



This booklet seeks to document, analyse, and present Usthaz Mansoor's reformist project with clarity and critical appreciation. It aims not only to introduce his thought to a wider readership but also to situate his contributions within the broader trajectory of Sri Lankan Islamic intellectual landscape. By doing so, it invites further research and dialogue on the evolving challenges and opportunities facing Muslim reformist thinkers today.

# **USTHAZ M.A.M. MANSOOR**

## **AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO REFORMING ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN SRILANKA**

### **A CRITICAL APPRAISAL**

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## Preface

Beginning with the pioneering efforts of M. C. Siddi Lebbe in the late nineteenth century, Sri Lankan Muslim reformism has evolved through diverse phases of educational activism, socio-religious revival, legal reinterpretation, and public engagement. Usthaz M.A.M. Mansoor stands today as a significant and distinctive voice within this lineage. He represents both continuity and renewal: continuity in his deep rootedness in Islamic scholarship, and renewal through his commitment to addressing the pressing intellectual and social questions confronting Sri Lankan Muslims in the contemporary era. Seeking to reimagine the role of faith in a rapidly transforming national landscape, Usthaz Mansoor's writings and public interventions extend the reformist vision beyond institutional critique and into the realms of moral rejuvenation, communal solidarity, and civic responsibility. His thought demonstrates a careful balance between fidelity to the Islamic scholarly tradition and an openness to the ethical, political, and social challenges of the present. In this sense, he continues and enriches the reformist project that earlier generations initiated, one that insists on the compatibility of Islamic authenticity with social progress, educational advancement, and national coexistence.

Usthaz Mansoor has distinguished himself as one of the leading contemporary Islamic reformist thinkers. His intellectual contributions intervene in several key domains that are vital to the intellectual future of Sri Lankan Muslims. Notably, he has consistently engaged with Muslim Minority Jurisprudence (*fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*), offering frameworks through which Muslims in non-majority contexts can fulfil their religious obligations while contributing constructively to national life. He has also advanced discussions on Ethical Islam, shifting the focus from ritualistic



debates to the moral foundations that underpin just, compassionate, and socially responsible Muslim living.

Furthermore, Usthaz Mansoor's work draws heavily on the Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah tradition, using its overarching objectives, justice, welfare, dignity, and the preservation of life, to reinterpret contemporary legal and social issues. His engagement with maqāṣid demonstrates a forward-looking vision that seeks not only to preserve Islamic law but to activate its transformative potential in plural, democratic societies. His intellectual range is both wide and rigorous. He has also contributed to gender debates, exploring the ethical and legal dimensions of women's rights and responsibilities in Islam while challenging reductionist or culturally constrained interpretations. His writings on Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) exhibit a strong command of Islamic legal theory paired with a sensitivity to contemporary realities. His reflections on Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr) reveal a methodology that is both linguistically grounded and ethically conscious, emphasizing the Qur'an's moral thrust and universal values.

In addition, Usthaz Mansoor engages deeply with modern Islamic socio-political thought, grappling with questions of citizenship, governance, public ethics, and the responsibilities of Muslims within a multi-religious nation-state. Notably, he has also contributed to the emerging discourse on Islam and non-violence, highlighting the normative foundations within Islamic tradition that promote peace, restraint, and constructive social engagement. Through these diverse efforts, he has become an influential figure shaping contemporary Muslim thought in Sri Lanka, particularly at a moment when intellectual clarity, moral courage, and community self-reflection are urgently needed.

This booklet seeks to document, analyse, and present Usthaz Mansoor's reformist project with clarity and critical appreciation. It aims not only to introduce his thought to a wider readership but



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I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Miskath Research Institute for supporting the research that made this work possible. Their commitment to fostering scholarly inquiry and nurturing critical Islamic thought continues to enrich the intellectual landscape of our community. I am also deeply thankful to *Islamic Studies Journal* for publishing the principal paper on which this booklet is based and for providing a platform that encourages rigorous, meaningful academic engagement.

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