Reconciling Influence and Agency: Renewal and Adaptation in Two Colonial Encounters in British India

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The British colonial project in India ushered in a vast array of social, political and economic changes throughout the subcontinent, with a distinct influence on religious movements. Colonialism brought with it new technologies, such as the printing press, and new educational forms and content. One area in which the ramifications of colonial rule are readily apparent is with the development of several new religious movements, including the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Singh Sabha and the Deobandi movement. Each case offers an opportunity to explore the dynamics of interaction between local actors and the opportunities and threats posed by colonial rule. Debendranath Tagore captures these challenges with an address to his Tattvabodhini Sabha, a religious organization of the upper class, educated native elite of Calcutta:

> "There is no doubt that the study of the English language is tending to advance the cause of learning… Nowadays [educated Indians] do not feel disposed to worship stocks and stones like the ignorant masses… But if the Vedanta were spread far and wide, then we would never feel drawn to other religions. That is why we are thus trying to preserve our Hindu religion."[1]

Even as the British colonial project granted new tools to Indian religious reformers, its modernizing influence threatened to replace local culture with, in a law council member's words, "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."[2] The social, political and economic changes brought on by British colonialism significantly contributed to a rash of religious reform movements that swept through India in the 19th century.

Two of the most influential and successful of these movements were the *madrasah*, or religious school, founded at Deoband by the ‘ulama, or religious scholars, and the founding of the Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta under the leadership of men such as Rammohan Roy and Debendranath Tagore. Although these movements took place in separate regions of the subcontinent, in different time periods, and arose among intellectuals grounded in different religious traditions, they nevertheless share an anxiety about the vast changes introduced by colonial rule. The movements, in responding to such anxieties, reflect a common desire among Indian elites of the 19th century to balance the elements of renewal and adaptation.

The problem of conceptualizing “native responses” to colonial change has produced a vast literature, and scholars have continually searched for the most effective conceptual vocabulary.[3] In an attempt at both clarity and consistency, I would like to offer my own definitions of both renewal and adaptation. The term “renewal” is common in scholarship dealing with religious reform movements. In fact, in her influential study of the Deoband school, Barbara Metcalf argues that *tajdid*, “which suggests the process of renewal,” is common in all Islamic reform movements. I will broaden the definition so that it may apply to any attempt to return to a religiously pure era. For Islam, renewal involves recognition of “the first decades of Islam as providing the fundamental examples of behavior and belief.”[4] In the case of Hindu reformers, renewal can be associated with a desire to reinvigorate the Upanisadic golden age of Hinduism, a rational, ethical and pure religion.[5]

While it is possible to find uses of the term “adaptation” in scholarly studies of the period, I have not encountered a systematic application of the term in

connection with religious reform movements.[6] As I would like to use the term, it offers a delicate balance between choice and force, and evokes a change in the environment that must somehow be reacted to while retaining the potential for the subject to shape his or her own response. This adaptation can take one or both of two forms. The first occurs when the colonized adopts the methods or technology of the colonizer for his or her own purposes. The second involves something like an ideological shift, in which the colonized adopts ideas, concepts or norms and applies them to his or her own traditions. Clearly, an ideological shift represents a deeper religious change than simply adopting practical methods.

The third term I will employ is the word threat. I use this term not in its simplistic sense, but to evoke the fear or anxiety that occurs among colonized peoples faced with the obvious power of colonial rule to institute changes in their personal and public lives. Obviously, the threat is not merely a matter of force. As I detail later, it may be that some of the Deobandi ʻulama may have felt violently threatened by the British response to the mutiny of 1857, but they were in fact more fearful for the survival of their culture. Such a threat does not endanger single actors, but rather the cultural integrity of an entire community. Threat thus connotes a general atmosphere of anxiety. I use threat to cover the range of reformative practice used by the British to supplant local culture with their own, intentionally or not.[7]

Through a careful contextualization of the historical moment and a side-by-side comparison of the dynamics of renewal and adaptation, which are important to both movements, I will show that the perceived threat of cultural assimilation

necessarily impacted, but did not therefore determine, the development of each movement. The Deobandi ʻulama "feared for the fate of their class and culture," and this led them to formulate a response predicated on the acceptance of renewal and the rejection of ideological adaptation.[8] The case of Rammohan Roy is somewhat different, although both movements shared an emphasis on renewal. Rammohan benefited from the British and saw missionaries generally failing in their goals, and therefore focused on adapting ideas to perfect his vision of renewing the Upanisadic golden age. However, Debendranath Tagore, recognizing the growing British threat during the Age of Reform, gravitated away from ideological adaptation and towards a more explicit discourse of renewal. Using these movements as an example, I hope to articulate a model of influence and agency that balances, rather than opposes, the economic, social and political aspects of British influence with the agency of the colonized to understand, shape and develop their own religious choices.

The Need for Careful Contextualization

Deoband

Prior to the advent of colonial rule, the Mughal Empire, an Islamic state, had dominated India. The British arrival coincided with the decentralization and, eventually, decline of the empire.[9] A widespread Muslim polity of such power would never again exist in India. Through the 1700s the Mughal Empire steadily broke into a series of smaller successor states of various religious affiliations. "The mid-eighteenth century saw the onset of a process of steady dismantling of the Mughal successor state system and its replacement by British domination."[10] Piece by piece, the British East India Company chipped away at the remaining states until, by 1856,

it dominated the subcontinent.[11] Charles Ball, an English historian writing in 1858, claims that the English “put an end to the power of the Mogul emperors… the reigning emperor, Alum Shah, became a tributary of the English East India Company.”[12] Although this history is simplistic at best, it traces the general trend of the loss of Mughal power at the hands of British colonialism.

What could be considered the last spasm of the Mughal Empire came during the infamous Mutiny of 1857. Many factors contributed to the uprising, but the fear of religious threat certainly fueled the flame of revolt. The British, unable to control India through force of arms alone, hired a large mercenary force made up of “sepoys.” When the British distributed a new rifle cartridge, a rumor broke out among the soldiers that it was smeared with cow and pig fat, a grave offense to both Hindus and Muslims, “and this was widely seen as an insidious plot by the infidels to pollute Indians before forcing their conversion to Christianity.”[13] The official revolt began when, after watching their comrades arrested for refusing to load their rifles, a cavalry division deserted the army and fled to Delhi, where they installed, despite his reluctance, the Mughal emperor as the symbolic head of the revolt.[14] The rebellion was quelled, and the Mughal emperor was tried and exiled to Burma, “[enabling] the British at last to represent themselves as the unquestioned rulers of India.”[15]After the rebellion, British colonists exaggerated the influence of religion in the mutiny, blaming Muslims disproportionately. In fact, the mutiny “was widely viewed as a product of enduring Muslim animosity.”[16] These assumptions about Muslims led to works like Sir William Wilson Hunter’s *The Indian Musulmans*, a diatribe against Indian Muslims published first in 1871.

Just four years before Hunter's book, a *madrasah* was founded by Muhammad Qasim, Rashid Ahmad and other members of the 'ulama, or Islamic scholars, in the town of Deoband in northern India.[17] They hoped to strengthen and expand the class of the 'ulama, who offered religious support and teachings to the general Muslim populace, and provide support for such a class in a state ruled by non-Muslims.[18] This concession of accepting non-Muslim rule represents the culmination of hundreds of years of Indian history.

Furthermore, both physical and discursive threats specifically targeted the Deobandi 'ulama. After the mutiny, British officials hung thirty-four men of Deoband, confiscated villagers' land, and burned nearby villages.[19] In addition, written British criticisms targeted Islamic educational institutions:

> "The more zealous Muhammadans, however, have never quite accepted the lawfulness of an education in our State Schools. While the worldly-minded among them made advances towards our system, the fanatical section shrunk still further back from it… Even as late as 1860-62 there was only one Musalman to ten Hindus in our school."[20]

Here, Hunter carefully implies that any Muslims that attend Islamic schools are fanatics. Since most "Muhammadans" avoided British schools, Muslims, and specifically educational institutions, were associated with fanaticism. The threat of British military power, the loss of overarching Muslim rule, and the discursive threat posed by works like Hunter's created a general atmosphere of anxiety for Muslims in India in general and specifically the 'ulama who founded the Deobandi *madrasah*.

Brahmo Samaj

The background to religious reform in Bengal in the early 1800s differs from the history of North Indian Muslims after the mutiny. At this time, the full force of British military power, used to devastating effect during the mutiny, had not yet been experienced by Bengalis, and the slow replacement of the Mughal Empire and its successor states was somewhat less jarring for Hindus in Bengal. This was especially true for those like Rammohan Roy, whose ancestors had worked for and benefited from Muslim rulers.[21] Roy followed his ancestor's pattern by working for the British Civil Service.[22] Furthermore, Orientalist scholarship of the time had "a bias towards studying the more exclusivist high traditions of both Hinduism and Islam."[23] The British also promoted the indigenous hierarchical social structure, which became more rigidly enforced.[24] As an upper caste Hindu, Rammohan's practices and position became privileged. Experiencing such benefits, it is of no surprise that Roy's writings emphasized the benefits to be gained from communication with Europeans, in various fields including government and science.[25] Overall, Roy had a positive view of the British presence.[26] In fact, partly due to these views, *The Times* in London published a benevolent eulogy that described his academic achievements as "remarkable."[27]

During this time, official British policy was to avoid interference with local religious customs. Even rampant missionary activity was not perceived as a threat, since missionaries did not achieve significant numbers of conversions until years later.[28] Essentially, the English wanted to maintain order to extract wealth from South Asia, which meant interfering as little as possible with local customs. This allowed Bengalis like Roy to benefit from the British presence without fear of

assimilation. However, this general pattern was complicated during the 1830s, known as the "Age of Reform," when the official policy of non-interference came into conflict with conceptions of improvement as the justification for colonial rule.[29] British reformers of the time had little respect for antiquity, seeking to improve India by freeing natives "from their age-old bondage to priests, despots and feudal aristocrats" in an attempt to legitimize their own rule.[30]

The highlight of such reforms was Lord Bentinck's banning of *sati*, or widow burning, in 1829. In his "Minute on Sati," justifying his decision, Bentinck weighed the lives of "hundreds of innocent victims" against the "great improvements – affecting the lives not of hundreds or thousands but of millions" - that the British government had to offer.[31] Clearly, he feared that interference could cause revolt, and though it was a departure from precedent, he banned the practice as unethical. Many prominent natives, including Rammohan Roy, deplored *sati* and celebrated the ban, even as other Hindu organizations protested the British right to regulate religious practice.[32] Not long after, the Minute on Education delivered by Macaulay in 1835 discussed the merits of teaching Indians native languages, like Arabic or Sanskrit, versus European languages, namely English. Macaulay's speech articulated an assimilationist position: "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."[33] As a member of the law council of Bentinck, the governor-general, Macaulay exerted significant influence, and in 1835, English, instead of Persian, became the language of the government and courts.[34]

To threats of reform and Anglicization must be added Hindu fears of conversion to Christianity. The well-publicized conversion of Krishna Mohan

Banerjea by the prominent missionary Alexander Duff in 1832 caused an uproar in the community and prompted parents to pull their sons out of English language schools.[35] When the East India Charter was renewed in 1833, it lifted the last restrictions on missionary activity, further exacerbating native anxiety.[36] Missionaries like Duff argued that the "doctrines of Christianity beautifully contrasted with those of Hinduism" and that the only reason the British needed to learn about Hinduism was "to adapt their measures for its final extirpation and overthrow."[37] To native intellectuals like Debendranath Tagore, the point was clear: "behold, our religion is being altogether destroyed… and our very Hindu name is about to be wiped out for ever."[38]

To summarize, the main threat perceived by the Deobandi ʻulama came from the physical brutality of Britain's quelling of the mutiny and the polemics against Muslims British writers engaged in afterwards. By contrast, men like Roy stood to benefit from British rule, and welcomed measures of reform. However, in succeeding generations, Brahmos like Debendranath Tagore would experience the full force of Anglicization and Christian proselytization. Although the threats may differ, we will see that the responses shared important characteristics.

Towards a Perfect Religious Society: The Push for Renewal

Renewal, or the attempt to create a perfect religious society by looking back to a pure golden age, is a prominent theme in both movements. In order to legitimize their ideas, native actors utilized what they viewed as the foundational texts of their religions to articulate a conception of what their religions truly are or should be. As we shall see, the element of renewal forms a clear focus for the leaders

of both the Deoband and the Brahmo movement. Both movements highlighted scripture as a window to a more perfect religious golden age, and both attempted to encourage a return to those more perfect religious ideas within communities.[39]

Islamic Renewal

Barbara Metcalf argues that a common feature of Islamic religious reform movements is renewal, or *tajdid*. The most notable way the Deobandi *madrasah* encouraged renewal was through its emphasis on teaching *manqulat*, including the Qu'ran and *hadith*, commentaries on and translations of the sayings of the Prophet.[40] Most schools of the time, including the Farangi Mahall school on which the Deobandi curriculum was based, emphasized *ma'qulat*, or studies of law, logic and philosophy. The Deoband *madrasah* reversed the program. At the Deoband seminary the teacher of *hadith* was considered the most influential and only the best students studied it: when asked about a deficient student's education, a prominent leader replied, "When that is the case teach a student *fiqh* or Urdu or Persian [but not *hadis*]."[41] This was all in service of creating "in any sphere available, a community both observant of detailed religious law and, to the extent possible, committed to a spiritual life as well."[42] To achieve this, the 'ulama "chose a strategy of turning within… to preserve the religious heritage."[43] The goal was to renew, within the Islamic community, the golden age that existed during the first decades of Islam.

Metcalf sees in this program a trend inward in which the 'ulama addressed the fact of British domination by reforming an insular religious community.[44] While Metcalf's argument as been widely accepted, Fuad Naeem has felt the need to make a clarification.[45] He argues that, through the use of Sufism, the goal of the Deobandi

'ulama was to provide opportunities for each Muslim to "reform or protect his or her self in a process of internalization and upon accomplishing this, to turn outwards towards the larger Muslim community to effect outwardly what has been learned inwardly."[46] This mirrors the two forms of *jihad* that Metcalf describes as fundamental to Islamic reform movements: the greater *jihad* represents an inner struggle for moral discipline and religious commitment while the lesser represents an outer struggle to create a religiously pure community in concordance with the Qu'ran.[47] Both are central to Islam, and both can be sought concomitantly.

Naeem in fact helps characterize the movement's concern with renewal. As he notes, "Sufi doctrine and practice enables the Muslim to turn inward, to reform and perfect his or her self in a process of internalization and… [next] turn outwards toward the larger Muslim community to effect outwardly what has been learned inwardly."[48] The Deobandi *madrasah*, unable to achieve lesser *jihad* in the face of British military dominance, followed a similar pattern.[49] They used the *madrasah* to inculcate religious values and propagate a religiously pure community, training "prayer leaders, writers, preachers, and teachers" who would then "disseminate their learning."[50] The school created a class of Islamic scholars to serve the spiritual needs of the community, peacefully moving towards a pure expression of Islam.

Renewal Among the Brahmos

Renewal is a powerful theme in the writings of Rammohan Roy as well. Much of his early work involved translation, especially of the Upanisads.[51] Furthermore, in "A Defence of Hindoo Theism" Roy states that he never "assumed the title of reformer or discoverer"; to him, the "doctrines of the unity of God are *real*

Hindooism."[52] His goal was to revive this "real" Hinduism, which would combine "the divine guidance of the Vedas and the dictates of pure reason."[53] For Roy, reason applied to the fundamental texts of Hinduism provided the key to returning to a golden age. Roy's "preoccupation with a golden age" is set against "a dark age of popularized religion and social abuses."[54] Even so, his criticism of some Hindu practices, like idolatry, is not an outright rejection of his tradition. Such practices are merely a perversion of the true Hinduism he seeks to propagate. "Idolatry… is not only rejected by the Sastras universally, but must also be looked upon with great horror by common sense."[55] His strategy is to use scriptural support to deny such deviations from his "real" Hinduism.[56]

After the death of Rammohan in 1833, the Brahmo Samaj suffered a decline, sustained only by the financial support of the wealthy businessman Dwarkanath Tagore and the spiritual guidance of Ramacandra Vidyavagisa. Dwarkanath's son, Debendranath, soon became a major figure in the Brahmo movement, joining the Samaj in 1842.[57] Debendranath's positions evolved over time, but he generally approached his task in relation to the interpretation of classical Hindu sources.[58] Having founded his own Tattvabodhini Sabha for religious development, he later merged his interests with those of the Samaj, intending to restore the writings of Rammohan Roy to public discourse.[59] In the process he developed a moral code drawn from Hindu scriptures, like the Laws of Manu.[60]

Of course, Tagore's emphasis on renewal could be attributed to multiple causes. To begin with, his relationship with his grandmother, a woman who loved him dearly and was extremely devout had enormous influence. In his own words,

she melded a "certain freedom of mind" with "her blind faith in religion," and could have inspired Tagore to combine rationality with a deep-seated piety.[61] However, to attribute Debendranath's religious ideas to his relationship with his grandmother or simply to his fascination with the Upanisads would be to ignore his growing concerns about the Christianization of his people. Missionary success during his lifetime prompted him to encourage a more vigorous defense of Hinduism, especially in his journal, the *Tattvabodhini Patrika.* It included writings by figures like Rajnarain Bose, who, in a response to Duff, questioned the authority of foreigners to comment on or understand Hindu texts and who claimed that Christianity contained doctrines "at once absurd and futile." Bose effectively proclaimed the superiority of a Vedic faith that achieves religious toleration more effectively than the Christians.[62] Renewal therefore characterizes the religious development of both Roy and Tagore.

Survival and Expansion: Adaptation and the Colonial Environment

Having emphasized the shared theme of renewal among Deobandis and Brahmos, I will now consider how both movements balanced this concern with an awareness of the need for adaptation, whether ideological, practical or both. Reformers in both instances had few qualms about adopting some of the physical techniques and methods of the British colonizers. However, it was only when there was little perceived threat against their culture that the same reformers engaged in what I have called ideological adaptation.

Adaptation in the Deoband Movement

The Deoband *madrasah* is quite remarkable in its adaptation of the methods of British schools and organizations. While "the 'ulama saw little reason for adapting their own ideas to English culture," "the organizational form was adopted from British institutions and then modified."[63] Formerly, most *madrasahs* were dependent on the local mosque, and usually did not have libraries, a centralized curriculum, or examinations. A teacher helped a few students learn the books he specialized in before the student would move on. However, the founders of the Deoband school included three Deputy Inspectors of the Education Department, and many had attended British educational institutions such as Delhi College. Having seen the effectiveness of such schools, they attempted to recreate their educational environment in an Islamic context. The *madrasah* had classrooms and a library and held examinations, through which especially successful students could win prizes.[64] It established a fixed curriculum that could only be changed at the institutional level.[65] Furthermore, the school innovated a new way of gaining support from the community. While most *madrasahs* had been financed by princely contributions, the flux caused by British intervention made such contributions no longer reliable. Instead, the school solicited donations from the Islamic community with a complex system that required British innovations like the postal service and printing press.[66]

These innovations served a dual purpose for the 'ulama. First, they undoubtedly made the school more effective. The style of British education allowed them to standardize their teaching and impact an enormous number of students. The institution broadened its influence by inspiring the founding of similar institutions throughout the region, and, by 1967, there were 8,934 such schools.[67]

Second, such innovations answered the charges of British polemicists like Hunter who, as detailed above, attacked Islamic educational institutions as a breeding ground of fanaticism. Since the *madrasah* looked so much like a British institution in its structure, many of these attacks lost their bite. In fact, a British District Collector invited to the school by its leaders gave a speech praising its success in 1895.[68]

However, the ʻulama at Deoband quite clearly rejected the validity of British religious and philosophical learning. While "the school did not object to western learning or to the use of English," it is quite telling that neither was ever introduced.[69] Instead, the focus remained on teaching Islamic viewpoints on various topics, including law, logic, medicine and history, but with a particular emphasis on the Qu'ran and *hadith*. Furthermore, the *madrasah* rejected government funding and never sought financial aid. They believed such money was "suspect because it came from non-Muslims," displaying a clear concern about the potential corruption of any British influence.[70] Indeed, a basic principle of the school held that "the participation of government and the wealthy is harmful."[71] The Deobandis remained aloof from outside influences, most notably the British, in order to maintain their own religious integrity.

Adaptation in the Brahmo Movement

Both Roy and Tagore understood the value of practical adaptation, and used the printing press as a primary method of disseminating information. Roy translated the Vedanta, ending an ancient restriction preventing the lowest castes of Hindu society from reading sacred texts, and established the bilingual *Brahmunical Magazine* to expand his audience, setting a trend for similar organizations.[72] Tagore

also utilized the press, founding the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, a journal that sparked discussion and became a powerful critic of missionary activity. He also founded the Tattvabodhini School, which provided education to the youth of Bengal without the slant of Christian missionary objectives.[73] While both figures agreed in their acceptance of practical adaptation, they differed in the degree to which they adopted British ideas.

Rammohan Roy's writings reveal a more pronounced focus on ideological adaptation than those of Debendranath. In his essay "Settlement in India by Europeans" he outlines the principal advantages and disadvantages of the European presence. He concludes that he "may safely recommend that educated persons of character and capital should now be permitted and encouraged to settle in India."[74] Interestingly, Roy recognizes the superiority of some British religious ideas, claiming that interaction with colonists will "deliver their minds from the superstitions and prejudices, which have subjected the great body of the Indian people to social and domestic inconvenience."[75] In fact, Roy was convinced that English would promote rational inquiry, which would work to erase the religious practices he abhorred, like idolatry and *sati*. As such, he welcomed those British ideas that he believed would lead to a better practice of his own religion in India.[76]

This was not the case with his successor, Debendranath Tagore, who refocused the movement with a definite anti-Christian slant. This occurred in direct response to threats of assimilation and conversion. His Tattvabodhini Sabha, founded in 1839, eventually became a major force for anti-missionary activity.[77] It gave voice to the "grave concern about the terribly rapid progress of Christianity

due to the ignorance of our countrymen about our old religion," and set about promulgating worship of the Vedas and Vedantic books.[78] Tagore "preferred to interpret Rammohun's legacy in a culturally apologetic manner, without becoming encumbered with the universalist Unitarian aspects."[79] Unlike Roy, he felt the threat of missionary activity, and distanced the Brahmo movement from Christianity.

Another key element of Tagore's dismissal of western values is implicit throughout his autobiography. His father, the famous businessman Dwarkanath Tagore, never focused his attention on religion, preferring the realm of business. As Debendranath's involvement with the Tattvabodhini Sabha became more intense, his father lamented "as it is he has very little head for business; now he neglects business altogether; it is nothing but Brahma, Brahma the whole day."[80] Unlike his father, Debendranath saw no value in material possessions. At eighteen, while seated at the deathbed of his beloved grandmother, he experienced a religious awakening in which "a strong aversion to wealth arose… carpets and costly spreadings seemed hateful."[81] He later said his goal was to become a "Veda-sannyasi householder," by which he meant "living the life of a householder but freed from worldly desires."[82] This is a rather clear rejection of what I have termed ideological adaptation, since while Tagore accepted the necessity of living in the world the British shaped, he refused to accept British values. Put simply, he feared the possibility of deracination that British colonialism threatened, and in this respect differs markedly from Rammohan.

Conclusion: A Model of Influence and Agency

In exploring the relationship between British influence and native agency, I found it useful to consider Brian Pennington's *Was Hinduism Invented?*. Although Pennington does not discuss Islamic reform movements in his work, the overall approach can be applied to the two cases I have described. He identifies one challenge, in particular, for colonial intellectuals: "The colonial milieu and spread of print technologies called for the construction of a religion capable of both preserving the essentials of tradition and harnessing the now unleashed forces of modernity."[83] I have spent much of this essay discussing how members of the Brahmo Samaj and the Deoband movement addressed such a challenge. They adopted effective practical methods in order to renew religious purity, and adopted the ideas of the British only when they did not fear for the future of their culture.

In addition, Pennington provides a convincing argument against the idea that colonial power defined the religious transformations of the era:

> "It would be a severe historical misrepresentation (albeit a faddish one, to be sure) to suggest, as many have, that Hinduism was the invention of the British. Adapting to the colonial milieu, Hindus themselves entered a dialectic space in which they endorsed and promoted the British publication of ancient texts and translations, resisted missionary polemic, and experimented with modifications, alterations, and innovations in Hindu religious forms."[84]

As Pennington demonstrates, the problem with the claim that the British invented Hinduism is that it "both mystifies and magnifies colonial means of domination and erases Hindu agency and creativity."[85] Part of Pennington's critique here is of the binary model that imagines a "collective" colonialism that can engage in such a monumental task, and he criticizes even scholars he generally agrees with for such claims.[86] Instead colonialism is "a largely unconscious, unintended system of often

contradictory, contested power arrangements that pervaded the British/Indian encounter at every level."[87] Therefore, colonial influence and native agency are not necessarily oppositional, but in fact interact in a dialogic process.

The native intellectuals in the movements I described display exactly this process by seizing the opportunity presented, partly by colonial influence, to effect important religious change. The Deobandi 'ulama used British educational methods to standardize a pure religious community, and Rammohan Roy applied the rational standards of British education to contemporary practices, and found some of them lacking. Each movement was inspired to delve into its own traditions, often in response to Christian missionaries or British polemics. British influence in these instances did not erase or limit native agency, it in fact encouraged creativity and development. Colonial dominance presents challenges, which colonized people are free to handle in whatever way they choose, but forces them to examine their own traditions as well as the ideas of the colonizer. In this way, colonial influence in India, rather than stifling native agency, in fact encouraged a vibrant religious discussion in which native actors found new ways to shape and develop their traditions, suggesting that an effective study of religious changes must encompass both colonial influence and native agency.

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[1] Debendranath Tagore, *The Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore*, trans. Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1914), 65.
[2] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Education," in *Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839)*, ed. H. Sharp (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1920).
[3] For some examples of conceptual frameworks, see J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (Delhi: Jayyed Press, 1967), and Kenneth W. Jones, *The New*

Cambridge History of India: Socio-religious Reform Movements in British India (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[4] Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 4.
[5] Jones, *Socio-religious Reform*, 31.
[6] For examples of the use of adaptation, see Gene R. Thursby, "The Study of Hindu New Religious Movements" *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 15/2 (Nov. 2011), 10 and Sumit Sarkar, "Conversions and Politics of Hindu Right" *Economic and Political Weekly* 34/26 (Jun. 26 – Jul. 2, 1999), 1696.
[7] It is important at this point to note the difference between colonial military power and colonial hegemony, which involves dominance with consent. Both of these threatened the native subjects who feared for the survival of their culture. For a discussion of hegemony, see Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, Rev. 2nd Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 41-2.
[8] B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 91.
[9] Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2011), 41.
[10] *Ibid*., 46.
[11] *Ibid*., 52.
[12] Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving A Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India; and a Concise History of the Great Military Events Which Have Tended to Consolidate British Empire in Hindostan* (New York: The London Printing and Publishing Company, Ltd., 1858), 20. For a later characterization, see J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements* (Delhi: Jayyed Press, 1967), 91.
[13] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 74.
[14] *Ibid*.
[15] Thomas R. Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India: Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 51.
[16] *Ibid*., 139.
[17] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 88.
[18] Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform*, 62.
[19] B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 91.
[20] Sir William Wilson Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*. 3rd Edition (London: Trubner and Company, 1876), GoogleBooks, 181.
[21] Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform*, 30.
[22] Sophia Dobson Collet, ed. and comp., *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohan Roy* (Calcutta, 1914), GoogleBooks, 14-15.
[23] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 63.
[24] *Ibid*., 65.
[25] Raja Rammohan Roy, *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, ed. Jogendra Chunder Ghose, comp. Eshan Chunder Bose (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1906), 315-7.
[26] I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the debates Roy held with British missionaries, notably on the topics of miracles, the atonement, Christology and trinitarianism (see Collet, *Life and Letters*, Chapter IV). However, even these often

represented a friendlier attitude towards Christianity at large, as Rammohan did not tend to denigrate Christianity as a whole, but only certain aspects of its theology and practice.

[27] "Rajah Rammohun Roy." *The Times*, October 3, 1833, 3.

[28] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 59 and 63-4.

[29] For a detailed description of this transition, see T. Metcalf, *Ideologies*, Chapters 1 and 2.

[30] *Ibid*., 29.

[31] W. C. Bentinck, "Minute on Sati," in *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921*, Vol. 1, ed. A. Berriedale Keith, (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), 208.

[32] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 59.

[33] Macaulay, "Minute on Education."

[34] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 68.

[35] T.V. Philip, *Krishna Mohan Banerjea: Christian Apologist* (Bangalore: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1982), 7. For the influence of Banerjea, especially in relation to the Tattvabodhini Sabha, see Brian Hatcher, *Bourgeois Hinduism, or the Faith of the Modern Vedantists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 86-7 and 92-3.

[36] Spencer Lavan, "The Brahmo Samaj: India's First Modern Movement for Religious Reform," in *Religion in Modern India*, ed. Robert D. Baird (Columbia, Missouri: South Asia Publications, 1989), 7.

[37] Rev. Alexander D. D. Duff, *India and India Missions: Including Sketches of the Gigantic System of Hinduism, Both in Theory and in Practice; Also, Notice of Some of the Principal Agencies Employed in Conducting the Process of Indian Evangelization*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1840), 62 and 68.

[38] Tagore, *Autobiography*, 99.

[39] See Timothy S. Dobe, "Dayananda Sarasvati as Irascible Rsi: The Personal and Performed Authority of a Text" *The Journal of Hindu Studies* 4 (2011), 79-100 for another example of the use of scriptures in religious reform.

[40] B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 100.

[41] Mirathi, Muhammad 'Ashiq Ilahi. *Tazkiratu'r-Rashid*. Vol. I, 94-95, trans. B. Metcalf in *Islamic Revival*, 101.

[42] B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 87.

[43] *Ibid*., 11.

[44] While the work of B. Metcalf has set the standard for scholarship on the Deobandi 'ulama and greatly influenced this section of the paper, a major challenge to her work came in Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), which argues that the Deobandi 'ulama did not seek to reform inwards, but to turn outwards and impact society (see page 13).

[45] This clarification also responds to the criticisms of Zaman, noted above.

[46] Fuad S. Naeem, "Sufism and Revivalism in South Asia: Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanvi of Deoband and Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly and their paradigms of Islamic Revivalism" *The Muslim World* 99 (July 2009): 438.

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[47] B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 4.
[48] Naeem, "Sufism and Revivalism," 438.
[49] While this particular movement does not seek *jihad* through military power, it was not completely absent from British India. For a more detailed treatment see Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), especially chapters 4 and 5.
[50] B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 100.
[51] Roy, *English Works, v*.
[52] *Ibid.*, 90. Emphasis added.
[53] *Ibid*., 181.
[54] David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 11.
[55] Roy, *English Works*, 112.
[56] For an analysis of Rammohan's strategy, see Brian Hatcher, "Remembering Rammohan" *History of Religions* 46/1 (Aug. 2006), esp. 61-3.
[57] See Hatcher, "Remembering Rammohan" for a detailed analysis of the Brahmo Samaj during these transitional years.
[58] An example of Debendranath's concern with classical Hindu sources can be seen throughout his autobiography. He frequently cites scriptures that have been inspirational to him, partially to promote their study.
[59] This was not always Debendranath Tagore's goal. Hatcher describes his original organization, the Tattvabodhini Sabha, as "Brahmoism without Rammohan". Reviving the teachings of Rammohan only became a clear goal of Tagore after he joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1842. For details, see Hatcher, "Remembering Rammohan," esp. 66-7 and 70-72.
[60] Kopf, *Brahmo Samaj*, 106.
[61] Tagore, *Autobiography*, 35-6.
[62] Rajnarain Bose, "Reply to Duff," in Samayik-patre Banglar Samaj chitra, Part 5, ed. Benoy Ghosh, (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1981), 89-103.
[63] Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform*, 57-8.
[64] B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 93-4.
[65] Qasimi, *Daru'l-'Ulum De'oband.*
[66] B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 96-7.
[67] *Ibid.,* 136.
[68] *Ibid*., 120.
[69] Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform*, 60.
[70] Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform*, 61.
[71] Qasimi, *Daru'l-'Ulum De'oband*.
[72] Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform*, 32.
[73] *Ibid*., 34.
[74] Roy, *English Works*, 320.
[75] *Ibid.*, 315
[76] In *The Brahmo Samaj and the Making of the Modern Indian Mind*, David Kopf argues that Roy's brand of religious reform is essentially an adaptation of Unitarian reform to Indian circumstances. Although he makes a compelling argument, the

comparison is a bit blunt in light of Rammohan's eventual rejection of Unitarianism in favor of a Vedantic faith.

[77] While Tagore's Tattvabodhini Sabha grew into an anti-missionary organization, it is not clear that it was founded as such. Brian Hatcher argues that concerns about Christianity were not relevant at the founding of the organization. See Hatcher, *Bourgeois Hinduism*, Ch. 5 for a detailed account of the founding of the Tattvabodhini Sabha in relation to Christian activities.

[78] S. Sastri, *The New Dispensation and the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj*, trans. Kopf in *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*.

[79] Kopf, *Brahmo Samaj*, 162.

[80] Tagore, *Autobiography*, 74.

[81] *Ibid.,* 38.

[82] *Ibid.,* 136.

[83] Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians and the Colonial Construction of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140.

[84] *Ibid*., 4.

[85] *Ibid*., 5. Pennington's criticism is most vehement against Robert Frykenberg and Frits Staal, who he claims have disregarded much native Hindu testimony and made "often intractable attributions of immeasurable power and creativity to colonialism." For a further discussion, see pp. 168-72.

[86] These include Kopf and Bearce, who, Kopf especially, managed to maintain native agency but still pictured colonialism as a powerful, unified monolith. Another criticism, which highlights his rejection of binary models, is his claim that such models "[fail] to account for the ways Britain itself was transformed by the experiences of colonialism and empire." For a further discussion, see Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, Chapter 1 (and page 11 especially).

[87] *Ibid*., 11.