MODERN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS OF COLONIAL SOUTH ASIA: THE

ORIGINS OF REVIVAL AND REFORM

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James Allan Lax

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ABSTRACT

During the British colonial period of South Asia, religious movements such as Buddhist modernism and Hindu nationalism became powerful agents of resistance and change. These developments, shaped by the contrasting influences of Western cultural domination and the pervasiveness of preexisting social formations, proved to be an effective measure in unifying the colonies under a common purpose. By studying the parallel, but individual, progression of these two movements, we see that changing identity formations during the colonial period, were a consequence of a wide array of converging influences. Colonialism, modernity and reverse orientalism all become important factors that affected change. Examining the complexities of religious reform and revival also proves beneficial in determining avenues of resistance. Although colonies such as British India and Ceylon were facing a common subjugation, their responses were solitary and methodologically dissimilar. They used resources distinctly available to them, such as assembly, culture and religion, but in different ways.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Allan Lax received his undergraduate degree and military commission from Middle Tennessee State University in 2006. Due to his success in several combat leadership roles he was chose to become a military Foreign Area Officer. With a concentration on South Asia, James spent a year at the Defense Language Institute learning Urdu and subsequently represented the United States in attendance at the Pakistani Command and General Staff College in Quetta Pakistan. From August 2015 to December 2016 he attended Cornell, receiving a master's degree in Asian Studies. After obtaining his degree, he will return to United States Army where he will serve as a liaison and military diplomat representing the United States throughout South Asia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Introduction

During the British colonial period of South Asia, the development of organized religious movements became powerful agents of resistance and change. These developments of reform and revival, shaped by the contrasting influences of Western cultural domination and the pervasiveness of preexisting social formations, proved to be an effective measure in galvanizing the colonized populations. By investigating the way South Asian society and heritage changed while acknowledging multiple causalities, we can see how changing identity formations during the colonial period were a consequence of a wide array of converging influences. Among the complex interconnecting factors affecting change, religion stands out. It is essential, therefore, to understand the function of religion as an independent variable. In tracing the progression and diversity of religious movements occurring in South Asia during the 19-20th century, I present them as an underlying factor leading to the modern organization of South Asian society and its resistance to colonialism. My discussion is restricted, specifically, to the evolving practices of Buddhism and Hinduism that transpired during British colonial rule under two seminal movements, Buddhist modernism and Hindu nationalism.

How did colonies within South Asia respond to the pressures generated by the impact of colonialism? What were the resources used by individual colonies to confront the British, and were their actions a collective response? These are the questions I set out to examine in the following analysis. I argue that within British India and Ceylon, religion became a primary resource for the local population as a conduit for opposition

and change. Buddhist modernism and Hindu nationalism were successful products of this agency that developed in reaction to the mounting Western influences in South Asia during the nineteenth century. Although these two religious movements were operating in similar spaces and times and shared numerous other commonalities, their modes of opposition to British colonial subjugation were not the same: in both cases they were adversarial, but took different approaches. A comparison of their different responses will reveal various interconnections surrounding their evolution, including the impact of Orientalist perceptions, a modern socio-economic order, the British colonial government and Christian missionaries. Lastly, I conclude that religious change during the colonial era was not exclusively an outcome of Western cultural domination, but shaped by a convergence of influences impacted by preexisting social formations including historiography, Reverse Orientalism and Occidentalism.

Modernity: Buddhism and Anagarika Dharmapala

According to the Buddhist idea of "Impermanence", as defined by Rhys Davids, nothing in the world is permanent, including religious institutions.[1] Buddhism and Hinduism in South Asia were thus bound to change, and colonialism was a catalyst of this transformation. Colonialism was the means and medium by which Western perceptions of modernity were introduced to the Indian subcontinent. Modernity,

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[1] In Rhys Davids' *Buddhism: Its History and Literature*, pp. 123, he explains the theory of impermanence. "There is nothing, either divine or human, either animal, vegetable, or material, which is permanent. The state of an individual, of a thing or person, distinct from its surroundings, bounded off from them, is unstable, temporary, sure to pass away. It may last, as for instance in the case of the gods, for hundreds of thousands of years; or as in the case of some material things, for a few seconds only. But, in every case, as soon as there is a beginning, there begins also, that moment, to be an ending."

portrayed as rational, scientific and result oriented, was more than just a perspective, it became an agent of change. Its influence was far reaching and was slowly becoming the regulating factor within a wide array of institutions, eventually making its way to religion. Some recognizable characteristics of the "modern" religious label included: (1) using modern technology such as print to bolster religious activism against colonial or Western institutions; (2) establishing religious associations based on Western models to organize religious efforts to combat Christian missionaries and halt the degeneration of indigenous religious authority; (3) associating religion with rationalism and science; (4) moving away from ritualistic forms of practice and promoting a canonized textual authority.[2]

Although religion and modernity are two seemingly disjointed terms, their association has become customary in the current scholarship on Buddhism and Hinduism (McMahan 2015; Batchelor 2011; Braun 2011). The idea of Buddhism as a modern religion started with Western hypotheses that characterized Buddhism as rational, philosophical and forward-looking. In depicting Buddhism as modern, Edwin Arnold's The Light of Asia (1885) became one of the best-known books exposing Buddhism to Western society. From Arnold's perspective it is evident that his portrayal of Buddhism is not only didactic but promotional. Within his interpretation of Buddha's life and religious principles, some perceptions provided by the author fit the Western mold of modern civilization and religiosity. For example, Buddha's teachings are

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[2] Anne Blackburn, *Locations of Buddhism* pp. 199.

depicted as predominantly secular and have a rationalistic approach to ritual.[3] His

expansion of the idea of the equality of all beings to include animals lends support to the

ideal of a caste-free society.[4] Moreover, he portrays Buddha's teachings as having the

facility to influence organizational policy such as freedom of the oppressed and the

possibilities of fundamental liberation.[5] The Western definition of Buddhism, not

unilaterally accepted in Ceylon, eventually began to garner support from prominent

Buddhist leaders such as Anagarika Dharmapala.

     Anagarika Dharmapala (Don David Hevavitarana, 1861-1933) was from a

wealthy Singhalese family, and rose to become one of the most influential

representatives of Buddhism in the world and the primary figure for Buddhist modernism

in South Asia. He was not always in support of the colonial figures and their agenda, but

he did respect English society and wanted to emulate their progression.[6] In *Rescued

from the Nation,* Steven Kemper recounts the life of this great monk and some of his

contributions to Buddhism, highlighting Dharmapala's relationship with the British

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[3] Throughout Prince Siddhartha's journey in becoming Buddha, he discounts the irrational rituals of self-maiming and animal sacrifice. Edwin Arnold, *Light of Asia, pp. 126,141*

[4] "Pity and need make all flesh kin. There is no caste in blood. Which runneth of one hue, nor caste in tears, which trickle salt with all; neither comes man to birth with tilka-mark stamped on the brow, nor sacred thread on neck. Who doth right deed is twice-born, and who doeth ill deeds vile." Edwin Arnold, *Light of Asia,* p. 152.

[5] Several scholars including T W Rhys Davids and Gananath Obeyesekere present the discussion of Western influence on the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon, in depth. Refer to Davids, "The Place of Buddhism in the Development of Religious Thought." and "Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka", by Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere.

[6] "Europe is progressive. Her religion is kept in the background for one day of the week, and for six days her people are following the dictates of modern science. Sanitation, aesthetic arts, electricity, etc., are what made the Europeans and Americans great. Asia is full of opium eaters, ganja smokers, degenerating sensualists, superstitious and religious fanatics. Gods and priests keep the people in ignorance." Quote from Dharmapala. Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A social history from ancient Benares to modern Colombo*, pp. 193

Empire and concluding that he fervently wanted to spread Buddhism to England.[7]

Dharmapala envisioned Britain as the continued leading power spanning the 20th

century and believed the country had the potential to influence all of humanity.[8] Thus, if

the English gained a veneration for Buddhism, they could help in the proselytization of

the religion. He believed the gift of Buddhism would have a trickledown effect which

would eventually lead to the benefit of Sri Lanka and India through the process of

reciprocity. His ultimate goal in achieving this missionary work was to build a *vihara*

(Buddhist monastery) within England. This monastery would serve the purpose of a

religious control center from which Buddhism could flourish. For expanding this

relationship, Dharmapala understood that Buddhism needed to be promoted as more

progressive and modern.

Distinguishing what is "modern" is highly debated within academia. Therefore,

not surprisingly, defining Buddhist 'Modernism' becomes a difficult task.[9] To blur the

lines even more, some scholars see modern Buddhism as a revival of the Buddha's

original teachings in contrast to the continuing traditions of Buddhism that had evolved

over time. Thus, according to Donald Lopez:

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[7] Dharmapala became a traditional Buddhist monk only in the late 1920s, a few year before his death in 1933. After his adoption of name "Anagarika Dharmapala" and before he became a traditional monk with a new name "Devamitta," he was considered to be a Buddhist activist neither a monk nor an ordinary person.

[8] Through further research of Dharmapala's diary and other writings, the author concludes that his admiration for England only extended to the mainland governance. He felt that England was not being truly exemplified by their appointed representatives in the colonized states of India and Sri Lanka. Instead of bringing civilization to the unrefined, the actions and bureaucracy that were developing were causing a regression to the countries and their citizens.

Steven Kemper *Rescued from the Nation.* pp. 356

[9] Anne Blackburn, in her preface to *Locations of Buddhism* has provided a similar argument to the complexities of understanding forms of modernity within Buddhism. In order to gain a true perspective, she understands that more research is required specifically on a more human scale to grasp the importance of local agency.

Modern Buddhism rejects many of the ritual and magical elements of previous forms of Buddhism, it stresses equality over hierarchy, the universal over the local, and often exalts the individual above the community, it does not see itself as the culmination of a long process of evolution, but rather as a return to the origin, to the Buddhism of the Buddha himself.[10]

Lopez provides several examples and culturally specific applications of Buddhist modernism that were intrinsically tied to Western notions of religious modernity. These included concepts such as reason, science, universalism, individualism, tolerance and the rejection of religious orthodoxy. This interpretation of Buddhism, conveniently, during the colonial period, served as a religious outlet which coupled traditional spirituality with rationalism. Moreover, the formulation of Buddhism in this manner, served as a champion against religious hegemony, commonly associated with universal religions, and was considered an advocate of modern scientific theories including quantum physics, relativity and evolution.

In *Buddhism Beyond Borders*, David McMahan provides an additional outlook on Buddhist modernism, as he discusses the origins and validity of Buddhism's modern label. In his opinion, the modernity of Buddhism has been erroneously branded as a Western manifestation founded under the direction and objectives of the Orientalist movement. Instead, he argues, the evolution of Buddhist modernity is more complex. He states:

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[10] Donald Lopez, *A Modern Buddhist Bible*. pp. ix

Many very modern and modernizing societies do not, in fact, resemble Western Europe or the United States in morals, media, government, and attitudes toward science; rather, they have taken up these features of modernity in unique ways determined by their own preexisting social formations.[11]

This phenomenon of preexisting social formations, he argues, can also characterize the modern evolution of Buddhism. When reviewing McMahan's work regarding the modernity of Buddhism, he disagrees with Lopez on one key observance; Western culture and its influence on the formulation and progression of what is now understood as Buddhist modernism.[12]

In the nineteenth century, there was a growing Western perception that conventional Buddhist and Hindu practices throughout South Asia were being performed incorrectly. This was a result of Christian missionary and orientalist writers. For example, "On Buddhism," written by the missionary Rev. Daniel Gogerly in 1845 argued that Buddhism was being contaminated due to a lack of consideration of historical and religious texts. Instead of following one canonical source, religious practice and rituals were handed down inaccurately through generations of oral transmission. "On Buddhism" gives us clear indication that during the British colonial period Eastern religions were scrutinized for not adhering to Protestant principles of orthodoxy, which highlight scripture itself. According to Gogerly:

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[11] David McMahan, "Buddhism and Multiple Modernities." pp. 182
To further his argument of multiple modernities, McMahan reflects on the progression of Buddhism across three distinct examples: American and European educated class, Tibetan community in Exile, and lastly the Peoples Republic of China. In each of these examples McMahan shows how Buddhism, in a regional context, has been shaped to conform to the social and political necessities of the referenced time period.
[12] For further discussion on this two sided discussion see, C. A. Bayly's, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia.*

Many of the dissertations on the subject which have been presented to the public appear to be defective, one reason of which may be that there has been too much desire to theorize, without a sufficient investigation of original documents. In doing this we must not so much regard the Commentaries as the Text, the former being confessedly much more modern than the latter.[13] They are of use, but are not to be implicitly relied on.[14]

The gist of the argument that he will make—that text trumps ritual—[15] corresponds to the popular Orientalist platform of deritualization[16] and furthermore complements Lopez's line of reasoning which links Buddhist modernism to the doctrine presented by the original Gautama Buddha. Although Orientalism and works such as Gogerly's were recognized as major inspirations within the evolution of modern understandings of Buddhism, not all scholars agreed on the all-encompassing impact of their influence. Subscribing to the ideas previously mentioned by McMahan, some researchers (Chatterjee 1993; Blackburn 2010; Hallisey 2007) believed that religious reform and revival was not dominated by Western philosophy but developed as a consequence of calculated assimilation.[17]

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[13]The belief that the older the text the more accurate or the "historicist approach" is best described by Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism."

[14] Daniel J. Gogerly, "On Buddhism."

[15] I use the term *ritual* to characterize the wide spectrum of Buddhist worship occurring on different echelons within the Buddhist society. These worship practices can be dramatically different from each other depending on demographic influences.

[16] Gregory Schopen in "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism," pp. 14, presents an argument on the dangers of only using text based study of Buddhism. He states, "It would appear, then, that the ascription of primacy to textual sources in Buddhist studies not only effectively neutralizes the independence of archaeological and epigraphical sources as witnesses, it also effectively excludes what practicing Buddhists did and believed from the history of their own religion."

[17] Arguing against the idea that Buddhist and Hindu religious practices and history received a complete alteration due to a colonial rupture, authors such as Anne Blackburn, Alicia Turner, and Frederick Cooper bring to light the innovative character of religious leaders and their use of indigenous resources and associations to inspire the collective community.

Hindu Nationalism and Swami Vivekananda

In the case of Hindu nationalism, Partha Chatterjee presents an argument similar to McMahan's. In *The Nation and Its Fragments*, he addresses this dichotomy of Western influence and traditional institutions. Disputing Benedict Anderson's perception of nationalism as Eurocentric, Chatterjee establishes a counter narrative highlighting the importance of what he considered to be an indigenous spiritual realm. Within this domain, cultural national identity maintains its sovereignty from the West through its application of language, drama, art, secondary education and family.[18] Contesting the idea that Western influences caused a complete cultural rupture, he states:

> Here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power.[19]

This two sided argument also applies to the label of 'modernity' endorsed by Hindu Nationalism. Like Buddhist modernism, its application was subject to a wide spectrum of motivations. For example, Rammohan Roy, one of the original reformers of Hinduism, envisioned modern Hinduism analogous to that of a successful purging of its vulgar

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[18] Examples of spiritual domain, provided by Chatterjee, include the use of language, Bengali School of Art Movement, new network of secondary schools, Bengali drama and the advent of traditional family and modern woman. Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments, pp. 7-9.
[19] Partha Chatterjee, *Nations and its Fragments*. pp. 6.

elements. His ideas infused Western rational thought with cultural progressiveness. He believed eliminating traditional Hindu rituals such as Sati, polygamy, child marriage and idol worship were essential steps for Hinduism to become a universal religion accepted on the world stage. Swami Vivekananda, on the other hand, believed Hinduism was already a universal religion and the only one capable of encompassing all religions within its unique belief system. His ideas on modernity were deeply rooted in individual subjectivity and self-mastery, which were developed through his association with Ramakrishna. He developed what could be described as a form of Dialogic Hinduism, which incorporated European religious values while facilitating Hindu reform and conservative initiatives.[20]

Like the Modern Buddhists, India's Hindu revivalists were insistent on shedding their traditional, non-rational image. Religious leaders such as Swami Vivekananda and others were searching for the link that could help Hinduism acquire a "universal label" without completely altering its fundamental core values. However, finding a common platform within Hinduism proved challenging. Paul Bowen in *Themes and Issues in Hinduism*, conceptualizes the difficulties in trying to categorize Hinduism when he states:

> Hinduism has no founder and is neither a prophetic nor a creedal faith; it has authoritative texts, such as the Veda and the *Puranas*, but none are exclusively accepted; it has no unifying structure, doctrine or dogma; and furthermore its

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[20] Shamita Basu. *Religious Revivalism as National Discourse*. Conclusion

understanding of the divine/absolute encompasses polytheism, henotheism, monotheism, monism and atheism.[21]

Due to India's extremely pluralistic society, religious reform needed a unifying factor that could overcome the various socio-cultural barriers existing throughout India, including caste, class, language and ethnicity. Furthermore, it needed to project strength and organization. The strong, unifying element proved to the concept of the nation, which became the basis of a new form of religion. It was eventually labeled "Hindu Nationalism" and was successful in maintaining and protecting its religious traditions while projecting modern attributes.

By the third decade of the 20th century, there existed three distinct organizations founded on Hindu nationalistic principles: the *Arya Samaj* (Noble society), the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (National Volunteer Organization), and the Ramakrishna Mission. The Arya Samaj was established in 1875 within the educated class of Punjab and predates the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) by more than 50 years. The original motive of the founder, Dayananda Saraswati, in forming this organization was not nationalistic principles or religious revival; instead, his intention was sooner religious reform. His philosophies, influenced by Western religious fundamental practice, contested what he considered degenerate Hindu practices, including image worship and ritualism.[22] Dayananda's reform initiatives also encompassed the development of a Hinduized religious scriptural canon and spiritual revelations. The membership of the

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[21] P. Reid-Bowen, *Themes and issues in Hinduism*. pp. 2
[22] Daniel Gold, "Organized Hinduisms." pp. 534

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Arya Samaj grew to nearly 1,500,000 followers at the time of Independence in 1947, but due to the devastations of Partition, the organization lost nearly half of its membership. By the late 20th century, the principles of Arya were no longer associated with Hindu Nationalism and existed only as a religious based ideological movement.

The RSS, founded by Keshavrao Baliram Hedgewar, was established on the principles of nationalism, loyalty, discipline and duty to one's country. Unlike the Arya who looked to the Vedic scriptures for the purpose of reform, Hedgewar focused on militarization and community building, finding inspiration from heroic legends such as that of Shivaji, leader of the 17th century Maratha Empire. The RSS, successful in promoting its ideology of Hindu revitalization, boasted nearly 2,000,000 members by the end of the 20th century.[23] In the late 1970s, the RSS began to develop their political wing, and was associated with the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (Indian People's Party) under the *Sangh Parivar* (Family of Sangh). The relationship between these organizations flourished and endured. In modern India, they continue to be the face of Hindu nationalist identity.[24]

The Ramakrishna Mission was founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897. Like Anagarika Dharmapala, Vivekananda came from a family whose economic status

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[23] Daniel Gold, "Organized Hinduisms." pp. 535

[24] The BJP, originally formed out of the ashes of the political party Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) in 1980, has risen to astronomical heights. Its first commitment, which is recognized in the party constitution, is nationalism and national integration. Although secular activist would strongly disagree, from the viewpoint of national integration, India has made tremendous strides. On the other hand, this core commitment for the BJP party, can also be looked at as their greatest demise. The BJP ideologically supports socialist themes and secular equality, as stated in their constitution, but their record in regards to these principles has proven otherwise, beginning with their involvement in the Ayodhya Movement.

afforded him the opportunity of an English primary school education. In his early years he was greatly influenced by the philosophies indicative of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, an offshoot of the original ideologies of the Brahmo Sabha movement started by Rammohan Roy.[25] He later became a disciple of the nineteenth-century saint, Ramakrishna Paramhansa. The mission is known primarily for its focus on humanitarian initiatives and its connection with the monastery order of the Ramakrishna Math. Vivekananda's success was propelled with his performance at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 and he grew to become one the most influential figures in the revival of Hinduism and the advent of religious nationalism. He celebrated India as the birthplace of spirituality and philosophy and spent numerous years lecturing throughout India. His primary argument was that Indian nationalism and unity through religion was the only way to return India to its past glory. He states,

> Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition of the immense wealth poured in by trade, of the power and spread of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of physical liberty, the Hindu mind does not understand it. Touch him on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the infinite, on spiritual freedom, the lowest peasant, I am sure, is better informed in India than many a so-called philosopher in other lands.[26]

In regards to the West, Vivekananda denounced materialism and addressed the need for cultural and religious assimilation as opposed to domination.[27] Through his concept

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[25] Rammohan Roy's Brahmo Sabha movement also known as the "One God Society," is considered the first Hindu reform movement within India. It was established in 1828 to promote common worship and religious/social reforms in India. The major difference between the early Sabha movement and the later Arya Samaj was based on the interpretation of Vedic infallibility. For further reading on Brahmo Sabha and their contestation of the infallibility of the Vedas see Antony Kolencherry's, *Universality of Modern Hinduism*. pp. 16-32

[26] B. G. Gokhale, "Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism." pp. 38

[27] In Vivekananda's closing speech at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) he addressed the need for assimilation as opposed to domination. He states, "Similar is the case with religion. The Christian is not to

of nation, portrayed as the greater self, his ideology was to become one of the major driving forces modernizing India under the platform of "Nationalism."[28]

Can a religion be labeled nationalistic? The answer to this question depends on how Hinduism is classified. Defining 'Hinduism' has become a point of contention among theologians and historiographers, due to the conceptual ambiguities connecting religion with historical ethnicity.[29] The success of the idea of the Hindu nation derives from the convergence of concepts "Hindu" and "nation". If measured against the modern nation-state theory, this may seem like a reasonable association, but the confusion, and for some, animosity, emerges when defining 'Hindu'. For nationalist leaders of the nineteenth century such as Vivekananda, "Hindu" was a reference to Indian civilization and remained separate from the institution of religion. In the early 20th century, however, with the proliferation of Hindu nationalism throughout India, the term increasingly found association with political and religious identities. 'Nation' on the other hand, was a foreign concept to the Indian subcontinent before the nineteenth century. The colonial government, for ease of rule, emphasized categorical division, primarily founded on caste lineage and religion.[30] For the purpose of administration, these delineations were

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become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."

[28] For an in depth discussion refer to chapters 2 of Shamita Basu's *Religious Revivalism as Nationalist Discourse.*

[29] The term Hinduism is relatively new, having been coined by British writers in the first decades of the 19th century, it refers to a rich cumulative tradition of texts and practices, some of which date to the 2nd millennium BCE or possibly earlier. If the Indus valley civilization (3rd–2nd millennium BCE) was the earliest source of these traditions, as some scholars hold, then Hinduism is the oldest living religion on Earth. http://www.britannica.com/topic/Hinduism

[30] According to Wendy Doniger in, *On Buddhism,* before the British began to categorize communities strictly by religion, few people in India distinguished themselves exclusively through their religious beliefs; their identities were segmented on the basis of locality, Language, caste, occupation and sect.

successful, but, conversely, they became the foundation for amplifying group identity and organizational power.[31]

Vivekananda's perception of nationalism, like similar understandings in Modern Buddhism, was developed to save an embattled tradition by retaining its autonomy. Hence, Buddhist modernism and Hindu Nationalism's retreat to fundamental origins, although seemingly a form of regression, served a strategic purpose in combatting the existing pressures being applied by the West. In contrast, not every aspect of the nationalist movement was culturally unifying. The most divisive example was witnessed through the discriminatory practices of Hindutva, developed by nationalist Vinayak Savarkar. The ideology of Hindutva, established in 1923 promotes Indian culture as a manifestation of Hindu values and defines "Hinduness" under the principles of a common nation, common race and common civilization. What makes this philosophy controversial is its reliance on religion as a determining factor and its close ties to what Christophe Jaffrelot would consider a rebranding of European influenced "ethnic nationalism."[32] Although religions such as Jainism and Buddhism were accepted under the auspices of "Hinduness," religions outside this cultural web (including Christianity and Islam), were considered to represent a foreign influence, and were therefore ostracized. Vivekananda's use of a nationalism grounded in a concept of spirituality had been a successful starting point in uniting the nation. This program, combined with

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[31] This concept is further explained in Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments*, pp. 211-213. He describes a "Passive Revolution" as a process involving a political-ideological program by which the largest possible nationalist alliance is built up against the colonial power.

[32] In *Hindu Nationalism.* pp. 5, Christophe Jaffrelot defined ethnic nationalism in terms of religious identity, a common language and race. He derived this comparison with Hindu nationalism by highlighting the popular Hindutva inspired motto, 'Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan'.

Hindutva and the power of political/religious organization, became a dominant factor in British India's push for independence, and remains as a global identifier of 21st century India.

Religious Reform: A Convergence of Influences

At the outset, religious reform in nineteenth-century South Asia was not founded on the principles of opposition. Its development, as Christopher Bayly notes, was sooner a consequence of converging influences stemming from early colonial interaction between the British and South Asians within existing non-colonial eighteenth-century social formations.[33] I thus argue that Buddhist modernism and Hindu nationalism, although heavily influenced by Western modernization, were not exclusively established as a result of outside influences. Moreover, as Daniel Gold suggests in *Organized Hinduisms*, for the natives, these developments served a strategic purpose in facilitating religious revival and combating Westernization.[34] In the remainder of this analysis, I compare the different approaches British India and Ceylon successfully used to counter Colonialism and highlight religious revival and reform.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Christian missionaries and orientalist scholars produced a steady stream of ideological literature asserting the need for Western-style governmental and religio-cultural reform initiatives. These began with providing English education, through which the influence of European social philosophy began to rewrite

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[33] C. A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia*
[34] Daniel Gold, "Organized Hinduisms." pp. 533

the standards of modern civilization and conventional religiosity. The reformist ideology

further challenged indigenous systems including political systems, academic discipline,

public administration and policy. This idea of refinement targeted the middle class and

promoted a diminution of traditional values and beliefs. At the end of the nineteenth

century, opposition began to strengthen in response to this method of aggressive

cultural transformation. In *After The Great Divide*, Andreas Huyssen provides an

explanation for the rise in South Asia's disenchantment, and subsequent hostility,

towards western modernity. In defining this movement he states:

> Modernism constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of
> contamination by its other; an increasing consuming and engulfing mass culture. Both
> the strength and weakness of modernism as an adversary culture derive from that fact.
> Not surprisingly this anxiety of contamination has appeared in the guise of an
> irreconcilable opposition.[35]

If we look back to the independence movements of British India and Ceylon, we see

that the 'anxiety of contamination' revealed by the colonized population was displayed in

political/economic spheres and through the promotion of ethnocentricity.[36] A further

divide between South Asia and the West stemmed from the 'contaminating' work of

Orientalists in the fields of politics, literature, religion, archaeology, etc. which gave rise

to the educated middle class' search for their own identity. The impact of Orientalism on

the changing culture of colonial South Asia is undeniable, but the formulation of

religious movements, I argue, was not so black and white. Although comparable in

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[35] Andreas Huyssen, *After The Great Divide.* pp. 7.
[36] Discussed later in this analysis, emphasis of self-sufficiency within religious and political movements became characteristic of 20th century South Asia.

disposition, Buddhist modernism and Hindu nationalism were shaped by a variety of converging influences including Colonialism, Occidentalism, Orientalism and most importantly Reverse Orientalism.

Orientalism

The term Orientalism refers to the East or "Orient" and is understood to be the summation of the Western scholarship, perceptions and representations of Eastern culture. This scholarship depicts all facets of cultural studies to include history, arts and literature. Today, orientalism is rarely discussed without mention of Edward Said who authored the book *Orientalism*, within which he gives a critical summation of this Western attitude. He understands orientalism as an instrument of domination by the West that has extended to the present day. This domination is exercised through economic, political and social coercion. According to Said:

> It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be.

> Yet the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does this for him-self, for the sake of his culture, in some cases for what he believes is the sake of the Oriental. This process of conversion is a disciplined one: it is taught, it has its own societies, periodicals, traditions, vocabulary, rhetoric, all in basic ways connected to and supplied by the prevailing cultural and political norms of the West.[37]

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[37] Edward Said, *Orientalism. pp. 67*

Richard Cohen gives an example supporting Said's characterization of orientalism in *Beyond Enlightenment*, where he provides a refutation to scholarship that gives the British credit for "discovering" Buddhism.[38] In the nineteenth century, archaeologists such as Alexander Cunningham and other Western scholars were in a race to find the origins of Buddhism. They presumed that with their success, they could authenticate Buddhism by providing the biography of Guatama Buddha to the Buddhist people. Providing this service would benefit Buddhism, and simultaneously give the West an informal authority over the religion. They were successful in this endeavor when Eugene Burnouf published his book, *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien* in 1844.[39] Although the objective of the West was accomplished, its results did not have the far reaching impact they expected.[40] To continue their pursuit of controlling the epistemological space in British India and Ceylon, the British focused heavily on education and language. Colonialism became a conquest of knowledge, which eventually led to discursive formations that gave colonizers the control of social and political spheres that included legislation, the economy, the military, and affairs of state.[41] The success of this conquest relied heavily on the projection of Western civilization as modern.

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[38] Richard Cohen, *Beyond Enlightenment.* pp. 26

[39] In 2010 his work was translated into English by Donald S. Lopez Jr. and Katia Buffetrille, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism.*

[40] In Toni Huber's *Holy Land Reborn*, pp. 252-335, the author gives an example of how Anagarika Dharmapala and the Maha Bodhi society were able to use colonial forms of knowledge and discovery to capture the epistemological space surrounding these new findings. They were able to use Buddha's biography as well as excavated temples and relics as geopolitical tools to promote Buddhism on a global level and increase pilgrimage networks.

[41] For a discussion on the power of language, see Bernard S. Cohn's *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, section 2 pp. 16-56

Anagarika Dharmapala and Swami Vivekananda understood British society to be modern. This modernity went beyond governance and religion, but could also be seen in economics and innovation. In response to this, I would argue, they began to develop an understanding of themselves and their religious aspirations in a self-reflective way inspired by contemporary Western models. Although they were fiercely against imperialism, this was not the totality of their Occidentalism.

Occidentalism

Occidentalism is a term taken as a counterpart to Orientalism, referring in a general way to the orientals' representations of the West. It is a multidimensional concept, however, the distinguishable features of which, much like those of modernity, are contingent and temporal. In order to understand the import of occidentalistist views in relations to modernism, one needs to recognize their dependence on each other. I suggest, then, that occidental views exhibited in British India and Ceylon during the colonial era were not solely a product of cause and effect. For example, we can easily assume that, due to the acts of treachery committed during colonialism, the natives' opinion of the West would be uniformly negative. In actuality, their opinions are not so clear cut. As we see through the journal entries of Anagarika Dharmapala, he did not have confidence that his people were civilized enough for self-government. In a clear divergence from his anti-colonial views, he stated that he hoped Ceylon would eventually "enjoy the happiness of self-government under the British Crown similar to

the Government of New Zealand."[42] Statements such as this foretell Sri Lanka's peaceful independence movement in the 20th century and show that the Orient's perceptions of the West were not wholly consumed with ideas of insurrection. Occidentalist views in Ceylon, then, were ambivalent and mostly reactionary, deeply affected by the Orient's acceptance of the superiority of Western society.

British India, on the other hand, underwent a defining moment in colonial history that marked a significant departure of Western veneration. The revolt of 1857 is considered the first "nationalist" uprising against British rule in India and the beginning of the colonial decline. However, it is a fact that Western ideals associated with universalism and assimilation were widely accepted in some segments of politics, economy and religion. This reception and inclusion of European philosophy in Indian religion could be seen as a sign of admiration toward the progressiveness of the West. Then again, scholars such as Daniel Gold suggest organized Hinduism and internal reform developed not in veneration, but were modern measures against competing Western Culture.[43] The multiplicities of British India make it hard to put a consensus on South Asian occidentalism during the colonial period, but evidence shows there was a steady decline of favorability toward the British leading up to the independence movements of the mid-20th century. Some of the major injustices during the British colonial era included unwarranted acts of violence such as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919), misappropriation of relics,[44] and the exploitation of natural resources.

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[42] Steven Kemper, *Rescued from the Nation.* pp. 318

[43] For a further discussion of this topic see Daniel Gold, "Organized Hinduisms." pp. 533

[44] Himanshu Ray's, *The Return of the Buddha Ancient Symbols for a New Nation*, he gives an in depth analysis of the archeological endeavors of the West during the colonial era. His investigation informs the audience of the

Equally offensive was the colonial support given to Christian missionaries. In the late nineteenth century, Keshab Chandra Sen directed a movement, challenging the Westernized reform initiatives of Rammohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj. He admired the rational ideal of Western religiosity, but realized that Christianity and its lack of conformity was unsuitable for India. He states:

> Who rules India?...You are mistaken if you think that it is the ability of Lord Lytton in the Cabinet, or the military genius of Sir Frederick Haines in the field that rules India. It is not politics, it is not diplomacy that has laid a firm hold of the Indian heart. It is not the glittering bayonet, nor the fiery cannon of the British army that can make our people loyal. No, none of these can hold India in subjection… That power, need I tell you, is Christ. It is Christ who rules British India, and not the British Government. England has sent out a tremendous moral force, in the life and character of that mighty prophet, to conquer and hold this vast empire.[45]

Among the South Asian colonies, Western cultural identity was shaped by the influences of ethnicity, caste, language and religion. The outcome of South Asian Occidentalism, therefore, progressed differently between the colonies. In British India, the upsurge in cultural and religious nationalism in combating colonialism exhibited an aggressive opposition to the West. The desire to develop a governance apart from Western influence led to attempts to decentralize economic and political power by developing indigenous rural resources.[46] Ceylon's Occidentalism, on the other hand, was more compliant. One of the more influential institutions was the *Sangha* (Buddhist

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destruction the West performed to ancient Buddhist historical sites to fulfill their own agenda of developing what they considered to be Buddha's history. He states, "In the search for relics and statuary, Cunningham and the Archaeological Survey of India filled museums with collections of sculptures and coins, but left the stupas as heaps of rubble." pp. 58

[45] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, pp. 41.

[46] Gandhi Socialism was an important movement formed in the 20th century. Gandhi's principles were heavily guided by self-sufficiency with the goal of establishing an egalitarian society free from exploitation. Although most people saw Gandhi's principles as a belief system that was mirrored in socialist ideology, other research suggests the foundations of his fundamental thought was established in direct opposition to the industrial revolution and the advent of capitalism.

community) and the monastic orders. Within the *Sangha* many of the leading monks such as Hikkaduve Sumangala were in favor of working with the colonial government. They believed that support from the colonial government was vital to the preservation of the *Buddha-sasana* (teaching, practice and doctrine of Buddhist).[47] Moreover, the West played a significant role in reviving Buddhism and provided a platform for it to reach the international community.

Colonialism

Christian missionaries such as Gogerly, previously mentioned, seemed threatening to many South Asians, primarily because they challenged Buddhism and Hinduism at every stratum: from its core teachings and historical texts to its everyday practice, missionaries were attempting to undermine the conviction of South Asian religious practice in an attempt to proselytize Christianity. Through previous works of Western orientalist scholars such as Sir William Jones and Henry Colebrooke, they were able to gain some textual knowledge and in some cases use this to their advantage. For example, in Ceylon it was determined that the teachings of Gautama Buddha were not recorded during his lifetime. Actually, the first writings defining Buddhism were carried out four to five hundred years after his death. Moreover, there is no factual evidence or accurate historical timeline of his life. From discrepancies such as this, detractors of Buddhism would argue that his proposed philosophies and truths

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[47] The sasana according to Hikkaduve was in a weakened state and this decline was partly attributed to the lack of royal patronage. In the precolonial Lankan era, the sub-divisions of the monastic order were united through their association with the Buddhist Kingship that presided over all monastic affairs including religious appointments and punishment. Since 1817 Lanka was completely under colonial rule and the separation of religion and administration practice by the colonial government severed the ties of royal patronage. See Blackburn, *Locations of Buddhism.* pp. 143-197

have, arguably, been exposed to other influences and therefore corrupted. To make matters worse, colonial governments strayed from their previous arrangements and began giving assistance to the colonial evangelist's mission by supporting Christian churches, schools and printing presses.[48] This, in turn, brought more grievance from the indigenous position.

For Buddhists in Ceylon the consequences of this betrayal was twofold. For centuries prior to Western colonization, Buddhist leaders retained the patronage of governmental rule. Under Theravada Buddhist practice, Kingship served an important role in the institution and organization of Buddhism. Royalty directed decisions on Buddhist administration and punishment as well as supported the monastery traditions. When the British colonial government instituted a complete disjunction from the prior alliance between Buddhism and the state, monastic affairs began to deteriorate. This became a determining factor in the gradual separation and mutual competition among the three important monastic orders within the colony. Already on their heels from their struggle with Christian missionaries and their governmental support waning, the institutional role of Buddhism in Ceylon began weakening, which opened an avenue for change. As Buddhist leaders began to confront Orientalism and the pressures applied by missionaries, the fundamental ideas of Buddhist modernism began to emerge.

Hindus on the other hand, as previously mentioned, chose nationalism to combat the pressures from the orientalist and missionaries. Why nationalism? When garnering

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[48] Anne Blackburn, *Locations of Buddhism*. Preface.

support, it has the ability to transcend caste and class, appealing to an extremely large population that explicitly associate Hinduism with more than just religious identity. According to Vivekananda, the common ground held by all Indians lay in their sacred tradition. He said, "The unity of religion, therefore, is absolutely necessary as the first condition of the future of India."[49] The concept of a Hindu nation unified by a broadly conceived Indic religious tradition came as a backlash to the original organized Hindu movements, such as the Brahmo Samaj, who were interested in universalizing Hinduism to all humankind. Vivekananda was able to use religion as a way to authenticate and protect Indian culture.

Nationalism, as a form of self-preservation, became a mainstay for India and was seen in the economic and political philosophies guiding India's forthcoming independence movement. Some examples include Mahatma Gandhi's approach to an egalitarian society and the political philosophy of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, the founder of the first nationalistic political party Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS).[50] In his written work, *Integral Humanism,* Deendayal states, "World unity and nationalism conflict with each other. Some advocate suppression of Nationalism for world unity whereas other regard world unity as a utopian ideal and emphasize national interest to

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[49] Rathna Reddy, *Political Philosophies of Swami Vivekananda.* pp. 150
[50] As a product of the colonial era, Mahatma Gandhi's principles were heavily guided by self-sufficiency and the fulfillment of needs in sharp contrast to materialism. In order to gain Socio-economic harmony, he believed a nation must first be free of exploitation and be characterized by equality of all people especially in political, economic, or social life. Although most people saw Gandhi's principles as a believe system that was mirrored in socialist ideology, other research suggests that the foundations of his fundamental thought was established in direct opposition to the coercive powers of the industrial revolution and the advent of capitalism.

the utmost."[51] Deendayal and the BJS' beliefs rested in the latter interpretation. He further states:

> We have set out with the determination to make this nation strong, happy and prosperous through the medium of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. Therefore, we must carry on practical programs for the nationalist reconstruction on this foundation. We have taken due note of our ancient culture. But we are no archeologists. We have no intention of becoming the custodians of a vast archeological museum. Our goal is not merely to protect the culture but to revitalize it so as to make it dynamic and in tune with the times. We must ensure that our nation stands firm on this foundation and our society is enabled to live a healthy, progressive and purposeful life. We shall have to end a number of traditions and set in reforms which are helpful in the development of values and of national unity in our society. We shall remove those traditions which obstruct this process.[52]

The ideals associated with Integral humanism as well as Gandhian socialist principles were important to the revitalization of Indian culture, the survival of Hinduism and the future success of India's governance, but it is important to note that they also encouraged reform. The advent of nationalism for Swami Vivekananda and the Hindus, as well as religious change orchestrated by the Modern Buddhists, were reactionary and primarily influenced by colonial pressure and Orientalism. However, I posit that, within this dynamic, Reverse Orientalism has also played a major role. For the purpose of this paper, Reverse Orientalism is separated into two categories, positive and negative.

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[51] D. Udadhyaya, Integral Humanism. Chapter 2
[52] D. Udadhyaya, *Integral Humanism*. Chapter 4

Reverse Orientalism

As in the social psychological concept of looking-glass self, in reverse orientalism, Eastern populations shape certain aspects of their identity based on interactions with Western orientalist perceptions.[53] Ideally, this interaction is positive in nature, based on some common grounds.[54] This form of reverse orientalism played a major role in the colonies of Ceylon and British India during the nineteenth century. During this period, the West and South Asia had a mutual desire for a productive exchange of cultural exploration, as well as representation. Charles Hallisey, an author who specializes in Buddhism and South Asia, classifies this mutual sponsorship as "elective affinity"[55] and attempts to find a relationship between the West and the Orient that is founded on shared interests. He states:

> We might also address our task more directly and look for relations between "the West" and "the Orient" that are not characterized by negation or inversion, but instead seem to represent a kind of "intercultural mimesis." That is, we should consider occasions where it seems that aspects of a culture of a subjectified people influenced the investigator to represent that culture in a certain manner.[56]

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[53] Looking-glass self is defined as a person's self that grows out of society's interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others.

[54] Another definition of Reverse Orientalism was given by Mehrzad Boroujerdi in *Iranian Intellectuals and the West.* "Reverse Orientalism is a discourse used by oriental intellectuals and political elites to lay claim to, recapture, and finally impropriate their 'true' and 'authentic' identity. This self-appropriation is almost invariably presented as a counter knowledge to Europe's oriental narrative…First and foremost, orientalism in reverse uncritically embraces orientalism's assumption of a fundamental ontological difference separating the natures, peoples, and cultures of the Orient and the Occident." pp. 12.

[55] Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism." pp. 103

[56] Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism." pp. 94

Accordingly, the most significant "shared interest" or "intercultural mimesis," between the West and South Asian Buddhism was the idea of religious modernity.

During the colonial era, Buddhism had an unlikely appeal to the West as a religion without borders. On the heels of religious change due to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century in Europe, the discovery of Buddhism was alluring on several fronts.[57] Most notably, it was understood as a religion without a divine authority.[58] This factor is important for two reasons. First, Buddhism, resultantly, became a legitimate religion that offered a program for ethical living, devoid of a God figure or heaven and hell. Secondly, as was proven during the rule of King Ashoka (268 to 232 BCE), Buddhism had the potential to become transcultural and serve as an authoritative power. With the emergence of European rational enlightenment in the eighteenth century, the possibility of a religion having the potential to establish a governance based on secular ideals was not only fascinating, but also a modern concept. Without a God figure, Buddhism did not meet the criteria of Western conception of religion, but it has a strong ethical foundation. This combination was attractive for those Enlightenment thinkers who argued for secularism (governance beyond Church control) and humanistic ethics. Along with rationality Buddhism was also classified as scientific.[59] One of the most important aspects of this delineation was

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[57] I used the expression "discovery" due to the fact that the study of Buddhism in the West was scarce before the 19th century.
[58] In Stephen Batchelor's, *The Awakening of the West,* he states, "Throughout the course of the eighteenth century three interconnected factors were gestating that would help give birth to what we know as 'Buddhism'. These were the emergence of the rational Enlightenment, the decline of religious authority and the consolidation of colonialism. pp. 231
[59] Refer to the essay entitled "Religion without Speculation." *International Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Nagendra Kumar Singh

Buddhism's investigative nature, which has some resemblance to the scientific method.[60] Other terms used to highlight the modern characteristics of Buddhism were terms such as universalism, empiricism and individualism. These modern interpretations of Buddhism by the Western orientalists were seen by Buddhist leaders as positive and were popularly accepted. Furthermore, as denoted in the definition of positive reverse orientalism, Buddhist began to appreciate and promote their religion in the same light. An example of this occurred at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893.

The World's Parliament of Religions occurred in the United States in the city of Chicago, Illinois. It was a conference that, for the first time in history, brought together leading delegates of the major religions from around the world. Representatives of Buddhism, Parsee, Islam, Hinduism, Confucian and various churches of Christianity were invited to lecture on the decisive truths of their religion.[61] Anagarika Dharmapala, representing Theravada Buddhism of Ceylon, gave a lecture in which the relationship of science and Buddhism became one of the major focal points of his discussion.[62] David McMahan in "Modernity and the Early Discourse of Scientific Buddhism," gives reference to speeches by Dharmapala and other Asian Buddhists on the importance of "science," and how it became internalized by prominent Buddhist leaders during the

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[60] Buddhist believe in the four noble truths, suffering, the origins of suffering, the end of suffering, and the path. This process closely matches the scientific method in which states one should, ask a Question, do Background research and lastly construct a hypothesis. Other scientific concepts associated with Buddhist philosophy relevant to scientific application are cause and effect, concept of Interdependence and concept of Impermanence.
[61] Rajagopal Chattopadhyaya, *World's Parliament of Religions, 1893.* pp. 33
[62] Unlike Western modernity, science and religion are not mutually contradictory in modernity related discourses in Asia.

colonial era.[63] In the overall argument of Buddhism's relation to science, McMahan states:

> The compatibility of Buddhism and modern science has not only become a staple of popular Buddhist literature, it has also become a hypothesis in a large number of quite sophisticated experimental studies. Although all historical religious traditions in their encounters with modernity have had to reinterpret doctrines in light of the dominance and symbolic capital of scientific thinking, its tremendous transformative effects on the world, and its unsurpassed legitimacy in establishing "what is the case," perhaps no major tradition has attempted to adopt scientific discourse more vigorously than Buddhism.[64]

This same justification of Western-influenced religious revival in the form of modernity and science, as seen above, presented itself in the notion of "Protestant Buddhism." This term became an expression that was used as an attempt to capture in entirety the whole of Buddhist modernity that was taking place in the nineteenth century. This included the appropriation of Orientalist justifications of science, rationalism and most importantly rejection of religious Orthodoxy. This title has been a topic of debate because of its direct reflection to the sixteenth-century Protestant reformation in Europe. In accepting this label, Buddhist Modernism's platform would ultimately be limited in scope. Furthermore, it would delegitimize the intentions of the movement by projecting it as an exaggeration of Buddhist "protest" against the institutions of Christianity and

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[63] Soyen Shaku, a Japanese Zen priest and the other important Buddhist representative at the Parliament, continued these themes in his address entitled, "The Law of Cause and Effect, as Taught by the Buddha." Soyen called the Buddha's notion of cause and effect "the law of nature" and insisted that the myriad phenomena of the world are not governed by an exterior force but by this all-encompassing law. David McMahan, "Modernity and the Early Discourse of Scientific Buddhism." pp.901

[64] David McMahan, "Modernity and the Early Discourse of Scientific Buddhism." pp. 898

colonialism.[65] Nevertheless, the elective affinity shared for the religiosity of science and Protestant ideals of rejecting the authority of accumulated religious tradition became powerful associations developed from the position of positive reverse orientalism.

Where most of the "New Age" movements were focused on detraditionalisation, the conditions of reverse orientalism provided rare opportunities for intercultural wonder and appreciation. The mysticism of the Orient was its most fascinating characteristic, which through the conscious attention of both the West and East has endured into the 21st century. The most important movement that surfaced from this mutual appreciation of spirituality was Modern Yoga and meditation. Throughout the history of colonial South Asia, the roles of Yoga and meditation were utilized on multiple fronts. Although progressive in nature, as witnessed by its transcultural popularity, it was primarily used within this region for the purpose of religious preservation. For example, in Burma, monk Ledi Sayadaw, under similar pressures of colonial occupation, utilized meditation to simplify Buddhist doctrine and garner religious support. His most prestigious publication was *The Summary of the Ultimates*, through which he was able to unite the religious population by empowering the roles and institutions of lay Buddhist practice. Sayadaw brought to the average people the ability to partake in the recitation and understanding of the ancient texts of Abhidhamma (pali language was not understood by the average lay person), and also cultivated a form of worship that provided a possibility of achieving an awakening within a single lifetime. Meditation was by no means a new concept, but it was traditionally only practiced by monks. Ledi ingeniously

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[65] Richard King, "Orientalism and the Discovery of Buddhism" pp. 151

fashioned this work in a way that it could be memorized and recited by anyone

regardless of his or her previous experience with Buddhism. The type of meditation that

arose from his pioneering approach became known as insight meditation.[66] The

formulation of this meditational approach ensured the continued livelihood of Buddhism

in Burma and became a global phenomenon.[67]

Even more successful was the Modern Yoga movement that came in the wake of

Swami Vivekananda's publication of *Raja Yoga* in 1896. This movement sparked the

most significant milieu of East-West exchange that has persisted for more than a

century. According to Elizabeth De Michelis, Vivekananda, through efforts similar to

Ledi Sayadaw's, reformed some of the classical Hindu approaches to yoga and created

a basis for diverse teachings that could be followed by Indian Hindus and Westerners

alike.[68] This religio-cultural trend has been the most successful outcome of positive

reverse orientalism deriving from South Asia's colonial period. On the other hand, not all

changes to Buddhism and Hinduism occurring during the British colonial era arose

under the pretense of shared interests. Instead, some materialized as a product of

adverse circumstances.

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[66] Insight Meditation is a form of Buddhist mediation that employs concentration sharply focused on bodily sensations and mental events, practiced with the intention of gaining insight into reality. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com
[67] Erik Braun, *The Birth of Insight.* pp. 110
[68] Elizabeth De Michelis, *History of Modern Yoga.* Introduction.

Negative Reverse Orientalism

Earlier, I defined reverse orientalism as a shaping of identity based on Western orientalist perceptions. This remains a true characterization of "negative reverse orientalism"; however, criticism becomes the stimulus for change as opposed to elective affinity. Throughout the process of religious reform during this era, several modern applications of Buddhism and Hinduism were incited by the adverse perceptions of India's religious traditions propagated by Western orientalist and Christian missionaries. Although not positive in nature, criticism from a perceived superior influence results in self-reflection and can ultimately lead to change.[69] One of the best examples of negative reverse orientalism can be found in "Engaged Buddhism." This movement outlines the parameters for Buddhism's interactions of social and political activism. According to Sallie King, author of *Socially Engaged Buddhism,* this program was not the creation of one individual person or even a particular sect of Buddhism. She argues that this is a phenomenon that "surfaced in the latter half of the twentieth century and was in reaction to social, economic, political, and ecological crises."[70] Although the term "Engaged Buddhism" surfaced among 20th century Western Buddhists, this movement has roots from a century earlier and was used as a component of cultural preservation and religious revival. To actively resist Christian influence and damaging religious stereotypes, Buddhist organizations and societies began to surface in the political and

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[69] In *The Nation and Its Fragments,* Partha Chatterjee, gives a great example of non-traditional Reverse Orientalism when he states, "To overcome domination, the colonized people had to learn those superior techniques of organizing material life and incorporate them within their own cultures. This was one aspect of the nationalist project of rationalizing and reforming the traditional culture of their people. But this could not mean the imitation of the West in every aspect of life, for then the very distinction between the West and the East would vanish – the self-identity of national culture would itself be threatened." pp. 120

[70] Sallie B. King, *Socially Engaged Buddhism*. pp. 2

social domain throughout South Asia. Under the pretense of being more engaging, organizations such as the Young Men's Buddhist Association and Dharmapala's Maha Bodhi Society, became benefactors in the improvement of education, health and other social services. Like the Hindu's nationalism, religious activism within Ceylon served as a powerful tool for change and national preservation. The success attained from this form of engagement eventually lead to international developments, such as the Bodh-Gaya reclamation project within India and the recognition of Buddhism as a universal religion on a global scale. On the other hand, some scholars claim that Engaged Buddhism's theory of social action is a break from traditional Buddhist doctrine, and conversely supports social justice which is a requisite tenet of Christianity and other Abrahamic religions.[71]

Another example of this form of reverse orientalism is seen through South Asian historiography. The difficulties of establishing an accurate account of India's history was not a plot of disillusionment devised under colonial influence nor was it centrally vested in the interests of an indigenous power struggle, but simply derived from orientalist research. Orientalists criticized India for not having an accurate historical account of their country.[72] Originally, Indian historians were opposed to this viewpoint and attributed it to a misunderstanding of historical models. By the mid-nineteenth century, the power associated with the Western model of linear history became apparent and the interpretation of pre-colonial history became essential to Indian revival. From this

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[71] For further discussion on this topic see David Loy's *The Great Awakening.* pp. 1-53 and Vidhu Verma's "Reinterpreting Buddhism. pp. 56-65.
[72] For further reading on this topic see Sumit Sarkar's "The Many Worlds of Indian History." pp. 1-49.

resurgence of history, India's "Golden Age" before Colonialism and religious conquest, became an object of nostalgia and sign of Indian accomplishment. Most scholarship on this era was provided by orientalists and portrayed the ancient Indian civilization as advanced in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, logic, and linguistics.[73] This representation of Indian history was widely accepted by Indian historians and became a foundation block for the traditional discourse which is now a dynamic element in Modern Buddhist and Hindu Nationalist ideology.[74]

The last example of negative reverse orientalism, and in my opinion the most important, was the emergence of organized Hinduism. This movement progressed as a defensive measure in combatting criticisms that Hinduism was ignorant, superstitious, unorganized and backward looking. Correspondingly, from the nineteenth century onward, almost every organization's constitutional framework centered on reforming Hindu traditions to fit the Western mold of modernity. From this, terms such as Hindu revivalism, Neo-Vedanta and Universal Hinduism began to emerge. Hindu nationalism, historically the most successful counter to British colonialism, was also a product of this form of reverse orientalism. For Vivekananda and the nationalist Hindus, their movement could overcome the greatest criticisms of the West, which were religious legitimacy, casteism and gender discrimination. The Bharatiya Janata Party leads the current government in India and as seen in their party's constitution, these age-old criticisms have had lasting effects. In the party pledge it states: "I subscribe to the

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[73] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*. pp. 98.
[74] For a further discussion of an in depth historiography of India, see Sumit Sarkar's, "The Many Worlds of Indian History." pp. 1-49.

concept of a Secular State and Nation not based on religion. I firmly believe that this task can be achieved by peaceful means alone. I do not believe in discrimination based on caste, sex or religion. I do not observe of or recognize untouchability in any shape or form."[75]

Conclusion

Throughout my investigation, I have provided research that addresses the multiple causalities affecting cultural, political, and socio-religious change. Looking at reform movements during nineteenth-century colonial South Asia, I find that Buddhist modernism and Hindu nationalism do not derive exclusively from outside influences. Their origins are complex and as David McMahan argues, the influence of pre-existing social formations cannot be discounted.[79] Through reflecting on varying models of reverse orientalism, I have illustrated concepts that show how perceptions of modernity presented by the Orientalist movement brought about religious change. Although a majority of the change was rooted in Orientalist objectives, this cannot become the measure of its entirety. Due to common interests and elective affinities, much of the change surrounding religion was not forced, but influenced by interacting cultural and religious perceptions. Through further examination of orientalism, modernity, and the British colonial government, I have concluded that Ceylon and British India formed different, individual approaches in responding to the pressures generated by the impacts of colonialism using the essential resources of assembly, culture and religion.

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[75] Bharatiya Janata Party. Retrieved from bjp.org (pledge)
[79] David McMahan, "Buddhism and Multiple Modernities." pp. 182

In India, the populace chose religious nationalism as a tool for organization and cultural preservation whereas the subjects of Ceylon relied on a modern religious revival. In truly understanding the origins of modern religious movements of colonial South Asia, one has to be sympathetic to the possibilities of converging influences emerging from both the Orient and Occident.

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