

The Role of Muslim Nesan Newspaper to the Islamic social Renaissance of the 19th Century

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Abstract

The late 19th century, under British colonialism, proved to be a time of significant change for various communities throughout South Asia. Tamil-speaking Muslims in Sri Lanka rapidly needed social changes and educational development to counteract colonial power together with Christian missionary outreach as well as homegrown stagnation. M.C. Siddi Lebbe established Muslim Nesan newspaper in 1882 which became the landmark event of the Muslim renaissance. This research evaluates how Muslim Nesan operated as an outlet for marginalized populations while it simultaneously became an intellectual illumination and cultural revitalization and political awareness force for Muslims. A historical thematic analysis of the newspaper demonstrates how its publication reshaped Muslim identity in contemporary times. During the late 19th century Muslim Nesan newspaper provided the essential platform that led to the social and religious awakening of the Muslim community. As leader M.C. Siddi Lebbe directed the publication to lead Muslim upliftment through education reform and social progress combined with religious restoration activities. Between 1882 and 1889 Muslim Nesan published a total of 48 issues containing articles about educational reforms and the empowerment of women along with economic development and religious guidance and antagonism against colonial powers and missionary interferences. Through active encouragement the newspaper worked to restore the community identity and resist cultural decay while fostering acceptance of modern knowledge and Islamic values. This study employs a mixed-methods methodology to evaluate the main objectives. The study primarily relies on secondary data, including earlier publications of the Muslim Nesan, relevant books and magazines that offer insights into the historical and cultural context of the time. Using descriptive analysis, the research examines main themes of study. The study highlights how the newspaper contributed to muslim community identity and resistance to colonial influence. The final discussion reflects on these findings and offers suggestions for further research on media – driven social movements in historical Muslim societies.

Keywords: Colonialism, Muslim Nesan, Siddi Lebbe, Muslim community, Muslim renaissance.