

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: An Ideal Personality in Indian History

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Abstract: Last 74 years of independence the most downward community is known as Indian Muslims at every perspective the community is backward than schedule tribe and scheduled casts in India. Which are the major gap that newer fulfill by this community. In the 19th century the sir syed Ahmad khan find out that major gaps and things that will liftmen for the betterment for community. The Arrival of Syed Ahmad Khan on the Indian national scene is perhaps the most outstanding event in the 19th century in the history of Muslim community. My paper will analyze the views, of sir syed ahmad khan's on social justice, educational philosophy, youth empowerment and contribution of Sir Syed in the field of Education and the output of Aligarh Movement initiated by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and giving some suggestions to the community if they will not understand and act on sir syed ahmad khans philosophy they will remain same.

Keywords: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Educational philosophy, Youth Empowerment, Aligarh Movement, Muslim Community

1. Introduction

Sir Syed was born on 17 October 1817. At Delhi It was a period of transition. The Mughal rule had faded away. The internal revolts of Marathas and Ruhilas and the external aggression of Nadir Shah turned the empire into ruins. It was not only a political upheaval, which affected the nobility but also a social devastation which made the life of the people horribly miserable. The people breathed in an atmosphere of fright and fear. The company rule was extending its domain. The people lost all their property, liberty and equality. In such a pungent atmosphere, Sir Syed opened his eyes and grew up with a different consciousness and inspiration.

Sir Syed belonged to a distinguished family. His great grandfather originally belonged to Arabia they migrated to India in search of new home with better possibilities of livelihood and prosperity having stayed at *Damghan* and *Herat*. They came to India to try their fortune in the Mughal court during the reign of Shahjahan. The Mughals, always Patronized the people of luminaries and theologians. Sir Syed's great-grandfather was an able administrator and eminent scholar. Shahjahan facilitated him with a considerably, good rank of nobility, which rose the social status of the family.

1.1 The Man and His Personality

Sir Syed Ahmad khan was not only a reformer but also a visionary and a thinker. And philosopher. He wrote many books on various subjects, i.e. Sunnat dar radd-e-Bidat, Tabyinal-Kalam, Kalmat-al-Haq, Tafsir-al-Quran, Khutbat-e-Ahmadia etc. which manifest his clear insight and reasoning. In fact, he has made a new beginning in literature by writing a different prose. As a social reformer he imposed upon himself the stupendous task of emancipating the Indians in general, and people of his own community in particular from the coercion of the British rule.

He, therefore, resolved to pursue a particular mission by means of educating the Muslims in the modern sciences and

removing the orthodox approach to religion. Sir Syed always defied Conventionality in all realms. He never followed traditionalism either in practice or in writing. In religion he challenged the commonly accepted basic concepts, like that of revelation, Angels and Jinn etc. In his religious thought the act of interpretation is very important. Like many of his predecessors, he chose allegorical interpretation.

He can rightly be understood as an epoch making person. His ideas created a sort of intellectual revolution

2. Turning Point of Sir Syed's Life

As a young man Sir Syed indulged himself in all sorts of pleasures. He spent his youth in very colorful company. He would take part in singing and dancing parties and go on picnics with his friends. But the death, of Syed Muhammad Khan, whom he loved very deeply changed his life altogether. He lost interest in colorful social gatherings .He gave up wearing fashionable clothes. Nextly, the death of his father in 1838 changed his carefree life into a responsible one. The salary his family was getting from mughal court was ceased and syed Ahmed Khan started seeking for a job to support his family. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan learnt judicial proceedings from his uncle Khalil Ahmed Khan, who was a Sadr- Amin in Delhi few months later against them. Wishes of his family, he joined the service of East India Company. He was appointed as a serishtadar in the court of his uncle. In 1838 he was transferred to Agra as a Naibmunshi in the office of the Divisional Commissioner, Sir Robert Hamilton. As Sir Syed Ahmed was semi-educated, he was mindful of his inadequacies. He worked hard to overcome the lack of self-confidence owing to inadequate education. In Agra Syed Ahmed made his literary debut and acquired quite a reputation as a budding author, indicating that he was endeavoring to overcome his lack of self-confidence. Those days' permanent settlements in some districts of Agra division were being introduced. To expedite the settlements and to streamline the administrative procedures, Syed Ahmed drafted **Dastur-ul-Annal**, a transcript and analysis of settlement Regulations. It was followed by **Jam-i-Jam** a

Persian history of Mughal dynasty including the reign of Bahadur Shah in 1840. Meanwhile, he compiled **Intikhab-al-Akhwayn** a civil law digest in order to get promoted to the position of a munsif in an examination. In 1841 he successfully competed for munsifship and was appointed a munsif at Manipuri. In 1846 Sir Syed thought of revising his modest religious learning and improves upon the same. He studied standard works of **fiqh** and **Asul-i-fiqh**, Arabic literature, traditions and the Quran from well known scholars. In the very same years he wrote some tracts including a biographical sketch of the prophet of Islam. He also carried out an Urdu translation of chapters tenth and twelfth of **Tuhfa-i-Isna Ashriya** a pamphlet dealing with **Shia-Sunni** controversy. Syed Ahmed's most important non-religious work during his stay at Delhi was compilation of **Athar-ul-Sanadid**. It was compiled in one and a half year and published in 1844. It is partly an archeological history and partly a biographical encyclopedia of the prominent contemporary personalities of Delhi. Its archeological section deals with forts, mosques, towers, gardens, wells, bridges etc. of Delhi. It, as well, illustrates a list of 142 Hindu and fifty nine Muslim rulers of Delhi, who ruled from 1400 B.C. up to 1853 A.D. It also contains a list of various Delhi's forts renovated or rebuilt by different ruling dynasties from time to time.

This book was instrumental to his success winning for him international recognition. He subsequently became a member of the **Royal Asiatic Society**. He was the first Asiatic to be honored as a member of this society.

Another notable work of Syed Ahmed Khan was the revision of **Ain-i-Akbari** in three volumes. The famous Urdu poet Ghalib sent him compliments in the form of a **mathnavi**. However he remarked that, it would have been better for Syed Ahmed Khan to devote his time and energy to the study of English institutions, than to waste them in diverting the attention of people to these old and outdated stories. This book was published by Royal Asiatic Society in 1862.

3. Educational Philosophy

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had not only to convince the Muslims that Lack of Education was the Main Cause of their Backwardness, but also to address the Problems in these Areas.

- a) To convince Muslims that their salvation lay in acquiring modern scientific education.
- b) To bring all sections of society to participate in the educational emancipation.

3.1 Muhammadan Educational Conference

For great spread of education, Sir Syed in 1886 founded the Muhammadan Education Conference which Met at different places in the country.

3.2 Aims of the Muhammadan Educational Conference

- 1) European science and literature to be taught at a high level.

- 2) To research old work of Muslim antiquity and translate them into English.
- 3) To translate the works and writings of historical Muslim Authors.
- 4) To research on the modern worldly works.
- 5) To offer fresh interpretation of ancient works in a modern light.
- 6) To safeguard Islamic values and their propagation.

4. Youth Empowerment

4.1 Aligarh Muslim University

Often in civilized history a University has supplied the springboard for a nation's intellectuals and Intellectual renaissance. In our time has been said that the American Robert Missionary College in Constantinople led to the re-emergence of Bulgaria as an independent, sovereign nation. Who can assess The effect of Arab nationalism of the existence of the American University of Beirut? Aligarh is no Exception to this rule. But we may claim with pride that Aligarh was the product of our own efforts and of On outside benevolence, and surely it may also be claimed that the independent sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh" (Lanna, 1954). Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) occupies an exalted position among Indian Universities and its Contribution to nation building is in no way inferior to the best among the lot. AMU is perhaps the only University in the country, which has high schools in its domain. It has as many as five high schools including one for the visually handicapped, and two senior secondary schools for boys and girls. With more than 30000, students, about 1400 teachers and some 6000 non-teaching staff on its rolls, it has Faculties comprising a wide spectrum of academic discipline (95 departments, 5 institution and Centers) and 18 halls of residence with 73 hostels. The University offers 325 courses. (Syed Sami Ahmad,2002)

4.2 Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam

Not all the aims pursued by Sir Syed and his followers were achieved but the impact of the Aligarh Movement should not be overlooked. All over the subcontinent Muslim educational associations and Institutions established colleges for the Western Education of Muslim youth. The Muslims of Punjab were In particularly receptive frame of mind for his program of reformation and modernization. The Muslims Of Punjab welcomed Sir Syed as genuine for his policies toward the British. They followed his Recommendations to established colleges for western education and they sent more students to Aligarh College than any other Indian province. Under the influence of the Muhammadan Educational Conference. Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, powerful and influential Muslim organization was established in Lahore. It not only established a boys college for western education but subsequently expanded its activities to women`s education. It also established a medical college (Hafeez,1980).

The annual meeting of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam used to attract the leading figures of the Aligarh Movement. The annual sessions of the Muhammadan Educational

Conference and Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam became national festivals. Muslims Participated from every corner of the India and the Parents brought their children to these national fairs so that may learn the views of the national leaders in Their formative years. The Anjuman ran an orphanage (Yateem Khana, established in 1884)

4.3 Osmania University Hyderabad

Just after Aligarh College came into existence, Osmania University was founded in 1918 by the Seventh Nizam of Hyderabad state, Nawab Mir Osman Ali Khan and all the best scholars of the sub-continent Were inducted. A torch was thus kindled by the spirit of Aligarh at Hyderabad. Osmania also produced Great stalwarts in learning and science. It started its medical and engineering colleges earlier and on a very High scale. Aligarh was somehow late in founding its Medical College. Members of Sir Syed's talent pool Were constantly moving from north to South. Hyderabad and Bombay being the farthest nooks on one Side and Banaras and Patna to outposts of learning came up at Lahore and Peshawar by the identical Names, Islamia College Lahore, Islamia Collage Peshawar and M.A.O College Amritsar which later, upon Partition of the Sub-Continent, shifted to Lahore. The educational endeavors of Hyderabad continued to Be encouraged, channelized and guided with the help of leaders like Sir Syed. His grandson Sir Ross Masood worked as the director of education at Hyderabad and reorganized the education system to meet The urgent needs of the times, later he moved to Aligarh and became vice chancellor to arrange a feedback From Aligarh to Hyderabad.

5. Women Empowerment

After establishing the MAO College, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and his associates in Aligarh Movement Started to realize the need of women's education. In 1896, the annual executive session of Muslim Educational Conference was held in Aligarh and a proposal to start a women education section in Muslim Educational Conference was accepted and Justice Karamat Hussain was appointed as its Founding Secretary. Nawab Mohsinul Mulk, Sahabzada Aftab Ahmad Khan, Janab Sultan Ahmad and Haji Ismail Khans were asked to assist Justice Karamat Hussain. Justice Amir Ali presided over the annual session of MEC in 1899 at Calcutta and the idea to start girl's schools in all of the state capital was accepted. It was Also agreed that the Ulema will be consulted to develop the curriculum of the schools and the modern Subjects of Science and Social Science will also be included in the syllabus.

Shaikh Abdullah's leadership shaped the women's educational movement and played a very Important role for the future of women's education in India. He faced a strong and stiff resistance from The community, but his commitment paid and finally he managed to start a girl's school with 5 students And one teacher at a rented facility in Aligarh town on 19th October, 1906. On 7th November, 1911, Foundation stone for the school building was laid down by H.H. Lady Porter, wife of Lt. Governor of United Province At present a total of around 2699 students are enrolled in women's college. There are around 95 Faculty

members in the college. From the very beginning, the women's college alumni were at par with Their fellow University alumni in all walks of field of education, sports and live traditions of Aligarh Muslim University. There is a long list of prominent alumni who graduated from Women's College and Made a reputation in their relevant walk of life. Begum Khatun Jahan, Mrs. Mumtaz Jahan Haider Khursheed Jahan and Birjis Jahan (daughters of Shaikh Abdullah, Papa Mian) were among the early Alumni of this college. Later the ranks were joined by literary giants like Ismat Chughtai and Dr. Salma Siddiqi, a prolific fiction writer, biographical sketcher and daughter of Prof. Rasheed Ahmad Siddiqi, famous painting artist based in United States of America, Zarina Hashim, Nayyar Sultana, a well known actress of Pakistan and well known Hindi and Sanskrit writer, Mrs. Kulsum Ansal. Begum Abida Ahmad, wife of ex-president of India, Mrs. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad, Mrs. Salma Ansari, wife of ex- present Vice-president of India, Mr. Hamid Ansari also belongs to the same fraternity. Dr. Qudsia Tahseen, first female of Aligarh Muslim University to become a Fellow of Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore is a proud alumina of Women's College of Aligarh Muslim University.

6. Aligarh Movement

Sir Syed always felt aggrieved over the deplorable social and economic condition of the Muslims was mostly because of their own extremist and conservative attitude. The Indian Muslims had always considered the British as their enemies and avoided social interaction with them, which had created a great deal of misunderstanding among the British about the Muslims. Sir Syed believed that the pitiable condition of the Muslims shall not be improved unless the Muslims changed their behavior toward the British. He was of the opinion that since the British were likely to stay in India as rulers, the Muslims should adopt a more lenient attitude towards them and extend the necessary loyalties to rulers of the country. He also believed that the Hindus would get an opportunity of getting closer to the British if the Muslims continued with their policy of hatred for the British rulers. He advised the Muslims to change their policy of keeping away from the British and come closer to them. He believed that only in this way the Muslims would be able to counter the Hindu and Congress propaganda to win back their position in society. At this time the education condition of the Muslims can be guessed from the fact that in 1872 in Hooghly College numbers of the Muslim students were just three out of three hundred (Kareem, 1972).

Sir Syed also realized that Muslims were lagging behind in the education because of their conservative approach toward the Western education. He felt that the present condition of the Muslims shall not improve unless they received English education to compete with the Hindus. Sir Syed began his movement by diluting suspicion and misunderstanding between the Muslims and the British.

6.1 The Aligarh Movement and its Contributions in the Field of Education

Often in civilized history a University has supplied the springboard for a nation's intellectuals and intellectual

renaissance. In our time has been said that the American Robert Missionary College in Constantinople led to the re-emergence of Bulgaria as an independent, sovereign nation. Who can assess the effect of Arab nationalism of the existence of the American University of Beirut? Aligarh is no exception to this rule. But we may claim with pride that Aligarh was the product of our own efforts and of an outside benevolence, and surely it may also be claimed that the independent sovereign nation of Sir Syed took practical steps for implementing his plans of education uplift of the Muslims of the India. In 1859 he set up a school at Moradabad where Persian and English were taught. In 1863 he established another school at Ghazipur. He set up a Scientific Society at Ghazipur in 1864 which translated the modern works from English to Urdu and Persian to make them easier for the people to understand. The scientific society published a journal in 1866 known as "Aligarh Institute Gazette". This journal was published both in English and Urdu languages. The main objective of this journal was to arouse the sentiments of goodwill and friendship among the British for the Muslims. Sir Syed went to England in 1869 with his son Syed Mahmud who was given a scholarship for higher studies in England. During his two years stay in England, Sir Syed closely watched the educational system of Britain. He was extremely impressed by the educational system of the Cambridge and Oxford Universities of England. He made up his mind to set up an educational institution on the pattern of Oxford and Cambridge Universities when he returned back to India. Sir Syed returned from England in 1870 and set up a society called "A Society for the Educational Progress of Indian Muslims". It was this society which later on became the founder of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. Sir Syed's most concrete service to his community was the foundation of Aligarh of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College. The college started in 1875, in the following year he retired from the government service and settled down in Aligarh to tend the infant institution. Lord Lytton the Viceroy formally laid the foundation stone of the college in 1877. Sir Syed had the college managed by carefully selected English men, who ensured that education of the pupils was not confined to the classrooms but included those extracurricular activities which go to make up an all-round gentlemen. In their address of welcome to Lord Lytton the college committee stated that the objective of the college was to "to dispel those illusory traditions of the past which have hindered or progress; to remove those prejudices which have hitherto exercised a baneful influence on our race; to reconcile oriental learning with western literature and science; to inspire in the dreamy minds of the people of the east the practical energy which belong to those of the west; to make the Muslims of India worthy and useful subjects of the British Crown. Loyalty to the British government was an important plank of Sir Syed's programme because he realized that British goodwill was essential for the Muslims to save them from being overwhelmed by numerically and educationally superior Hindus. In a few years the M.A.O. College, Aligarh, developed into a fine residential institution in which special attention was paid to character building. The principal and the professors resided within the precincts of the College and maintained constant contact with their pupils. The students were asked to wear a special uniform consisting of

a black Turkish coat, white trousers and a fez. Religious education was made compulsory for Muslim students and all the Muslim boarders were required to pray five times a day and, but for a reasonable excuse to fast in the month of Ramadan. With the establishment of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh became the centre of the Muslim social, cultural and educational activity. Here Muslim students not only got instruction in modern arts and sciences but also developed a feeling of oneness on account of their cultural unity and religious identity (Qureshi, 1967).

7. Jamia Millia Islamia

Jamia Millia Islamia, an institution originally established at Aligarh in 1920 by the efforts of Maulana Mahmud Hasan, Maulana Mohamed Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, and Abdul Majid Khwaja. The known Muslim theologian, Maulana Mehmud Hasan, laid the foundation stone of Jamia Millia Islamia at Aligarh on Friday, 29 October 1920. Later the top leaders including Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari and Abdul Majeed Khwaja—the first trio—supported by Gandhiji shifted Jamia from Aligarh to Karol Bagh, in New Delhi in 1925. The story of its growth from a small institution in the pre-independence India to a central university located in New Delhi—offering incorporated education from nursery to research in particular areas—is a saga of enthusiasm, confidence and revelation of a people who worked against all odds and saw it growing step by step (official web) (<http://jmi.ac.in/HistoryofJamia.htm>).

8. Political Philosophy

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's "two nations" theory had a big affect on large number of Muslims in South Asia subcontinent, and even set off the British Indian nationalism movement. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's successor, such as Iqbal, Jinnah not only inherited the "two nations" theory, but put into practice, then established the Pakistani eventually. On one hand, the British India Muslims' political consciousness had been greatly improved, and maintained their power in cooperation with the Indian National Congress Party actively. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan called on Muslims not to participate in the Indian National Congress Party, and strived to improve their level of education, so that they had the power to get jobs in the British India government and to obtain a higher level of wealth in the industry. In addition, during the constitutional development, "concerns about majority rule provoked Muslim requirements for nominees. They required quotas in favor of the district election." (Chen, 2004, p.72) Not long after Sir Syed Ahmad Khan died, between 1900 and 1909, the British India Islamic nationalism movement reached a peak. Muslims claimed that "Election was the base on independent representatives of the Muslim community wherever." (Robinson, 2008, p.96)

9. Conclusions

Today Sir Syed is not with us but his ideologies are with us. We need to revitalize his thinking once again because now we are sickened by even worse kind of problems. Citing

condition of the Muslim world from famous Sachar Committee Report, which will give us the glimpses of the same problems faced by Sir Syed which he in a very able manner solved in his life time. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was a pivotal figure in the Indian Muslim renaissance. shows how the dedication, hard work and clear vision of a single man can change the destiny of a whole nation. It can be said that it was due to his extraordinary vision that the Muslims of India could regenerate after lapsing into moral despondency, cultural lethargy and educational backwardness. Without him, it might have taken another few centuries for the Indian Muslims to come out of their medievalism to modernism. He sought to reconcile modern scientific thought with religion sensibility and rationalistic interpretations His educational reforms addressed the problem of the illiteracy of the Muslims creating in them a sense of national pride and identity as well as creating a society in which the masses were given some degree of equal educational opportunities. Although he wanted Muslims to adopt western education and scientific outlook, but he was never ready to compromise with the high ideals and values of Islam and on their Muslims national identity. Thus, he elaborated his educational philosophy in the following words, "Philosophy will be in our right hand and natural science in our left. The study is useful in situations where teaching of a foreign language causes concerns about the subject formation of learners. It also points directions for curriculum designers to include local knowledge's and perspectives in curriculums designs to counter the emphasis on English, so that learning foreign languages and concepts does not compromise local knowledge's and identity construction of learners Thus it is proved from the above discussion and facts that Sir Syed rendered unforgettable services in the field of education for the Muslims. He tried to instill western knowledge in the students as well as reminding them of their heritage and Islamic culture. Sir Syed is very aptly described by a couplet by Allama Iqbal which says:

**'Mubtala Ayay Dard Koi Azu Ho Roti Hai Aankh
Kis Qadar Hamdard Saray Jism Ki Hoti Hai Aankh''**

(The eye weeps for the suffering of any and every part of the body

How sympathetic it is to the entire organism)

To the Muslim community Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was and is like the eye which weeps for the suffering of any and every part of the body? The sufferings of the community worried him. He took an oath to reform, educate and empower the Muslim community and was successful to a great extent in implementing it despite strong opposition from innumerable sources. Indeed the dream of Sir Syed will be strengthened with the opening of five regional centers of AMU across the country. And the parents and youth of India do more focused on education and complete at least graduation level study and do some innovative creations for betterment of community .as well said by Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

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