

# Sinhala nationalism and Sinhala-Buddhist imaginaries in post-colonial Sri Lanka

Subhasish Guha

## Abstract

The following paper deals with the human imaginary – the spatial component of Sri Lankan Buddhist imaginaries in the post-colonial period between 1948 and 2009. This was roughly the time frame when Sinhala nationalism conditioned and was conditioned by an increasingly violent ethnic conflict. The paper will argue that the motif of inclusivist subordination continued to underpin the spatial and cultural models proposed to solve ethnic polarization and the perceived threat of a ‘Tamil homeland’. It will also examine the representations of history that informed such ‘models’. It ends with contesters of the dominant imaginaries, namely Buddhists who nuanced ethnic essentialism and sought to challenge what they saw as *avijja* (ignorance) within the Sinhala community.

**Keywords:** essentialism, ethnic, imaginary, nationalism, representation.