

Islamic Revival

In parallel with the Sinhala and Hindu renaissance in Sri Lanka, a cultural resurgence also came into being among the Muslims. M.C. Siddhi Lebbe pioneered the creation of pride and a renaissance of the language and religion of the Muslims. At a time when the Muslim population was not very much interested in education, the activities of Lebbe helped to a great extent to generate enthusiasm for education among them. He encouraged the Muslims to study both English and Arabic. He acted for the reorganisation of the Muslim religious schools known as 'Madrassa'. In 1882, Zahira College was started at Maradana under his leadership. A school for Muslim girls was also founded in Kandy. He pioneered the founding of the Colombo Muslim Education Society and took steps to regenerate Muslim culture by the launch of two newspapers 'Muslim Nation' and 'Gnana Deepam'.

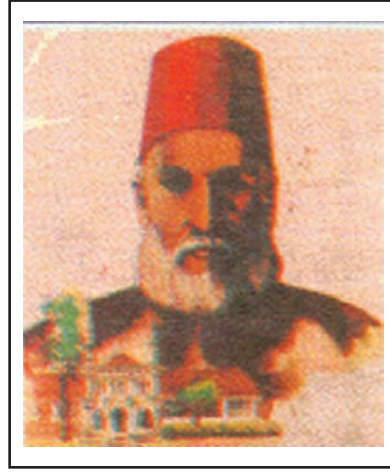


Figure 2.20 M.C. Siddhi Lebbe

At a time when the indigenous religions, languages and cultures were facing a decline, Siddhi Lebbe pioneered a religious and a cultural revival among the Muslims and provided a valuable patronage to the national movement of this country.

T.B. Jaya is also one of the persons who contributed to the revival of Muslim education and culture. He tried to convince the Muslim Community the importance of education in his articles published in the magazine "Ceylon Muslim Review", initiated in 1914. Zahira College is the living example of the immortal service he has rendered to the Muslim Community. He became the Principal of Zahira College in 1921, and worked for the betterment of the Muslim Community from 1936 - 1947 as a member of the State Council appointed by the Governor and in 1947 as the Minister of Labour and Social Service.

Student Activity

- * Prepare a booklet containing information about Sinhala, Hindu and Muslim leaders who pioneered the religious and cultural renaissance in Sri Lanka.

Cultural Revival

The religious renaissance led the way for a cultural renaissance in Sri Lanka, as a result of which a large number of Sinhala, Pali, Sanskrit and other books came to be printed. It also led to the beginning of many Sinhala newspapers.

Following are some of these newspapers:

- * 1962 A.D. - Publication of “Lakmini Kirana”, “Lakmini Pahana”, and “Arunodaya” news papers.
- * 1866 A.D. - “Gnanartha Pradeepaya” - This is the oldest newspaper now in existence.
- * 1880 A.D. - “Sarasavi Sandaresa” newspaper.
- * 1902 A.D. - “Sinhala Jathiya” - Started by Piyadasa Sirisena
- * 1909 A.D. - “Dinamina” Newspaper

Factors that led to a cultural renaissance.

- * Writing and staging of plays based on religious and cultural events.
- * Composition of novels promoting national pride by writers such as Piyadasa Sirisena.
- * Steps taken by the Tibetan monk S. Mahinda to arouse patriotism among the Sinhalese, through poetry.
- * Encouragement given to the study of languages such as Pali and Sanskrit through Pirivenas like Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara and the expansion of Buddhist education in various parts of the island emulating those institutions.
- * Opening of Dhamma schools by the Buddhist Theosophical Society.
- * Expansion of Dhamma schools by the Young Men’s Buddhist Association.
- * Upsurge of Hindu renaissance due to the activities of leaders such as Arumuga Navalar, Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Ponnambalam Ramanathan.

- * Launch of newspapers ‘ Indusadanam’ in 1888, ‘Virakesari’ in 1930 and “Thinakkaran” in 1931 by the Hindus.
- * Launch of two newspapers ‘Muslim Nation’ and ‘Gnana Deepam’ by the Muslim leaders.
- * Renaissance of Islam Culture and education due to the activities of Siddi Lebbe and T.B. Jaya.

At a time when the national culture was undergoing a decline, the anti British activities of these Swabhasha educated persons led to a resurgence of national culture.

Student Activities

- * What are the reasons that led to a religious and cultural renaissance in Sri Lanka?
- * Conduct a debate on the beneficial and harmful effects of the establishment of plantations in Sri Lanka.

Temperance Movement

Temperance movement can be described as a movement that made an immense contribution to both the cultural renaissance as well to the agitation for constitutional reforms. By the dawn of the 20th century, it was becoming very clear that the alcohol policy of the British was leading to a cultural disaster through the spread of drunkenness throughout the country. Therefore, national leaders began to take steps against this state of affairs.

After 1911, the British government began to open more and more liquor outlets with the intention of increasing its revenue, aggravating the fear about the alcohol menace. An Excise Ordinance was promulgated in 1912, and this was considered as a social menace and an agitation movement against it was launched, known as the Temperance movement. It was led by Swabhasha educated leaders such as D.S., D.C. and F.R Senanayake brothers Sir D.B. Jayathilake, W.A. Silva, Piyadasa Sirisena and Arthur V. Dias. The British got scared about it and the repressive policies followed against it transformed the temperance movement into a broad based national movement.

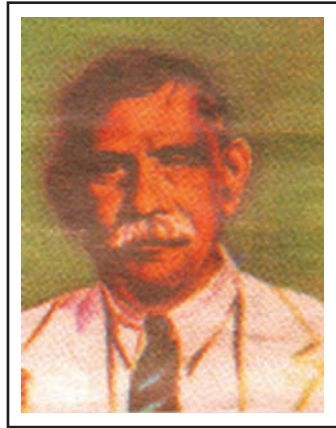


Figure 2.21 D.S. Senanayake

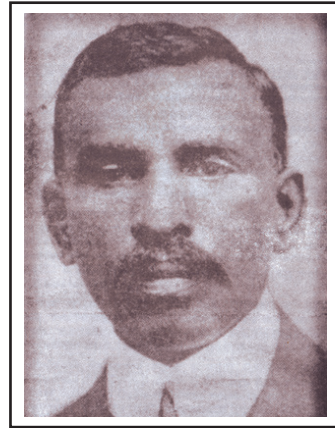


Figure 2.22 F.R. Senanayake

Although it was not a political movement, the temperance movement was able to unite the national leaders. It provided an opportunity for the Buddhist leaders to become national leaders. Subsequently, the leaders of the temperance movement joined the constitutional reform movement and made outstanding contribution to it.

Religious and cultural renaissance that came into being from the end of the 19th century and the temperance movement which became active from the early part of the 20th century in conjunction with the renaissance movement pointed out the correct path that should be followed by the people of the country in their struggle against the British rule. The renaissance movement activated by Swabhasha educated leaders pointed out clearly the need to resuscitate the socio cultural pattern shaped on the basis of the core values of national religions and the manner in which it should be done in order to achieve the above objectives. However, as we can see later, due to the jettisoning of that guidance by the constitutional reform movement of the English educated classes that masqueraded as the national movement, we have not gained complete independence even after the grant of independence in 1948.

Agitation for Constitutional Reform

By the beginning of the 20th century, the English educated class in Sri Lanka had developed up to a reasonable level. In the meantime, the Indian independence was making rapid strides. It influenced the agitation of the English educated classes in Sri Lanka as well. In addition, the liberal ideas imbued by those persons who had received education in foreign lands through their English education also influenced the development of the national movement of Sri Lanka in the early part of the 20th century. The natives did not get an opportunity to enter the social, economic and

political fields relative to the education they had received. Sri Lankan middle class was kept away from the political field and they were unable to participate in political activities in constitutional reforms. Accordingly, a strong resentment about British rule was growing among the members of the native middle class. Therefore, from the beginning of the 20th century, the English educated middle class began to join the national movement with the objective of securing political power.

The English educated western oriented middle class did not want to revive national culture. What they wanted was to bring in reforms within the system of government carried out by the British imperialistic rulers. They strived to participate in the administration of the country through constitutional reform. They never desired to expel British imperialistic rulers completely and secure independence for all citizens of the country. Accordingly, they carried out an agitation in the mid 20th century demanding constitutional reforms to expand the membership of the legislative council. The Low Country Planters' Association started in about the 1870s played the leading role in this movement. At the same time, the Associations that came into being at that time such as the Jaffna Association and the Chilaw Association also joined the Ceylon National Association and carried on the agitation.

In order to win constitutional reforms from the imperialists, Sri Lankan leaders submitted their demands through petitions. Persons like H.J.C. Perera and James Peiris presented petitions explaining the dissatisfaction of the middle class with the government. In addition to the expansion of the membership of the legislative council, they made a number of other demands such as the grant of limited franchise.

Political commentators describe the period between 1910 and 1920 as the most critical phase in the national movement Sri Lanka. It is during this period that the movement became better organised.

As we have studied in the previous chapter, the national leaders were not at all satisfied with the reforms of 1910. Since it was during this time that the movement was aligned towards an organised approach, politically this phase can be considered as very significant. In this manner, the Sinhala-Muslim riots of 1915 and the Ceylon National Congress established in 1919 became the two factors that influenced the sharpening of the constitutional reform movement.

Sinhala - Muslim Riots of 1915

Sinhala - Muslim riots of 1915 was the main factor that compelled the Sri Lankans to be better organised in their struggle against the imperialists. The

national revival movement that had been active since the 19th century and the temperance movement allied to it were very powerful national movements. Yet, the English educated middle class did not utilise the dynamism that could have got from them in its movement for constitutional reform. Although on the face of it, the 1915 riots appear to have been a religious conflict, a large number of political and economic factors also seem to have contributed to it. Due to the first world war, the general public had been subjected to very acute economic hardships, and a strong resentment had grown up against the Muslim traders who had established a virtual monopoly in trade. Therefore, the clash that arose on a religious issue in the Kandyan area spread into a large extent of the country.

The British government interpreted it as an anti imperialistic movement, declared martial law and suppressed it with ruthless measures. It also provided an excellent opportunity for the rulers who were waiting for a chance to pounce upon the leaders of the temperance movement. Leaders of the movement who were arrested and treated as rioters were subjected to heavy punishments.

The Sinhala - Muslim riots of 1915 broke out in Gampola on a religious issue. Then it spread to areas such as Colombo and Kurunegala.

Leaders like F. R. Senanayake, D. S. Senanayake, Sir D. B. Jayathilake, C. Batuwanthudawa, D.A. Hewawitharana and A.E. Gunasinghe were among the persons taken into custody. Several persons including Edward Henry Pedris were executed without a proper trial.

These developments led to a strong upsurge of feelings among the people of the country that made them convinced of the need to rise against the imperialists and secure complete freedom. In this manner, the national resurgence paved the way for the strengthening of the anti imperialist agitation.

Ceylon National Congress of 1919

Measures taken against the national leaders by the British led to the strengthening of the unity among the national leaders. They felt the need for a strong organisation consisting of all segments of the people for the purpose of ensuring freedom from the injustices and oppression of the British. As a result of this situation, and with the inspiration from the Indian National Congress, an organisation named Ceylon National Congress was formed in 1919. This can be considered as the most important result of the political agitation conducted by the

middle class. Ponnambalam Arunachalam was its first president. Within a short time, it was able to bring about unity among the Sinhala, Tamil and other communities. The presentation of demands for common constitutional reforms for the Sri Lankans was conducted through the Ceylon National Congress. Thereafter, they aimed to win their demands through legal and peaceful measures.

The national leaders were able to work together without any communal distinction in several instances such as the selection of an educated Sri Lankan as a member of the legislative council, during the riots of 1915 and the formation of the Ceylon National Congress. Agitation for constitutional reform

was conducted under the direction of the National Congress and they were able to win several constitutional reforms in 1920, 1924 and 1931. However, it appears that the aspirations of the Ceylon National Congress were not fulfilled by these measures and the agitation for reform continued unabated. Although the Ceylon National Congress was a union of all communities, by 1921, dissensions began to surface between the Sinhala and Tamil leaders on the question of allocation of seats in the legislative council. Disregarding the agreement entered into between the Sinhala and Tamil leaders to grant the additional seat created for the Western Province to the minority communities without a contest led to the creation of a feeling of mistrust and dissatisfaction about the Sinhala leaders in the minds of the Tamil leaders. By 1926, the Tamil leaders left the Ceylon National Congress.

Ceylon National Congress was started through a union of representatives of various organisations. "Taruna Lanka Sangamaya" started under the leadership of A.E. Gunasinghe and was renamed "Ceylon Workers Congress" in 1922 was also one of the members of the Ceylon National Congress. Their main demand was independence. Although they demanded universal franchise, leaders of the National Congress insisted on a limited franchise. A.E. Gunasinghe's group opposed the proposal of the leaders of the Ceylon National Congress and left it. By 1928, minority communities, the Kandyans and the Workers Congress had left the National Congress and it was left mainly with a group of leaders comprising low country planters.



Figure 2.23 Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam

Ceylon National Congress expressed its disappointment about not granting a cabinet system of government under the Donoughmore reforms. They expressed their dislike about the Executive Committee system of government and universal franchise. While the Donoghmore constitution was in operation, the Ceylon National Congress and some other organisations worked inside and outside the State Council to receive a form of government with more responsibility. In 1942, the Ceylon national Congress again demanded constitutional reforms and the state council also had passed a resolution requesting the declaration of dominion status. By this time, the British government had considered the implications of the expansion of the second world war into the eastern countries and the upsurge of agitation in the colonies and promised to give a more responsible government to Sri Lanka in 1943. Therefore, under a system of government based on the recommendation of the Soulbury Commission appointed to look into this matter, Dominion Status was granted to Sri Lanka on 4th February 1948.

Student Activities

- * Collect information about the national leaders who played a leading role in the national movement in Sri Lanka and compile a booklet with the information collected.
- * Give a talk to the historical society on the beginning, growth and activities of the National Congress.

Education

There is evidence from sources of information to prove the existence of educational systems in Sri Lanka from the very beginning of the Anuradhapura period. It was based on temples and Pirivena institutions.

After the capture of maritime provinces by the Portuguese and the Dutch, they started Parish schools and provided education through them. In 1796 the British East India Company captured the coastal areas and it does not seem to have paid any attention to educational activities in Sri Lanka during the early period.

However, Governor North appears to have taken steps to re-organise educational activities that were undergoing a decline at the time. Governor North implemented the following measures:

- * Adoption of the Dutch educational system as the foundation for educational activities.

- * He aimed at a western style education in a Christian environment.
- * Took steps to receive the help of Reverend Cordiner and the missionary priests.
- * Started an institution named ‘Colombo Academy’ to provide education to the children of native nobility with the intention of training clerks and other officials needed for government service.
- * A Muslim school named ‘Madrassa’ was established for Muslim children. After the arrival of Governor Brownrig in Sri Lanka in 1812, there was a significant progress in education. It received the support of the missionary societies.

Educational activities were expanded under the following missionary societies:

- * London Missionary Society,
- * Wesleyan Methodist Society,
- * Missionary Society of England,
- * Baptist Missionary Society. It expanded educational activities centered on Colombo.
- * Wesleyan Methodist Society - Spread in the north and south.
- * Church missionary Society - Spread in Colombo, Galle, Kalpitiya, Mannar and Kandy areas.
- * American Missionary Society- Built a highly organised educational system in the north.

The Colebrooke commission of 1833 made several proposals regarding education.

Accordingly, the following reforms were implemented.

- * Establishment of a ‘School commission’ to administer all government schools.
- * Establishment of English schools and making English compulsory.
- * Establishment of a college in Colombo for the teaching of English.
- * Provision of support and encouragement for Christian missionary education. For this purpose, the establishment of government schools was banned in areas where there were missionary schools.

Although the British gave more consideration to missionary education, they did not pay any attention to education in Swabhasha. As a result, in the later period, swabhasha education became extremely weak.

During the time of Governor Machenzie, in 1841 several important reforms carried out in the field of education.

Although several reforms were implemented after the Colebrooke reforms there was no improvement in education. Therefore the Non-official members of the Legislative Council proposed the appointment of a Commission to go into details of the education system and make recommendations. The result was the appointment of the Morgan Commission.

Proposals of the Morgon committee (1865)

- * Setting up of a public education department for the administration of education.
- * Taking over the administration of education under the government.
- * Medium of education-elementary education to be provided through Swabhasha medium. Provision of secondary and higher education through the English medium.
- * Improvement of girls' education. Girls to be exempted from school fees. Rewarding girls who attend schools.
- * Provision of assistance to non government schools.
- * Morgan committee proposed several types of schools as follows:
 - * Industrial Schools
 - * Bilingual Schools
 - * Central Schools
 - * Colombo Academy
 - * Teacher Training Schools

Under the Donoughmore reforms of 1931, there were changes in education as well. It was clear that education had to be reformed in line with the national pride of the people of the country and also to meet the needs of the country. Accordingly, educational activities in this country were implemented under the leadership

of C.W.W. Kannangara who was the chairman of the executive committee on education. This paved the way for free education in Sri Lanka.

The following proposals were made under the leadership of the minister of education, C.W.W. Kannangara.

- * Provision of education through Swabhasha.
- * Compulsory education for all the children.
- * Provision of free education from the kindergarten to the university.
- * Implementation of the ‘ Handessa’ scheme to improve rural education.
- * Central Schools were started to provide facilities for clever children in rural areas.
- * The fifth standard scholarship was established to facilitate the poor but clever children. It also provided hostels in Central Schools to encourage the clever girls and boys who lacked transport facilities to enter into Central Schools and obtain higher education safely and comfortably.

Although only the English teachers were trained in the normal schools at the start, subsequently they were used for the training of both Sinhala and Tamil teachers as well.

Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara is Considered as the “Father of Free Education” in Sri Lanka.

Summary

- * The economic policies followed in Sri Lanka after the annexation of the maritime areas of the country by the British in 1796.
- * Step by step abolition of the age old traditional Rajakariya system.
- * Origin and expansion of plantations.
- * Growth of the middle class and its activities.
- * The nature of the nationalist movement.
- * Educational activities under the British.
- * Religious and cultural renaissance.

Student Activities

- * List out the measures taken under the British administration for the development of education during the period 1812- 1931.
- * What are the educational reforms implemented during the State Council period.

The Impact of the British Administration

- ❖ Recognition of the necessity for the repair of irrigation schemes that had been abandoned for a long period. The attempts made by some governors to repair them and the failure of these attempts.
- ❖ Provision of English education by missionaries.
- ❖ Neglect of Swabhasha education.
- ❖ Making education compulsory.
- ❖ Beginning of modern communication and transaction systems such as postal services, telecommunication and banking systems.
- ❖ Construction of roads and railways.
- ❖ Development of harbours.
- ❖ Neglect of agriculture and the commercial plantations became the main source of income in the economy.
- ❖ Transforming the economy of the country to be dependent on import and export trade and the world market.
- ❖ Transfer of lands that should have been inherited by the people of the country to foreign private entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Destruction of the national heritage that had independent ,political, social, economic and cultural features evolved during a period of over twenty centuries.
- ❖ Implanting in the country a western oriented culture with colonial mentality subservient to foreigners.

- ❖ Introduction of widely spread use of money and thereby the establishment of a society that gives the pride of place to money.
- ❖ Creation of competition for earning money by any and every means.
- ❖ Complete destruction of the social system replete with the core values which practised a peaceful co-existence and full of mutual co-operation that inherited from the ancestors.
- ❖ Weakening the progress march of the country on all fronts and paving the way towards driving the country towards bankruptcy and through that process creation of a state of affairs under which the country is compelled to be in the grip of imperialists even after independence.

This is the nature of the conditions created in the country after centuries of British domination.