Churun, Sircar Shama. *The Muhammadan Law: Being a Digest of the Law Applicable Especially to the Sunnis of India*. Calcutta: A. ITID CO, 1873, 590pp.

**ABSTRACT**

**The Muhammadan Law: Being a Digest of the Law Applicable Especially to the Sunnis of India**

Sircar Shama Churun wrote his book with two goals in mind: to produce a flexible, comprehensive work for teaching purposes, and to produce a work useful to lawyers and administrative officers dealing with Islamic laws in their everyday occupations. Despite this twofold intention, the book seems primarily a tool for law students. It is, in fact, divided into eighteen lectures intended to cover the most significant aspects of Muslim law in India, with special reference to the laws of Indian Sunnis.

The first lecture introduces the subject by discussing the origins of Muslim law, its sources and its application, and complementary issues such as the differences between Sunni communities. In the second lecture, Churun deals with the Muslim law of succession as developed and applied in India. Lectures two to eight focus on Muslim laws that regulate inheritance. The ninth lecture introduces a new topic: marriage and its ancillary issues, such as dowry, divorce, parentage and maintenance. The final two lectures are devoted to commercial law (sale) according to Islam and preemption. In the lecture on sale, Churun describes the few cases in which Muslim law was applied, as in British India, where Muslims were subjected, as were the rest of the Indian population, to British laws governing commerce and trade.

The book is an attempt to present and explain Muslim law plainly, without difficult jargon. Churun has attempted objectivity and accuracy in his exposition. By and large, the book can be considered a product of the socio-cultural and political climate of the second half of the nineteenth century. Written in a period in which many British scholars and officials were investigating the laws of Indian Muslims, the book partially reflects then-British perceptions. Therefore, Churun’s work is a useful tool for researching the ways in which Muslim law was understood and applied in British India.

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