CHAPTER - V
TRENDS OF MUSLIM POLITICS
(1858-1905)

The Revolt of 1857 struck a heavy blow at the aspirations of the upper classes of Indians. It extinguished all their ambitions for the recovery of their lost power and dominion. The Muslims who became the special target of British hatred after the Revolt naturally suffered most from its consequences. Their leading families in the areas where the Revolt had raged most fiercely were uprooted, many lost their lands and property and their bread-winners became paupers. The young men faced bleak future as the doors of Government patronage were shut upon them. Darkness enveloped the community and a destiny boding nothing but ill threatened them.

According to Sir Alfred Lyall, after the Revolt of 1857, “the English turned fiercely on the Mahomedans as upon their real enemies and most dangerous rivals; so that the failure of the revolt was much more disastrous to them (Muslims) than to the Hindus. The Mahomedans lost almost all their remaining prestige of traditionary superiority over Hindus they forfeited for the time the confidence of their foreign rulers; and it is from this period that must be dated the loss of their numerical majority in the higher subordinate ranks of the civil and military services.”

In these circumstances, there were only two alternatives before them. Either to face boldly their misfortune, cast out the moral weaknesses which paralysed their will, build up a clean, God-fearing and upright society on the basis of the teachings of the holy Quran, and in co-operation with their countrymen of other faiths, evolve a political order which would guarantee free exercise of faith, equal opportunities of welfare and advancement, and a self-respecting dignified life for men of all creeds, all races and all colours.

Or, to surrender the dream of independence for all time, accept the rule of the alien masters and endeavour to enlist their goodwill to obtain Government patronage—a share in the services and in the positions of influence like the municipal councils, legislative bodies, and in other places.
The first alternative was adopted largely by the Ulama— the custodians of traditional learning and ideals. The second was followed by the Muslim leaders educated on modern lines in the schools and colleges established to propagate the Western arts and sciences.

The school of the Ulama which advocated religious reform and political freedom traced its affiliation to Shah Wali Ullah who had inspired the leaders of the so-called Wahhabi movement, and the many divines who had joined the Revolt of 1857.

The Ulama represented the interests of the Muslim masses about whom Lyall’s opinion was: “It would, I believe, be much mass of them are against us. Many among them came from the humble working classes. Their primary object was to purify the religious practices of the people, to remove the accumulation of superstitious and un-Islamic elements from their midst, and to persuade them to lead a life in accord with the injunctions of the Quran and the Hadith—the teachings and example of the Prophet. More than this, they felt that so long as India remained subject to foreign rule, it would not be possible to carry out these reforms. According to them, the politico-religious issue could only be resolved after the removal of British domination, which threatened to destroy Islam politically as well as culturally. They were, therefore, prepared to make a common cause with the non-Muslim inhabitants of the country and to throw themselves whole-heartedly into the struggle for national freedom. They believed that once India was free, their religious and cultural free do would be secure.

Their opposition to Government was, therefore, spontaneous and irrevocable. Hatred of alien rule, which had dispossessed them of influence in the State, naturally created a revulsion in their minds against foreign learning and culture. They realized that English education would shake the Muslims’ faith in Islam and turn many into apostates.

On the other hand, the rival group which competed with them for gaining influence over the community, consisted of men who were greatly impressed by the political institutions, military power, civilization and culture of the West. They regarded British dominion in India unshakable and invincible, and their history had
taught them how, in the struggle against the British, the independent Muslim rulers had miserably failed. They were convinced that it was as a result of the mistakes committed in 1857 that the Muslim upper classes had been ruined.

They saw that the Hindus generally, and the Bengalees especially, had utilized fully existing opportunities for their advancement. They had achieved remarkable progress acquired riches through land-ownership and commerce, and monopolized the services. By their unreserved devotion to Western education, they had won the favour of the rulers. On the other hand, the Muslims had kept aloof, nursing their grievances, and were left behind. Of this disparity, W. W. Hunter wrote: “Our system of public instruction, which has awakened the Hindus from the sleep of centuries, and quickened their inert masses with some of the noble impulses of a nation, is opposed to the traditions, unsuited to the requirements, and hateful to the religion of the Mussalmans.”

The Muslims had opposed English education from the very start. They had expressed their disapproval officially when they submitted a memorial signed by 8,000 Muslims to Lord William Bentinck on his signing the order of 7 March 1835, protesting against the utilization of the Government grant exclusively on English education. Their chief objection to English education was that it weakened the faith of young Indian students in their religion and also opened the way for the propagation of Christianity among them.

It is true that some lone voices were raised against the anti-Western bias, Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824) had himself made a declaration in favour of acquiring Western knowledge. Some Muslim young men had braved the frowns of the conservative elements in the community when they joined the English schools and colleges at Calcutta; even the Calcutta Madras opened classes for the teaching of English. In Delhi, the College which was opened in 1828, gave instruction in Western knowledge and began the Government for translating Western sciences into the Urdu language. As a result, from Calcutta to Delhi, small numbers of Muslim youth were educated under the Western system during the first half of the nineteenth century. But the community as a whole stood aloof.
In the political field also efforts were made to end the estrangement and suspicion which existed against the ruling classes. The Muhammedan Literary Society of Calcutta which was founded in 1863 and of which Khan Bahadur Nawab Abdul Latif Khan was the Secretary, combated the propaganda of the Wali Ulahi group—the so-called Wahhabis—for Jihad. Maulavi Karamat Ali of Jaunpur, too, issued a pronouncement denouncing holy war against the rulers. Fatwas were also obtained from the Muftis of Mecca denying the obligation to fight against the Queen of Britain.

I. SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN: ALIGARH MOVEMENT

But the most effective movement in favor of English education and for cooperation with the British Government was initiated and successfully led by Syed Ahmad Khan, who was destined to play a conspicuous role in the political resurgence of the Indian Muslims.

Syed Ahmad Khan was born in 1817. On both sides he traced his descent from parents who belonged to aristocratic and religiously devoted Muslim families. On his father’s side, the family had since Aurangzeb’s days, been in the service of the empire, was closely connected with Mughal Court and was steeped in its culture. His maternal grandfather, Khwaja Fariduddin Ahmad, was the scion of a prosperous family of Iranian merchants. He had received his education in Lucknow and specialized in mathematics and astronomy. He served first as the superintendent of the Calcutta Madrasa and later as British envoy at the courts of the Kings of Iran and Burma (Ava). Twice he was appointed chief minister of Emperor Akbar Shah II (1806-1837).

The task which confronted Syed Ahmad Khan was an uphill one. It was not less than the social, economic and political amelioration of the Muslim community. It must, however, be remembered that Syed Ahmad Khan belonged to the upper class. The ruination of this class had been catastrophic and had affected him directly. He had felt it as a personal loss. The slow and almost unnoticed impoverishment of the lower classes did not, however, touch him. He showed little awareness of the vast misery which enveloped them. All his efforts, therefore, were directed to the uplift of the class which had, in the past, enjoyed influence and power and whose glorious
deeds filled the pages of history and constituted the proud heritage of the community. His approach to the solution of the problem was, therefore, different form that of the *Ulama*.

Syed Ahmad Khan and his associates had witnessed the futility of the attempts to drive out the British from India. To them, “independence” was not practical politics. The only alternative was to accomplish the betterment of the community under British dispensation.

For this purpose, a re-interpretation of religion was necessary. It was also necessary for three other reasons. Firstly, the Christian missionaries had been merciless critics of Islam and had held up the religion to contumely and scorn. Their propaganda through books and pamphlets and public preaching and debates was reinforced through schools and educational institutions and was proving effective.

Secondly, the moral and social laxity and religious indifference of the community, while giving it to its rivals abundant grounds for attack, made it hard for its protagonists to defend it. To vindicate Islam, a fresh interpretation on modern lines was imperative to restore self-respect; what was more, the superstitious accretions and irrational incrustations had to be cleared away.

Thirdly, the spread of Western ideas and expansion of Western education threatened to subvert the very basis of Islamic faith. The challenge of modern science had to be met.

Syed Ahmad Khan was not fully equipped with the philosophical and theological scholarship needed for the battle, but he possessed tremendous courage and a burning zeal. He took upon himself the triple task of religious re-interpretation, social reform and education. But he did not lose sight of the fact that they were also the necessary and preliminary conditions for the rehabilitation of the community, economically and politically.

On social, cultural and political matters, Syed Ahmad Khan’s point of view was equally independent. The most controversial among the problems were those related to slavery, polygamy, jihad, interest, and treatment of captives of war. His exposition made out that the Islamic view of these problems was both rational and in conformity with natural laws. He pointed out that Islam had laid down such liberal
conditions for the treatment of slaves as to alter the very character of slavery; polygamy was allowed but only in rare circumstances; holy war was not justified against non-Muslims except when Islam was attacked; not every type of interest, but only the usury of pre-Islamic times was prohibited; men captured in war were not to be executed, nor women made slaves. Regarding the pious Caliphate, his view was that it ended with Imam Hasan on the expiry of thirty years after the death of the Prophet. It followed that the sultan of Turkey had no justification to claim the title of Caliph, and that loyalty to the British rulers was obligatory. 4.

Thus, Syed Ahmad Khan’s liberalism opened wide the gates for social accommodation and co-ordination between Muslims, Hindus and Christians.

It is not surprising that in his writings and speeches, Syed Ahmad Khan laid stress upon the unity of the Hindus and the Muslims. In the speech which he delivered at Patna on January 27, 1883 he said: “Now both of us live on the air of India, drink the holy waters of the Ganga and Jumna. We both feed upon the products of the Indian soil. We are together in life and death; living in India both of us have changed our blood, the colour of bodies has become the same, our features have become similar; the Musalmans have adopted numerous Hindu customs; the Hindus have accepted many Muslim traits of conduct; we became so fused that we developed the new language of Urdu, which was neither our language nor that of the Hindus. Therefore, if we except that part of our lives which belongs to God, then undoubtedly, in consideration of the fact that we both belong to the same country, we are a nation, and the progress and welfare of the country, and of both of us, depend on our unity, mutual sympathy, and love, while our mutual disagreement, obstinacy and opposition and ill-feeling are sure to destroy us.” Further, he compared Hindus and Muslims to the two eyes of a beautiful bride whose face would be disfigured if either one or the other was injured. 5

Addressing the Hindus of the Panjab, he complained why he was not regarded as a Hindu, and said, “you have used the term Hindu for yourselves. This is not correct. For, in my opinion, the word Hindu does not denote a particular religion, but, on the contrary, every one who lives in India has the right to call himself a Hindu. I am, therefore, sorry that although I live in India, you do not consider me a Hindu.”
In one of his last articles, he wrote: “In our opinion, just as the difference of religion which exists between the Musalmans and the Hindus ought not to prevent social dealings, mutual affection, love and sympathy between them, so also differences on political questions ought not to prevent social dealings, mutual affection and love and sympathy.” He added, “Undoubtedly, just by ignoring difference of religion we desire that there should be established between the Hindus and the Musalmans friendship, affection, unity and sympathy, in the same way, by ignoring political differences also, we desire that in social dealings there should be mutual friendship, affection, sympathy and brotherhood among them.6.

Syed Ahmad Khan was a believer in Hindu-Muslim political co-operation. It is a travesty of truth to regard him as the author of the theory that the Hindus and the Muslims were two separate nations. In fact, he was a supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity. For him there was no religious barrier in the way of this unity, no objection on the grounds of conscience. His differences with the Congress were based on considerations of political expediency alone. Such differences existed among the Hindus also, e.g., the land-holding class and the educated middle class.

Syed Ahmad Khan had inaugurated a revolution in Muslim thought. Of no less importance, in fact, of greater consequence, was his endeavour to reform the Muslims individually and collectively. He wanted to provide institutional foundations for his religious ideas and, therefore, he prepared a scheme of Muslim education which would satisfy their religious, cultural and material needs. Like the conservative members of the community, he too was dissatisfied with the secular education imparted in the Institutions maintained by Government, which tended to weaken the faith of the pupils in Islam; for while it destroyed the old traditions in which the training of character was emphasized, it did not provide any new moral principles of conduct. But, so far as intellectual culture was concerned, Syed Ahmad Khan was not satisfied either with the traditional system of Muslim Madrasas, or the modern teaching given in the colleges and universities established by Government. About the Madrasas he wrote: “The Muslims have started in these days a number of institutions of old learning at Jaunre, Aligarh, Kanpur, Saharanpur, Deoband, Delhi, and Lahore, but I say, in all sincerity, that they are utterly useless and wholly futile.” 7
The curriculum of the Madrasas consisted of theology, language, logic, natural sciences, mathematics, astronomy and medicine. Syed Ahmad Khan’s opinion was: ‘now the worthlessness of the Islamic sciences stands exposed and it has been abundantly clear that they do not comprise any useful knowledge, and this is the reason for their degradation and misery.’

At the same time, Syed Ahmad Khan regarded the higher education imparted by universities did was, according to him, to give a smattering of knowledge and to produce a multitude of graduates holding B.A and M.A. degrees, but few scholars equipped with real learning.

He enunciated the aims of education thus: (1) the strengthening of faith which required the knowledge of religious truths, and the reconciliation of reason and tradition; (2) the training of character through establishing residential institutions and promoting healthy activities; and (3) the teaching of modern sciences up to the highest stage and evoking a rational outlook among students.

The measures adopted by Syed Ahmad Khan for the achievement of these aims consisted of opening schools, founding scientific societies, and organizing Muhammadan educational conferences. The scheme of education which he proposed for the community, contemplated three grades of institutions, viz., (1) the highest grade which was represented by the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College for pupils above the age of 18; it was composed of three sections-English, Urdu, Arabic and Persian; (2) the middle grade consisting of secondary schools for children between the ages of eleven and eighteen where the medium of instruction was the Urdu language; and (3) the primary grade of elementary schools (maktabs) for those between six and eleven years of age. In all these three types, religious education was to be compulsory.

Under this scheme, the Aligarh Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental School was opened in 1874; it was raised to the status of a college in 1878. Thus venture served both a notice and a challenge to the Hindus and the British rulers that the Muslims in India were no more apathetic to the new education and its advantages. Syed Ahmad Khan’s ambition was to make the college a model of which the Oxford and Cambridge Universities were the prototype. And as these universities had become the main sources for the supply of officer and administrators for the Government of the
United Kingdom, he wanted the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College to play the same role in India. In the second place, he desired that the college should become the propagator of the highest knowledge of the West among the Indian people through Indian languages.

But the college failed to reach up to the expectations of Syed Ahmad Khan. The English section was unable to fulfil one of its roles, viz., the propagation of Western knowledge through Urdu. Nevertheless, the College became the centre of what is known as the “Aligarh Movement,” and made a tremendous impact on the life and thought of the Muslim Community.

The foundation of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College marks a turning-point in the life of Syed Ahmad Khan. He became so deeply concerned in its welfare and progress that all other interests were subordinated to it. Higher English education became for him the panacea for all the social and political ills of India.

The task was extraordinarily difficult. The Muslim community was then divided into factions on both religious and political questions. The conservative Ulama, among whom were members of the Deoband School and scholars like Nawab Abdul Latif Khan of Calcutta, Nawab Siddiq Has Khan of Bhopal, Nawab Rasul Yar Khan of Hyderabad, and Nawab Imdad Ali of North-West Provinces & Oudh (Utter Pradesh), were opposed to his radical learnings and rational interpretations, and looked upon him as a materialist (dahriya), if not a heretic. His supporters, like the erudite Syed Amir Ali, who called himself a Mutazilite, the tactful Syed Mehdi Ali (Muhsin-ul-Mulk), who later collaborated with him in all his schemes, and Maulavi Chiragh Ali, who helped him with his facile pen, did not enjoy, because of their liberal views, that popularity among the Muslim masses, which the Ulama and their allies did.

To appear the Muslim opposition, Syed Ahmad Khan stopped the publication of the Journal Tahdhibul Akhalq (Social Reform), in 1878 and thereby removed a great cause of annoyance to them. Discretion triumphed over missionary zeal.

Reform of Islam as a religion was a risky venture, but revival of Muslim influence and rehabilitation of Muslims in the new conditions of India were necessary and much more worth striving for. In the past, power had conferred wealth; in the
modern context education opened the way to competence; and competence led to positions of power.

For Syed Ahmad Khan, economics and politics were thus inter-related and inter-dependent. He found that Muslims as a community had economically sunk to a very low level; it was imperative that they should co-operate with the Government and rebuild their economy with its help. What was true in the economic sphere, was equally true in the political sphere as well. Both economic advancement and political status depended on Governmental favour. Herein lay the secret of Syed Ahmad Khan’s anxiety to co-operate with the British rulers.

Before the days of the Indian National Congress, Syed Ahmad Khan had been a strong advocate of the association of all Indians in the councils of the Government through their chosen representatives and also in the administration of district and local boards through their elected members. He had opposed the idea of special favours for the Muslims and had instead advised them to rely upon self-help. In his pamphlet, “Causes of the Indian Mutiny: (1863), he had stated that “the original cause of the outbreak was the non-admission of a native as a member into the Legislative Council. I believe that this Rebellion owes its origin to one great cause to which all others are but secondary branches, so to speak, of the parent stem. I do not found my belief on any speculative grounds or any favourite theory of my own. For centuries many able and thoughtful men have concurred in the views I am about to express.

“Most men, I believe agree in thinking that it is highly conducive to the welfare and prosperity f Government indeed it is essential to its stability, that the people should have a voice in its councils. It is from the voice of the people only that Government can learn whether its projects are likely to be well received. The voice of the people can alone check errors in the bud, and warn us of the dangers before they burst upon, and destroy us.”

He added: “There is no reason, however, why the natives of the country should be excluded from the Legislative Councils, and here it is that you come upon the one great root of all this evil. Here is the origin of all the troubles that have befallen Hindustan… I do not wish to enter here into the question as to how the ignorant and uneducated nations of Hindustan could be allowed to share in the
deliberations of the Legislative Council; or as to how they should be selected to form an assembly like the English Parliament. They are knotty points. All I wish to prove here is that such a step is not only advisable, but absolutely necessary, and that the disturbances are due to the neglect of such a measure.” 9.

In 1866, when he founded the British India Association, he exhorted Indians to try and secure proper representation of their interests in the Legislative Council. He told them that it would be folly and cowardice on their part if, out of fear of the Government or the District officials, they refrained from demanding their proper representation. He was in favour of co-operation with the Indus for securing better conditions. In fact, he went so far as to advise the Muslims that “If the giving up of cow-slaughter will establish amity and friendliness among Hindus and Musalmans, then please do not sacrifice cows which is a thousand times better. 10

On the question of a common Indian nationality, he expressed very clear views. In His Patna speech, dated the 27th of January, 1883, he said: “Please remember that the Hindu and Muslim are religious terms. In fact, all the inhabitants of India whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian, are by virtue of the fact of their residence one nation… The time is past when merely on the ground of religion the inhabitants of one country could be regarded as members of two nations.” 11.

In his speech made a Gurdaspur on the 27th of January, 1884 he affirmed his faith in the unity of the two communities. He addressed the audience thus: “We (Hindus and Muslims) should try to become one heart and soul and act in unison; if united, we can support each other. If not, the effect of one against the other would tend to the destruction and downfall of both.”

He further said: “Hindu and Mahomedan brethren, do you people any country other than Hindustan? Do you not inhabit the same land? Are you not burned and hurried on the same soil? Do you not tread the same ground and live upon the same soil? Remember that the words Hindu and Mahomedan are only meant for religious distinction—otherwise all persons, whether Hindu or Mahomedan, even the Christians who reside in this country are all in this particular respect belonging to one and the same nation. Then all these different sects can only be described as one
nation; they must each and all unite for the good of the country which is common to all.  

From 1885, however, Syed Ahmad Khan’s liberalism started definitely to recede. Unfortunately, he began to feel that it was necessary to walk even more warily in politics than in matters of religion. In matters of religion he had to respect the susceptibilities of the Muslims and to win over the hesitant elements among them. In political matters, it was necessary to turn the antipathy of the rulers into sympathy and support.

The main trouble was that the Muslim world was divided in its political aims. The Ulama, who commanded the Muslim majority, wanted to have no truck with British culture or government. Then they were greatly perturbed by the recent events in the Islamic world. In 1878, the Ottoman Empire had been humiliated by the Russians, and the Caliphate was shorn of much of its territory and prestige. For the Indian Muslims, who looked upon the Sultan of Turkey as their Khalifa, this was adding insult to injury. About the same time, another Muslim State, Egypt, was fast losing its independent status and passing under British sway. The deposition of the Khedive and the defeat of Arabi Pasha in 1881 were blows which had repercussions all over the Islamic world.

Again, the rivalry of Great Britain and Russia had brought about the Afghan War, the capture of Kabul by General Roberts and the inclusion of Afghanistan in the British sphere of influence. In Iran, the British were virtually masters in the south along the coast of the Persian Gulf, while the Russians dominated the north.

As a result of these developments, sentiments of shame and reproach against themselves and of anger against the imperialist powers of Europe, especially Great Britain, were sweeping the Muslim countries. They had found in Syed Jamal-al-Din Afghani, a spokesman and leader, who by his learning, eloquence, indefatigable energy and unselfish devotion, roused the Muslims to the realization of the grave danger of impending extinction, both culturally and politically. He became the pioneer of the Pan-Islmaic movement.

His writings and speeches were avidly read in all Muslim circles in India, and when he visited this country for the third time in 1979-80, he was welcomed as a hero
and worshipped by the Muslim youth as a Messiah. His stay in India for over a year strengthened the forces of opposition to Syed Ahmad Khan for Afghani bitterly attacked his religious and political ideas. He characterized Syed Ahmad Khan’s interpretation of the Quran as a piece of ignorant and vulgar exposition, “whose object is to destroy the beliefs of the Musalmans, to serve the purpose of the others, and to plot their (Muslims) admission into their religion.”

Jamal-al-Din Afghani was a lover of political freedom and equality and a determined foe of Western imperialism. He desired to establish the independence of the Asian peoples, and to revive their past glories. His exhortations crystallized the sympathy, which the adversity of the Muslim countries had awakened in the minds of the Indian Muslims. A consciousness of their solidarity began to take form, and along with it an awareness of the larger unity of the world of Islam. But the objectives of Jamal-al-Din offered a striking contrast to the political views of Syed Ahmad Khan, who had come to regard self-government for India as utterly impracticable and inadvisable, and believed in the Anglo-Muslim alliance—the cornerstone of the Aligarh Movement—as the only means of Muslim security and solidarity.

Syed Ahmad Khan’s problems, therefore, were formidable. But, by 1885, already countervailing factors had begun working in his favour. In the first place, the opportunity for Muslim rapprochement with the English had come. In Europe, the dismemberment of Turkey by Russia had been thwarted by Great Britain, and British policy towards Afghanistan was undergoing a favourable change. The fear of Russian advance towards Central Asia was obliging Great Britain to move with greater circumspection in her dealings with the Muslim countries. The Durbar at Rawalpindi to welcome Amir Abdul Rahman Khan was a pointer.

At home, the British attitude towards the Muslims had changed. The old antipathy was giving place to a new policy of befriending the community. It is difficult to point to any particular date for the change. It seems to have begun with the publication of W.W. Hunter’s Indian Musalmans in 1871. He drew the attention of the Government to Muslim grievances, to their complaints of British “want of sympathy, want of magnanimity, mean malversation of funds, and great public wrongs spread over a century.” He was the first “able and somewhat impassionate
advocate of the Musalmans.” Other British advocates of change were Nassau Lees, ex-Principal of the Calcutta Madrasa, Beck and Morison of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, and W.S.Blunt. Blunt goaded them to assert themselves. He said, “I told them, if the Mohammedans only knew their power they would not be neglected and ill-treated by the Government as they now were. In England we were perpetually seared at the idea of a Mohammedan rising in India, and any word uttered by a Mohammedan was paid more attention to than that of twenty Hindus. But, if they sat still, thanking Providence for all the favours which were denied them, the English public would be only too happy to leave them as they were. 15.

In 1885, Randolph Churchill, then Secretary of State for India, visited this country and it was surmised that he confirmed the pro-Muslim trend of the Government. In any case, by, 1888, the trend was clear. Sir Auckland Colvin was pointing out to Hume the dangerous possibilities of the Congress politics. 16

Dufferin was alarmed. In his reply to the farewell address which the Muslims presented to him, he flattered them in these words: “Descended as you are from those who formerly occupied such a commanding position in India you are exceptionally able to understand the responsibility attaching to those who rule.” 17

To promote the policy, Lord Northbrook had donated Rs.10,000/-for scholarships at Aligarh. John Strachey had recommended to the countrymen to help the College generously. W.W.Hunter, the Chairman of the Education Commission of 1882, had held the first meeting of the Commission at Aligarh as a compliment to its importance, and accepted the special claims of the Muslims in education. Alfred Lyall praised the founders of the Aligarh College for rendering a great service to the Government. Auckland Colvin held the College in special regard for inculcating loyalty to the Government.

The agitation in favour of the Ilbert Bill in 1883 had roused the passions of the British community in India against the Hindus and helped in changing their attitude towards the Muslims.

Another factor was the unfortunate growth in tension between the Hindus and the Muslims at this time. The causes of the tension were many—social, political and economic. Some of them affected only the upper classes, some the masses, and the
others both; it was competition for the loaves and fishes of government service which brought into clash the interest of the educated Hindus and Muslims. Throughout the first three quarters of the 19th century, the Hindus had manifested greater eagerness in the race for office and more active participation in the administration of the British. English education made greater progress among them, while the Muslims stood aloof, with the result that public employment and success in the independent professions became to a greater degree the possession of the Hindus. Also, the conduct of the newspaper press was largely in the hands of the Hindus the political agitation was, more or less, their monopoly. As pointed out by the Government of India in 1893, “the effect of the exclusion from public and private employment, from which the Muhammandans have suffered, has naturally been to embitter their minds against the Hindus, and reflections on their past state of supremacy contribute to keep this feeling active.”

Then the meeting of the Indian National Congress in December, 1884, seems to have upset Syed Ahmad Khan. His mind conjured up prospects of a gloomy future for his community in case the Congress succeeded in persuading the government to accept its demands, among which that for Indian representation in the Councils was the most important. His reason for opposing the Congress and dissuading the Muslim community from joining it was not without substance. In a system of pure and simple elections, he was afraid the Muslims, who were in a minority, would have small chance of securing seats in the Councils. In the nineteenth century, this fear was not groundless. In Europe, the minorities based on race, religion and language were everywhere in conflict with the majorities. They were responsible for irredentist movements which aspired to unify the minorities with their larger kindred groups under neighboring States and to separate them from the majority groups among whom they lived. For instance, the Italian-speaking minorities in Austrian Tyrol and Trieste desired to join Italy, and the German-speaking groups in Slav countries wanted union with Germany. The racial minorities were similarly agitated. The Slavs within the Austrian and Turkish empires hankered after union with the great Slav people of Russia.
But, perhaps, the example of the Ottoman empire was most apposite, for hare within the borders of the Muslim empire were a number of non-Muslim minorities, especially the Armenians and the Greeks who entertained some real and some imaginary grievances which supplied the excuse to the Christian powers of Europe to intervene as protectors.

In India, some Muslims belonging to the old aristocratic families were not quite reconciled to the idea of living as equals with Hindus in a country over which men of their faith had ruled for over six centuries. Their claim for special treatment by the Government was partly based on what they called their political importance as inheritors of traditions of dominance.

The masses were mainly affected by the economic conditions. For example, the interests of the Hindu and Muslim landlords were in conflict with those of their tenants. The Hindu money-lenders and the Muslim borrowers were opposed to each other. Edge was provided to this economic conflict by the decline of arts and crafts, mostly practiced by the Muslims.

The revivalist movements which spread in the nineteenth century exacerbated mutual suspicious and fears. Among the Muslims, the School of Shah Waliullah of Delhi and the School established by his pupils at Deoband, as also the reform movement begun by Syed Ahmad Khan were active in restoring the pristine purity and the religious fervour of the Muslim community. The revivalist movement laid stress upon the elimination of those elements form the practices of the Muslims which had been acquired through Indian contacts. Among the Hindus, the Dharma Sabha of Radha Kanta Deb of Calcutta, which had been started in the twenties of the nineteenth century to defend Hinduism from the attacks of the liberal reformers and the Christian missionaries, was active. It gathered momentum, and literary geniuses, like Bankim Chander Chatterji, used their powerful en to popularize and strengthen it. Swami Dayananda Saraswati laid the foundation of the Arya Samaj in Bombay in 1875, but its influence spread to northern India. He called the Hindus ‘back in the Vedas’, and endeavoured to readmit the Hindus, who had changed their faith, into the fold.

Great activity was shown in propagating and promoting respect for the doctrines and observances of Hinduism as a reaction against the spread of religious
indifference which was the effect of Western education. The movement was not confined to the upper classes alone. It affected many castes which were regarded inferior. As they strove to rise in the scale of status in the Hindu community, they became more strict in their regard for the observance of Hinduism. The Hindu revival inculcated among them respect for the past and its traditions.

Thus, there were parallel movements of the two communities, which had common aims and employed similar methods. Unfortunately, there was no cooperation between them to strengthen their liberalism and toleration. Instead, they became mutually suspicious. By their nature, the movements emphasized negation and protest and were aggressive and assertive. Both developed a mood of self-righteousness, an attitude of superiority over the other, and a feeling of 'holder than thou.' The two communities were already developing a narrow self-centred mentality in matters relating to their material welfare, which were accentuated by the discriminatory treatment of the Government. The consciousness of their exclusive self-interest was waxing. It was, therefore, not surprising that the religious revival should have sharpened communal feelings, especially as the economic conditions in the country offered little scope for the solution of the acute problem of unemployment.

The situation required far-sightedness and restraint. The permanent interests of the communities were identical and their immediate wants and deprivations were the result of their common dependence and subjection. But each, in its impatience to better its own lot, pursued policies which widened the gulf between them. Their mutual recriminations and accusations delivered their destinies into the hands of the third party which reaped a twofold reward from their dissensions. The hold of the British on India became firmer and British rule found a much-needed justification.

The Hindu resurgence manifested itself in a new emphasis on old doctrines and observances, and a new enthusiasm for an Indian culture purified of foreign elements. Among such activities, those which accentuated Hindu-Muslim differences were: (1) cow-protection (2) Hindi-Urdu controversy, and (3) assertion of religious privileges on the occasion of festivals and holy days, especially when owing to the nature of the Hindu and Muslim calendars, their dates coincided.
What helped in aggravating the bitterness of the relations was the fact that, in pre-British India, in some parts one community predominated over the other, and in other parts the other community was in power ensuring some balance. After the British conquest, both became equally subject to British rule; and although vis-a-vis the British both wee equally inferior, between themselves each felt proud of its past, and was keen on asserting its superiority. In pore-British days, if the ruler was tolerant, the two communities lived together in peace; but if the ruler was bigoted and tyrannical, resentment of the aggrieved party had little opportunity for manifestation.

The problem of cow-protection arose at first in the Panjab, where under the Sikh rule the killing of cows was strictly prohibited and the offender was liable to the death penalty. After the annexation, the prohibition was abolished. The Hindus and the Sikhs felt resentful at this, but the Muslims were pleased that a valuable right was conceded. When the Arya Samaj was established, cow-protection societies were organized in many places in almost all the provinces. Itinerant preachers toured the country, cattle pounds were opened and an agitation for the prohibition of cow-killing was started. A number of Hindu rajas and zamindars supported the movement. Among the Sikh, the Namdharis of Bhaini (Ludhiana) took the lead. Among the Muslims, too, there were sympathizers. In Uttar Pradesh, they supported prohibition; for, the protection of the cow was not merely a religious question, it had for an agrarian people economic justification too.

Maulana Abdul Hai of Firangi Mahal, Lucknow, a very eminent theologian of India, and three other Ulama, gave the following judgment (fatwa) which made it clear that by giving up cow-sacrifice no sin was committed and no defect caused in the performance of the rite of sacrifice:

“It is necessary for us he Muslims that we should abstain from giving pain. Holding that iniquity and violence towards human beings is improper (the Muslims) ought to make the utmost effort to prevent people from being guilty of such action. Cow-killing is not at all a religious injunction of Islam, hence it is of the highest value to abstain from such a futile action.”
The signatories of the judgment were: (1) Abdul Hasanat Muhammad Abdul Hai, (2) Muhammad Abdul Wahhab, (3) Abul Haya Muhammad Abdul Hmid, and (4) Qazi Sayyid Muhammad Hasan 19.

Unfortunately, overzeal on the one side and irritation on the other led to ugly demonstrations and collisions. In 1881, a riot took place in Multan and then for many years, peace continued to be disturbed from time to time in the different parts of the country. In 1893 there were riots in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Bombay. Both the Government and the Muslims alleged that the Hindus were responsible for the incidents and the losses of life and property. Apart from the question of the responsibility for the riots, it is necessary to know how far they were preventable. It is difficult to be certain, but in an office note dated 21 July 1871, it was stated:

“I altogether disbelieve the conclusion of the Lieutenant-Governor and the other high authorities that no blame attaches either to the Police or the Magistrate for not taking special precautions. The object seems to be to show that nobody is to blame for anything. Having myself had a great deal of experience in former times of disturbances of this kind in Rohilkhand, I assert that it is absurd to say that authorities had no means of becoming cognizant of what was threatening.” 20.

But it was the Hindu-Urdu controversy which gave a severe blow to Syed Ahmad Khan’s desire for communal unity. In the Government circles, many officers were biased against the Muslim community and they looked with disfavour upon many aspects of Muslim culture. Early in the nineteenth century, efforts were made in the Fort William College to develop the prose of the modern Indian languages like Bengali, Marathi and Urdu. As all these languages were rich in poetical literature, the task was easy. But it occurred to the authorities of the college that Urdu, which was written in Persian in its vocabulary and versification, and was mainly used in towns, could not be regarded as the language of the people. They, therefore, set about evolving a prose style free from Persian elements. Thus, Hindi prose came into existence. This Hindi had no poetry and its prose was a form of Urdu in which Sanskrit words had taken the place of Persian words. At first a little awkward, it soon
acquired facility of expression both in prose and poetry, and it became the language of literature.

After 1857, a fresh impetus was given to Hindi. A number of British officers became interested in its development. They wrote its grammars and encouraged the Hindi writers. S.C. Bailey advised the Government that “Hindi could be and should be gradually introduced into the courts and offices,” because “Persian characters can be altered with much greater facility than Nagri, and hence it afford greater temptation to fraudulent tampering with documents.”

In Bihar, Sir George Campbell, the lieutenant-Governor (1871-74), attempted to exclude Persian characters from the courts and school of the province. It was urged that the Biharis were, “poor, voiceless and down-trodden, and so long as their vernacular (that is Hindi in the Nagri or Kaithi characters) is not introduced in the courts, they will continue to be the victims of oppression by the amlah and the police, the zamindar and the indigo planter.

The move was considered by the Muslims as a threat, because the amlah of the courts, the police and the staff of the zamindar and the planter, were mostly Muslims who knew only Urdu. Their livelihood was at stake. In 1867, a memorial was submitted to the Government requesting that Hindi in Devanagari script should be introduced in the courts to replace Urdu in the Persian script. Syed Ahmad Khan, who was then posted as a judicial officer, was deeply perturbed. To him, the demand represented not only the repudiation of the mixed culture of Hindustan, which had been created by the United efforts of the Hindus and the Muslims, but a rejection of the elements which, for over a thousand years, had made India their home. Apart, therefore, from its economic effects for a large class of low-paid Muslims, the measure foreboded a deep rift which sought to cleave society and culture into two irreconcilable divisions.

In 1872, Hindi was made the court language of nine districts in Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh) instead of Urdu, and the measure increased communal tension.

Thus, already before 1885, the communal waters had been muddied with suspicion and discord. There we, then, extreme separatists among the Muslims, who
counseled a complete break with the Hindus and the closest alliance with the British rulers. Among them, the most outstanding personality was Syed Amir Ali, who had established the National Mohammedan Association in 1877, to impart political training to Muslim young men, a subject in which he was interested even when he was a student in England. He had then urged that unless the political training of the Indian Muslim ran on parallel lines with that of the Hindus, they were certain to be submerged in the rising tide of the new nationalism. Syed Ahmad Khan had then refused to support the venture of Syed Amir Ali.

But the inauguration of the Indian National Congress in 1885, brought all the pent-up doubts and apprehensions of Syed Ahmad Khan to the surface. It is likely that the process was considerably accelerated by the English staff of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, particularly by Theodore Beck, who was appointed Principal of the college in 1886. Beck played upon the fears of Syed Ahmad Khan and employed all his persuasive powers to instill in the youth of the College, feelings of hatred towards the Hindus and loyalty for the British Government. While paying tribute to the Aligarh College, he said. “the students bred in this College, trained in the cricket and football fields, would be ready to render to the Government and to our beloved sovereign such assistance as would prove that the Mohammedans of India are ready to face the bullets and bayonets in defence of the empire.” He requested Syed Ahmad Khan to hand over the virtual editorship of the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* to him, and used its columns to denounce the national movement and its Bengali sponsors. Officially, Syed Ahmad Khan remained the editor of the Gazette. He was, therefore, held responsible for the articles and became a target of the attacks of the Bengali press.

In 1886, Syed Ahmad Khan organized the Muhammedan (later Muslim) Educational Conference which, in fact, was a political body. Its aim was to organize the Muslims all over the country by establishing its branches in all the cities and towns, to report on the educational needs of the community and to investigate their agricultural, commercial and industrial requirements. The Conference succeeded in evoking a feeling of solidarity in the community and the consciousness of a Muslim society.
In 1887, he launched a violent campaign against the Congress. He warned all Indians, the Muslims in particular, of the dangers involved in its activities. But his opposition was based on political considerations only and did not affect his social relations with the Hindu community. In order to understand his attitude, it is necessary to point out that Syed Ahmad Khan was an aristocrat steeped in the traditions of the medieval feudal class; that on political matters his mind was medieval. For instance, he believed, like all medievalists, that power and not wealth was fundamental, that the warrior and the administrator were more important than the merchant and the broker. He was, therefore, wholly engrossed in schemes for the rehabilitation and amelioration of the upper-class Muslims and paid no attention to the well-being of the masses. For him, the main problem was to secure the goodwill and sympathy of the ruler who were the dispensers of favours and, opposition to whom led to ruin as happened in 1857—a memory which never ceased to haunt him. He, therefore, considered the policy of offering loyal co-operation the best for the Muslims. It did not occur to him that the real problem of India was that of the grinding poverty of its vast and increasing population, and it was quite beyond his mental horizon to envisage that the remedy of this fundamental socio-economic malady could not be provided by a foreign government, however capable, powerful and well-meaning it might be.

But he was not alone in this predicament. Most of the land-owning class, too, shared these views. Syed Ahmad Khan argued that independence was no more than a wild dream, for the British rule was too powerful to be shaken easily. Therefore, it was bad tactics to annoy the Government by exposing its mistakes and spreading disaffection. Theodore Beck, who was at once the confidant and adviser of Syed Ahmad Khan, makes this clear in a letter he wrote to Badruddin Tyabji on May 7, 1888:

“Our chief objection to the National Congress is one more fundamental than any objection to any specific proposal. We believe that its methods—holding public meetings, showing the ills of the people and circulating pamphlets like the one printed at the end of the Congress report, etc.—will sooner or later cause a mutiny among the
inhabitants of these provinces and the Punjab. If this be joined with a Frontier War, it will be a disastrous affair.” And he added:

“In the first place, the whole Mohammedan community of Upper India is distressingly poor. If they are led to believe, as they are already inclined to do, that this is due to the British Government, they will be ready to rise. They feel passionately the loss of their glory. The old Impaerial buildings of Delhi and Agra are a living sign of their degradation. The older people of Delhi remember the last Emperor of the House of Timour. Add to this their religious fanaticism, which is not dead. The cry of Jehad is heard now and again. And add, moreover, that the people are really excitable and love a fight, as we saw at Delhi and Etawah—and we have the gravest reasons that if this kind of agitation spreads, he whole of Upper India may one day be aflame. Personally I should dislike this for two causes; first, because I have no desire to have my throat cut, and secondly, because the cause I have given my life to, would be hopelessly ruined, and the Mohammedans would fall perhaps never to rise again. We, therefore, do not like agitation of any sort.”

In another letter, he explains his views—which were also the views of Syed Ahmad Khan—regarding the future of India. He writes: “The one thing of importance in India is the stability of the Government; for then we have every reason to expect the gradual progress of education and prosperity. I want to see the people enjoying a share in the Government of the country, but not by means of a representative system, which I believe unadapted to India, but by means of occupying high positions in the bureaucracy.”

Syed Ahmad Khan was greatly fortified in his opinions by the support which he received. Both Sir Auckland Colvin and Lord Dufferin had come to the same conclusion regarding the Congress as Syed Ahmad Khan. Most of the Taluqdars of Oudh, with the important exception of Raja Rampal Singh, were with him. Few leaders of this class, Hindu or Muslim, in northern India-Uttar Pradesh, Panjab, Sind-had joined the Congress. The Government which showed some interest in the initial stages, soon became indifferent and the British community was, on the whole, hostile.

Syed Ahmad Khan sought to collect the opponents of the Congress in the United India Patriotic Association which was founded in 1888. But did not last long.
In 1893, a number of communal disturbances occurred in many places including Bombay, and in the same year Tilak started the Ganapati Festival in Poona. Beck took advantage of the situation to found the Muhammadan Defence Association of which he and Syed Mahmud became the Secretaries. In his inaugural address, he pointed out the defects of the Patriotic Association, the desirability of establishing a purely Muslim body, and the need of a political organization to fight the Congress, which according to him, aimed at the transfer of power into the hands of Hindu groups and the Hindu revivalists, who threatened the very existence of the Muslims. He explained: “With the press pouring out a stream of political articles, our young educated Mahomedans will be drawn into the current to support to oppose the measures proposed. I think it would be a mistake to leave them without guidance.  

Addressing the London Muslim Association in 1895, Beck impressed upon them the impossibility of Hindu-Muslim unity, and, therefore, of a democratic system of government, because such a system would make the Muslims slaves of the Hindu majority for all time. He warned them not to repeat the mistake of 1857, and not to join the seditious Indian National Congress led by Dadabhai Naoroji and Bengali politicians. For if they did so, they would lose their posts, their independence and their status.

It is regrettable that Syed Ahmad Khan adopted the views of Beck and continued till his death to oppose every Congress resolution. His activities during the last 15 years of his life under the influence of Beck wee so unexpected that even his close friends were surprised. Some of them ceased to co-operate with him. Samiullah Khan and his friends resigned from the trusteeship of the college, partly on account of Beck’s increasing influence over the college affairs. Shibji Numani retired from the College, because he completely different from the political views of Syed Ahmad Khan. Other trustees were so worried that they intended to appeal to the community through a series of articles in the press to intervene and save the institution, but his death made them desist. His last days were unhappy—a domestic calamity, the breakdown of his son’s mind, the troubles in the College due to defalcation of funds, and public events, e.g., Sir Antony Macdonnell’s orders permitting the employment of Hindi in courts, were shocks which shattered his health.
In 1898, the grand old man passed away. Judged by any standards, he was a great man. The tribute paid to him by an intimate friend and quoted by C.F. Andrews, befittingly describes his greatness. He said: “In Sir Syed Ahmad I saw the grandeur, the lion-like strength, the high ideals, the passionate enthusiasm of a great mind. No Musalman, whom I ever met impressed me more by he force and dignity of his character and his commanding intellectual greatness than Sir Syed Ahmad. Wherever he went, he naturally took the lead. His personality demanded it, and men instinctively followed him. His very presence and appearance were commanding. He was a born leader of men.” 27. By his magnificent lead, he rescued the Muslim community from wallowing in the slough of despond. He turned their mind from irrational devotion to outworn and obscurantist learning to modern education, which enabled them to play their rightful part in the affairs of their country. He converted the suspicion and hostility of the rulers into confidence and friendship.

That he should put the community before the country was unfortunate. A possible explanation of his attitude is that, with the exception of a small intellectual class, the country as a whole was still medieval in its outlook. Religion was the main concern of the great masses of people, both Hindu and Muslim. Both had among them dreamers, who saw visions of a golden past undefiled by foreign contacts. They wished to resurrect this past, little realizing that it was impossible to reverse the stream of history. Both subscribed to the view that Caesar was identical with God and that there should be no discrimination between the duties that man owned to either. A stereo-typed, non-capitalistic agrarian economy ordered society. Life for the many was hard, poor and nasty, and employment for the elite difficult to obtain. The habits of economic inter-dependence and partnership between the communities were weak and occupational isolation was the rule.

In the political sphere, Indian knowledge and experience was confined to British was a democratic and homogeneous country without any permanent religious, racial, or linguistic minorities. The problems of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales hardly affected the picture. The British majorities and minorities were purely political and quite unstable and alterable. In India, the situation was different; the Hindu majority did not, unfortunately, realize that national unity and democratic government could
only be secured by creating in the minorities the feeling that their religion and culture were safe and protected from interference. The minorities felt that a permanent religious majority must also be a permanent political majority; and in spite of the experience of modern governments, could not believe in the possibility of religious and cultural freedom in a society where the majority belonged to another faith. The hang-over of the past was not yet dissipated.

The concept of majority was based upon number. The only significant number known to them was contained in the figures of the Census, which gave separate counts of the religious communities. This number appeared fixed for all times.

There was no experience of number as applied to political parties, to groups formed on the basis of political and economic programmes, which were as changeable as the weather. There was little realization of the fact that not religion but material interests, were the prime movers of modern government.

This conclusion of religious and political numbers was responsible for lack of mutual understanding; and one community blamed the other.

Syed Ahmad Khan gave hope and confidence to the upper-class Muslims, and created a directive centre for their political guidance. Although the movement he started swung the educated Muslims of India behind the lead of Aligarh and relegated their rivals to the background, the goals he set before the community were narrow and short-sighted, which made the accomplishment of the necessary task of communal conciliation and harmony more difficult.

Syed Ahmad Khan had begun his career as a social and religious reformer. He had realized that the downfall of the Muslims in India was due to the moral and spiritual decline of the Muslim elite. He therefore addressed himself to the task of Islamic reform. He took his stand upon reason because the Muslims had become a prey to superstition and tradition. To rescue them from torpor, it was necessary to condemn irrational beliefs and practices and to abandon the blind pursuit of tradition. Minds had to be freed from the shackles of old and outworn conceptions.

He rightly argued that the instrument of emancipating the Muslim mind was modern education, its rational approach and scientific method. So he founded the
Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College and the Scientific Society to achieve his object. But education of the modern type was needed not only to bring about a change in the mentality of the community, but also for a more immediate and practical purpose, namely, to train Muslim young men for the State services.

Unfortunately, the fist objective met with serious opposition from the conservative elements in the Muslim community, and Syed Ahmad Khan was obliged to abandon the grand design, viz., the propagation of a rational interpretation of Islam, and to concentrate all his energies on the achievement of his practical aims, namely, the rehabilitation of the community in the favour of the Government so as to retrieve the economic condition of the Muslim upper classes.

Aligarh failed to become the centre of renascent Islam. It did not produce a Ghazali, a Waliuullah, a Jamal-al-Din or a Rashid Raza. In the religious teachings of the College, tradition asserted its supremacy; but tradition and Western sciences, philosophies and literatures, ill-assorted with one another. Hence, in the minds of students, there was intellectual dichotomy. No reconciliation took place between dogma and reason.

The spirit of exclusiveness and isolation created a gulf between the minds such as had not existed in the past and which the common knowledge of Western thought was unable to bridge.

After the death of Syed Ahmad Khan, the reins of authority fell into the hands of Muhsin-ul-Mulk. But, on the Hindu-Urdu issue, he incurred the displeasure of Antony Macdonnell, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, with the result that political activity at Aligarh remained in abeyance till the Partition of Bengal opened a new chapter in the history of India.

During his term of office, Theodore Morison, the successor of Beck, guided the Aligarh Movement. He exerted his influence to keep the Muslims away from all political agitation. He told the Muslims, “this is just the time at which the upper classes, who have been treated with exceptional favour, should show that they are not ungrateful”, and threatened that “if the behaviour of the leaders of the community gives colour to the accusations (of disloyalty), would it be strange if the Government withdrew its favour from the Musalmans, if Government disbelieved in their
friendliness to the English in recent years, in their hostility to the Hindus and the pursuit of their own interests.”

The Aligarh Movement, according to its leader, had two aims—one religious, and the other political. In religious matters, Syed Ahmad Khan was a liberal rationalist. In politics, he failed to show far-sightedness. He did not visualize the goal of the community in a free India and hence thought of the future in terms of official favours and loyalty to the rulers. Among those who followed him there were some eminent scholars and some learned politicians. Prominent among the former were Chiragh Ali, Nazir Ahmad, Zaka Ullah and Altaf Husain Hali; and among the latter Mushin-ul-Mulk and Vaqar-ul-Mulk, both retired officials of Hyderabad.

Outside the circle of Syed Ahmad Khan, but equally concerned with him in the fate of the Muslim community was Syed Ameer Ali of Calcutta. He looked upon himself as a Mutazila and did more to mould the mind of educated Muslims in India and abroad than the rest of Syed Ahmad Khan’s followers taken together. But, in politics, he was more narrowly communal and rigidly separatist than any other leader of the Aligarh Movement. He was uncompromisingly opposed to the idea of the political unity and common citizenship of the Hindus and Muslims. He wrote, “It is only people who are ignorant of the situation, who do not understand the situation, that talk of common citizenship. Any attempt to drive the smaller into the bigger camp will only lead to discord and strife… Do you think it possible to attain that end by driving them in common to the hustings?”

He tried to obtain the support of Syed Ahmad Khan to his scheme to start a purely communal movement for the exclusive benefit of the Muslims, but received no encouragement from him. Then he founded the Central Muhammedan Association in 1877 to rouse the sense of responsibility in the community. In 1902, he published *The Spirit of Islam, which presents Islam as a progressive, rational and democratic religion*. He wrote also *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Muhammad, A Handbook of Muhammedan Law, A short History of the Saracens, The Ethics of Islam, and Personal Law of the Muhammadans*, etc., besides numerous articles, to draw the attention of the Muslim youth to their glorious heritage and to remove misunderstandings in the West.
His attitude was to suppress the supernatural and miraculous elements in Islam and to prove that the sacred laws were in conformity with the ideals of the twentieth century. He did not accept the decisions of the four great Imams on traditional law as unalterable. He regarded the provisions of the Shariat capable of modification in accordance with modern requirements, and affirmed the right of private judgment.

II. THE ULAMA AND DEOBAND MOVEMENT

Syed Ahmad Khan’s views were challenged by two sections of Muslims, the Ulama who were the bearers of traditional learning, and the nationalist Muslims.

While Syed Ahmad Khan became interested in the politics of the Muslims after the Revolt of 1857, the Ulama had been seized of the much earlier. The passing away of the Mughal Empire and the rise of British dominion in its place was a terrible shock to them. Of the two pillars on which Islam seemed to rest, viz., faith and power, the latter had been wrecked. The question was whether the edifice of faith could remain standing without the support of the State.

The answer of the Ulama was that they could resuscitate Muslim political power. So, in his school, Shah Wali Ullah of Delhi undertook a dual task. Firstly, to clean the moral springs of life, to lift the dead-weight of legalistic dogma and to bring the Muslims back to the pure teachings of the Quran and the shining example of the Prophet. In the second place, he tried to find a solution for the practical problem which the British conquest had created. But it was his son, Shah Abdul Aziz, who, on the fall of Delhi in 1803, issued a decree (fatwa) declaring that India was the land of war (Dar-ul-Harb). The decree made it incumbent on the Muslims either to declare a holy war (jihad) against the Christian conquerors or to migrate from India to Muslim lands.

Syed Ahmad (of Bareilly) took the lead of the movement and he was supported by the relatives and pupils of Abdul Aziz. These brave people, whom the British misnamed “Wahhabis,” carried on their campaign from the hilly, inhospitable terrain of the north-west frontier and continued to defy the Government till 1914.

In 1857, some of their followers joined the Revolt against the British. But the suppression of the Revolt posed for them the question which Shah Wali Ullah had to
face earlier. In the mid-nineteenth century, after the collapse of the Revolt of 1857, however, the solution of the holy war, or Jihad, was unthinkable.

A group of Ulama, who had actively participated in the Revolt and had organized a mass movement against British rule with its centre at Shamli in the Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh evaded the wrath of the Government, and established a school at Deoband in the Saharanpur district, to train religious leaders for the community. Prominent among them were Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi (1837-1880) and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1828-1905), both followers of Haji Imadullah who migrated to Mecca in 1857.

The School of Deoband was opened in 1867 with the following objects:

1. to exalt the word of God, unaffected by any temptation, patronage, pressure and favour;
2. to extend contacts with the Muslims in order to organize them for leading their lives according to the original Islamic principles;
3. to regard any co-operation with the Government or the nobility as injurious to the interests of the School;
4. to follow firmly and strictly the teachings of Shah Wali Ullah;
5. to avoid aristocratic and despotic ways and to work through co-operation and mutual consultation to set an example of democratic and republican methods in administration.

In education, the School followed the curriculum prescribed by the Dars-i-Nizami, which concentrated on the traditional sciences. The School was wholly independent in curricula, finances and administration, and its graduates had no openings in the departments of the Government. It was a poor man’s school and its teachers and pupils lived hard lives in the most economical conditions. They wanted to keep their faith bright and did not care for worldly success. English education, Western culture and Western domination over Eastern lands were hateful to them, and they longed to free Asian countries in order to bring about the moral and religious regeneration of the Muslim community.

Though the School was immediately concerned with the problems of education and character, the questions of ‘society and State’ were as important for
them as those of ‘belief and practice’ of the individual. The happenings in India and the world of Islam naturally demanded their attention. The Indigo Riots of 1859-60, the Decan Riots of 1876, the famines, and the deteriorating condition of the peasants and village artisans directly affected them. The political activity which started in Bengal and spread allover India, and especially the agitation provoked by the Ilbert Bill in 1883, had aroused widespread anti-British feelings. Discontent in India was growing.

At the same time, events overseas were spreading dismay among the Muslims all over the world. The expansion of Western imperialism over Egypt, Turkey, West Asia, North Africa, Iran, had its repercussions in India. Syed Jamal-al-Din Afghani’s visit had stirred up the young scholars of the Muslim seminaries. His call to free Asia from the yoke of Western culture and political supremacy found an echo in many hearts.

The Deoband School was in agreement with Jamal-al-Din Afghani’s views. Therefore, when in 1885 the Indian National Congress was founded to unite the people of India for political purposes, the School responded positively to the challenge. Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, who was the head of the institution in succession to Muhammad Qasim, defined the attitude of the School. He held that, in accordance with the decree of Shah Abdul Aziz, India was Darul Harb and, therefore, it was incumbent upon the Muslims to drive the British out of the country.

On the question of co-operation in this task with the Hindus, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi gave the opinion that, for the fulfillment of national aims in temporal affairs, it was permissible according to the Shariat for the Muslims to enter into agreement with the Hindus. Hence, he advised the community to co-operate with the Congress in its activities, though he himself did not join it because he believed in the complete independence of India, unlike the Congress of those days. The decision of the learned head of the Deoband School was an unambiguous declaration that the concept of nationality based upon the unity of all religious groups did not contravene any Islamic principle.

The decision created a gulf between Deoband and Aligarh. The pro-British attitude of Syed Ahmad Khan on the revolt of Arabi Pasha in 1881, Jamal-al-Din
Afghani’s condemnation of Syed Ahmad Khan’s religious and political views, and lastly the support which Syed Ahmad Khan gave to the Western powers in the Turko-Greek war of 1897 against the Turks, widened the gulf between the two principal centres of Muslim opinion in India. In spite of the attempts of Muhsin-ul-Mulk, it was not possible to bring the two together, so that the Deobandi Ulama, even in times of grave communal dissensions, continued to uphold the cause of national solidarity and Indian independence.

Among the supporters of the Deoband School was Shibili Numani (1857-1914), a profound scholar of Persian and Arabic, and a prolific writer in Urdu—both prose and poetry. In 1883, he joined the staff of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at the invitation of Syed Ahmad Khan, and although he continued to serve till 18989, the year of Syed Ahmad Khan’s death, he early developed differences with his chief. He could not agree with Syed Ahmad Khan either in his theory or politics. Shibili was a rigid follower of Imam Abu Hanifa and did not approve of the Syed’s non-adherent (ghair muqallid) attitude towards the four schools of jurisprudence. Starting as a follower of Mataridi, he came under the influence of Ghazali and Razi, and ended by becoming a devotee of Ibn Taimiya. He therefore, rejected Syed Ahmad Khan’s rationalization.

On the question of education, Shibili held a position midway between the school of Deoband and the school of Syed Ahmad Khan. He was in favour of reforming the traditional Islamic system of education by cutting down its verbal and formal studies and including the English language and the European sciences. He founded the Nadwatal Ulama and Darul Ulam in Lucknow in 1895-1896, where he tried to give effect to his educational ideas. At first, he met with the determined opposition of the traditionalist Ulama, but ultimately succeeded in convincing them of the desirability of changing the old courses and introducing the teaching of English.

In political matters, he held that Islam was a liberal religion, which promoted progress and civilization. It upheld the dignity of man, asserted human equality, championed the rights of women and favoured democratic forms of government. It taught tolerance and prohibited war, except in the defence of faith. It forbade the
propagation of religion by force. Islam did not believe in the polarization of life between temporal and eternal and rejected asceticism and monasticism.

Shibli was a democrat, an anti-imperialist, and a pan-Islamist. Naturally, he could not see eye to eye with Syed Ahmad Khan. These differences were deepened by their divergent views on Indian questions. He deplored Syed Ahmad Khan’s attitude of loyalty to the British and opposition to the Congress. He thought he was too much under the influence of the English staff of the College. Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, the pupil and biographer of Shibli, says:

“The English professors had created the conviction in Sir Syed’s mind that opposition to the Congress and friendship for the British were in the true interests of the college and Musalmans. He had been so charmed by their magic that his own opinion had been submerged and now whatever he was with the eyes of Mr. Beck and the English staff, and whatever he heard with their ears.”

Shibli admired the Congress for its high idealism, and for its solicitude for the welfare and advancement of the Indian people. So far as the Muslims were concerned, he realized that as a minority, they had a dual status. They possessed a distinctive religion and culture, their part in the history of India had been glorious, they belonged by faith to a universal society. At the same time, the Muslims were citizens of India and they owed loyalty to their motherland. They shared with the other communities the deprivations which British rule imposed and the aspirations for the future which all Indians entertained. He knew that it was not possible to revive the medieval Muslim rule but he was convinced that the Muslims could, jointly with the Hindus, create a state in which both could live honourably and happily, and without any reproach from their conscience or any violation of their sacred laws.

III. NATIONALIST MUSLIMS

Another Muslim school, which supported the Congress views, consisted of the educated Muslims, most of whom belonged to the Bombay and Madras Presidencies. Their outlook was nationalist in the modern sense of the term. They supported the political advancement of India along democratic lines, and they were deeply devoted to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. For them, there was no conflict between their faith in Islam and their love for India.
Badruddin Tyabji (1844-1906) was, in the early days of the Congress, one of the foremost nationalist leaders. He belonged to an Arab family, which came to India and settled down in Bombay. In early life, he was educated in a Muslim Madrasa, and then in the Elphinstone Institute at Bombay. He began to take a lively interest in politics when, in 1878 Lord Lytton promulgated the Vernacular Press Act and suggested to the Secretary of State for India (Lord Salisbury) to exclude Indians from the Covenanted Service. He reacted vehemently against these measures. The Ilbert Bill controversy of 1883 brought him to fight for the Indian cause. He was then rapidly climbing upwards in his profession as a barrister. He had been already appointed an additional member of the Legislative Council of Bombay, where by his eloquence and advocacy he gained great popularity among the people. On the 31st of January 1885, the Bombay Presidency Association was established, and he gave expressed to his political opinions in the following words:

“It is, I think, with the nations as with individuals that with the growth of political life new aspirations arise, and those aspirations require an organization to give them due expression and the organization in its turn watches, regulates, develops, and directs national aspirations.” He went on to say, “we have awakened to a sense of our political rights, and the distinctions of race, colour and creed, which have so long and unfavourably divided us, have at last disappeared under the softening and enlightening influence of education.” 31

Along with Kashinath Trimbak Telang and Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji was the recognized leader of all public movements in Bombay. As Sir H.P.Mody points out, “the brilliant triumvirate were carrying on a ceaseless campaign for reforms in every branch of the administration. From various platforms and through diverse organizations they laboured to promote the public good in every sphere of public life. 32

When the Indian National Congress met in Bombay in December 1885, Tyabji not only supported the Congress but took pains to repudiate the charge of the London Times that the Muslims of Bombay had kept aloof. In a speech at the Bombay Presidency Association, he said, “I assure you of my perfect sympathy with the movement, and the sympathies of my co-religionists at large. The English Times, in
writing about the movement, mis-stated that the Muhammadan community refrained from having anything to do with it. This I deny.³³³ Although it is a fact that, for some reasons, Tyabji was unable to attend the session, Rahmatullah Sayani and Abdullah Dharamsi, two equally influential Muslim leaders of Bombay, were present. And Tyabji reaffirmed his views thus: “The Muhammedans have their Anjuman-e-Islam to represent to Government the wants of the community, and to urge them to adopt measures for its general improvement, but I deny that they are not one with their countrymen of other creeds and persuasions in the movement for the political improvement of their country.” ³⁴.

Feelers were thrown out by the Governor of Bombay, Lord Reay, to dissuade the Muslims from supporting the Congress. Lord Dufferin, who had already held a very satisfactory interview with Syed Ahmad Khan, personality tried to influence Badruddin Tyabji also. The Viceroy met Tyabji, presented to him a group photograph of himself and family, and professed great admiration and friendship for the Muslims, whom as British Ambassador in Turkey, he had come to love. But the effort of the Viceroy had no effect. Badruddin confessed, “activities am much afraid of Donees bringing presents.” ³⁵. Syed Ameer Ali also tried to win him over. As Secretary of the Muhammedan Association of Calcutta, he invited him to join the proposed Muhammedan political conference. Tyabji declined the invitation saying: “you are no doubt aware that I have always been of opinion that in regard to political questions at large, the Muhammadans should make a common cause with their fellow countrymen of other creeds and persuasions, and I cannot help depreciating any disunion on such questions between ourselves and the Hindus and Parsees. On this ground I have highly regretted the abstention of the Mussalmans of Calcutta from the National Congress held both in Bombay and Calcutta. If therefore, the proposed Muhammadan Conference is started simply as a rival to the National Congress, I should entirely oppose it, as it seems to me that the proper course is to join the Congress and take part in its deliberations, from our peculiar circumstances.” ³⁶.

In a subsequent letter, too, Badruddin Tyabji reiterated his political views in these words: “My own views are that in regard to general political questions affecting
India as a whole, it is the duty of all educated and public-spirited citizens to work together, irrespective of their caste, colour or creed.” 37.

In 1887, the Indian National Congress held its session in Madras and elected Badruddin Tyabji as President, and he paid no attention either to the displeasure of the Government or the frowns of Syed Ahmad Khan and Syed Ameer Ali. In his presidential address, he laid distress on the desirability of all communities of India joining together “in their efforts to obtain those great general reforms, those great rights which are for the common benefit of us all, and which I feel assured have only to be earnestly and unanimously pressed upon.” He refuted the charge that the Congress was merely a crowd of people. He challenged any person who made that assertion, stating, “come with me into this hall and look around you, and tell me where you could wish to see a better representation of the aristocracy, not of birth and of wealth, but of intellect, education, and position, than you see gathered within the walls of this hall.” 38.

For several years after 1887, Tybaji was a decisive factor in the deliberations of the Congress. On the one hand, he attempted to convince the Muslims of India that in matters of religion, they were free to act, as they pleased and that the Congress would not interfere. But so far as national activities were concerned, the Indian Muslims should consider themselves as Indians and for all national advance-better government, better treatment of Indians, less taxes, better educational arrangements for all the communities—they should struggle together as one people to achieve their end. At the same time, he tried to dispel the fears of the Muslim community regarding the grant of representative institutions which would result in the preponderance of the Hindus, which might endanger the interests of Muslims by making laws and regulations affecting Muslim sacrifices on the occasions of Id and Muharram and Muslim ceremonies. He wrote to Muslim leaders of the North that it was the duty of all educated and public-spirited citizens, to work together irrespective of caste, colour or creed, and call upon all enlightened Muslims to do what they could individually and jointly to ameliorate the conditions of the people. As long as he lived, he remained a devout Muslim, but at the same time a devoted, loyal and fearless leader of the Indian National Congress.
In 1905, the Partition of Bengal opened a new phase in the relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Till then, Muslim political thought was divided between two schools. On the one hand, the upper class Muslims of northern India largely tended to gravitate towards the Aligarh Movement and the views of Syed Ahmad Khan. On the other hand, the School of Deoband an the Ulama, in general, held in the leadership of those who were not trained in the institutions of Western education. The nationalist Muslims shared the liberal attitude of Syed Ahmad Khan towards the West, but differed from him on the problems of political reform, the ideas of representative democratic government, and methods of democratic agitation. But on the eye of the Partition of Bengal, it was difficult to say which school would ultimately triumph in the competition for leadership of the Muslim community.

Thus the period between 1858-1905 witnessed triangular political trends among Muslim community and above all the very same period also became witness of the formation of the separate political identity of the Muslims modern India which provided ground for the British policy of Divide et Imperia (Divide and Rule Policy).

Out of the above three Aligarh Movement was going to decide the future of Muslim politics is India. This movements and its policies ultimate paved the way for the foundation of All India Muslim League in 1906 A.D. And now onwards this organization with the passage of time becomes the representative of Muslim community especially in the critical period of 1940s in the history of Indian Subcontinent. The next comprehensive chapter elaborate the politics of this organization.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

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10. Akhiri Mazamin, op. cit, p.70.
17. Dufferin: Speeches Delivered in India (1884-1888), p. 204.
18. Lord Lansdowne’s Despatch to the Earl of Kimberley, Secretary of state for India, dated the 27th December 1893, para 7, (Home Department-Public, No. 84 of 1893).
22. The Bengalee, 10 March 1877.
24. Vide Badruddin Tyabji’s correspondence in the National Archives of India, New Delhi.
28. *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, October 9, 1897.
31. Tyabji, Husain B., op. cit. p. 160
32. Ibid, p. 213
33. Ibid, p. 167
34. Ibid, p.-168.
35. Letter dated 3 December 1887; ibid, p. 178
36. Letter dated 3 December 1887; ibid, pp. 179-80
37. Letter dated 13 January 1888, ibid, p. 191
38. Presidential Address, Madras Session, 1887.