

SIR SYED AHMED KHAN and Aligarh Movement

BIOGRAPHY:

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a Muslim philosopher, Social activist and educator who founded the Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College at Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. He was deeply devoted to the cause of education and believed that widespread education was the only way to enlighten the masses. A distinguished scholar, he was a progressive thinker who played a major role in promoting social, scientific, and economic development of Indian Muslims. Even though he religiously followed Islam, he was troubled by the rigidity of the orthodox outlook of the Muslims. His life-long interest in religion manifested itself in the form of several volumes of a modernist commentary on the Quran. In addition he also began a sympathetic interpretation of the Bible. But above everything else, it was his dedication towards the cause of education that defined him as a person. He believed in promoting Western-style scientific education and was instrumental in setting up several schools for implementing this purpose. He was a British loyalist and formed the Muslim League to promote pro-British attitudes and activities, thus raising suspicion in the minds of Indian politicians. Nonetheless, he commanded great respect from both Hindus and Muslims for his progressive views and dedication towards the cause of education.

Childhood & Early Life

He was born as Syed Ahmad Taqvi on 17 October 1817 in Delhi. His father, Mir Muttaqi was highly regarded by the Mughal dynasty, and many members of his family had held positions in the Mughal court.

He was raised in a large house in a wealthy area, in accordance with Mughal traditions. His mother Azis-un-Nisa was a strong-willed religious woman who ensured that Syed and his brother received a disciplined upbringing.

He was trained in Persian, Arabic, Urdu and orthodox religious subjects, and was also taught mathematics and astronomy. He was an active boy and participated in a number of sports like swimming and wrestling.

He began his study of medicine but did not complete the course. His father died when Syed was still young and thus he had to abandon his formal education due to financial difficulties.

He was offered positions in the Mughal court which he declined and entered the English civil service. Later on he attended the East India Company College from where he graduated with a degree in law and judicial services.

Career

He was appointed as a clerk at the courts of law in Agra in 1838, and promoted to the title of 'Munshi' in 1840. His position in the judicial department gave him ample time to devote to his other interests, which included writing.

He began his literary career by writing religious tracts. His book 'Athar assanadid' ("Monuments of the Great"), on the antiquities of Delhi was published in 1847.

When the war of Independence of 1857 broke out, he remained loyal to the British and even saved the lives of several Europeans. He was serving as the chief assessment officer at the court in Bijnor at the time when the rebellion broke out and was personally affected by its aftermath.

He published the booklet 'Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind' (The Causes of the Indian Revolt) in 1859 in which he fearlessly outlined what he believed to be the causes of this revolt. He rejected the common belief that the conspiracy was planned by Muslims and blamed the British East India Company's thoughtless actions for the revolution.

Religion was one of his great interests, and he had great respects for all religions, not just Islam. He started a work on a commentary on the Bible in which he stated that Islam and Christianity both share a common lineage from Abrahamic religions.

During the 1850s he developed a strong passion for education and realized the advantages of Western-style education. He believed that scientific education was the need of the hour and set about establishing modern schools for the children, at Muradabad (1858) and Ghazipur (1863).

He was transferred to Aligarh in 1864 where he founded the Scientific Society of Aligarh which was the first scientific association of its kind in India. The Society held conferences, disbursed funds for educational causes, and published scientific journals in English and Urdu.

He published many writings promoting liberal and rational interpretations of Islamic scriptures as he felt that orthodoxy was threatening the development of the Muslims. However, his liberal views were met with criticism by the Muslim clergy and thus Sir Syed decided to stop discussing religion and focused on promoting education.

After having established schools for children, he founded the Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College in 1875, seeking to promote social, scientific, and economic development of Indian Muslims. Today, the institution is known as the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and ranks among the top universities in India.

Introduction

The conditions of the Muslims of Indian Sub-continent were very pathetic especially after the war of Independence in 1857. The consequences were Disastrous for whole of the country but the Muslims were targeted particularly. Britishers started persecuting Muslims in every field as they grabbed the power from them and considered that the Muslims were the only threat to their power. They blamed Muslims the sole force behind the rebellion. Indeed, the darkest and awful period started for the Muslims of India. As recorded by Garratt and Thompson:

“The Mohammedans were packed up by the British in pigskins and pork's fat was applied on them. Their bodies were charred and the Hindus were compelled to defile them”.

Immediately after the defeat in first War of Independence in 1857, Muslims found themselves bow down and their decline reached at lowest ebb. In those days of hopelessness and darkness, the man who took the responsibility of changing the conditions of Muslims was none, but Syed Ahmad Khan. In that critical situation for the Muslims it was he who came forward as rescuer of his fellow Muslims. Syed Ahmad Khan feared that the wrath of the British would cause much distress among already troubled Muslims. He came forward at a critical time for the services of Muslims and gave the right direction to them. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had pragmatic approach and he deeply analyzed the ground realities of that time and advised the Muslims to be loyal to the British authorities, devotion to the modern education and refrain from politics for the time being. Had it not been for Sir Syed, Muslims of Subcontinent might have had a very dark history but he gave them the right direction at the right time.

Educational Services:

1: School of Muradabad

Established in 1859 in Muradabad. Basically it was a Persian institute but English was taught there.

2: Scientific Society:

In 1860, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was transferred from Muradabad to Ghazipur. The stay of Sir Syed in Ghazipur is a milestone in his life. This was the place where Sir Syed took additional responsibility other than creative writings. He established a personal printing press in 1862 for his publications, an English medium school in 1863 and established Scientific Society in 1864. The Scientific Society was established at Ghazipur on 9th January 1864 and later shifted to Aligarh when Sir Syed was transferred to Aligarh. This became a focal point of his dream project which later shaped up as the Aligarh Movement.

On 9th January, 1864 Scientific Society was founded at the residence of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in Ghazipur. The key element of his dream movement, social collaboration was intact and a large

number of his Indians and British friends were present on the occasion. The welcome address was delivered by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and he requested Mr. G.F.I. Graham, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Ghazipur to make introductory remarks. In his introductory remarks Mr. Graham emphasized the need of the society and passionately appealed everyone to support the newly formed Scientific Society. He proposed the name of Mr. B. Spate, District Collector of Ghazipur to preside over the meeting. In the meeting, Sir Syed presented the by-laws of the society which was unanimously approved by the attendees. Sir Syed announced the name of 109 people who had accepted the membership of the newly formed society. It's worth mentioning here that the concept of Society was accepted by everyone irrespective of religion and color and creed. Out of 109, 28 members were British, 34 Hindus and 47 were Muslims. Elections were held for Directing Council, Executive Council and other office bearers. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Mr. G.F.I. Graham were elected as Secretaries of the newly established Scientific Society. Mr.B. Spate delivered the presidential address and the meeting was ended with vote of thanks.

3: Aligarh Institute Gezette

In 1866, a building named the Aligarh Institute was erected for the Scientific Society of Aligarh, which launched its journal Aligarh Institute Gazette in the same year. A joint mouthpiece of the Scientific Society and the Institute the journal came into weekly circulation from 30 March 1866 with the slogan "To permit the liberty of the Press is the part of a wise Government; to preserve it is the part of a free people. Part of the Gazette's contents were printed in Urdu alone, part in English, and a portion also in both languages. The editorial team was composed of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan as Honorary Editor, Munshi Mohammad Yaar Khan as Editor, Munshi Chaukhan Lal as translator, Babu Durga Prashad as translator and Shaikh Fida Ali as Librarian and distribution incharge. The Aligarh Institute Gazette had a circulation of four hundred but played a key role in mobilizing the people and convey the message of the Society.

In 1871 William Wilson Hunter, a British civil servant in Bengal, published his famous book The Indian Mussalmans, in which he raised questions about the loyalty of the Muslims to the British government and referred to the earlier military campaigns of Sir syed Ahmad Barelyvi to establish Muslim rule. Sir Syed reaction to this book is described as follows:

"Sir Syed Ahmad Khan took Hunter's book very seriously, and vehemently criticized its contents by publishing a review on it. In the review he tried to argue that the jihad movement of Sir syed Ahmad [Barelyvi] and his followers was directed solely against the Sikh rule in the Punjab and that it had nothing to do with the British government in India. He adopted an apologetic tone to convince the British authorities that the Indian Muslims, including the followers of Sir syed Ahmad [Barelyvi], were not opposed to the British rule. The articles of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, which were published in The Pioneer and in the Aligarh Institute Gazette, refuted William

Hunter's ideas alleging that there was a widespread conspiracy among the Indian Muslims. He tried to convince the English readers and the British authorities that the accounts of William Hunter about the followers of Sayyid Ahmad and their jihad movement were not based on facts.

3: Visit to London for Modern Education

On the advice of colonel G.F.I. Graham, he sailed to England on 10th April, 1869 . He was dissatisfied with his educational efforts in visiting England alongwith his son Mahmud Ahmad to study the British educational system. He visited the Universities of Cambridge and oxford and thought of establishing such institution in india for the welfare of the indian muslim. He met different personalities of England like, Queen victoria Lord Lawrence, colonel G.F.I Graham and carly Lord Stanley. He stayed there for 17 months and came back to india with piles of educational schemes for the indian muslim.

4: M.A.O HIGH SCHOOL

He Aligarh Muslim University ran five schools under it and Mohammad Anglo Oriental Collegiate School was one of them. Officially called Sayedna Tahir Saifuddin High School (on the name of the then Chancellor of the School), the foundations of M.A.O. School were laid in 1875 by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan aiming at bringing the Muslims out of the abysmal darkness of ignorance which had been made their destiny after the War of Independence 1857. The British policies after the War had targeted exclusively the Muslims for their vengeance and the later were outlawed from education and job opportunities. On the other hand, the Muslims had said good bye to western education in order to associate themselves to their religion and delineate the English language as anti-Islam.

The foundation stone of Mohammadan Anglo Oriental School was laid down by Maulvi Sami Ullah Khan, the Secretary of the College Fund Committee and by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan himself. It was also called Mito circle School. Primarily the School had two main sections: The primary section which was in Zahoor Ward and the students who passed though this section were sent to Minto Circle. Since the founder of the school was highly educated and enlightened with the moderate views, the admissions were open to all the communities irrespective of their caste, religion, of doctrines. The Aligarh University created graduates for the Muslims who fought the war of freedom from the British and the Hindus simultaneously. All the credit goes to the educationist Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who rang the bell for the first time despite the opposition of the Muslims and proliferated those Muslims needed by the time.

Mr. H.G.L Siddons, a graduate of the oxford university was appointed its headmaster. Within two months the enrolment of the school rose to sixty. This school was also opened to other Indians as day scholars. The school was affiliated to the Calcutta university for the matriculation, examination. Its first batch of four students appeared in 1877. All of them passed.

7: Muhammeden Anglo Oriental College (M.A.O)

The establishment of Mohammedan Anglo Oriental (MAO) College in 1877 marks one of the most important events in the educational and social history of modern India. Its establishment is considered as the first significant response of the Indian Muslims to the challenges of post -1857 era. It was an important catalyst in a process of social change, which allowed them to break cleanly from their medieval shackles. The MAO College was originally affiliated with Calcutta University, and was transferred to the Allahabad University in 1885. It was also around this time that a movement began to have it develop into a university to stand on its own. To achieve this goal, many expansions were made with more and more programmes added to the curriculum.

In 1920, an Act of Indian Legislative Council elevated the M.A.O. College to the status of a Central University and it became the principal Muslim Institution in India. Section 2(1) of the AMU Act, says the University means the “the educational institution of their choice established by the Muslims of India”. The establishment of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) was part of India’s intellectual and social renaissance in the late 19th century. It soon emerged as a catalyst in bringing various schools of Islamic thought and movements in step with modernity. It became the nerve-centre of a composite modern Islamic ethos and consciousness. A.M.U. occupies a distinct position among Indian Universities and its contribution to nation building is in no way inferior to the best among the lot.

8: MUHAMMADAN EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

As M.A.O College Aligarh, the greatest dream of Sir syed Ahmed khan was achieved and this achievement turned the tides for future events. Still he realized that college was unable to fulfill educational problems of Muslims of India. Sayyid Ahmed khan launched All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference in 1886, later on changed to “Conference” for Muslims to provide them a forum through which they could get educational awareness. On contrary to the Confrontational Politics of the Indian National Congress, he wanted co operational Politics with the British rulers.

All India Muslim Educational Conference (AIMEC), a Non-political organization which brought Muslims social and political leaders, intellectuals and distinguished people from all of walks of life onto one platform for educational empowerment of Muslims of India. It transformed the dimensions of Aligarh Movement and fulfilled the dream of its founder, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan by converting Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College (M.A.O. College) to Aligarh Muslim University. The Conference also became championing the cause of Women’s education and gave birth to one of the oldest and biggest women’s educational institution, Women’s College of Aligarh. This non-political, All India Muslim Educational Conference which was started for

educational empowerment of Muslims of India also gave birth to largest Muslim political party “Muslim League”

The AIMEC held its inaugural meeting on December 27, 1886 at M.A.O College in the chair Moulvi Samiullah Khan. It was attended by 161 delegates from all over. The Inaugural session at Aligarh adopted the following resolutions:

- 1: Establishment of “AIMEC” and to hold its annual session in different parts of the country.
- 2: British Government should only take care of modern and western education. Muslims will take care of Oriental studies.
- 3: Promote publications of journals and special attention should be paid for memorization of Quran (Hifz-e-Quran)
- 4: The Head Office of Muslim Educational Congress will be at Aligarh.

The main objectives of the Conference were:

- . To provide a platform for Muslims to get higher education.
- . To arrange a forum through which religious education should be taught in English medium schools of Muslims.
- . To provide a forum for ulema and religious scholars to encourage diniyat and oriental studies in the schools of Muslims, and support them to take forward religious tasks.
- . To provide a forum, through which the declined status of religious institutions should be improved.

The annual meetings of AIMEC were regularly held every year in different parts of the country. Sir Syed Ahmed acted as the secretary of the Conference till the time of his death. He himself took care of regularly publishing of conference proceedings every year.

The holding of meeting every year under conference proved a great success for their required results. People from all-India gathered and sit together, to talk about their problems, solutions, and suggestions. This was the first and the only platform for the Muslims where they gathered for their united cause. The AIMEC conference provided a unique platform.

One branch of conference was anjuman-e-tarraqi-e-urdu, in which many important tracts were published under the conference like ‘Muslimanon ki ghuzishta taleem’, ‘Al-jazia’ and few articles like “Kutab Khana Sikanderia”, “Huqooq-uz-Zimmiyan”, “Muslimanon ki Taraqqi-o-Tanzili kai Asbab”.

The AIMEC also provided the platform for Muslims to display their inborn qualities of people like Moulana Shibli Nomani, Moulana Altaf Hussain Hali, Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Moulvi Nazir

Ahmed. They used their hidden talents through this platform by delivering speeches and poetry to show their desire for education, passion for self respect and national sympathy.

The conference took the initiative to look after the matters concerning the Indian Muslims generally:

- i) Oriental and religious education should be started in Government Schools.
- ii) Social issues; to curb Non-Islamic and heinous traditions from the Muslim society.
- iii) An extra effort to put for promotion of women's education.
- iv) Demands were made to remove derogatory and anti-Islamic contents from History course books.
- v) Translation of literary works of different languages into Indian languages.
- vi) The need of women education was felt and a proposal to start a women education section in Muslim Educational Conference was accepted. The idea to start girl's schools in all the state capitals was initiated. Later, girls' school at Aligarh was established.
- vii) Conference also accepted Theodore proposal regarding education reforms to continue their struggle and effort regarding education.

As AIMEC was a non political organization, yet anything delivered through platform of conference was considered collective demand of Muslims. Sayyid Ahmed also delivered his first anti-congress speech through this platform. The first ever political party of the Muslims in the history of India, "The All India Muslim League" was formed on the platform of this conference. AIMEC played very important role in the life of Muslims to get their rights, education and later on separate state in the shape of Pakistan.

SOME IMPORTANT BOOKS OF SIR SYED AHMED KHAN

1: AIN-E-AKBARI 2: ASBABE-BAGHAVATE 2: SILSILAT UL MULUK 2: SAFAR NAMA LONDON 3: SAFAR NAMA PUNJAB 3: ON HUNTER.....OUR INDIANS MUSLIMANS AND ETC

IMPACT OF ALIGARH MOVEMENT

Aligarh Movement trained the Muslims how to deal with the prevailing new circumstances. It guided the Muslims in every field of life.

1:- English-Muslim Reconciliation

Due to Aligarh Movement, the feelings of hatred against Muslims started diminishing from the hearts of the English. The English started coming closer to the Muslims.

2:- Protection of Rights

Aligarh Movement created an awareness of the protection of rights among the Muslims. Sir Syed spent the whole of his life in improving the educational, social, economic and political affairs of the Muslims. Aligarh college was the biggest educational institution of the Muslims. It's educated persons presented the problems of the masses before the government that considered from favorably. In 1906 the demand for separate electorate forwarded through the Simla Deputation was accepted.

3:- Supply of Political Leadership

The Muslims got education from Aligarh Movement and made themselves capable to face Hindus and the English. Muslim League was established by the educated political leadership that also owed to Aligarh Movement. Political awareness was created among the masses by Aligarh Movement. In fact the struggle for the establishment was originated from this movement.

4:- Concept of Separate Nation

Aligarh Movement made the Muslims realized that they were a separate nation having a glorious past, and also made it clear that Hindus and Muslims were two nations and could not unite together. Moreover, Hindus were not the well-wishers of Muslims. This two nation theory was made the basis of Pakistan Movement by Allama Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah who got a separate homeland for Muslims.

5:- Acquisition of Western Education

Muslims were afraid of western education that they could not make progress without it. As the source of modern sciences was the English language so it was necessary for them to learn it. Therefore, arrangements of western sciences side by side with Islamic education were made in Aligarh College that motivated a large number of Muslims to get an education. Aligarh Movement also persuaded other affluent Muslims to start educational institutions, and in a short time the Muslims became prominent in the fields of English and modern education.

6:- Economic Progress

Aligarh Movement attracted the Muslims towards education and made them enabled to improve their economic conditions. By getting the share in government jobs, the Muslims rose to the higher positions, and in this way the economic condition of the Muslims improved a lot.

7:- Muslim Unity

Aligarh Movement created a sense of Muslims nationality. A Muslim wherever he lives in the world is a member of Muslim 'Nation'. In 1919 the educated youth of Aligarh college launched Khilafat Movement for the Muslims of Turkey. They created a sense of unity among the Muslims. Hence feelings of union, relationship, and brotherhood were developed among them.

CRITICISM

1: PRODUCTION OF SLAVISH

Sir syed ahmed khan produced slavish mentality and produced a generation that was loyal to the british. Aligarh movement failed to sow the seeds of anti-imperialist attitude. The salariat class was only interested in jobs and showed empathy to freedom and resistance.

2: EMERGENCE OF SALARIAT CLASS

Aligarh movement produced the English-speaking persons, who captured the jobs and resulted into a salariat class. Later this class transformed into Anglicized persons and indulged into the administrative affairs of the british state apparatus.

3: MITIGATED THE JEHADI SPIRIT

The Aligarh movement dampened and suppressed jihadi spirit, it failed to inculcate jihadi tradition among the muslims. On the other hand, deoband movement kept jihadi spirit alive.

4: RELIGIOUS APOLOGETIC ATTITUDE

The Aligarh movement defended islam in apologetic exposition unlike Allama Iqbal.

5: EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE REMAINED UNFULFILLED

Sir syed ahmed khan failed to translate his vision into reality as Aligarh movement never arrived the vision of sir syed, i.e. "science is our left hand, philosophy is right

hand and crown of kalmia is our head''. Aligarh movement despite its rhetoric went too far in modernity.

6: LIMITATION OF SYED'S PHILOSOPHY OF COOPERATION

I.H.QURESHI opines that Aligarh movement was meant for short term objectives and it ignored the long term objectives 'uncritical acceptance of western values could not provide firm foundation for nationhood'.

CONCLUSION

The Aligarh Movement injected a life in the dormant body of the Muslim nation and helped them to regain their lost position of eminence and glory. It revived confidence among the Muslims to fight for their economic and social rights. The Aligarh Movement was a broad movement which left its impact on every phase of the Muslim life. The actions taken by Sir Syed left a far-reaching impact on the social, economic, religious, political and cultural aspects of the Muslims. His precepts and examples revived hope and self-confidence, showed new ways to progress and opened doors for the Muslims to modern education and economic prosperity. The enormity of Sir Syed's contribution cannot be denied. Aligarh movement stood also as a movement of ideas and changed the Muslims' social, political, and cultural outlook. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan spearheaded the Aligarh movement which led to the Muslim renaissance. Though the movement was educational in nature. It had impacted all the areas of the Muslim life. The movement was not bereft of the political considerations. His educational work also contributed and enforced his idea of separate Muslim state and gave birth to separate ideology. It was Sir Syed who gave idea of two nation theory and alienated and educated class which was inclined towards separation.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan is one of the great luminaries of Muslim India. Shareef-ul-mujahid has highlighted that Sir Syed is father of nation in following context; in terms of issues framed and laid down the propositions. Sir Syed set and defined the objectives and direction of Muslim politics and advised them to keep aloof from politics. They should oppose Congress and abandon agitational politics.

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