South Asian countries are in the sixth decade after formal independence from British suzerainty, Macaulay, it would appear, continues to have the last laugh.<sup>9</sup>

Following a specific line of inquiry arising from these more generalized literary and linguistic antecedents, this book explores Guru English as a language variant of South Asian origin. There are at least four major aspects of this phenomenon. First of all, in its most literal sense, Guru English is not so much a dialect (even though it might be linked to dialectal variations of Indian English) or a jargon (even

though it might frequently possess an esoteric and technical vocabulary), as it is an example of what linguist Michael Halliday has called a *register*.<sup>10</sup> However, this definition would have to be applied in an expanded sense, as the notion of register is linked to the language of a clearly demarcated socioprofessional group (such as doctors, lawyers, or engineers), whereas Guru English does not function only within such parameters. Anglophone scholars and proselytizers of South Asian religions (especially Hinduism and Buddhism in their revivalist and cosmopolitan versions) use this register in search of audiences who can “only connect” via English. Aspects of free play and innovation within the syntax, vocabulary, and rhetoric of this specific register can be discerned through multiple examples cited by religious practitioners throughout the chapters that follow. As register, Guru English is a *theolinguistics*, generating new religious meanings. Analyzing religion through language, and language by religion, Guru English is a practice nourished by eighteenth-century orientalist and twenty-first-century gurus alike.

The second, more generalized, aspect of Guru English is as a literary *discourse*. This form uses multilingual puns, parody, and syncretism that tend to open-ended and indeterminable futures that can influence the religiously inclined and also entertain those not so disposed. While specialized registers might be standard to a speech community, in this case they will vary across communities and practitioners, especially as there is no centralized linguistic stock exchange or even swap meet of lexically innovative gurus and their followers. When it begins to accommodate multiple registers and innovations, Guru English expands into a free-floating literary discourse that can tolerate a high degree of ambivalence. At this point, if I may invoke Michel Foucault, the range of the discourse makes visible characteristics that are not directly linguistic but also institutional and practice-oriented, and contextual to the deployment and manipulation of language as a material phenomenon with corresponding effects within social networks of power. When the Jesuits in Pondicherry planted the spurious *Ezourvedam* among the natives in order to make for an easier transition to Christianity from a purportedly ancient Hindu deism, they could not have foreseen that Voltaire would use the rationalism of the same text to launch an attack on Christianity in Europe. (Although the original example was in French, the impact of its translated English version was also considerable.) The multiple outcomes of Theosophy through a series of literary innovations I term *theosophistries* were similarly surprising.

These aspects of register and discourse also make Guru English function in the third sense, as something of a *transidiomatic* environment—where Guru English is not the directly active participant, but the passive

background that informs and enables other cultural or linguistic activity. More about this function will be discerned when Guru English sustains creative interpretations that weave history and politics around perceptions of science, weaponry, and technology—where J. Robert Oppenheimer quotes from the *Bhagavadgītā* at Los Alamos or when the Indian and Pakistani military establishments manipulate religious vocabularies into state-sponsored nuclear rhetoric while naming weapons systems or taunting each other during their recent nuclear standoff. As environment, Guru English can, therefore, be the ground for discursive reversal and secondary elaboration as much as it can be the extension of linguistic register into literary discourse.

If the notion of Guru English as environment is a deeper cultural materialist idea of the notion of register, its fourth aspect is a more aggressive version of its second variant as discourse, namely as a *commodifiable cosmopolitanism*. Discourses can also be doctrinally thematized as interested and motivated rhetoric. Producing transnational religious cosmopolitanism that retails a saleable commodity, as does Deepak Chopra, in this last sense, Guru English names a marketing device that connects various levels to each other and that extracts a surplus from its mastery of the transidiomatic environment. While it might initially be confusing to use the same phrase to characterize a (linguistic) register, a (literary) discourse, a (transidiomatic) environment, and a (commodifiable) cosmopolitanism, Guru English's trafficking between negative or passive poles (such as register and environment) and positive or active ones (such as discourse and cosmopolitanism) reveals a story of discrepant levels of engagement. It is hoped that the liquidity of the phrase, Guru English, also allows it to be used by the author and other critics as a tracking device or a depth charge that forces various elements for analysis to the surface for the reader's attention and critique. However, these four abstract definitions need some more explanation, following which Guru English also merits being situated historically as well as structurally.

In Guru English as register as I have defined it, the indeterminacy of the modifier is visible: there is no possessive finality of the definite article, as there is with *the King's* (or *the Queen's*) English. Issuing rival dicta, gurus are many, even if at any time there is just one British monarch. The Sanskrit etymology of *guru* presents this figure as "a dispeller of darkness." The guru's power is perceived to be spiritual even as the *śiṣya* or chela—the disciple in search of wisdom or enlightenment—can choose to pursue and is sometimes encouraged to perform an absolute surrender of his or her will to the will of the master. Etymologically, the male *śiṣya* might perform the funeral rites of a son for the guru, saving him from an afterlife in the underworld. Unlike the spiritual

authority of the guru, that of the *ācārya* (preceptor or teacher) is understood to be that of a circumscribed pedagogic authority within accepted social conventions, whereas the figure of the guru, as Sudhir Kakar has also argued, features powerful parental and psychoanalytic functions for the disciple.<sup>11</sup> The guru's function for the disciple, within the framework of an open-ended religious transaction, is therefore potentially unlimited in the manner in which it could transgress personal and social boundaries. *Guru* is also the astronomical term for Brihaspati, the preceptor of the Hindu pantheon, and designates the largest planet of the solar system that under the Western nomenclature goes by the name of "Jupiter." This parallel Sanskrit etymology of *guru* as the planetary and astronomical "heavy" with considerable influence<sup>12</sup> may be just as relevant, even if ironically so, in relation to a history of complicity with, as well as antipathy for, gurus within the history of religion in South Asia.

For these reasons, before we assume too readily the spread of Guru English as lingua franca across the globe, a number of questions must be addressed: Whose (South Asian and Indian) Guru English?<sup>13</sup> What are the goals of this language's users? What happens when indigenous religious and cultural conceptions are translated and represented in terms of a language that is, relatively, a very recent presence on the subcontinent? What links various aspects of (South Asian and Indian) English, whether as international lingua franca or national official language, or even more as precise acrolects, sociolects, and idiolects?<sup>14</sup> When native religion and colonial language come together in Guru English, the double engine of religion and empire makes deeper inroads into global dominance and proselytization. Guru English, as register, discourse, environment, and cosmopolitanism, exceeds most other diasporic outcomes of Indian English whether as mother or "auntie" tongue.

The links between Guru English as literary discourse and linguistic register, and the larger questions of the role of English suggests multiple directions of inquiry. Argot almost immediately raises for interrogation various aspects of its profile and function and the goals of its users. Initially, the anglicization of colonial subjects, while eventually making its mark on a global scale, was conceived as crucially necessary for a South Asian audience. Writing to a positivist friend, Jogen Ghosh, in the late nineteenth century, the Bengali novelist Bankimchandra Chatterjee asserted, "anyone who wishes to address all Hindus must of necessity write in English."<sup>15</sup> Bankim's most famous novel of religious atavism, *Anandamath* [Abbey of bliss], ends with the proposition that "imbued with a knowledge of objective sciences by English education, our people will be able to comprehend subjective truths." The

point made by Bankim's conclusion, even if a hopeful stretch given empirical realities, was that the English language would, as a means of international access and especially scientific technocracy, objectively create the conditions where pan-Indian cultural unity could be discovered as a kind of remaindered essence. This adoption of English as a *via negativa* to the literary discourse of "subjective truths" is quite different from other plausible choices, such as Persian, which in Bankim's context had greater historical precedent as the language of Mughal bureaucracy and government, or Sanskrit, the sacerdotal language of the Brahman-dominated religious and cultural elites of the Hindu majority. We now find that there is an anomalous afterlife to Bankim's recommendation that he may not have anticipated: the circulation of Hinduism through English was probably an early alternative means—and continues to be an important vehicle—for the religious discourse of middle-class urban Hindus in search of their "subjective truths." The global transmission of Hindu and Buddhist thought eventually led to the rise of the self-proclaimed ethno-religious nationalist as well as the detached and Asian-influenced cosmopolitan. It might be worth considering the most provocative version of Bankim's thesis, that the use of English was indispensable to the defining of Hinduism as a universalist "spirituality" at the outset. This new articulation of spirituality cohered around several general assumptions brought to it by colonial discourses and practices, even as it undoubtedly made good use of preexisting practices and doctrines. This necessarily modern presentation of ancient practices explains the constitutive contradiction of Hinduism's national and cosmopolitan roles far more effectively than various empirical accounts that map the contingent coming together of a number of loosely related practices and identities under the pressure of British colonial rule.<sup>16</sup>

Continuing to the third aspect discussed, Guru English is perhaps a perfect example of what linguist Marco Jacquemet has described as transidiomaticity. The notion of certain languages and discourses as constituting a transidiomatic environment allows us to understand how they might have considerable appeal with multiple audiences without necessarily having to posit the particular medium of communication as a coherent foundation. How is this language idiomatically dispersed, translated, and disseminated? Rather than focusing on the exclusively dystopian visions of language-death amidst linguistic imperialism as many linguists have done, Jacquemet urges us to consider languages as flow: mutant, recombinant, and morphing under the conditions of globalization.<sup>17</sup> A renewed appreciation of cultural interconnection by way of transidiomaticity leads to the question of translation. In one sense, transidiomaticity attempts to bypass the necessity for a

more conscious or full-fledged translation. Ideas arrive in prepackaged ways that merge with their analogs or cousin-ideas in the host language, thereby preempting a self-conscious reflection on the matter and the manner of translation.

Guru English presents itself as already translated, even though a critical perspective on it would lead to the conclusion that it is very much in need of further translation and specification. The transnational aspect of Guru English mobilizes a South Asian spiritual superiority in search of hegemony. Critical attention to such ideas can dissolve them into particulars that are insufficiently transparent to all locations. To paraphrase translation theorist Naoki Sakai, translation is constitutive of its context only because it fixes two interpretive communities in terms of a stable relation.<sup>18</sup> Of course, these communities might themselves be in full mobility, and the relation is always a temporary one in danger of being broken. For this reason, while Sakai distinguishes sharply between a “homolingual” and “heterolingual” address of translation, it might be preferable to think that all translational situations—like all transnational situations—simultaneously involve homogeneity and heterogeneity, transidiomaticity and incommensurability. The partial nature of context, audience, and subject matter under translation makes for the simultaneous possibilities of communication and its failure. As the special case of a transnational translation currently under purview, Guru English could be at times innocuous, and at other times, noxious. On some occasions, Guru English leads to at least a partial understanding and a fulfilling New Age East-West encounter, whereas at other times this very production is in danger of becoming an explosive and dangerous misapprehension, nothing more than a dehistoricized and false claim to tradition, whether European or Asian. As recombinant, mutant, and simulacrum, Guru English is the sign of heterogeneity within the homogeneous, demonstrating that the imperial tongue can be reshaped internally even as English colonizes its linguistic others.

With respect to the fourth aspect—cosmopolitanism—its relationship to the volatile terrain of religion needs explanation to understand the function of Guru English as one such form. Such a relationship may appear counterintuitive, especially as the Voltairean-Kantian-Weberian legacy of Enlightenment modernity has depicted the dominant line of cosmopolitanism as resulting from the privatization of religion, and indeed, disenchantment with the world. Clichés of the sort that modernity resulted in the twilight of the idols, and the death of God(s), abound in this tradition, despite growing evidence that the news of religion’s death was greatly exaggerated and that the history of Judeo-Christian monotheism and deism was rather conveniently collapsed with the

itineraries of polytheistic and other faiths. Cosmopolitanism, according to this general Enlightenment doctrine, is a disposition that creates world fellowship, or at least passive membership, through the abandonment of religion for a (political) philosophy. The basis for this philosophy would have been a humanist recognition of the discrepant itineraries of individual lives. As Rammohun Roy put it in an 1831 letter to Talleyrand, pleading for the abolition of the passport system, such an act would be necessary “to promote the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race.” According to Rammohun, “it is now generally admitted that not religion only but unbiased common sense as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches.”<sup>19</sup> Amid a generalized recognition of the rights of individual subjects and the dignity of all cultures, as well as affirmations of the freedom of individual and group expression as resistances to dominant forms, the cosmopolitan, as a mediator, eschews interested particularity for the role of spatial referee, sometimes turning into a crypto-universalist if not into a full-fledged one. However, others, by identifying earlier Christian and Renaissance humanisms as performing this universalistic task, have undercut grand narratives of the Enlightenment’s romantic transformation of religious irrationalism into secular rationalities. As Tzvetan Todorov asserts, the doctrines of the world-proselytizing religions such as Christianity and Islam have done a great deal of the groundwork for modern transcultural dialogue. More specifically to South Asia, the neoreligious Right in India is promoting its own disturbing version of Hindu universalism. We have, therefore, a situation where a number of enchanting and enchanted modernities contest the disenchanting Enlightenment stereotype.<sup>20</sup>

Cosmopolitanism itself is undergoing something of a revival, and it is useful to identify Guru English as one amongst several alternative and popular forms of cosmopolitanism. While the disavowal of cosmopolitanism after 1968 could be explained in the context of the global Left’s repudiation of Stalinism and the decline of internationalism following decolonization, responses to the failure of modernization theses and developmental agendas took several routes. One tendency was the repudiation of cosmopolitanism itself as a bourgeois, Western, or delocalized aesthetic aspiration, outmoded and tone-deaf to contemporary realities. A more tolerant (if patronizing) downgrading of cosmopolitanism represented it as a noble but idealist goal that could not respond to, or correspond with, the rootedness of local politics, interests, cultures, and perturbations. Thus cosmopolitanism was seen as politically ineffective but nonetheless tolerable in manifestoes, mission statements, and party congresses. However, after these reactions reached

the dead end of extreme particularity with the fragmentary positions of subnationalisms, radical relativism, and the micropolitics of location, it appears that several thinkers have taken a step back in the direction of the general. We now see the return of die-hard cosmopolitanisms of the old kind, featuring Kantian projectors, World Bank economists, and religious universalists. Recent apologists for the grand normative scaffolding of Western liberalism and universalism include Martha Nussbaum, Tzvetan Todorov, or Julia Kristeva. There are, of course, those philosophers such as Richard Rorty who are willing to eschew universalism and embrace the charge of being ethnocentric, thereby actively separating the tradition of Western liberalism from that of science, rationality, and universal truth, but such pragmatism sacrifices global scruples for a blinkered chauvinism or cultural particularism.<sup>21</sup>

More cautious voices than these recommend a shuffle between globalization and localization that leads to a “glocalization” of uncertain consequence. Such a newly cautious cosmopolitanism attempts to rebuild and pluralize cosmopolitanism from below. Its theorists thereby describe the new cosmopolitanisms as “discrepant,” “vernacular,” and “actually existing” in place of the older forms, which were preformed, normative, and universalistic. This grass-roots version of cosmopolitanism—one that migrant workers, tourists, and refugees participate in as equally as transnational executives, academics, and diplomats—is represented by James Clifford, Homi Bhabha, and Bruce Robbins, who insist on the careful reconstruction of cosmopolitanism as an efficacious (but always provisional) lingua franca that dissolves the reifications of particularity. Cosmopolitics in general, however, runs the danger of being perceived as a vacuous idealization despite various qualifications. Like any other discourse, cosmopolitanism cannot be inherently stable in terms of its meaning but will shift semantically according to context, use, and function.<sup>22</sup>

While these debates have not resolved sticky cultural differences into an all-encompassing identity of contemporary cosmopolitanism, they increasingly suggest that we turn to the globalized particular, or to the particular generalization, with a heightened sense of their mutual relationship. The attempt of this book to characterize Guru English as one more such venture is not necessarily as positive in its outcomes as defenders of cosmopolitanism would want, or even recognize. Cosmopolitics is increasingly more effective as a rooted discourse rather than a free-floating one, just as much as border-crossing and nomadism appear to have greater purchase when anchored in relation to the specific ecologies and geographies where the crossings are taking place and where they acquire very specific forms of transgressive meaning. Guru English as cosmopolitanism, then, is the lived

practice of which a universalism of some sort is often the theory—even if cosmopolitans might often disavow their universalist underpinnings. Understanding this perceived unity masking practical multiplicity in the case of the Englishes that are contained within the notion of a global English might also result in a reinterpretation of other universalisms and cosmopolitanisms, whether religious or secular. Étienne Balibar’s notion of multiple universals echoes this idea of a cosmopolitanism under the conditions of transidiomaticity: the new universalism consists of “a temporal movement whose regulatory claims are iterative rather than imperative, translational rather than transcendental.” This feature is especially visible in universalisms from below that enact themselves through performance and intercultural communication rather than from centralized directives.<sup>23</sup> Despite their ambivalences, will postcolonial cosmopolitans suffer the fate of being misunderstood as straightforward Western liberals (sometimes with validity)? There is no easy answer to these debates, as Rabindranath Tagore realized in his lectures on nationalism: “[N]either the colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism, nor the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship is the goal of human history.” The postcolonial world has flirted with both prongs that Tagore criticizes and yet has found neither option ultimately rewarding for its inhabitants.<sup>24</sup>

Religious forms of affinity in late modernity have grown in proportion to the fact that state secularism and the politics of civil society have not delivered adequate forms of group vindication. The utter lack of a successful progressive politics under the global rule of the market has led to even obscurantists exploiting cosmopolitan strategies for gaining leverage. Notorious for the September 11, 2001, attack on the United States that shook the world, Osama bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda network functioned through various shadowy electronic and transnational mechanisms. This right-wing Wahhabism—and its client group, the Taliban, which gave it sanctuary in Afghanistan—has been characterized as representing “a deracinated fanaticism—a kind of bleak Islamic cosmopolitanism.”<sup>25</sup> Such developments arose partly because the postcolonial state, from which the gospel of diverse collectivity could have been preached (whether universalism, nonsectarian uniformitarianism, or multiculturalism), was exposed as ideologically bankrupt even as the double standards of the Western powers led to the First World’s continued obliviousness and instrumentalization of the lives of the rest of the world as before. Hijacked by local elites for financial gain and ethnic domination, the postcolonial states survived—and continue to survive—as a homeostasis between the cynicism of global powers and the marketplace, and the great internal contradictions, corruption, political violence,

and repression characteristic of the rule of the few in so many countries.

In a brilliant essay entitled “The Command of Language and the Language of Command,” Bernard Cohn argues for the existence of a transmission process whereby Indians produced knowledge about themselves as a form of tribute, a knowledge that was subsequently recorded by Europeans. While orientalist took credit for discovering and cataloging the cultural riches of India, their labors would have been impossible without a vast retinue of translators, scribes, scholars, and informants. Guru English represents aspects of this recoding that began a life of its own as a supplement, even as “practical necessity” began to trump “scholarly curiosity” and Hindustani replaced Persian as the practical language of command within India. As Cohn suggests, “the Indians who increasingly became drawn into the process of transformation of their own traditions and modes of thought were . . . far from passive.” Guru English is about the productivity, agency, and cumulative consequences of this original tribute exacted in a colonial situation, although it is never simply about the reasserted command of language by just Indian natives or British colonizers but, as we shall see, about eventually much more than just the initial parties to the historical quarrel.<sup>26</sup>

A beautiful watercolor from 1790 demonstrates a scene of instruction that can be read as a generative allegory for the origin of Guru English, in the context of the extraction of tribute through the various investigative modalities of colonial epistemology that Cohn outlines. And yet, there is the hint of something entirely different. One of the paintings in the voluminous Mackenzie collection of the India Office Library, “View of Dindigul, with an English officer, perhaps Colin Mackenzie, and an Indian in the foreground,” poses several intriguing aspects of the religious knowledge transcreated in a colonial situation that anticipates future outcomes other than just the predictable one of empire. A Scot who joined the East India Company out of the desire to learn more about Hindu mathematics, Mackenzie became a military engineer who rose to surveyor general of the Madras Presidency and eventually to the post of the first surveyor general of India from 1815 until his death in 1821. Mackenzie was no conventional orientalist, however. He did not speak any Indian languages even though he was interested in antiquities, coins, engravings, archaeological sites, and any accounts of religious “contentions” and “establishments.” He sketched constantly and also employed scribes, artists, fellow officials, and local informants to document visually what they saw, thereby accumulating a vast archive. Yet he died without being able to organize his vast collection into

anything like the evidentiary materials for a full-fledged colonial sociology. That was to come after him.<sup>27</sup>

Mackenzie's vast collection contains some drawings of gurus, sannyasis, and itinerant holy men. However, "View of Dindigul" is unusual in its foregrounding of a dialogue between a British redcoat and a robed Indian. The native appears to be a Muslim religious teacher, possibly a Sufi. In the background is the impressive fort of Dindigul, built on the top of a rock formation in southern (the name *tintukkal* in Tamil means "bolster-shaped rock"). Looking like a Tuscan hilltown rendered through the techniques of the British school, the painting reveals several indeterminate structures within the walls of the fort, including possibly the temples to Mariamman, Vinayaka, and Muruga that are still extant there today. Tipu Sultan controlled this area and is said to have installed the Mariamman temple, although he was defeated by the British several years later at the battle of Seringapatam (Srirangapatna) in 1799.

However, the figures in the foreground are not engaged in a conversation about the fort, but yet another structure. They are both seated, with the North Briton as recipient of the information revealed by the authoritative indexical gesture made by the South Indian. The rock in the background resembles anything from a seated elephant to a gigantic conch shell—both iconographically more relevant for Hindu notions of the sacred than the local comparison of the rock to a bolster. Rather than gesturing to the magnificent rock, the obvious subject of the painting, the native points to the archaeological structures at the left (his right). These structures are likely Islamic, perhaps a mausoleum of a local Muslim chieftain or saint. There is an air of tranquil communion about the scene that does not suggest anything like the peremptory catalog description by Mildred Archer, "Colonel Mackenzie cross-examines a villager about a nearby tomb."<sup>28</sup> Imperial hindsight has clearly infected the catalog description with the suggestion of a quasi-judicial prosecution where the native is being held to account, but does a careful look at the image suggest, in part, the more lyrical portrait of a transculturated guru and chela, an Indian religious teacher and a European disciple? That might be too much of an interpretive stretch in the opposite direction. Although Mackenzie is clearly taller and unable to sit in the Indian's posture (appearing to balance on a rock with his feet disrespectfully pointing outward), he communicates a mixture of authority and deference toward his interlocutor, as does also the Indian. While the officer gazes curiously (and uncomfortably) at the monument, the fakir (entirely at ease in his surroundings) is the source of its meaningful relevance, and intent on communicating this (in no uncertain terms) to the officer. The suggestion is

that neither figure can do without the other, and that both are needed for the scene's intended viewer. The slight disharmony between the two figures, with one expounding to the other, and the other rapt in the object rather than his interlocutor, allows a reflection on several outcomes.

While the zoomorphic rock-fort is the spectacular and arresting image in the background, suggesting the archaic and picturesque mysteries of monumentality expressed through paintings and etchings by William Hodges and Thomas and William Daniell during this period, the human interchange in the foreground is more prosaic. Evoking contemporary time, the figures in the foreground stage a moment of simple revelation. The conversation with the native elicits the topographical, architectural, and possibly religious information that Mackenzie was after. Yet, the color and pattern of the clothing of the Indian figure visually echo the rock in the background, connecting the "ancient" Hindu landscape to the "medieval" Muslim exponent, and through him to the British officer, emblem of the busy surveyor of "modern" India. In this manner, the painting becomes an anticipatory allegory of British historiography's tripartite periodization of Indian history that was still to follow.

In 1817, Mackenzie wrote lyrically about the Brahman informant who greatly assisted his Mysore survey several years later: "the connexion then formed with one person, a native and a Bramin, was the first step of my introduction into the portal of Indian knowledge; devoid of any knowledge of the languages myself, I owe to the happy genius of this individual, the encouragement and the means of obtaining what I so long sought. . . . From the moment the talents of the lamented Boria [by then deceased] were applied, a new avenue to Hindoo knowledge was opened."<sup>29</sup> As this quotation reveals, the linguistically incapable Mackenzie would need to have relied on the early locutions of Guru English to make sense of his environment, and he is deeply grateful to his native instructor. Perhaps the person strikingly present in the Dindigul image is a Muslim version of Boria, serving the role of the Brahmanical (all too Brahmanical) intermediary or translator. It is through such translations that Guru English will later become one of the primary modes of communicating Indian religion to outsiders.

A brief historical schema for the development of Guru English is necessary to explain the chronological sweep of the project, which ranges from the late eighteenth century of the image to the present. Taking stock of developments since the advent of the British in an early survey entitled *Modern Religious Movements in India*, J. N. Farquhar sees a great religious awakening beginning in India around 1800. Farquhar puts

forward a threefold answer to the question of why the awakening began at that time rather than any other:

The answer is that the Awakening is the result of the cooperation of two forces, both of which began their characteristic activity about the same time, and that it was quickened by a third which began to affect the Indian mind a little later. The two forces are the British government in India as it learned its task during the years at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, and Protestant Missions as they were shaped by the Serampore men and Duff; and the third force is the work of the great Orientalists [Colebrooke, Wilson, and Tod]. The material elements of Western civilization have had their influence, but apart from the creative forces, they would have led to no awakening.<sup>30</sup>

Following from Farquhar's analysis of neoreligious awakening, but generating some different periodizations for the anglophone representations of Indian religions (and especially Hinduism), I see the evolution of Guru English as occurring in three distinct phases corresponding to the political rule of the subcontinent. These would be as follows: (a) the period of the East India Company (1757–1857); (b) the period of the British Raj (1858–1947); and (c) the postcolonial period (1947–the present). The first phase could be subdivided into two parts: (i) 1757–1805, when the work of the first-wave orientalist was consolidated; and (ii) 1806–57, when the rise of utilitarianism repudiated or sidelined orientalist agendas with the anglicists triumphing over the orientalist by 1835. However, it was in the heyday of anglicism that Raja Rammohun Roy provided the first sustained native voice in Guru English through his inception of the Brahma Samaj while in dialogue with European and American Unitarians. The second phase, of the formal period of the British Raj, could also be subdivided into two parts. An important period was (i) 1858–1919, when first-wave nationalism as well as cosmopolitan syncretisms such as the Brahma Samaj, Theosophy, and the Ramakrishna Mission reinterpreted and modernized Hinduism in English, even as orientalism was greatly revived as high Indo-European philology under scholars such as Max Müller and Monier Monier-Williams. The second part of this period, (ii) 1920–47, saw a partial disappearance of Guru English as the nationalist sway overwhelmed other religious-cosmopolitan agendas with the great success of political Gandhianism—even though these cosmopolitan agendas continued to exist below the surface. Theosophy made inroads in Asia, Europe, and the Americas at least until the late 1920s, even as it became more common for the first wave of gurus and yogis to proselytize in the United States. The third, and final, post-independence phase could again be split into two parts of dormant and active religious cosmopolitanism.

The immediate post-independence years, (i) 1947–65, were a period of religious intensification in South Asia (with the partition and its aftermath and significant territorial and military conflicts). Also underway was a subtler preparatory phase among individuals and movements for South Asian proselytization of the rest of the world alongside state-sponsored explorations of secularism. In the most recent period, of (ii) 1966–the present, the guru phenomenon exploded worldwide, after first forming a beachhead in the United States and becoming one accepted component of so-called New Age religions. It was in this final part (since the mid-1960s) when gurus became entirely commonplace in the West, whether it took the form of seeing Hare Krishnas distribute their literature in airports and on the street, learning about transcendental meditation techniques at the office, or encountering competing schools of yoga among the exercise choices at the local health club. Guru English ultimately took on the appearance of the “lifestyle” choice it has come to represent, as a form of domesticated xenotopia within the West and beyond, or what has also been called “the post-colonial exotic.”<sup>31</sup>

Orientalist rediscoveries concerning Indian religion, and the religious syncretism and imperial cosmopolitanism of groups such as the Theosophists formed an important underlay of the Indian nationalist movement even when its goals were ostensibly secular. Annie Besant, longtime president of the Theosophical Society, also served for one year as the president of the Indian National Congress. The nationalist movement’s two best-known leaders—Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru—had both been exposed to Theosophy in their youth. While Nehru remained largely atheistic and secular throughout his life, Gandhi turned to his version of nonviolent Christianized Hinduism as a personalized politics when he returned to India from South Africa. But it is important to note that even “Bapu”—the acknowledged father of the modern Indian nation—developed his creed after being stimulated by initial encounters with Theosophy in England:

Towards the end of my second year in England I came across two Theosophists, brothers and both unmarried. They talked to me about the Gītā. They were reading Sir Edwin Arnold’s translation—*The Song Celestial*—and they invited me to read the original with them. I felt ashamed, as I had read the divine poem neither in Sanskrit nor Gujarati. . . .

The brothers also recommended *The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold . . . and I read it with even greater interest than I did the Bhagavat Gītā. Once I had begun it I could not leave off. They also took me on one occasion to the Blavatsky Lodge and introduced me to Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant.<sup>32</sup>

While many historians see a double movement in Indian religion from colonial rule and orientalism to modernizing revivalism and nationalism, it is necessary to add to this account a third step: cosmopolitanism, diaspora, and the postnational futures of religious renewal. A language that was produced in the crucible of colonial contestation and modernizing transformation did not stay uniquely in the confines of the sphere within which it arose. The movement from (British) empire to (Indian) nation inexorably led also to and through (transnational) cosmopolitanism.

Enlightenment metanarrative, which proclaims the birth of modernity in the decline of religion, is put on the defensive when faced with religiously based collectivities. When religion reenters the political sphere (as for example, the European Christian Democrats), it is seen as a conservative social phenomenon that has made its peace with a secularized and democratized polity. However, the counterexamples are many. The entries of the Hindu Right into democratic politics in India, and the religious Right in the United States and Israel are also paralleled by the consolidation of Islamist neopatriarchies in several countries from Iran to Egypt to Indonesia. The outcome of religion's reentry into democracy (just as that of secularism's supposed defeat of religion) can never be stable or predictable. As Talal Asad has argued persuasively, the secular and the religious have always coexisted as constitutive forces of social order. While *secularity* as epistemic category exists everywhere alongside religious conceptions of the world, *secularism* is a more modern political phenomenon whose goal is to keep religion at bay and purge its role in precise areas such as civil law, politics, and governmental policymaking.<sup>33</sup> The embrace of secularism—after all, a kind of state religion especially since the French Revolution—has led to state-sponsored normative orthodoxies that are very much on the defensive against religious revivalism in countries as different as France, Turkey, or India. In the United States, constitutional history points to an oscillation between two different institutionalizations of secularism—one based on seventeenth-century notions of the passive toleration of religious difference and expression (the conservative approach) and the other similar to the more aggressive “French” idea of antireligious state policy that paradoxically validates by inversion the Christian religion that it has evacuated from that public sphere (the liberal approach). Various well-meaning secularists inadvertently recreate paradoxically what they most seem to combat, by putting their faith in reason, whereas religious believers had put their faith in the divine. To avoid this contradiction (whereby even atheism begins to resemble a religion), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests that we can find the secular that is not a *secularism* only by adopting a deconstructive

approach of “detranscendentalizing the radical other (of the divine) into figurative instrumentality”—in other words, by paying much closer attention to the idiom of religious belief, especially when this idiom is turned away from theological or divine performance into marking the boundary of the lived everyday.<sup>34</sup>

Debates about the relationship between nationalism and culture prove that, even when defined as secular, the category of culture is deeply inflected by latent religious markers that become manifest in particular situations—as can be seen the world over in the ideological battles concerned with religion in the schools or opposition to state-imposed normativity in areas of clothing, dress, and physical appearance (Sikh turbans, Muslim headscarves, Jewish yarmulkes, Christian crosses, and the like). Prescient in his critique of Benedict Anderson’s modular and optimistically secular notion of postcolonial nationalism, Partha Chatterjee has argued that the postcolonial subject concedes modernity and progress narratives to the West but holds the nation dear as some kind of atavistic, premodern, and nostalgic religious form, which is then appropriately inflected with ethnic and regional markers. In this regard, it might appear that Partha Chatterjee’s work is a long paraphrase of Bankim’s dictum discussed earlier. While Chatterjee’s criticism affords a better understanding of South Asia’s religion-inflected politics, its model of nationalism is perhaps unnecessarily pessimistic, even as Anderson’s modular account of nationalism is perhaps optimistic about the triumph of nationalism as secularism and the ease of political transformation following that triumph. Anderson’s revision of his own position is also an interesting development: now he characterizes popular pre-independence nationalisms as forms of unbounded seriality that are universalistically potent but which later become ethnic separatisms only when nationalisms acquire a state and exercise bounded serialities in the form of censuses, and also when long-distance nationalisms fuel reified forms of ethnic particularisms. However, if Anderson’s description of nationalism helps us understand some of its secular bourgeois variants, and Chatterjee’s model is best for mapping South Asian religious nationalism as the pathology of a permanently scarred outcome, neither of their approaches enables us to understand the extensive transnational outreach of South Asian religious cosmopolitanism. In any case, that would be faulting them for what is an epiphenomenon to their projects even though it is central to the concerns of this book.<sup>35</sup>

If we turn outside South Asia to a social-anthropological approach to the Hindu diaspora, such a shift is also only partially revealing. The spread of Guru English as a linguistic phenomenon is far in excess of its countable demographic collateral: according to one such study, there

are about twelve million Hindus outside South Asia (and only over nine million if Indonesia were excluded). Other studies have delineated the diasporic impact of the recent rise of religious fundamentalism and the continuing impact of orientalism on the study of South Asian religion.<sup>36</sup> However, this book analyzes some of the consequences of the religious cosmopolitanism that originated in South Asia and that has managed to attain considerable global visibility before and alongside the developments of domestic South Asian politics. Focusing on this flow is not meant to preclude grounded analyses of South Asian religion which have specific purchase on their object of knowledge. This study can, however, be taken to be an important supplement to those that have drawn the picture of recent religious developments exclusively within South Asia. While it is helpful to study the sociology of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, or Jaina identity within minority communities outside the sacred geography that anchors Hinduism as the majoritarian religion of a South Asian environment, such an approach is surely quite limited by its empiricist reconstruction of communities as stable objects of analysis, alongside their requisite complexity and transformation. Tracking a discourse is a more subtle, and potentially elusive venture, because this kind of flow doesn't always leave telltale signs or inhabit mental landscapes exclusively, or even predominantly. Of course, as these structures become subtler, mapping their agency likewise poses a harder task. Arjun Appadurai's cartographic metaphors regarding postmodern disjuncture and difference are also relevant to this issue. Guru English, while it participates in the ethnoscapas or population movements that are reshaping the globe, also marks an important presence in the mediascapas and the ideoscapas, or the representational and the ideological apparatuses. A set of images, representations, and vernacular expressions and colloquialisms, animated by Guru English, has considerable extranational impact and resonance. Movies, literature, and cultural forms using religious discourses synthesizing Asian religious themes have populated Western and global representational flows as never before. Guru English also participates in what Appadurai calls the technoscapas and the financescapas, as some of the later chapters in this book—on the South Asian nuclear standoff, the Rushdie affair, and the literary sociology of gurus—argue.<sup>37</sup>

The six chapters that follow can be characterized as describing instances of overlapping periodizations of Guru English. Provisionally, these categories could be named neoclassicism, Romanticism, modernism, nuclearism, postmodernism, and New Ageism respectively. While the chapters range chronologically, the first half of the book

deals with legacies of the pre-independence period and the second half with independence and after. Two different models of periodization are implicit in the two halves—labels such as neoclassicism, Romanticism, and modernism recall to mind extant conventions of Western periodization, whereas the periodizations involved in the second half—nuclearism, postmodernism, and New Ageism are more controversial and contested as temporal markers, naming one kind of modern apocalyptic millenarianism and two distinct postmillenarian outcomes. The more compressed or telescoped character of the book as it approaches the present—given that the last three chapters deal with some aspects of the post-World War II period—also undoubtedly demonstrates the arbitrary nature of periodizing gestures. I propose these periodizing terms for heuristic reasons. While they cannot entirely be avoided, it is important to stress that these periodizations are speculative proposals rather than positings of deep ontological divisions between radical or discontinuous epistemes of historical temporality.

The first chapter explores the impact of the orientalists and the resultant reaction-formation of a number of indigenous voices with diasporic appeal, including Brahmos such as Rammohun Roy and Keshub Chunder Sen, Vedantists such as Vivekananda, and yoga exponents such as Yogananda. These figures are neoclassical in that they reinvent continuous tradition under the sign of the advent of modernity. Through some of these individual cases, I narrate the existence of the discourse of Guru English from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. It is indeed moot whether neoclassicism of this sort can ultimately be separated very carefully from Romantic nationalism.

More through a principle of convenience and slightly different philosophical emphasis rather than that of radical separation from the figures treated in the first, the second chapter examines the parallel implication of Guru English into a literary form of late colonial Romanticism. Writers such as Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Rudyard Kipling, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo are shown to contribute richly to this enterprise, one that participates in the Janus-faced project of Romantic nationalism. Looking back atavistically, Romantic nationalism also generates a wholly modern idiom that is produced prosthetically. These important early figures are but the very beginning of a whole range of Indian and foreign romanticists and romanticizers of the subcontinent's religious wealth. The eternal rediscovery of Indian spiritual and religious mysteries continues unabated, whether in travelogues, tourist brochures, pulp fiction and media, or even occasionally in religious anthropology.

The third chapter focuses on Theosophy and its critique, taking two

very important novels, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and G. V. Desani's *All about H. Hatterr*, as the vehicle for this investigation. This chapter shows how modernism helps these writers derive an ethics of destabilizing and satirical laughter when confronted with the creative obscurantism of religious innovators such as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. However, rather than document Joyce's "influence" on Desani, or conversely, attack those who thereby produce assessments of Desani's diminished creativity, this chapter focuses on the transcultural dynamics of both Joyce's and Desani's attitudes toward Eastern religions. The use of Hinduism and Buddhism (especially through a Theosophical lens in Joyce's case) makes for other narratives of cultural filiation. Desani's relationship to Joyce is one of creative affiliation, as is Salman Rushdie's, and affiliations such as these—which are voluntary and cross-cultural—can best be understood within the postcolonial frameworks of Guru English.

Following these three chapters, the second half of the book shifts to modern techno-millenarianism and its aftermath. The fourth chapter features the sublime rhetoric of nuclear weaponry since 1945, within which Guru English is also deeply implicated. The organizing intelligence behind the Manhattan Project that produced the atom bomb, Robert Oppenheimer, relied extensively on the *Bhagavadgītā*—not just personally, but publicly—to ascribe meaning to the creation of the genocidal weapon that would usher in the nuclear age. Yet the *Bhagavadgītā* was also paradoxically the favorite text of various apostles of nonviolence, from Thoreau to Gandhi. How is this possible? A brief textual analysis of the relevant sections of this ancient text will situate it within its imperial and postcolonial contexts. These contexts are deeply informed by the histories of genocide and nuclearism. Perceptions of the weaponry of mass destruction are always connected to other cataclysmic experiences of political conflict and massacre. I analyze the corresponding fallback to the "deep time" of religious imagery by nuclear strategists and antinuclear opponents, by warmongers as well as peacemakers, and by the state as well as the individual. The language of nuclear holocaust, a potent cryptoreligious and cosmopolitan discourse, brings genocide, nationalism, and technology together in terms of an ultimate de-differentiation of the separate spheres that modernism, despite all its epic heroism and parodic syncretism, could not keep apart.

The fifth chapter takes a look at the multiple contexts—of controversy, hybridity, apostasy, and parody—that surround the vexed reception of Salman Rushdie's satire of South Asian Islam, *The Satanic Verses*. Treating this episode as one of postmodern crossed connections that renders visible a logic of escalation inherited from nuclearism, and to

some extent also as an example of failed theosophistry, I emphasize the limits of Guru English (and indeed Mullah English as its parodic shadow-double). While some observers would want to make a more essentialist argument about Islam in relation to *The Satanic Verses*, I instead render visible the conceptual embedding of Rushdie's satire within South Asian syncretic religious contexts and identify the colonial legal apparatuses that he brings into our purview. This ludic relation to Islam is certainly a South Asian legacy Rushdie inherits, among others. While the notion of an Islam sitting within a Guru English might seem inadequate to those who want a fuller accounting of Islam (and the gamut of non-Hindu religions) in South Asia, I would argue that these overlaps are an important beginning to understand common lines of flight that are relevant for the cultural analysis being conducted through this book as a whole. Indeed, there is an immediate and valid objection to be addressed throughout about the "Hinduization" at work in Guru English that ought not to be symptomatically replicated in this critique, or collapse into just one particular form of culturalist accounting. However, as my discussion amply shows, Guru English is a conceptual umbrella that is more likely to be regarded as indiscriminate rather than exclusionary in terms of the religious phenomena it reassembles. In that respect, the concept may well be subject to the limitations and the perversions of the "Hindu Catholicity" that wryly characterize Mrs. Tulsi in V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*.

The sixth and final chapter turns to an analysis of several modern gurus and the fabrication of a new cosmopolitan lingua franca in New Age enterprises. Episodes in the ongoing saga of gurus in the West are taken up for investigation, including especially the cases of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Bhagwan Rajneesh (Osho), and Deepak Chopra. I deliberately pair these historical figures with their fictional counterparts from the works of V. S. Naipaul, John Updike, and Hanif Kureishi, in order to show how novelistic fiction and historical fact mutually anticipate and interrogate the meanings that circulate around these phenomena. Given the plethora of gurus and clients available for study, these particular instances—whether sociological or literary—are not held up as representative archetypes, but taken as provisional entry points into a whole range of populist trends. Gurus are to be studied more carefully for their transidiomatic suppleness, their rhetorical persuasiveness, their translatability, their commodifiability, and their consumability. Even a brief look at various "pitches" made by gurus at different historical moments, whether colonial or postcolonial, modern or postmodern, historical or literary, shows how versatile and mobile these discourses indeed are. Through Guru English, Madame Blavatsky claims to meet her Theosophical master at the great imperial exhibition

at the Crystal Palace in 1851, Swami Vivekananda makes his global career by way of an uninvited bravura performance at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, and Deepak Chopra jockeys for new readers through full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Observing gurus at work can provide us with very cogent insights into how religious vocabularies, market culture, and utopian desire intersect, in early, middle, and late modernity, and the dystopian futures of nuclearism are more than matched by the utopian projections of contemporary gurus. Or, is this distinction between utopia and dystopia no longer viable in a postapocalyptic world within which we observe the vacillations of economic, political, and religious phenomena?

A brief afterword rounds out the argument of the book, returning us to what is overall at stake, even as I make a few speculative observations on the directions that could not be taken given constraints of time, space, and personal interest. Ranging over two centuries, as well as barrelling on through religious practitioners, literary texts, and world-historical phenomena, this book has something for almost everyone. Such a venture resembles collections of insects in amber: a rendering into concrete of flights of fancy that nonetheless stay alive, in the air and through the brain, with the cadences of Guru English.