CHAPTER – 3
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REGENERATION OF THE MUSLIMS

In the closing years of the 19th century the Muslim masses were poverty stricken and backward economically and socially. Some of their intelligent and society well placed leaders tried to improve their lot. This chapter will throw light on the various measures for the regeneration or the Muslim community.

The Mohammadan Association:

The first political organization to be formed by the Muslim community in modern India appears to have been the Mohammadan Association was at 9/1, Taltollah, Calcutta. It is noteworthy that the Mohammadan Literary Taltollah. The President of the Mohammadan Association objective was to after assistance to the British in suppressing the ‘uprising’. The Association remained loyal to the British throughout the upsurge of 1857. When it was suppressed, the Association sent felicitation to Queen Victoria on November 14, 1858. The Association did not enjoy a long life. The only achievement to its credit seems to be a petition (a) sent by it to the governor general on the 28 the may 1857.

THE CENTRAL NATIONAL MOHAMMADAN ASSOCIATION:

Establishment:

This Association was probably the first powerful Muslim Association, formed in the years 1877 by Ameer Ali for hectic social and political activities. At that time its was the principal Muslim Organization which represented again and again the grievances of the Muslims to the Governor General. Ameer Ali remained the Secretary of the Association for a quarter of a century. He was the only Muslim of note who made an attempt to put the Muslim case before British. He was very influential among the Muhammadans in Bengal.

The Aims and Objectives:

This Association was formed with the object of promoting by all legitimate and constitutional means the well being of the Mussalmans of India. It was founded essentially upon the principle of strict and loyal adherence to the British Crown.
Deriving its inspiration from the noble tradition of the past it proposed to work in harmony which the western aimed at the political regeneration of the Indian Muhammadans by the moral revival and by constant endeavours to obtain from Government a recognition of their just and reasonable claims.

In 1882, the Association claimed that before its establishment, there existed no political body among the Indian Muhammadans to represent their hopes and aspiration. In order to obviate the difficulties under which the Muhammadans had labour, the Association was instituted for the protection and conservation of the general interests of the community.

Activities:

In the first few years, the Association concerned itself with petty social affairs, but by 1882, it developed the ambition of becoming the champion of Muslim interest in a larger sphere.

Ameer Ali, unlike Sir Syed, travelled far and wide disseminating the aims of his Association, opening its branches and exhorting Muslims to unite. He travelled all the way from Calcutta to Karachi and by personal visits and correspondence he had as many as 53 branches of the Association opened in Bengal, Bombay, Madras, the Punjab, the U.P. and Bihar. In the course of time the activities of the Association were extended as far west as Karachi and as far south as Bangalore. Ameer Ali’s mission in life became agitation for a share of Muslim in Government services. Though, overshadowed by fame of Sir Syed, Ameer Ali’s contribution to Muslim politics is more important and more powerful. His Association in fact was one of the organizers of the first Indian Congress. But it withdrew its support from the second Congress and never returned to any in future, the reason being the fear of political extinction of the Mohammadans or their absolute effacement as a community in this country. The Association, therefore, had to acquire a cautious attitude towards the Muslims attending the Congress.

Various Deputations of the Association to the Governor General:

A deputation of the Association waited on the Governor General on November 12, 1887, at Karachi and drew his attention towards the backward condition of the
Muslims and the Governor General in his reply recognized the undoubted fact that owing to various circumstances and to historic forces over which they themselves had no control, the Mohammadan community in many parts of India hardly found itself in that satisfactory position to which had a right to aspire.

On March 24, 1888 another deputation from the House, Calcutta, and presented a farewell address on behalf of the Mohammadan community. Delegated from several parts of Bengal, Bihar and the north were present. The address, which was read by Ameer Ali, sought the protection of the British Government for Muslims of India, and the Retiring Governor General, Lord Dufferin replied: the Mohammadans of India may rest assured that the Government will always view with the utmost sympathy and approval their endeavours to remove the peculiar impediments which hamper their efforts.

Again a still larger deputation consisting of 120 members waited on the Governor General, the Marquis of Lansdowne, and presented him an address of welcome on December 22, 1888. The address was read by the President of the people of India. The Governor General's reply said:

-You have to some extent suffered as you have pointed out, from the fact that your share of the national wealth is less than that to which your numerical strength would entitle you, and also from the want of a proper organization, such as that to which other sections of the community have had recourse. It is no doubt, owing to causes of this kind that you find yourselves less strongly represented than you might have wished in the public service of the country.

The Governor General's reply was, as it seems, more than assurance.

Attitude Towards the Indian National Congress and the Nationalist While the Muslims were agitating separately and waiting upon the Governor General on deputations, All India National Congress was set up. This Associated as noted earlier was favourably inclined to the Congress in the beginning but soon drifted away from it. The proceedings between the centrals ignored the existence of the congress of its proceedings relating to the Muslims, and of those Muslims who were attending its sessions in increasing number and who favoured evolution of a common Indian nationality. These proceedings led to a different analysis and a different result.
His fears were taken due note of by the upper class Muslims and for this –political training‖ several Muslim societies with similar aims and objects sprang up in many cities and town of India; and their activities in some loose way were co ordinate from Calcutta. According to Rafiq Zakaria, of the important places where such societies were formed, mention may be made of Patna, Gaya, Amritsar, Madras, Karachi, Bombay and Lucknow. Their activities covered a wide range of subjects from social and literary to legislative and political.

Mohammadan Literary Society of Bengal:

Another important Association of the Mohammadans which was functioning since more than a decade earlier than the Central National Mohammadan Association was the Literary Society of Bengal.

The Muslim could not remain completely unaffected by the political currents and cross currents in the country thought neither they could organize themselves properly nor had they desire to be entangled with the Hindus in political agitation, the complexities of which were beyond their comprehension, yet they knew well regarding the price they had paid for their participation in the upsurge of 1857. They were too poor and frightened at that time to them, their interest in politics also increased. The first attempt in his direction was made as early as in 1865.

Establishment:

Bengal founded in April, 1865, the Mohammadan Literary Society. It met once every month at the Nawab’s residence at No. 16, Toltoollah lane in Calcutta and brought together well to do Muslims for academic discussions on political and social matters.

The Aims and Objectives:

The object of the society was –to impact useful information to the higher and educated classes of the Mohammadan community by means of lectures, addresses and discourses on various subjects in Literature, Science and Society.

These lectures were delivered in Urdu or in English, sometimes even in Persian or Arabic.
Activities:

The Nawab and his colleagues were much influenced by the west; they showed almost a blind adherence to English ideas. The Society managed to create some interest in and its meetings often used to be very well attended. It claimed more than 500 members drawn from leading Muslim families all over India; it had its Patron the Lt. Governor of Bengal.

Politically the Society was loyalist to the core; within its portals no criticism of the Government, however Mild or constructive, was allowed. Its basis was unwavering fidelity to British rule, which it often tried to justify even on theological grounds. It did not hesitate to condemn the critics and opponents of British rule within the Islamic fold as traitors to Islam: a thesis which the society sanctified by securing fatwas from some leading Uema.

One of the chief features of its activities was the presentation of addresses on behalf of the Muslim community to the outgoing and incoming Lt. Governors and Governors Generals expressing in most eloquent and picturesque phrasing the loyalty of the Muslims to the British crown.

Once a year the Society held a conversazione at the town hall of Calcutta to which some prominent Europeans Physics and Electricity was held. It used to be organized not only to interest the Muslims in scientific studies but also to bring them into contact with the leading members.

Achievements:

In creating political consciousness among the Muslims, the society did not play significant part but in acquainting them with some of those aspects of British culture which were influencing life in India, its achievements were considerable. For instance, it rendered valuable service in spreading among the Muslim the study of English language and literature and successfully strived in introducing these subjects first in the Calcutta Madrasah and then in other centers of education in Bengal.

Its secretary, Nawab Abdul Latif, at time pointed out that the Muslims were not disposed to accept hastily [sic] proposals however well meant which have a tendency
to revolutionise time-honoured institution, and to bring about changes which have a
tendency to revolutionise time honoured institutions, and to bring about changes which
they consider unsuited to the exigencies of the India of today and the various
conflicting interests in it.

This attitude is in keeping with the other leaders of the Muslim community who
advocated complete faith in and support to the British Government. They did not pay
head to the few reform movements directed towards the welfare or the Muslim
community.

Muslim Reform Movement:

If the Hindu mind had responded to western influences with a desire to learn, the first
reaction of the Muslim community was to shut them in a shell and resist western
impact. In the mid nineteenth century a few reformers sought to break this isolationist
and static trend and reconcile the community to progressive ideas of the west.

Mention may be made of Maulvi Chirag Ali (1844 -95) who sought to reform the
Muslim society and modernize their outlook. He in the service of the East India
Company and later the Government of India, Chirag Ali wanted his co religionists to
reconcile themselves to British rule and have the right place in the administrative
services. He stood for monogamy and a better status for women in society and
advocated these reforms through his literary works.

It will be thus revealed that even a century back a few Muslim leaders advocated
reform in their society. They emphasized monogery and better living condition for
women. Some of the leaders of the Muslim community of 20th century do not favour
even this. This shows that the Muslims are not keeping pace with time. This fact was
first realized by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan during the closing decades of 19th century. In
1889, the Qadian movement was but a reflection of this reform wave.

The rise of the spirit which found expression in many observes agreed in saying that
most educated Muslims were turning away from the rationalism of Sir Syed Ahmed
Khan to orthodoxy.
In 1885, there was founded in the city of Lahore the Anjuman – i- Himayet –i-Islam, i.e. the Society for the Defence Of Islam and since that date branch associations had been formed in many towns throughout India.

Its main aim was to improve the social, moral and intellectual condition of the Muslim community. Its also aimed at giving Muslims a good modern education, and along with it, religious instruction on a more orthodox type than was given in Aligarh institutions.

In 1894, a Defence Association was formed, the Nadwat – ul – Ulema, or Society of Muslim Theologians, which had its central office in Lucknow. The principal objects of the association were (1) Social reform and (ii) the pursuit of the general welfare of Mussalmans. It brought on one platform the leading Ulema of every school of thought.

Hakim Ajmal Haziq ul Malik, a learned Muhammadan Doctor who resided in Delhi had the idea of combining Orthodox Muhammadanism with western culture. He had already trained a few graduates of Aligarh as Maulvies.

The most important and most orthodox of all Muslim seminaries in India was the Dar-ul-ulum, or School of started by Maulana Muhammad Qsim Nanautawi in 1863 students. All Muslims acknowledged that it was very old fashioned. Yet attempts were being made to reform the divinity course in several directions.it endeavoured to revive the old traditions of Islamic learning that had received a set back after the suppression of the 1857 revolt 15(a) it has played a vital position in the extensive move violently for freedom in the associate continent 15(b)

Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan’s name stands out conspicuous among the Muslim reformers of the 19th century. Born in Delhi in a respectable Muslim family, he received education in the traditional Muslim style. He was in the judicial service of the E.I.C the upsurge of 1857 and stood loyal to the Government. He tried to modernize the outlook of the Muslims. He tried to reconcile accept services under the government. In this objective he achieved great success.

As a Reformer:

Sir Syed also tried to reform the social abuses in the Muslim community. He condemned the system of piri and muridi. The pirs and faqirs claimed to be followers of the Sufi school and passed mystic words to their disciples (murids). He also
condemned the institution of slavery and described it un Islamic. His progressive social ideas were propagated through his magazine Tahdhib ul Akhlaq (Improvement of manners and morals).

In his masterly work ‘Commentaries on the Quran’ Sir Syed criticized the narrow outlook of traditional interpreters and gave his own views in the light of contemporary scientific knowledge. His emphasis was on the study of qoran. The word of god, he said, should be interpreted by the work of god which lies open before all to see.

His position in the Field of teaching:

Sir Syed believed that the aversion of the Muslim Aristocracy to the new system of education was due to the fact that when in the reigns of the Caliphs of Baghdad the Greek sciences of logic, philosophy, astronomy and geography were translated into Arabic, they were accepted by the whole Mohammadan world without hesitation and with slight modifications and alterations they gradually found their way into the religious books of the Mohammadans, so that in course of time these sciences were identified with their very religion, but European learning differed widely in principle from these Greek dogmas, and the Mohammadans believed that it was at variance with the tenets of Islam.

For several years, Sir Syed had been persuading his co religionists to take to English education and in 1871 he took a positive step by appointing a committee to investigate the causes of the aversion of Muslims to it, and to suggest means by which their attitude could be changed. The committee’s findings nearly tallied with the picture he had formed in his own mind.

He gathered around him a body of influential Muslim gentlemen and opened an Anglo Muslim high school for Muslim boys at Aligarh in 1875. Within 3 years, the school was raised to a second grade college. The original object of some of the supporters, according to Sir Syed himself, was to confine the college to the Muslims. According to Yourself Hussain, Mr. A.M. Colvin from Futtehgarh wrote Sir Syed in August, 1872: –The Movement to be rally productive of good, should (I am convinced) be quite independent of any funds other than those contributed by Mahomadan subscriber‖.
The Aligarh College differed from other colleges in that it gave instruction in Islam and encouraged Muslim boys to visit the mosques regularly for prayers, Sunnis and Shiaas praying separately. Sir Syed efforts succeeded admirably, and boys of Muslim aristocracy from distant parts of the province began to seek admission in the Aligarh College. This combination of secular education with compulsory religious instruction greatly assuaged Muslim antagonism towards English education…….. Sir Syed even exhorted Muslims to enter missionary instituting, telling them that the study of the Bible did not offend Islam; on the contrary, it affords a valuable help in acquiring knowledge of English literature.

Soon Aligarh became the center of religious and cultural revival of Muslim community. The college became the nucleus for the formation of the Muslim University in 1920

Change in Sir Syed’s Political Views:

Syed Ahmed’s unique influence was to keep the Muslims, particularly in northern India, away from the Congress, through earlier he had been known for his tolerant views and had Declair —the two eyes of the beautiful bride that was India‖, and —if united, we can support each other. If not, the effect of one against the other would lead to the downfall and destruction of both‖

But unfortunately Sir Syed who had said, —I call both these races which inhabit India by one word i.e. Hindus meaning to say that they are inhabitants of Hindustan‖, began to attack the Congress and the Hindus.

He opposed the Congress demand for the holding of simultaneous competitive examinations for the civil service.

He was in his latter days, obsessed by the bogey of permanent domination of the Muslims by the Hindus in the educational, economic and political spheres alike. Documents from Aligarh Archives his obsession seems to have unduly taken advantage of by the Britishers. H.G. Keine in his letter dated, Agra the 26th March, 1872, asked Sir Syed, —Do you think that it would be well to have distinct Courts of law for Muslims, or is the present system sufficient.
Lala Lajpatrai, though a great admirer of Sir Syed, did not allow the anti Congress utterances of the Muslim leader to go unchallenged. He brought out the glaring contradictions between Sir Syed’s new political views and his old creed by quoting copiously from his early writings. This has been mentioned in the Open letters to Sir Syed Khan regarding which Sh. V.C. Joshi has referred in his introduction to Young India

Meyo school at Aligarh and its nationalist Septiments:

The Muslim leaders, because of their own background tried their best to keep the Muslim away from any kind of collaboration with the Hindus. In this, they were motivated not so much by any hatred of the Hindus as by an instinct of protection against the possibility of eventual domination by the majority community. The looked upon the British as arbiters of intercommunal disputes. As outsiders, the British, they believed, and no reason to destroy Muslim religious and cultural identity; but the Hindus, being the major community, having suffered oppression through many generations, were bound so thought the Muslim leaders to impose their own supremacy on others. This approach came as a great shock to the liberal Hindus leadership, particularly of the Congress, which had been so anxious for Muslim collaboration in the larger national interest; it tried to woo the Muslims in various ways but the response was rarely encouraging. The Muslims continued to be In keeping the Muslims apart from the Hindus, Sir Syed and Mohammadan Anglo Oriental college, Aligarh played no small part. True, he had his own reason, but what made him a determined political opponent of the Hindus was their demand for more participation in administration and in legislative bodies …… As soon as there was clamour for India participation in deliberative and administrative organs of the Government, Sir Syed became alarmed. He opposed the congress on every issue, irrespective of its merits, and denounced the whole movement as not only dangerous for the Muslims but also for the rest of India. He was convinced that it posed the biggest threat to Muslim security. According to Mortison, Principal of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh, Sir Syed was of the opinion that –the best way of reconciling the two communities lay in main training the autocracy of the British Government intact. For one Muslims, he held, this was particularly essential, –without it, they would be submerged in the rising ocean of modern Hinduism.
Sir Syed, who had never debbled in political controversies before, condemned the whole congress movement as seditious in a lengthy editorial in his Aligarh Institute Gazette, just a month before the second congress met in Calcutta. The congress effort to induce Muslims to come within its fold infuriated him; hence his spirited Lucknow outburst against the congress in 1887. He said it would not do good to anybody except a few Bengalis who at the site of table knife crawl under their chair, its only result would be to produce a useless uproar, thus raising Government's suspicions.

To his co-religionists, he talked bluntly, warning them that if they joined the congress, nothing but national disaster lay in store for them. Under a system of representative Government their future was dark; that system would only lead to the perpetual subjugation of the Muslim by the Hindus. He developed his fears on 3 main grounds:

Supposing the British were to withdraw, is it possible that these two could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down.

That representative institutions were unsuited to for the Muslim candidates and the Hindu voters would vote for the Hindu candidates, with the result votes as the Muslim candidates. How then could the Muslim, in such a situation, safeguard his interest

That the Muslims must depend on the British, became according to the Qaran, our nation cannot expect friendship and affection from any other people.

The Hindu press attacked him, while the Muslim Herald, on the other hand, was all praise for him its praise is worth quoting.

We proudly expect the Syed as our leader and exponent the summit and the crown of Islam, a faith that birds together with withes of iron 50,000,000 Indian Musalmans... his speech sounds the keynote of our policy.

On the other hand, the Ahmadi of Bengal wrote Many unthinking Musalman brethren have been allured by the magic of his name and leaving aside their own independent opinions, have been following blindly his footsteps. The congress leaders also accused him of creating ill feeling and hatred between the Hindus and Muslims.

The College Roused the Muslim Intellectuals Politically with a Communal Religious Foundation:
The real object of the Congress, Sir Syed feared was—that the Government of India should be English in name only, and that the internal rule of the country should be entirely in their own hands. When viewed in its true perspective, the congress movement, he said was nothing short of—a civil war, but a civil war without arms.

—We like it with arms. Let there be transference of power: the Muslims were not afraid. Let there be competitive Examinations; the Muslims were not worried. But—in this competition we should be allowed to use the 'pen' of our ancestors which is in truth the true pen for writing the decrees of sovereignty.

In fact, a month before Sir Syed's—Out burst at Lucknow, Principal Theodore Beck of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh had said something similar in a series of articles in the 'Pioneer'. He showed how the various congress resolutions aimed at the establishment of parliamentary government, which was impossible to achieve; because it was—unsuited to a country containing two or more nations tending to oppress the numerically weaker. Moreover, the Hindus, voters—would be absolute masters, as no Muhammadan Emperor ever was. His presumption was absolutely rong as the later events proved but unconsciously be advocated the two nation theory.

Sir Syed asked the congress leaders to say honestly,—whether out of two such nations whose aims and objects are different, but who happen to agree on some small points, a _National congress can be created_. His own reaction was:—No

Meetings held at Bombay, Madras, Allahabad and Lahore Etc., endorsed Sir Syed’s views and influential Muslims looked to him for a lead.

One of his lieutenants, Moulvi Nazir Ahmed, said:—whatever be the outcome of the congress, honour will never tolerate our being under the grace of the Hindus for worldly gains, however valuable they may be …….. the good that we are to receive under this rule, we shall have not from your so called congress, but from Queen Victoria, from the Viceroy, from the Lt. Governor, from the commissioner and Deputy Commissioner and God willing, we shall have plenty from them even without or asking.

Mian Mohammad Shafi, contended that a very limited number of Muslims who were with the congress were not the true representatives of the Mohammadan nation. Persons like Sir Syed, Syed Ameer Ali, Nawab Abdul Latif Khan were the only
spokesman of Islam in India. In fact, most of the Muslim news papers like the Muhammadan Observer, the Aligarh Institute Gazette, the Muslim Herald, the Rafiq Hind the Victoria paper and the Imperial paper condemned the activities of the congress. The same stand was taken by the various Muslim associations and anjumans through out the country, but the congress leaders remained and continued their efforts to win over the Muslims, through the Muslims suspected them of laying traps for them. Consequently, the anti congress agitation of Sir Syed, was gathering increasing momentum among the Muslims. His United Indian Patriotic Association had now a chain of 52 Muslim organizations as constituent units spread all over India; some of these organizations even passed rules to expel those Muslims from their ranks who either belonged to the congress or were in any way sympathetic to it. Sir Syed also received financial assistance (rs. 4,000) from the Nizam. As a matter of fact, the Syed was so bitter that he assured Hume that even if ‖Sir Auckland Colvin, Lord Dufferin, the Secretary of State for India and the whole House of Commons had declared in favour of the congress‖ still he would have been ‖as firmly opposed to it as ever‖. This was really a strange attitude. To further the feeling of solidarity in the Muslims he organised Muhammadan Educational conference in 1886 which functioned as a form for disseminations Muslim political opinion.

Early in November, 1888, Nawab Mehadi Ali (better known as Mohsin ul Mulk) wrote to the great Liberal leader, Mr. Gladstone, emphasizing that a central body congress whose constituency’s would be ‖as dissimilar both in race and religion as in India‖ was an impossibility. A noncommittal reply from Gladstone, must have disappointed the

Events, particularly the Hindu Muslim riots and the Hindi Urdu controversy, the minority in numbers, the Muslims would not derive any benefit from congress on the country they would became Khasr – ud – dunia val akhirah – a Quranic text, meaning ‖a loss to this world as well as the next‖. So he maintained that the Muslims, however highly educated they became, would never join the Hindu political agitators. As a result the intellectual Muslims were politically roused with a communal religious foundation.

Sir Syed and Shibli (1857 – 1914)

Maulvi Mohammed Shible was however an exception. He was appointed Persian professor in 1883. He was a democrat and anti imperialist. Unlike Sir Syed Shibli
welcomed the congress movement. He came to the conclusion that it was due to Mr. Beek influence that Syed was opposed to the congress. To Shible Beck policy was in no way a correct approach to the Muslim problem in India. He disliked Syed’s stand from the very beginning. He visited a number of Islamic countries and desired the emancipation of all the countries of western Asia, and also India, from the British Yoke. All these differences of opinion with Syed Ahmed led to the final withdraw of Maulan Shibli from the M.A.O. College.

According to W.C. Smith Sir Syed approached Islam from the values of the modern west where as Shibli approached western values from the view point of Islam in 1908 when he became Principal of Natwat ul Ulama it was hoped that he would be able to lead the community right in the light of modern requirements. However he was able to achieve little in the way of modernizing the id