

Buddhist Revival in the 19th Century in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The British colonial administrators started to consider about Buddhism in Sri Lanka only after the conquest in 1815. In order to win the consent from the Buddhist monks and the Kandyan elite, the colonial administrators added one sentence regarding Buddhism in the 1815 treaty. Since the beginning of 1850's, the Christian priests attempted to adjust the religious policy of the colonial administration according to their wishes and beliefs. They were executing missions against Buddhism in Sri Lanka. At first, Buddhist monks were liberal about this. Yet, gradually they started to comment for the accusations made by the Christian priests. As a result, a revival in the Buddhism in Sri Lanka arose. There were several religious debates and out of them, "Pandurawadaya" became world famous.

As a matter of fact, renowned Englishmen such as Colonel Sir Henry Steel Olcott came to Sri Lanka and became a Buddhist. Thereafter, several Buddhists schools were established in Sri Lanka to promote Buddhist education. Many Buddhists were given Sinhala names as substitutes for their Christian names. As a consequence, there was a Buddhist Revival in the 19th century in Sri Lanka. Thus, in this research, the objective is to analyses these challenges and threats. As for the methodology of the research, primary and secondary sources were used for reference.

To conclude, it can be stated that, as a consequence of these challenges and threats faced by the Buddhism in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist layman as well as the Buddhist monks were united as one and built many Buddhist societies in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, Kandyan Kingdom, 1815 treaty, Christian priests, Buddhist monks, Religious policy, Panadurawadaya,

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