

Reviving the Buddha: The Use of the Devotional Ritual of Buddha-Vandanā in the Modernization of Buddhism in Colonial Sri Lanka

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The modernization of Buddhism since the late nineteenth century has mostly been interpreted as a process of adaptation to rationalist trends of Western modernity. This understanding is particularly influential in the interpretation of modernized Buddhism in Sri Lanka via the use of the compelling term ‘Protestant Buddhism’, which emphasizes not only rationalist interpretations of Buddhism but also practices imitative of Protestant Christianity such as Sunday schools. This article argues that the modernizing efforts of Sri Lankan Buddhists were far more diverse than the above characterization. Further, the modernization of Buddhism was not just a project of the bourgeoisie. This paper reveals how both elite and non-elite Buddhist activists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made use of the newly acquired print technology to promote the devotional ritual of venerating the Buddha through printed liturgical booklets, while also recasting this ritual as a principal marker of Buddhist identity. This new emphasis on devotionism, while seemingly traditional, was in fact another form of modernist response to colonialism and globalization.

Keywords: *Buddha-vandanā*; Veneration; Buddhist Modernism; Buddhist Identity; Devotional Ritual; Liturgical Booklets; Sri Lanka

Scholarship on the modernization of Buddhism in colonial Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) has focused primarily on efforts to modernize Buddhism according to rationalist and Western norms, reforms that are interpreted as intending to neutralize colonial era criticisms of Buddhism as mere superstition and idolatry. These studies highlight how certain Buddhist activists reinterpreted Buddhism as an ethical and moral philosophy and introduced practices that were, frankly, imitative of Christian norms, such as Sunday dharma school, Buddhist “carols” and social welfare activities. The phrase most commonly used by scholars as a referent for this dominant model of Buddhist modernization in Sri Lanka is ‘Protestant Buddhism’, reflecting the view that Buddhist modernization was unidirectional, that is, Westernization with a Protestant bias (Obeyesekere 1972; Malalgoda 1976; Gombrich 2006 [1988]; Prothero 1996; Seneviratna 1999).

This article aims to demonstrate the diversity of Buddhist modernization by showing how the promotion of a devotional ritual known as *Buddha-vandanā* (veneration of the Buddha) has been an important project in the process of modernizing Buddhism in colonial Sri Lanka. Based on archival research on early printed liturgical booklets, this article argues that modernizing efforts were multi-directional. Such efforts included the promotion and reinterpretation of this devotional ritual of venerating the Buddha by both elite and non-elite Buddhist groups for an unprecedented purpose: as an alternative response to colonization and globalization. The promotion of this devotional ritual was not a continuation or a reassertion of a traditional practice, but rather a novel utilization of a ritual, which is another modernist project. The ritual of *Buddha-vandanā* was reinterpreted and utilized as a marker of an emerging Buddhist identity. This article starts by looking at the current scholarly framing of the developments of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Then I show how the evidence found in early printed liturgical booklets that promote *Buddha-vandanā* points to a different kind of modernization. This article reveals how Buddhist activists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made use of the capabilities presented in the colonial context, including print technology, to promote this devotional ritual practice as a principal marker of newly constructed Buddhist identity.

The Scholarly Narrative of Buddhist Modernization

Most studies of the development of contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhism have adopted the scholarly category of Protestant Buddhism. These studies have focused on interpretations and reforms initiated by two Buddhist reformers: Henry Steel Olcott and Anagārika Dharmapāla (Obeyesekere 1976; Malalgoda 1976; Bond 1988; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988; Prothero 1996; Seneviratne 1999). While George Bond (1988) attempted to highlight the diversity of Buddhist responses belonging to this reformist movement when it continued into the twentieth century, his treatment of the early phase is nonetheless also limited to activities of Olcott, Dharmapāla and their followers. During the colonial era, Christian missionaries, government officials, and some Western observers criticized Buddhism as backward, nihilistic, inconsistent, superstitious, and idolatrous (Harris 200: 55). To counteract these criticisms, Olcott and Dharmapala began to reconstruct Buddhism in line with modernist values, stripping away some pre-colonial practices and recasting Buddhism as a rational, ethical philosophy in harmony with modern scientific knowledge and Victorian social mores. Certain features of these reform efforts, such as religious individualism, lay activism, and a de-emphasis on rituals, were highlighted by scholars of Sri Lankan Buddhism as having been modeled on characteristics of Protestant Christianity (i.e. Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988; Gombrich 2006 [1988]). Due to their focus on two prominent Buddhist reformers, studies that followed the framework of Protestant Buddhism highlighted one kind of development in Sri Lankan Buddhism, that is, Westernization with a Protestant bias.

This category of Protestant Buddhism has been critiqued by scholars such as John Holt (1991) and Anne Blackburn (2010, 197ff.), who argue that all Buddhist responses during colonial and post-colonial periods cannot be interpreted as being fully determined by colonial power, Christian missionaries and Western modernity. They urge recognition of the greater diversity of responses to

the crisis of colonialism. For example, Blackburn analyzes the projects carried out by leading monks such as Hikkaduwe Sumangala in colonial Sri Lanka and argues that some traditional roles and educational practices endured throughout the period when new interpretations and practices were emerging (2010: 200). Scholars who were critical of the category of Protestant Buddhism showed that local actors in fact had greater agency when negotiating colonial power (Holt 1991; Hallisey 1995; Anderson 2003; Harris 2006; Blackburn 2010). These scholars argued that although responses of Buddhist groups were stimulated and conditioned by the colonial presence, their responses were not fully determined by it.

However, these critiques of Protestant Buddhism are questioned by Ananda Abeysekara (2002, 2019), who points out that they are based on an arbitrary demarcation between Buddhism and modernity (i.e. Protestantism). He argues that Buddhism and Protestantism themselves are discursive traditions defined by competing debates in shifting moments of time (2019: 16). The temporality of these discursive traditions makes it difficult to treat them as fixed or universal categories and to talk about the influence of one over the other. As he stresses, power relations are at the heart of defining discursive traditions like Buddhism. In the context of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Sri Lanka, colonialism was the power that made possible the very debate about 'Buddhism' and 'religion' (2019: 23). Abeysekara, following Talal Asad (1993), clarifies that power should be understood not as an external force that is opposed to local freedom, but as a capacity that enables and authorizes modes of sensibilities to feel, sense, remember, and act in particular ways (2019: 26). According to him, given the shifting configuration of power that authorizes distinct modes of ability and freedom, it is impossible to talk about agency of local Buddhist history and then to contrast such an agency with colonial power.

Abeysekara's analysis is helpful as it directs attention to the power dynamics underlying different projects of Buddhist activists during the colonial period. Buddhist groups who promoted the ritual of *Buddha-vandanā* were operating under new forms of power. The introduction of print technology gave rise to new groups of actors who could influence the formation of homogeneity and collectiveness among diverse individuals. Moreover, the policy of colonial government to support vernacular education, the increase of the vernacular literacy rate among Buddhists in and around urban areas, and the growth of the publication of Sinhala newspapers. These all resulted in new possibilities and new groups of Buddhist activists with new capacities. The project of promoting *Buddha-vandanā* was enabled and facilitated by these new conditions. Liturgical booklets also utilized the category of 'religion', which was introduced by colonial powers. These books are among the earliest literary evidence of the word *Buddhāgama* (Buddhist religion) as a self-referential term. As Tomoko Masuzawa (2005) explains, the category of religion is a technique of colonial power that was used as a means of defining, and thus containing and limiting, aspects of thoughts and practice. Authors and sponsors of these liturgical booklets adopted this category and attempted to define a religious identity.

Based on this awareness of power dynamics, I would like to interpret the project of promoting devotional ritual of *Buddha-vandanā* through printed liturgical booklets not as an endurance of traditional Buddhism through the colonial period or as an example of autonomous Buddhist agency,

but as an instance of utilizing available Buddhist practices in novel and strategic ways in the process of modernization. I argue that these liturgical booklets reveal how Buddhist activists faced with new circumstances made use of the capabilities they possessed in the colonial context, such as print technology and higher rates of literacy, in order to promote a devotional practice as a marker of an emerging Buddhist identity. This effort of promoting a ritual practice portrays an alternate way of modernizing Buddhism.

Abeysekara (2019)'s emphasis on the pervasiveness of different forms of power within the colonial context allows us to see the complexity and diversity of circumstances under which Buddhist activists were operating. An important element of this diversity is the larger process of globalization. It was not only the presence of Christian missionary activities that shaped Buddhist responses during the colonial era. Colonization also brought the process of globalization onto Sri Lanka. With the development of new modes of travel such as steamships and the industrialization of communication with mass-produced newspapers and inexpensive printing presses, people in Sri Lanka were exposed—on an unprecedented scale—to societies, cultures, ideologies, and events happening overseas.¹ They stretched and enhanced their relations with both Asian and European countries. These relations and exposure to distant happenings also provided Sri Lankan Buddhists with an opportunity to reflect on their own religious tradition and social identity. Various efforts of Sri Lankan Buddhists to promote Buddhist practices should be understood as responses to this larger process of globalization that was initiated by European colonization.

Moreover, the challenges facing Sri Lankan Buddhists in this period were not only external confrontations with colonial power or negative characterizations of Buddhism by missionaries. Many challenges were internal to Buddhist followers, such as lack of knowledge of Buddhist customs among many urban Buddhists, laxity of following Buddhist precepts, and less opportunity for children to learn Buddhist values. Liturgical booklets too express these concerns. Projects of Buddhist activists were also predicated by these local conditions.

Understanding these diverse circumstances can help us to see that responses of Buddhist activists during the colonial period were not uniform or unidirectional as suggested by the concept of Protestant Buddhism. Although the efforts of Buddhist activists were predicated by the capabilities as well as limitations presented by colonialism, Buddhist responses were not limited to rational interpretations and Westernized practices. Given the complexity of circumstances and diversity of power relationships enabled by the colonial context, the way Buddhists responded to their situation is not singular. It is this diversity of responses that has been captured by the concept of multiple modernities. Following Shmuel Eisenstadt (2000) and others, David McMahan (2015) points out that various Asian cultures have employed indigenous cultural resources as tools for asserting different versions of modernity. However, McMahan suggests that such multiple versions of modernity started to appear only in recent decades. He states (2015:183),

¹For a detailed description of the growth of transnational exchanges along the trade routes in Colombo and other cities in South and Southeast Asia, see Frost (2002). Blackburn (2010) also provides a description of Buddhist networks existed between Ceylon and Southeast Asia.

I would suggest that, while in the early phases of the Buddhist engagement with modernity—the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—reformist Buddhists vigorously attempted to translate Buddhism into the discourses of Western modernity and were willing to jettison large swaths of Buddhist thought, practice, and culture in order to modernize in Western terms, more recently there are more complex intertwinings of Buddhism and modernity that require a more pluralistic conception of modernity.

The project of promoting the indigenous devotional ritual of *Buddha-vandanā* through printed liturgical booklets demonstrates that even in the early phase of Buddhist engagement with modernity, Buddhist responses were not singular. The promotion of devotional practices and involvement of non-elite groups were part of Buddhist responses. It is the scholars who have been selective in their analysis of Buddhist engagement with modernity. They emphasized only reforms that were rationalist or styled after Christian forms of religious practice, many of which were introduced by educated elites who were influenced by the above two prominent Buddhist activists. Hence, the modernization of Buddhism was presented as a project of the bourgeoisie.

It is this trend of telling history from the perspective of the elites that has been criticized by historians such as Ranjit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty, who initiated a fresh analysis of colonial and postcolonial history known as Subaltern Studies. These historians showed that the historiography of South Asia has assigned a “spurious primacy” to the elites (Guha 1988: 35). They emphasized the need to tell the history from a ‘bottom up’ perspective and rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic writings in South Asian Studies. One consequence of the limited scholarly narrative of one kind of reform—elitist and Westernized, is the characterization of modernized Buddhism as anti-ritual. In the limited view, rituals practiced by contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhists are seen as a continuation, or residual leftover, of pre-colonial Buddhism. Such a view, lumping together all types of rituals into one class of traditional practices, ignores the fact that rituals can be, and were, used in novel and strategic ways. With their bias towards one type of reform, the above-mentioned scholars of Sri Lankan Buddhism become complicit participants in the kind of modernist reconstruction of Buddhism that Olcott and Dharmapāla attempted to promote.

This article argues that both elite and non-elite groups of Buddhists engaged in promotion and strategic use of the devotional ritual, *Buddha-vandanā*. These documented efforts reveal a broader foundation for Buddhist modernization and reformist initiatives than has previously been recognized. It shows that there was more than one way to respond to colonial situation and the process of globalization. It is true that, as Abeysekara points out, the colonial context presented limited options and categories for Buddhist activists to choose from. Yet, their responses were multi-directional. Other than adopting colonial categories and introducing rational interpretations and Westernized practices, they also relied on a repertoire of Buddhist practices. Alicia Turner’s study of the same period in colonial Burma (2014) also demonstrates multiple ways that Burmese Buddhists responded to the new colonial configurations. In this process, she reveals, Buddhists embraced new technologies to achieve their own ends and reimagined Burmese identity. In particular, she argues

that Buddhists often appropriated techniques originally designed to create docile and modern colonial subjects and repurposed them to work to preserve the Buddhist teachings (2014: 137). Anne Blackburn (2012) also reveals how immigrant Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) Buddhists in Singapore appropriated colonial conditions and propagated Pāli based Buddhism and liturgy among Singapore's Anglophone Chinese Buddhist population. The project of promoting *Buddha-vandanā* in colonial Sri Lanka demonstrates one strand of the broader foundation for Buddhist modernization. In their effort to recast the devotional ritual of *Buddha-vandanā* as a marker of a good Buddhist, the authors and sponsors of these booklets adopted the colonial category of 'religion'. However, instead of following the colonial project of making religion increasingly about ideas, beliefs, or symbolic interpretations, they situated religious identity in what one does. Buddhism in Sri Lanka has thus been modernized in multiple ways.

Buddha-vandanā and its Promotion through Print Media

Buddha-vandanā, also known as *Buddha-pūjā*, is a simple ritualized practice of honoring the Buddha by making prostrations, reciting verses in Pāli, and offering items such as flowers, lamps and incense. The basic actions in this ritual include observance of the three refuges and the five precepts by reciting Pāli formulas; recitation of the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha; formal dedication of offerings to the Buddha; and transference of merits to divine beings and departed relatives. It is a devotional ritual that exemplifies one of the most basic religious practices within the Theravada Buddhist tradition. We find references to this form of ritualized veneration of the Buddha in Pāli canonical texts, such as *Apadāna*, in Pāli commentaries, and in Sinhala medieval texts. In these texts, we find that devout Buddhist practitioners usually performed this ritual in front of a stupa, a Bodhi tree, or an image of the Buddha. It was traditionally performed within the precincts of temples for the purpose of expressing gratitude to the Buddha and generating merit. It is this devotional ritual, *Buddha-vandanā*, that was formalized and promoted among lay Buddhists with a new meaning, asserting a newly formed religious identity during the colonial period in Sri Lanka.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, prominent Buddhist activists promoted textual study and a rational interpretation of Buddhism and established lay Buddhist organizations, English-language schools for Buddhist children, and Buddhist Sunday schools. During the same period, another group of Buddhist activists promoted the devotional ritual of *Buddha-vandanā* among lay Buddhists as a part of enhancing religious engagement by lay Buddhists. These activists included Mohoṭṭivatte Guṇānanda Thera (the prominent monk who led the famous public debates with Christian missionary groups), members of his Society for the Propagation of Buddhism (founded in 1862), and many other lesser-known ordinary monks and lay people. They were more interested in educating Buddhists about this ritual practice than about Buddhist doctrines or its rationalist or scientific interpretations of Buddhism.

The primary means through which the ritual of *Buddha-vandanā* was promoted in the colonial era was the publication of printed booklets that provided the text of the liturgy in Pāli and basic instructions for performing it. A whole genre of printed liturgical booklets has survived in the archives in Sri Lanka. Starting from 1887, an extensive number of liturgical booklets were published.

Although these booklets occupy a significant portion of early printed materials, they have escaped scholarly attention.² These booklets are the first written sources for the complete liturgy of this ritual and the first produced specifically for lay Buddhists with explanations in vernacular Sinhala and liturgy in Pāli. Two monastic handbooks composed in the eighteenth century, *Banadaham Pota* and *Solasapūjā*, record parts of the ritual. However, there is no classical text that exclusively records the complete liturgy as found in these printed liturgical booklets. The monastic handbooks served as sources for the authors of the liturgical booklets to select recitals and compile their works. The connection between these monastic handbooks and printed liturgical booklets will be discussed later in this article. It is also possible that some parts of the liturgy for this veneration existed in the oral tradition among lay Buddhist practitioners.

At the time of the booklets' publication, printing was a fairly new technology for Sri Lankans. Until the 1860s, Christian missionaries who used the printing press for religious publications exercised a monopoly over printing. In 1812 the Colombo Auxiliary Bible Society established the first missionary press with the acquisition of a printing press that had been brought to the island by the Dutch. Other Christian missionary presses, such as the Wesleyan Press, followed (Dharmadasa 1995: 96n.27). It was only in 1862 that the first Buddhist press was established in Galle (Wickramasinghe 2006: 78). This was a project of a prominent Buddhist monk in the South named Bulathgama Sumana (1795 -1891) who played a very important role in organizing public debates with Christian groups. This monk, who was also known as Bulathgama Dhammalankara Siri Sumanatissa, collected funds from local Buddhists and rich landowners of the island to buy a printing press. He even managed to secure a grant from the Thai King Rama IV (King Mongkut) for this project. Eventually, he established the first press known as Lankopakara press in his own temple, Paramananda Viharaya in Galle (Dharmadasa 1995: 100).

The second Buddhist press was established in Colombo in the same year by Mohottivatte Gunananda's Society for the Propagation of Buddhism. The initial purpose of these printing presses was to produce pamphlets in response to the criticisms and charges against Buddhism propagated by Christian missionaries through numerous printed tracts and books, which had gone unanswered for a period of several decades. The use of printing technology then broadened to other purposes, such as publishing Buddhist newspapers, printing classical Buddhist texts, Sinhala translations of Buddhist treatises, Sinhala novels and, beginning in 1887, the publication of the liturgical booklets promoting *Buddha-vandanā*. With these booklets, *Buddha-vandanā* became the first liturgy to be published for lay Buddhists in Sri Lanka.

This use of the printing press, to promote a devotional ritual, supports Nile Green's argument (2011) that the effects of printing technology in South Asia during the colonial period were not limited to greater textual studies and rationalist interpretations of religions. Green argues that industrialized communications, such as printing and travel, were neutral technologies that were used by various religious groups for their own strategic purposes. Contrary to the more familiar scholarly

² During my archival research, forty-eight booklets published between 1887 and 1930 were found in the library of the Sri Lankan National Museum in Colombo. Most likely more booklets would have existed.

view that printing is inherently linked to the disenchantment of the world, Green shows how Muslim activists in the colonial city of Bombay promoted a traditional form of Islam through printing by producing hagiographical story books, talismanic texts, and stories of miracles associated with holy men and shrines (Green 2011: 91–92). In a similar fashion, Buddhist activists in Sri Lanka have made use of print to promote a devotional form of Buddhism as an alternative response to modernity.

The earliest booklet with the liturgy of *Buddha-vandanā* is Rev. Mohoṭṭivatte Guṇānanda's *Buddha Ādahilla* ("Worship of the Buddha"), first published in 1887. It is also the longest. In it, the liturgy for the performance of *Buddha-vandanā*, given in Pāli with translations in Sinhala, is the central part of a more comprehensive manual of instructions for lay Buddhists. Carol Anderson (2003) notes the significance of Guṇānanda's booklet for a reevaluation of the scholarly category of Protestant Buddhism. She highlights the fact that this booklet, printed in the early period of the Buddhist response to critiques from Christian missionaries, was a handbook primarily on ritual behavior and not on Buddhist doctrine (2003: 184–185),

[F]rom the perspective of *Buddha Ādahilla*, the revival movement focused on proper ritual behavior instead of rational belief. I suggest that the feature of rational belief that is so closely intertwined with the concept of Protestant Buddhism requires closer and more nuanced analysis.

Guṇānanda's booklet, together with other liturgical booklets, reveals an effort to modernize Buddhism based on a devotional practice. Other liturgical booklets are more concise in comparison to the booklet authored by Guṇānanda; they do not contain expositions of meritorious deeds or commentaries on recitations. Instead, they focus almost exclusively on *Buddha-vandanā*, presenting recitations for each item of *Buddha-vandanā*, and brief instructions. Many are publications of ten to thirty-two pages in an eight-by-five-inch format. On the basis of similarity in content and format, liturgical booklets published until 1930 can be categorized as the first generation of this genre of publication. Guṇānanda's booklet set the model for the other liturgical booklets. A few authors even used the same title, *Buddha Ādahilla* for their booklets.

In order to promote *Buddha-vandanā* among lay Buddhists, the booklets were widely distributed and appeared to have been received especially well by the newly emerging literate population of Buddhists in and around urban areas. The publishing of liturgical booklets also coincided with the rise of vernacular literacy in the country. According to the nation-wide census of 1911, forty per cent of males and ten per cent of females were able to read and write. This was a significant increase of the literate population compared to thirty years before (Wickramasinghe 2006: 77). This increase was mainly due to the growth of vernacular schools. The British government changed its policy with regard to education in the 1880s, which resulted in promoting vernacular education on the island. Leaving English education almost entirely to missionaries, the government devoted its resources to building schools that taught in Sinhala and Tamil. The colonial government introduced the grants-in-aid system in which financial aid was given to schools run by private organizations if these schools fulfilled certain criteria in terms of the number of students and the rate of attendance. Wealthy philanthropists of both urban and rural areas built schools and received government grants to run

them (De Silva 1981: 330). These schools significantly increased the vernacular literacy rate. The growth of vernacular literacy subsequently gave rise to more Sinhala periodicals, novels and plays during the late nineteenth century (Dharmadasa 1995: 116). These liturgical booklets reflect how Buddhist activists relied on capabilities presented by colonial rule. While operating under colonial conditions, these activists also appropriated the growth of literacy for their purpose of transmitting knowledge on religious behavior.

The wide distribution of these booklets can mainly be learned from the number of reprints and copies produced. We also find an important reference to the broad distribution of Guṇānanda's *Buddha Ādahilla*, the first liturgical booklet in the report of the Anglican Bishop of Colombo twenty years after the text's publication. In describing the recent development of Buddhism in Ceylon, Bishop Coplestone said the following on *Buddha Ādahilla*:

It is largely used, at any rate in the low country. Most Buddhists who can read at least in or near Colombo, possess a copy; some of them who cannot read get it read to them.
(1908: 278)

Guṇānanda's *Buddha Ādahilla* was in its Fourteenth Edition by 1912 (Young & Somaratna 1996: 208).

Similarly, *Buddha Ādahīme Kramaya*, ("The Method of Worshipping the Buddha") authored by the Buddhist monk Koratota Sobhita was first published in 1888 and was in its fifth edition in 1892. *Buddha Ādahīma hevath Vandana Gāthā Pota* ("Worship of the Buddha or the Book of Verses for Veneration") was printed for the third time in 1906, as referenced on its title page. *Buddha Ādahīma* (1902) mentions in its preface that the current booklet was an improved version of previous prints. *Buddha Meheya* ("The Service for the Buddha") (1888, 1893) also had two editions; 1500 copies were printed of the second edition (Paññāsekhara 1893: 43). The title page of *Buddhopastānaya*, ("Attending to the Buddha") published in 1905, states that 8000 copies were printed.

While the majority of booklets were printed for sale, the keen interest that Buddhist activists had in promoting *Buddha-vandanā* can be clearly seen in their efforts to produce these booklets for free distribution. Two booklets in particular were printed in large quantities for free distribution with the help of sponsors. The first is *Śri Saddharma Mañjarī* ("The Auspicious Bouquet of Good Teaching") printed in 1905. As is indicated on page ii, 10,000 copies were printed in its first edition. The second is *Buddha Adahilla* ("The Worship of the Buddha"), published in 1917. According to its title page, 3000 copies were printed for free distribution. The first booklet provides the liturgy of *Buddha-vandanā* with the Sinhala meaning of each recitation in a format of a catechism, while the second one simply provides the liturgy in Pāli.

The editions cited above of these four booklets alone provide evidence of 22,500 copies of liturgical booklets on *Buddha-vandanā* that were printed for distribution to lay Buddhists during the early Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka. That number does not take into account copies printed in the fourteen editions of the Guṇānanda's book, or the five editions of *Buddha Ādahīme Kramaya*, or the forty-four other booklets in the National Museum's archives that do not reference publication

numbers. It is reasonable to conclude from the evidence available that the actual number of liturgical booklets printed and distributed during this period was much higher.³

The wide consumption of these booklets would also have been facilitated by their affordability. Many of the booklets that were printed for sale, rather than for free distribution, were priced at ten cents, which in 1905 was similar to the price of a loaf of bread in Sri Lanka.⁴ According to the statistics of the British colonies presented to the Houses of Parliament of Great Britain in 1907, the average wage of a domestic laborer in 1905 ranged from thirty cents to fifty cents per day. For a skilled worker, such as carpenter, the average wage ranged from thirty-seven cents to Rs. two. We can easily assume that wages for office workers, schoolteachers, and other professionals were higher than the above wages. Under these economic conditions, the booklets that were offered for sale were affordable for an average family.

Concerted Effort of Elite and Non-Elite Groups of Buddhists

Access to print technology was one form of power. This power enabled Buddhist groups living in Colombo and other urban areas to take the lead in fashioning Buddhist practice. The ability to produce printed documents was one of the factors that made Colombo the center of Buddhist activities replacing Kandy, the capital of the last Buddhist Kingdom. After British authorities made Colombo the capital city of British Ceylon and the island's commercial hub, many individuals from other parts of the island, particularly from the southern province, migrated there to benefit from the new economic opportunities created by British rule. Many of these immigrants were Buddhists and they benefited from this new economy by engaging in trades, contracts, and various professions. As K.N.O. Dharmadasa points out, they also formed small scale voluntary organizations known as *samāgam* with religious and ethnic aspirations (1995: 130). They supported the projects of prominent monks like Hikkaduwe Sumangala and Mohoṭṭivatte Guṇānanda. With their ability to start printing presses and sponsor Buddhist publications, these Buddhist groups became new actors in Buddhism. However, we cannot simply interpret the projects of these Buddhist groups as undertakings of an autonomous Buddhist agency. This new form of power was enabled by economic opportunities and technological capabilities created by British colonial rule. These Buddhist groups were choosing from certain options that were presented to them by the colonial context.

The promotion of *Buddha-vandanā* among lay Buddhists during this period was one of the projects carried out by these Buddhist groups. It is important to notice that these Buddhist groups consisted both of elites and non-elites. The promotion of this devotional ritual was a concerted effort by Buddhist activists from different social backgrounds. The movements to modernize Buddhism have generally been seen as a project of the bourgeoisie. The focus of scholarship on modernizing projects supported by more elite class of Buddhist activists creates the impression that non-elite Buddhist groups were inactive or unresponsive to colonial challenges. But, with the liturgical

³ The total population of Buddhists in the country according to the census of 1901 was 2,141,404. The Buddhist population in the Western province was 628,612, while it was 532,140 in the Southern province (Wenzlhuemer 2008: 51).

⁴ See Seasonal papers of Great Britain's Parliament House of Commons, Inventory control record 1, Vol. 95, p. 83.

booklets we see the active involvement of non-elite groups of Buddhists in composing, sponsoring, and using the booklets, providing clear evidence that these non-elite Buddhist groups were not silent. This active participation of ordinary Buddhists reveals a less familiar trajectory of modernization of Buddhism.

The liturgical booklets themselves provide the evidence that the promotion of *Buddha-vandanā* was a concerted effort of all social classes of Buddhists—ordinary Buddhists, Buddhist monks, Buddhist aristocrats, and Buddhist businessmen. Authors of the liturgical booklets included monks and lay Buddhists of different castes and social classes. Among the forty-eight booklets in the collection, fifteen were composed by monks, thirty-one by lay people, and two by unknown authors. Authorship of these booklets did not require a higher level of education since these booklets were simply collections of Pāli verses in a particular order with some instructions on the performance of the ritual. Of course, some knowledge of traditional Pāli recitations was necessary. Most of these authors, with the exception of the author of the first liturgical book, Mohoṭṭivatte Guṇānanda, are not well known to us today. No detailed records or biographies can be found about them. This lack of biographies and diaries associated with these authors indicates their non-elite background. However, based on glimpses of their general background apparent from the booklets themselves, we can say that some were influential personalities within their own local communities. For example, the author of *Buddha Ādahīme Kramaya* (1888), Koratota Sobhita was the head-monk of Koratoṭa Raja Maha Vihāraya, an ancient temple located about ten miles away from the city of Colombo. He was also the manager of three schools in the Western province that were opened for Buddhist students in response to growth of Christian missionary schools (Malalgoda 1976: 235).

Buddhist aristocrats and businessmen joined in the effort to promote *Buddha-vandanā* by sponsoring the cost of printing. As previously noted, two booklets were printed in large quantities for free distribution with the help of sponsors. The first, *Śri Saddharma Mañjarī* printed in 1905 in a first edition of 10,000 copies, was a project of Pāulu Silva Appuhāmi, a manager of two Buddhist schools who invited the Buddhist monk, Wimaladhamma Tissa, to compose it and campaigned to raise funds for its printing. According to the budget sheet attached to the booklet, seven Buddhist organizations and twenty-nine individuals supported this project. While the majority of sponsors were ordinary people, the list of donors included four “vidānes,” village headmen, three doctors and two public notaries. A noteworthy donor in this list is E. R. Guṇaratne, the Mudaliyar of the Governor’s Gate (a high rank in the colonial administration and honorary title). The other booklet printed for free distribution, in an edition of 3000 copies, was *Buddha Ādahilla* composed by W. John Perera⁵ in 1917. The list of donors in this book also represents a mix of people from different social backgrounds. According to the last page of the booklet, responding to a paper advertisement, a religious organization (Ubhayalokārtha Siddhi Samāgama) and two individuals made the highest contribution, Rs. 10 each. Small contributions, mostly Rs. 1, had come from three trading companies

⁵ During the colonial period, it was common for Buddhist parents in urban areas to give their children English or Christian names. The use of such names gave these children a better chance of employment and assimilation with colonial rulers. Anaḡārika Dharmapāla was named David by his Buddhist parents. He changed his name in 1881 and initiated a movement to change Christian names and to give Buddhist names to children (Dharmadasa 1995, 121ff).

and thirty-one individuals. The majority in the list were traders, and four of these donors were doctors. Here we also find a few people with the surname Appuhāmi, which indicates their descent from the high caste, *goyigama*. But many donors had Fernando, de Silva, or Perera as their surnames, which are Portuguese names indicating their descent from the low country or coastal areas. Again, another noteworthy personality on this list of donors is Dr. W.A. de Silva, who was a veterinary surgeon and a pioneer in the Buddhist temperance movement in the early twentieth century (Dharmadasa 1995: 133). The number of booklets and editions indicates a continuing demand, from which it can be presumed that the booklets were in fact being used for their intended purpose.

Formalization of the Lay Practice of *Buddha-vandanā*

The significance of these liturgical booklets lies in the fact that they essentially constructed a form of *Buddha-vandanā* specifically suitable for lay Buddhists of the colonial era by simplifying it and formalizing its content, recitations, and the order of the practice. This formalization was possible due to print technology that enabled production and wide distribution of a large number of booklets among lay Buddhists. This construction of a uniform practice paved the way for it to become a marker of Buddhist identity.

While *Buddha-vandanā* had been a foundational Buddhist practice, the way it was promoted and utilized during the colonial period was new. Traditionally, lay people learned recitations and the order of this ritual through oral tradition, not from a text. As noted earlier, no text on *Buddha-vandanā* for lay people can be found within the large corpus of Theravāda texts. However, the liturgical booklets that appeared in the late colonial era were the first printed forms of the liturgy for lay practitioners, and the impact of these booklets in formalizing the liturgy and popularizing the recitations of *Buddha-vandanā* among lay Buddhists was significant to the modernization of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

The formalization of the liturgy presented in these booklets was not undertaken under the authority of any particular ecclesiastical body or organization. The authors themselves, both monastic and lay Buddhists, selected and ordered recitations from the much more extensive monastic liturgy. Moreover, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, there was not one single authoritative religious body.

The print medium generally leads to standardization and formalization of ideas and practices. This affordance enabled Buddhist activists in the colonial era to formalize the lay practice of *Buddha-vandanā* and utilize it in a novel way. Once booklets had been written and published, print technology allowed authors to interact with each other's booklets. The authors of many of these booklets refer to the existence of other booklets and state that their booklets were refined by removing "errors" found in previous booklets. For example, A.M. Perera, the author of *Pratipatti Saṅgrahaya* (1892), states in the preface that his booklet is free from the errors found in other booklets. P. Andirisi Appuhamy, the author of *Buddha Ādahīma* (1902), states in an afterword that his booklet was improved by removing faults found in his own previous edition. This possibility that print technology created for checking on each other's work, and improving one's own text through editing and reprinting, facilitated the formalization of the liturgy of *Buddha-vandanā*.

The booklets published until the early 1890s were short and included both Pāli recitations and Sinhala poems. One of the earliest booklets in the collection of the National Museum is *Buddha Ādahīme Kramaya*, authored by the Buddhist monk Koratoṭa Sobhita in 1888. It contains sixteen pages in three-inch by five-inch format. The *Buddha-vandanā* in this booklet includes seven sections of recitation. Each section is comprised of very short recitals both in Pāli and Sinhala. Over the next decade, the liturgy presented in the booklets increased in length and included more recitations. There were longer verses for each section and the appearance of more Pāli recitations, supplementing and sometimes replacing Sinhala poems. For example, in *Buddha Ādahilla*, published in 1899 by S.A. Dharmadasa, there are no longer any Sinhala poems, only Pāli ones.

Such differences were gradually harmonized in subsequently published booklets and by the early twentieth century had largely disappeared. What became the enduring structure of the liturgy first appeared in *Buddha Ādahima* (“Worshiping the Buddha”), published in 1902. Here *Buddha-vandanā* included the following recitations:

1. Observance of the three refuges and the five precepts or eight precepts
2. Homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha
3. Veneration of the relics of the Buddha
4. Dedication of offerings: flowers, lamps, scents, incense, food
5. Homage to the twenty-eight past Buddhas
6. Homage to the sixteen famous stūpas in the island
7. Recitations for meditative reflections
8. Aspiration
9. Asking forgiveness from the Buddha
10. Paying respect to one’s parents
11. Transference of merits to *devas* and departed relatives

The substance of the liturgy set out in this booklet remained consistent in later booklets, though the order in which the recitations appeared was sometimes different. One variation is the placement of recitations for dedicating offerings. In some booklets such as *Buddha Ādahilla hevath Saraṇāgamana Vistaraya* (1908) and *Bauddha Vandanāva* (1905), the dedication of offerings (number four, above) comes after paying homage to twenty-eight Buddha and sixteen stupas (numbers five and six). The rest of the structure remains the same across these booklets.

The specific Pāli chants for each section largely remain the same in the booklets published after 1902. For example, the words to recite in the *Buddha Ādahīma* (1902) for the transference of merits to *devas* are

*Ākāsaṭṭā ca bhummaṭṭā - devā nāgā mahiddhikā
puññaṃ taṃ anumoditvā—ciraṃ rakkhantu loka sāsanaṃ*

May the powerful *devas* and *nāgas* living in the sky as well as on earth rejoice and gain this merit and protect the world and the Buddhist religion for a long time.

All of the booklets that appeared after 1902 carry this Pāli verse for the transference of merits to *devas* (e.g. *Bauddha Vandanāva* 1905: 32; *Buddha Ādahilla hevath Saraṇāgamana Vistaraya* 1908: 15; *Buddha*

Ādahilla 1917: 32; Bauddha Vandanā Gāthā Pota 1923: 22; Gāthā Cintāmaniya 1930: 30). Similarly, the Pāli passage found in the section of homage to the Buddha is as follows:

Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammā sambuddho vijjā caraṇa-sampanno sugato, lokavidū anuttaro purisadamma sārathi satthā deva manussānaṃ buddho bhagavā ti.

Such indeed is the Blessed One: He is completely free from cankers, fully self-awakened, endowed with clear vision and virtuous conduct, sublime, the knower of the worlds, the incomparable trainer of persons to be tamed, the teacher of gods and humans, enlightened and blessed.

This is a canonical passage. We find this passage in many places in the Pāli canon where the Buddha is praised by his followers (e.g. *Dīgha-nikāya* i: 48 & iii: 4; *Majjhima-nikāya* i:355 & iii: 237; *Samyutta-nikāya* ii: 68; *Anguttara-nikāya* iii: 1). In liturgical booklets, this Pāli passage became the standard way of paying homage to the Buddha.

Many of the recitations in liturgical booklets are stanzas that can be chanted rhythmically. They are to be chanted loud individually or in groups when performing *Buddha-vandanā*. The following are stanzas found in these liturgical booklets for offering lamps, incense, and flowers respectively.

*Ghanasārappadittena - dīpena tama dhaṅsināti
lokadīpaṃ sambuddhaṃ - pūjayāmi tamonudaṃ.*

With lights brightly shining, dispelling the darkness

I venerate the Enlightened One who dispels the darkness of delusion.

*Gandha sambhāra yuttena - dhūpenā' haṃ sugandhinā
pūjaye pūjanīyaṃ taṃ - pūjābhājana'muttamaṃ.*

With this perfume of incense, filled with lots of fragrance

I revere the supremely one who is worthy of respect and honor.

*Vaṇṇa gandha gunopetaṃ - etaṃ kusuma santatiṃ
pūjayāmi munindassa - sirīpāda saroruhe.*

This mass of flowers with nice color and fragrance

I offer at the sacred lotus like feet of the Noble Sage.

Several booklets appeared after 1902 and contain these specific stanzas in the section of offerings to the Buddha (e.g. Buddha Ādahīma 1902: 4–5; Buddhopasthanaya 1905: 25; Buddha Ādahilla hevath Saraṇāgamana Vistaraya 1908: 14–15; Bauddha Vanadanā Gāthā Sannaya 1925: 12–14). As well as formalizing specific recitations, these booklets also collectively presented a general pattern of the lay practice of *Buddha-vandanā*, that is, starting with the observation of the three refuges and the five precepts; moving to recitations on paying homage to the triple gem, relics, and shrines; continuing

with dedication of various items of offering and meditative reflections; and ending with the transference of merits.⁶

In examining the possible sources for the specific recitations found in these booklets, I found three monastic liturgical texts containing some of these recitations. These monastic texts, which are palm-leaf manuscripts from the pre-print era, are the *Baṇadahaṃ pota* (“Manual of Buddhist Doctrines and Practices”), *Soḷasa pūjā* (“Sixteen Offerings”), and *Catubhāṇavāra pāli* (“Four Recitation Sections”). These manuscripts contain a large body of recitations and instructions for use by monks in their own practices and for teaching laypeople. Out of these various types of recitations, the authors of the printed liturgical booklets, who were both monks and lay people, seem to have selected certain parts to be included in a simpler lay practice of *Buddha-vandanā*.

The *Baṇadahaṃ pota* has been a popular monastic handbook since the eighteenth century. A whole genre of *Baṇadahaṃ pota* appeared during this century to be used in the newly established monastic educational centers (*pirivena*) under the guidance of Vālivita Saranaṃkara, a key reformist monastic leader of the pre-colonial era. The *Baṇadahaṃ pota* is also believed to be built on the initial monastic guidebook composed by this prominent monk (Blackburn 2001: 67). Even in the contemporary period, the *Baṇadahaṃ pota* remains an important guidebook in the training of novice monks. The broader contents of this text include such items as commentary on the standard phrase of salutation to the Buddha (*namo tassa bhagavato....*); Sinhalese translation and commentaries of the *parittas*, or protective chants; the set of rules for monastic etiquette (*sekhiyā*); the Buddha’s first discourse, together with its Sinhala commentary; and the Pāli discourse on the doctrine of dependent origination, with its Sinhala translation (Godakumbura 1980: 101 ff).

The *Baṇadahaṃ pota* can be the source for the recitals that appear in the printed booklets in the sections on “Homage to the sixteen famous stūpas on the island” (number six) and “meditative reflections” (number seven). These exact recitals are found in the palm-leaf copy of this manuscript held in the Danish Collection of the Copenhagen Royal Library within sections 15.2 and 15.4 respectively. The *Baṇadahaṃ pota* also contains the canonical passages on paying homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha (number two). Recitations for the dedication of offerings were taken from the other monastic liturgical handbook, the *Soḷasa pūjā*. This text is also found as a part of the above-mentioned *Baṇadahaṃ pota* in some bound palm-leaf manuscripts. It provides guidelines for the performance of a sophisticated monastic ritual of honoring the Buddha through sixteen (*soḷasa*) acts of service and offering. These sixteen acts together with relevant recitations are performed mostly focusing on special sacred objects, such as the tooth relic of the Buddha and the Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura, by specially trained monks with the assistance of a lay staff.⁷ What we find in the

⁶ These booklets also seem to formulate a pattern of liturgy for lay Buddhists that is distinctive to Sri Lanka. When I compare liturgical booklets in Thailand and Myanmar and actual chants recited during venerating the Buddha by lay Buddhists in those countries, I did not find verses for offering specific items as we found in Sri Lankan liturgical booklets. As we will later, these verses were taken to these booklets from the Sri Lankan medieval monastic liturgical handbook, *Soḷasa Pūjā*.

⁷ This ritual performance is mostly known as *tevāva*. At the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, this ritual is performed thrice a day: morning, midday, and evening. A detailed description on the daily performance of this ritual can be found in Seneviratne (1978: 38–59).

liturgical booklets is an abridged version of this longer service. In particular, offerings of services, such as fanning and pouring water, were not included in the printed liturgical booklets. What was included in the printed liturgical booklets out of sixteen acts of honoring are the verses for dedicating various items. The exact verses for dedicating lamps, incense, and flowers quoted above are found in the palm-leaf manuscript housed in the University of Peradeniya Library.⁸ Shortening a longer service into a few selected offerings can be seen as an effort to simplify this monastic ritual for lay consumption. This abridged version also indicates a change to the service, whereby instead of following a specific pattern for treating a living royal dignitary, offerings are made as symbolic gesture of honor.

The textual source for the section on “Homage to the 28 past Buddhas” (number five) and also the section on *paritta* found in some of the printed liturgical booklets was the *Catubhāṇavāra Pāli* (or *Piruvānā pothvahanse* in Sinhala), the most popular chanting book in Sri Lanka, which was first composed around the fifth century CE and was used in chanting ceremonies performed by monks. This text contains a vast of number of protective chants. The authors of the printed liturgical booklets selected a few of the most popular chants, such as *Ratana sutta*, *Mangala sutta*, *Metta sutta* (Buddha Ādahilla 1917), *Sīvali paritta* (Buddha Ādahilla, 1908), and *Jinapañjara* (Buddha Ādahīma, 1906), to include in the booklets as part of the lay practice of *Buddha-vandanā*. The short verse for dedicating merits to departed relatives has been taken from the *Tirokuḍḍa sutta* (*Khuddakapāṭa* 6), which is not a part of the *Catubhāṇavāra Pāli*.

Written sources cannot be found for other recitations that comprise parts of *Buddha-vandanā*. The verses chanted for paying respect to parents (number ten) and transference of merits to devas (number eleven) do not appear to have a textual basis. It is possible that these recitations derive instead from an oral tradition known to the authors. Noteworthy here are the recitations for paying respects to one’s parents. It makes clear that this form of *Buddha-vandanā* is a lay practice. In the Theravāda Buddhist tradition, only laypeople, not monks, pay respect to their own parents. Two Pāli verses found in these booklets for this purpose are purely for the use of lay Buddhists.

Taking these recitals from different sources, the authors of the printed liturgical booklets brought them into one text, organized them in a particular order, and formalized them as standard passages to recite for *Buddha-vandanā*. These printed liturgical booklets collectively and progressively provided the structure of the lay practice of *Buddha-vandanā* and gave laypeople a clearly defined Buddhist practice and instructions on how to perform it.

New Utilization of *Buddha-vandanā* in the Colonial Context

The promotion and formalization of *Buddha-vandanā* as a lay practice in the colonial period added a new purpose to those traditionally attached to this ritual of veneration. Although the substance of the booklets was not new, the method and manner of their use contributed to the modernization of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The booklets presented, for the first time, a simplified liturgy for use by lay

⁸ This text of *Soḷasa Pūjā* is found as a part of palm-leaf manuscript of *Baṇadāham pota* kept in the library of the University of Peradeniya under the access number 277170.

people. New technology was used to print the booklets and make them available for distribution, and a new purpose was added to performance of the ritual. According to Pāli sources and medieval classical Sinhala literature, the ritual of venerating the Buddha in the pre-colonial era was primarily performed for two purposes: to gather merit and to express one's gratitude and devotion to the Buddha. The promotion of this ritual through these liturgical booklets added the new purpose of making *Buddha-vandanā* a signifier of emerging Buddhist identity in the colonial era.

Pāli canonical texts, such as *Vimānavatthu* and *Apadāna* and their commentaries, refer to the performance of *Buddha-vandanā* as a great source of merit. The Pāli texts and commentaries use stories to illustrate the merit and spiritual reward to be gained from the performance of *Buddha-vandanā*. There is, for example, the story of Elephant Vimana in the *Vimānavatthu* (Vv: 55–56), telling of the potency of *Buddha-vandanā* in producing great merit. A divine being reports to the monk Mahāmoggallāna that he received his divine majesty due to his offering of eight flowers to a stupa of the Buddha Kassapa. Similarly, the *Apadāna* contains many stories about simple offerings to the Buddha, such as sandal paste, flowers, and even a small flag made from the upper garment of a poor laborer, all of which generated merit powerful enough to lead to many pleasures in the divine realm, including the attainment of psychic powers and enlightenment (Ap I: 70–73). As stated more directly in the *Vimānavatthu* (44):

Bahunnaṃ vata atthāya—uppajjanti tathāgatā

Yattha kāraṃ karithvāna - saggaṃ gacchanti dāyaka

The Buddhas arise, indeed, for the good of the many.

By making offerings [to the Buddhas], donors go to heaven.

Sinhala medieval texts such as *Pūjāvaliya* and *Thūpawamsa* portray the ritual of venerating the Buddha as a devotional expression of gratitude. According to these texts, acts of ritualized veneration and making offerings to the Buddha are done in gratitude for what the Buddha accomplished in his life and for the help one has received from the Buddha. Stephen Berkwitz, who highlights this function of *Buddha-vandanā* in Sinhala medieval literature, argues that the ritual was performed, and offerings were made to the Buddha, to express appreciation for the religious attainments and divine prosperity available to those who cultivate a proper mental attitude towards the Buddha (2012: 201). Charles Hallisey has similarly noted that instances of *pūjā* found in Sinhala medieval literature were acts of gratitude springing from an awareness of how one was benefited by the Buddha (1988: 278 ff). The aforementioned monastic liturgical book, *Soḷasa pūjā* prescribes a sophisticated ritual to express one's devotion and obeisance to the Buddha. This text, with its sixteen types of services and offerings, portrays a pattern of serving a royal dignitary. The Buddha is treated in this context as a king. The specific services such as fanning and offering items such as flowers are given as appropriate ways to honor such a royal Buddha.

While keeping these devotional attitudes, the authors of the booklets added a new meaning to the ritual, promoting it as an affirmative assertion of Buddhist identity within the colonial context. Part of the modernization of Buddhism in the late colonial era necessarily involved a construction of Buddhist identity by lay Buddhists. While some reformist Buddhist activists attempted to do the same

by spreading knowledge of Buddhist doctrines and positive representations of Buddhism, authors and sponsors of these booklets were interested in educating Buddhist followers on specific Buddhist practices and on how to behave as Buddhists in ritual contexts.

This need of formulating an explicit marker of Buddhist identity during this period can be explained by referring to the conditions created by the process of globalization. If we accept that globalization is the stretching of relations beyond locality and the free movement of goods, capital, technology, information and people across vast areas of land, we need to acknowledge that such a process brings challenges and pressure to hitherto unquestionably accepted local ideas, practices and institutions. Zygmunt Bauman (2000) highlights the profound effect of this process on individual and communal identity. When local ideas and practices lose their traditional value and seemingly natural status, individual and communal identity also loses its foundation. A person's identity and role in society become unfixed and uncertain. As a result, social identity becomes something to be purposely constructed and asserted (Bauman 2000: 31). These were challenges faced by communities in Sri Lanka during the late nineteenth century, which experienced the advancing influences of globalization while still under colonial rule. In such a complex and changing cultural context, it is natural that Buddhist activists would perceive the need to define and assert Buddhist identity in a new fashion. As Stephen Berkwitz has written, "[t]his disruptive effect of globalization has contributed to distinctively modern reworkings of what it means to be Buddhist and how one can model and develop this identity in practice" (2006: 7).

Thus, we see in colonial Sri Lanka efforts to construct a renewed sense of religious identity through such projects as promoting a traditional dress code, calling for changing the Christian names adopted by many urban Buddhists during the colonial period to Buddhist names, and designing a Buddhist flag (Ivan 2007: 143ff). The authors and sponsors of the above liturgical booklets similarly presented *Buddha-vandanā* as a marker of Buddhist identity. They were locally influential Buddhist activists who did not come from the English-educated elite social class. These Buddhist activists regarded the knowledge of how to perform *Buddha-vandanā* as an essential characteristic of a Buddhist. Some authors of these booklets stated that people who did not have knowledge of *Buddha-vandanā* and related practices, such as observing the three refuges and the five precepts, are Buddhists in name only. Concern about the lack of this knowledge among Sri Lankan Buddhists was a motivating factor for the authors of the liturgical booklets. Andiris Appuhamy, the lay author of *Buddha Ādahīma*, wrote in his preface (1902: 14) the following:

There are female and male followers among Buddhist religionists [*Buddhagamkara*] who even now practice religion and engage in worshiping and making offerings while not knowing the proper way to do such practices. They do not know even how to observe the three refuges and the five precepts. Because of this, I wrote this book so they could learn these practices quickly.

In educating Buddhists, these Buddhist activists regarded the knowledge of Buddhist practices like *Buddha-vandanā* as more fundamental than the knowledge of Buddhist doctrines. For them, Buddhists should be educated in those simple Buddhist practices before teaching them Buddhist doctrines. A

Buddhist monk, for example, stressed the importance of teaching Buddhist practices in a pamphlet titled *Saddharmovada Dipanī* (“The Exposition of Instructions on Good Doctrines”) (Sīlānkāra 1932: 1).

In some booklets, we also begin to see encouragement to perform *Buddha-vandanā* on a daily basis as a marker of Buddhist identity. These books particularly emphasize the regular observation of the three refuges, which is the first part of *Buddha-vandanā*. The author of the liturgical booklet, *Buddha Ādahīme Kramaya* states:

A complete Buddhist (*Buddhāgamkārayā*) is one who recites, “I go to the Buddha for refuge, the Dhamma for refuge, and the Sangha for refuge” and takes refuge in the triple gem in the morning and evening. Others are not Buddhists simply because they say that they are Buddhists or visit Kelaniya temple or other shrines once a year to offer flowers and lamps. Even if one performs all kinds of wholesome activities, he is not a Buddhist [without doing the above practice daily] (Sobhita 1893: 1–2).

Similarly, the monk author of *Rathnathrayābi vādanaya* (“The Veneration of the Triple Gem”) also encourages Buddhists to perform *Buddha-vandanā* daily:

Having read this booklet from the beginning to the end and having memorized what needs to be learnt, one should venerate the triple gem at least twice a day as a faithful devotee (Sri Medhankara 1929: 10).

These authors encourage the Buddhist followers to be good in the ritual behavior within the practice of *Buddha-vandanā*. This ritual behavior includes preparing oneself with cleaner and preferably white clothing, then going in front of an image of the Buddha either at home or a temple, placing items of offering such as lamps and flowers, prostrating in front of the image, sitting or kneeling down while keeping the palms together against the chest, and then chanting the recitations given in the liturgical booklets in proper order. Such *Buddha-vandanā* ends with three prostrations towards the image of the Buddha.

In addition to formalizing and promoting the practice of *Buddha-vandanā*, the booklets strengthened the idea of religious identity by utilizing two new terms to refer to Buddhism and Buddhists. Authors of some liturgical booklets referred to Buddhism as ‘*Buddhāgama*’ and to Buddhists as ‘*Buddhāgamkārayo*’. Here we find one of the earliest appearances of the word *agama*, the Sinhala translation of the English word ‘religion’. *Āgama* in the sense of religion is new to Sinhala usage. In precolonial times, the term *sāsana* was used to refer to Buddhism as a socio-temporal phenomenon. The term *āgama* originally meant ‘sacred texts’ or ‘sacred tradition’. John Ross Carter (1977) and Kitsiri Malalgoda (1997) suggest that the Christian missionaries who arrived on the island in the early nineteenth century chose the term as the Sri Lankan equivalent of the word religion. They then used it to refer to both Christianity (*Kristiāni āgama*) and Buddhism (*Buddhāgama*) (Malalgoda 1997: 72–73). The liturgical booklets represent early instances where the word *Buddhāgama* and its variants were used by Buddhists as self-referential terms. The ritual of *Buddha-vandanā* is presented in these

booklets as a practice that all *Buddhāgamkārāyo* (“Buddhist religionists”) should do (e.g. *Sri Saddharma Mañjari* 1905: 3).

David Scott (1994) argues that this adoption of the term *āgama* marks the transmission of European notions of religion to colonial Sri Lanka. He points out, following John Sommerville, that secularization in Europe brought about an epistemic shift in which a field of discourse and practice comes to be constituted as ‘religion’ as such. In this cognitive alteration ‘religion’ ceases to be the background of thought and becomes one among many objects of thought. Consequently, religion became primarily “an explanation of life or a set of propositions” (Scott 1994: 20). It is this concept of propositional religion, in Scott’s view, that was adopted by Sinhala people in colonial Sri Lanka with the usage of the term *āgama*. He further stresses that the altered social and political field brought about by the colonial power and confrontations with Christian missionaries urged Sinhala people to adopt a reified propositional ‘religion’ called ‘Buddhism’ and “reconstituted themselves as members of one ‘religious’ community against rival ones” (1994: 21).

Kitsiri Malalgoda (1997), however, doubts that the adoption of the linguistic term *āgama* necessarily means embracing the European notions of religion. Although *āgama* came to be used in Sinhala parlance, it did not replace the usage of *sāsana*, the Pali term that was used to denote the overall doctrines, practices, and institutions of Buddhists before the colonial period. He further stresses that *Buddhāgama* in Sinhala usage means not only doctrinal propositions but also practices, personnel, places and objects of worship (1997: 73).

Scott’s argument is helpful to understand one aspect of developments that occurred within Buddhism during the colonial period. It is true that some reformist Buddhist activists started to define Buddhism in terms of propositions. This is very clear in the projects of Henry Steel Olcott, such as his formulation of fourteen Fundamental Buddhist Beliefs and his composition of Buddhist Catechism. However, this was only one trend. What the liturgical booklets reveal to us is that there were other ways in which Buddhist religion and Buddhist identity were constructed. While the term *Buddhāgama* is used in these booklets, they did not give Buddhist beliefs in propositional terms. Rather, these booklets provide guidelines on how to behave and recite in ritual contexts as Buddhists. Although the authors of these booklets adopted the term *āgama* and the colonial category of religion, they did not situate Buddhist identity in what one believes or thinks. Rather, a good Buddhist has been defined based on how one performs rituals.

What these liturgical booklets indicate is that modernization of Buddhism has not been uniform. In contrast to rationally inclined reformist Buddhists led by Henry Steel Olcott and Anagārika Dharmapāla, who promoted rationalist interpretations of Buddhism downplaying its devotional aspect, the authors and sponsors of these liturgical booklets did not think that neglecting devotional practices was helpful for modernizing Buddhism. They saw that devotional practices like *Buddha-vandanā* can be a part of the process of modernizing Buddhism in the colonial context. In fact, they postulated that the way to modernize Buddhism was to make so-called Buddhists authentic Buddhist followers by teaching them the practice of venerating the Buddha. Although this turning to devotional ritual is seemingly a conservative move, assigning such a significance to this ritual was also a modernizing effort, though of a different kind. As noted earlier, those who promoted *Buddha-*

vandanā did not simply attempt to continue a traditional practice, but to reform it as a suitable practice for lay Buddhists of the colonial era, and to utilize it in an unprecedented manner for constructing Buddhist identity.

Contrary to the view of Richard Young and Somaratna, who claim that devotional attitudes expressed in Guṇānanda's *Buddha Ādahilla*, "swept away as society responded creatively to Ceylon's modernization and employed new strategies for finding meaning in Buddhism to cope with these upheavals" (1996: 209), the series of liturgical booklets preserved in the library of the National Museum demonstrate that such devotional attitudes were carried forward to the subsequent decades by above mentioned Buddhist activists as an alternative response to colonialism, modernity, and globalization.

Conclusion

The history of printed liturgical booklets on *Buddha-vandanā* enlarges the story that is found in contemporary scholarship about the way Buddhists attempted to modernize Buddhism in Sri Lanka during the colonial period. Although the efforts of Buddhist activists were predicated by the capabilities as well as limitations presented by colonialism, their modernizing efforts were multi-directional. Liturgical booklets show that it was not just Western-inflected rationalism and Westernized practices that were used to modernize Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and it was not only the bourgeoisie who were active in this process. Promoting the indigenous devotional ritual, *Buddha-vandanā*, by both elite and non-elite groups, played a significant role in modernizing Buddhism. This new stress on devotionalism, while seemingly traditional, was in fact another form of modernist response to colonialism and globalization. These activists gave a new meaning to this devotional ritual and utilized it in a novel way. These booklets also show the broadened use of print during the colonial period. While printing has generally been viewed as inherently linked to rationalizing and textualizing trends, these booklets demonstrate how this technology has been used to promote a practice of a devotional ritual. This innovative utilization of *Buddha-vandanā* has proved successful, since by the late twentieth century this veneration ritual had become the most frequently performed Buddhist practice in Sri Lanka and one of the most common ways that Sri Lankan Buddhists express their religious identity in both their personal and public lives.

It is worth examining the effects of the promotion of this ritual in socializing children in Buddhist households. Since this veneration ritual has been interpreted as a marker of Buddhist identity, it is plausible that Buddhist parents and leaders would have been interested in teaching children this ritual. A number of booklets indicate this interest in their prefaces. A more focused study on this area will be useful to understand the full significance of this project. Another important inquiry is a comparative investigation of Pāli centric liturgical booklets that were printed during the same period in other Theravada Buddhist countries, specifically, Thailand and Myanmar. Justin McDaniel (2007 & 2011) identifies the trend of printing new liturgical books in Thailand since the mid-nineteenth century. These books portray competing forces of standardization versus expansion and innovation in Buddhist liturgy. A comparative study of such new liturgical books of Theravada

Buddhist countries with a view to the extant transnational Buddhist networks through trade routes can give us a richer understanding of Buddhist modernization in Asia.

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