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Hindu Iconoclasts: Rammohun Roy, Dayananda Sarasvati, and Nineteenth-Century Polemics against Idolatry (Editions SR)

Noel Salmond

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Noel Salmond : Hindu Iconoclasts: Rammohun Roy, Dayananda Sarasvati, and Nineteenth-Century Polemics against Idolatry (Editions SR) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hindu Iconoclasts: Rammohun Roy, Dayananda Sarasvati, and Nineteenth-Century Polemics against Idolatry (Editions SR):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Recommended for religious history and studies shelves
By Midwest Book Review
Hindu Iconoclasts: Rammohun Roy, Dayananda Saravati, And Nineteenth-Century Polemics Against Idolatry by Noel Salmond (Assistant Professor of Humanities and Religion, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada) is a serious, scholarly study that asks why would nineteenth-century Hindus, who come from an iconic religious tradition, give voice to the types of declarations and invectives one might more readily attribute to Hebrew prophets or Calvinists? Questioning the simplicity of the common assumption that nineteenth-century Hindu iconoclasm simply borrowed attitudes from Muslim and Protestant traditions, *Hindu Iconoclasts* delves deeper to explore the lives and words of such prominent figures of the era as Rammohun Roy and Dayananda Sarasvati, who sought to bring about reform by eliminating image worship. *Hindu Iconoclasts* stretches further beyond the initial scope of its premise, contemplating a link between religious image-rejection and the unification and modernization of society in a process Max Weber has termed "disenchantment of the world", in a seminal discourse highly recommended for religious history and studies shelves.

Why, Salmond asks, would nineteenth-century Hindus who come from an iconic religious tradition voice a kind of invective one might expect from Hebrew prophets, Muslim iconoclasts, or Calvinists? Rammohun was a wealthy Bengali, intimately associated with the British Raj and familiar with European languages, religion, and currents of thought. Dayananda was an itinerant Gujarati ascetic who did not speak English and was not integrated into the culture of the colonizers. Salmond's examination of Dayananda after Rammohun complicates the easy assumption that nineteenth-century Hindu iconoclasm is simply a case of borrowing an attitude from Muslim or Protestant traditions. Salmond examines the origins of these reformers' ideas by considering the process of diffusion and independent invention—that is, whether ideas are borrowed from other cultures, or arise spontaneously and without influence from external sources. Examining their writings from multiple perspectives, Salmond suggests that Hindu iconoclasm was a complex movement whose attitudes may have arisen from independent invention and were then reinforced by diffusion. Although idolatry became the symbolic marker of their reformist programs, Rammohun's and Dayananda's agendas were broader than the elimination of image-worship. These Hindu reformers perceived a link between image-rejection in religion and the unification and modernization of society, part of a process that Max Weber called the disenchantment of the world. Focusing on idolatry in nineteenth-century India, *Hindu Iconoclasts* investigates the encounter of civilizations, an encounter that continues to resonate today.