CHAPTER - I

SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN: A PIONEER OF ALIGARH MOVEMENT
Sir Syed Ahmad Khan  
(1817-1898)  
Founder of the Aligarh Movement
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The nineteenth century of the Christian era forms a watershed in the annals of the Muslim world. The contemporary Muslim society, sunk as it was in obscurantism, inertia and frustration, was helpless to struggle out of its medieval grooves and it lacked the elan to respond to the challenges posed by the scientific developments of the West. A number of Muslim savants and reformers like Midhat Pasha and Fu’ad Pasha in Turkey, Hujjat-ul-Islam Shaikh Hadi Najmabadi in Iran, Mustafa Kamil in Egypt, Khairuddin Pasha in Tunis, Amir Abdul Qadir in Algeria, the followers of Maulana Abdul Wahhab in Nejd, Imam Muhammad bin Sanusi in Tripoli, Syed Jamaluddin Afghanistan, Mufti Alamjan in Russia and Sayyid Ahmad Khan in India – launched movements for the moral and intellectual rejuvenation of Muslim society. Their efforts ultimately crystallized into three distinct reactions to the situation. Some thought that the only panacea to these ills lay in a hark-back to the old values of religion through which alone the socio-political system could be resuscitated in consonance with the traditions of early Islam. Others thought it that the remedy did not lie in religious revival but in total acceptance of the Western values and concepts. There was a third-school of thought which struck a balance between these two extreme approaches and advocated acceptance of Western education and science while jealously guarding their religious and intellectual identity.¹

The center of revolutionary activities of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was Aligarh. The present district of Aligarh (in the state of U.P.) is situated in the middle portion of the Doab, or the land between the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. The Aligarh district is confined between 27°29’ and 28°11’ latitude North and

77° 22' and 78° 39' longitude East.\(^2\) The principal town in the Aligarh district for the last many centuries has been its headquartering. The town of Aligarh is 126 kms south-east of Delhi and 75 kms north of Agra.\(^3\) Aligarh occupies an important place in the modern Indian history and became a significant place of intellectual, social, religious, educational and political center for the regeneration of the Muslim community from where the Aligarh Movement\(^4\) originated after the name of Aligarh town, happened to be the center of all activities of Muslim regeneration during 19\(^{th}\) century.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to understand the condition and factors which made Sir Syed a great social reformer of Muslim community. What were the various factors which shaped the personality of Sir Syed and to what extent Sir Syed was influenced by these factors focused here. An attempt is also made to highlight Sir Syed’s Aligarh movement in broader aspects. In what condition Sir Syed launched his movement for the regeneration of the Muslim community and why he launched his movement?, What were the aims of his movement in 19\(^{th}\) century India, and to what extent his Aligarh movement was different from the other contemporary movements of India are focused here. An attempt is also made to understand Sir Syed’s views on the different issues have been focused in details. Attempt is also made to understand his views about Congress, his discourses on female education, his secular approach in educational and political matters. Whether Sir Syed was a Champion of Hindu-Muslim unity or he worked for only the Muslim community? And to what extent his movement was Muslim centric or purely communal in approach, have been critically discussed after the close examination of his writings, speeches and letters.

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Biographical Sketch of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was born in Delhi on 17 October 1817. He belonged to an aristocratic family of 18th century Delhi which had close relations with Mughal court. Sir Syed’s ancestors, from both sides i.e. maternal and paternal had acquired great prominences in the religious as well as worldly life. His paternal ancestors originally came from Herat (Central-Asia) during the reign of the Mughal emperor, Shahjahan (1628-1657). After their arrival in India up to the reign of Akbar II (1805-1837) they were conferred royal titles. In the reign of Alamgir II (1755-1759) Sir Syed’s grandfather Syed Hadi was awarded the title Jawad ud Doula Jawad Ali Khan, and the rank of Commander of 1,000 foot and 500 horsemen. Syed Mehdi, brother of Sir Syed’s grandfather was awarded the title of Qubbad Ali Khan, made Commander of 1000 foot and 500 horsemen. and was appointed to the post of Qazi and Muhtasib (a quasi-religious, quasi-judicial post). Sir Syed’s maternal grandfather Khawaja Fariduddin was the Prime Minister of Mughal Emperor Akbar II and was awarded the title of Nawab Dabir-ud-Daula Aminul Mulk Khawaja Fareed ud Din Khan Bahadur Mushle Jang . He served Mughal court with dignity and power and earned great respect and titles from Mughal court . He had so profound impact that Sir Syed wrote small treatise on his life and his achievements i.e. Serat-i-Faridiya. Sir Syed’s father Mir Muttaqi had a very close and intimate relations with Akbar II, and the post of Prime Minister was earlier offered to him, but he suggested it to his father in law Khawaja Farid ud Din who served...
the British Government and at that time was in the court of Ava in Burma as a political agent of British Government and by that time had returned from Ava and accepted the post of Prime Minister.\(^7\)

Sir Syed was the youngest of the three children\(^8\) of Syed Muhammad Muttaqi (d. 1838) and Azizunnisa Begum (d. 1857)\(^9\) and his lineage goes back to Hazarat Hussain, the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 36\(^{th}\) generation.\(^10\) At Sir Syed’s birth his father requested Shah Ghulam Ali to name his son. Shah Ghulam Ali named the elder son of Syed Muttaqi as Syed Muhammad and the younger one as Syed Ahmad. Sir Syed was brought up by a lady named Man Bibi, who had been a maid servant in the family of Sir Syed for a long time and Sir Syed loved her very much and when he was five years old she died.\(^11\) Sir Syed received his early and traditional education with the inception of his *Bismillah* ceremony, which was performed by Shah Ghulam Ali, and after it Sir Syed started to read the *Quran*. His family at maternal home arranged a respectable and *Purdah* observing lady to teach Sir Syed the holy scriptures of the *Quran* and elementary Persian. After reading the Quran, he started attending a school also and later Moulvi Hamiduddin taught him. Sir Syed also studied Mathematics from his maternal uncle Zainul Abedin. He also studied medicine with Gulam Haider Khan who was a physician of

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\(^8\) Sir Syed had an elder brother Syed Muhammad Khan, who was *Munsif* at Hatgam in the district of Fatehpur and who died in 1845. Sir Syed also had an elder sister Safiyat un Nisa Begam who died in 1892.

\(^9\) Hali, op.cit., p. 15-18.

\(^10\) The following epitaph is engraved on the stone plate of Sir Syed’s grave showing his lineage from Hazarat Hussain:

1. Muhammad (SAW)
3. Imam Hussain
4. Imam Zainul Abedin
5. Imam Muhammad Baqar
6. Imam Jaffar Sadiq
7. Imam Musa Kazim
8. Imam Ali Muaa Riraj
9. Imam Muhammad Taqi
10. Syed Musa Meer Raqi
11. Syed Ali Abdullah Ahmad
12. Syed Muhammad Araj
13. Syed Muhammad Ahmed
14. Syed Ahmed
15. Syed Musa
16. Syed Ahmed
17. Syed Muhammad
18. Syed Ali
19. Syed Jaffar
20. Syed Muhammad
21. Syed Isa
22. Syed Abul Fateh
23. Syed Ali
24. Syed Yar Hussian
25. Syed Kazimuddin Hussian
26. Syed Jaffar
27. Syed Baqar
28. Syed Musa
29. Syed Sherfuddin Hussian
30. Syed Ibrahim
31. Syed Hafiz Ahmad
32. Syed Aziz
33. Syed Mohammad Dost
34. Syed Burhan
35. Syed Mohammad Imad
36. Syed Mohammad Hadi
37. Syed Mohammad Muttaqi
38. Syed Ahmad

Also see appendix of *Khutbat-e-Ahmadia*, Vol. II.

Hali, op.cit., p. 16.
considerable note. During the age of 18 or 19 Sir Syed got opportunity to meet
the learned men of Delhi particularly the poets of Delhi viz. Sahbai, Ghalib,
and Azurda and even Sir Syed participated in the meetings of the learned
society of Delhi.\textsuperscript{12}

After the death of his father Sir Syed joined the British East India
Company’s service much against the wishes of his family in 1838 A.D. because
whatever his father had been drawing salary from various sources from the
royal court were stopped with the death of his father. only a small amount in
the name of his mother continued to be received, and all sources to his father’s
income were closed. Even some revenue free grants which were for the life
time of his father were also withdrawn. Sir Syed’s maternal uncle Maulvi
Khalilullah Khan who was posted as Sadre Ameen of Delhi who got appointed
Sir Syed in his court as Sareshtadar for minor criminal cases. Later on he was
appointed as Sareshtadar of Session Court by Sir Robert Hamilton, but
considering this work difficult Sir Syed continued to work in the court of Sadre
Ameen. In 1839 Sir Syed became Naib Munshi (deputy reader) to the office of
the Commissioner of Sir Robert Hamilton in Agra and here he learnt the laws
related to the revenue and prepared a manual for the procedure of work in that
office. In December 1841, he was appointed as Munsif at Mainpuri and from
there he was transferred to Fatehpur Sikri in 1842 and same year he came to
Delhi. where he was honoured by the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar
with the hereditary title of Jawad-ud-Doula Arif Jang.\textsuperscript{13}

While he was in the service of British Government he started his literary
career and wrote a booklet, Jam-e-Jam containing a history of forty three kings
from Tuman, the first Mughal ruler of Central Asia down to Bahadur Shah
Zafar II. the last of the Mughal ruler in India. Then he prepared a summary of
the rules and regulations prescribed in the civil courts entitled Intekhabul
Akhwain which was introduced to help the new entrants to the judicial services.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 17-18.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. p. 21, 22.
And the most commendable and scholarly work produced by Sir Syed was *Asar-us-Sanadid*\(^{14}\), which made him known even in the European countries. With this masterly work, Sir Syed was introduced to the European countries and was made a fellow of the *Royal Asiatic Society* and thus Sir Syed became a scholarly person not only in Indian sub-continent but also in European society.\(^{15}\) In 1855 Sir Syed was transferred from Rohtak to Bijnore where he stayed till the outbreak of revolt of 1857 which changed Sir Syed’s life totally. Maulana Hali records the changed life of Sir Syed due to revolt of 1857 as follows:

“After the Revolt I was grieved neither on account of the plunder of my house nor the loss of property that I had suffered. What shocked me was the misery and destruction of the people... When Mr. Shakespeare offered to me a taluka of Jahanabad which originally belonged to a distinguished Syed family which yielded an annual income of more than lac rupees, as a reward for my services, my heart was deeply hurt. I said to myself how I can accept this Jagir when all my people are in a miserable state. I declined to accept it and said that I no longer wish to stay in India. I could never think that the people would be able to retrieve their bygone prestige and status. The condition of the people at that time was extremely deplorable. For some days I was under the spell of grief. Believe me this grief had disheartened me and turned my hair grey. When, I came to Moradabad, a town full of sad memories of the destruction of our aristocracy, my grief increased all the more. But at that time, I thought that it would be extremely unmanly and cowardly on my part to find refuge in some safe corner and leave the people helpless and in distress. No! I should share their distress and strive hard to avert the calamity by lifting up their hearts. I gave up the idea of migrating and chose to work for my people”\(^{16}\).

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\(^{14}\) Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s *Asar us-Sanadid* is a scholarly work written in 1847. It is about the monuments of Delhi written by the pen of a mature author. The English title of the same book was *Asar us-Sanadid Asar oosummeed*, *A History of the Old and New Rules: or Governments, And of old and new buildings in the District of Delhi* and was composed by Syed Ahmad Khan Moonsiff of the First Grade in Delhi and was printed in 1854. The French translation of the *Asar al-Sanadid* (1854) was carried out by J.H. Garcin de Tassy as *‘Description des monuments de Delhi après le texte Hindoustani de Sayyid Ahmad Khan’*. Another edition of the same translation in one volume was published from Paris Imprimerie Imperiale in 1861.

\(^{15}\) The celebrated work of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Asar-us-Sanadid*, also won him the Honorary Membership of the Delhi *Archaeological Society*, established in Delhi for the *Indo-Archaeological Research*.

Thus Sir Syed decided to stay back in India and to work for the betterment of the Muslim society that had reduced to the lowest rank of the Indian society due to victimization of taking part in the revolt of 1857 against the British Government and subsequent treatment meted out by the British government which made them deplorable.

[B] Influences and Impression on the Life of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

There were various factors which motivated intellectuals like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to look into the affairs of his Muslim community. There were certain social conditions which shaped the personality of Sir Syed; the influences of his close relatives and experiences of his youth, his early upbringing, his family relations with the Mughal court and the childhood experiences of Sir Syed, and even the impressions of British officials played an important role in shaping the personality of Sir Syed. A close examination of these aspects may possibly provide a better understanding of the life and activities of Sir Syed, who influenced the history of modern India in a decisive manner.

The dominant factor which had deepest impact on the personality of Sir Syed was his family background. The fact that Sir Syed grew up in a family where members of his family especially his maternal grandfather had very close connections and contacts both with Mughals as well as the British officials. His maternal grandfather had held diplomatic and administrative assignments under the East India Company before taking up the post of Prime Minister at Mughal Court. He had developed very close relation with British officers like General Martin, Gore Ouslley and especially with General David

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89. He was the Prime Minister in the court of Mughal Emperor Akbar Shah II (1805-1837).
Ochterlony who used to visit him often. The visit of David Ochterlony to his grandfather might have possibly given that younger Sir Syed an opportunity to acquaint and perhaps appreciate the British culture from a close angle, his friendly interaction with his grandfather should have left an everlasting impression of goodwill towards the British on the mind of young Sir Syed who was of 5 or 6 years old, and this would have played an important role in shaping his non-prejudicial attitude towards the British and association of his grandfather with the British officials, which might have served as a model to Sir Syed and encouraged him to form a loyal relationships with them, which he did at a later stage.

The influence and impression of his maternal grandfather was quite natural as Sir Syed spent his childhood with him, on the other hand Sir Syed’s grandfather being a statesman and a distinguished scholar of Mathematics and Astronomy showed more interest and concern in bringing up Sir Syed as a disciplined but dignified man. Not only did Sir Syed learnt about manners and etiquettes from his grandfather but he also got an opportunity of improving

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20. He was the Resident of Delhi in (1803-1806).
21. Sir Syed had recorded that an elegant armchair upholstered in red velvet for the exclusive use of General was specially kept in his grandfather’s residence. The fact that special chair was kept for the Resident, when Khawaja Farid, the Prime Minister rested on carpet shows not only the esteem with which he treated the Resident but also leads us to believe that the Resident was a regular visitor. Sir Syed Ahmad, Serat-i-Faridiya, p. 322.
22. We get the idea of an informal relationship of General Ochterlony with the family of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Sir Syed’s observation of English dress and manners. To quote Sir Syed: One day when General Ochterlony had come, the present author happened to go there for some reason but seeing the General started to leave, but the General called him back and said something. Then the author asked the General who was in full uniform; “Why have you got feather’s on your hat and a double row of buttons on your coat?”. The General was much amused by this question and smiled without saying anything. See for details. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Serat-e-Faridiya, p. 322.
23. Sir Syed’s maternal grandfather’s influence was so profound on him that he wrote a monograph (Serat-e-Faridiya) about him in 1896. Sir Syed’s biographer believes that he was considerably influenced by his grandfather. See A.H. Hali, op.cit., p. 9.
24. Sir Syed’s maternal grandfather wrote many books, ‘Tuhfa-i-Ni-Maniya’ which deals with astronomy was famous. Most of books were lost in 1857 rebellion. See, A.H. Hali, op.cit., p. 6.
25. Sir Syed has given a number of instances where he learnt various manners to be observed at the dining table and on other occasions at home. See, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Serat-e-Faridiya, pp.325-26.
his knowledge regarding various subjects by reading his books collected by the old man who was a voracious reader.\(^\text{26}\)

Mir Muttaqi, Sir Syed’s father also had his share in shaping the personality of Sir Syed. He was a prototype of 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century upper class Muslim who took pride in tracing his genealogy to the Prophet Muhammad\(^\text{27}\) and pleasant in preaching and practicing the Sufism as we get details about the mystical heritage of Sir Syed through the Serat-i-Faridiya by Sir Syed.\(^\text{28}\) Two of Sir Syed’s maternal grandfathers were mystics as information contained in Serat-i-Faridiya. His father also connected with the family of the Naqshbandi Mujaddadi saint Khawaja Mir Dard on his mother side. Sir Syed’s father as well as his mother was disciples of Khawaja Najib ud Din (d. 1843) who was a Rasulshahi faqir at an early age and was popularly known as Mabidullah (the adored of God). Rasulshahi was a new branch of Suhrawardi order comprising the followers of Rasulshahi, the ecstatic Sufis. Another uncle of Azizunnisa, Khawja Alauddin (d. 1855) was an adherent of Mujaddadi for whom Sir Syed wrote: “though he was married and had a family, he spent his whole life in gosha nashini (seclusion) in remembering God”.\(^\text{29}\) The mystic relation of his family with the Naqshbandi sufi order of the time might have had its influences on shaping the religious outlook of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.

Sir Syed spent most of his time at his maternal grandfather’s home and remained there with the other maternal uncles, aunts and with his mother while his father passed his time on hobbies like kite flying, archery and swimming.\(^\text{30}\)

\(^{\text{26}}\) Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Serat-e-Faridiya, pp. 324.

\(^{\text{27}}\) His leniagc can be traced back through 36 generations to the Holy Prophet. His ancestors originally belonged to Herat. They migrated to India during the reign of Akbar (1556 to 1605) and joined Mughal Services. See A.H. Hali, op.cit., p. 1.

\(^{\text{28}}\) He was a disciple of the famous sufi saint of Naqshbandi order. Shah Ghulam Ali (1743-1822). See A.H. Hali, p. 3.

\(^{\text{29}}\) Gulfishan Khan, Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s Representations of Sufi Life of Shahjahanabad (Delhi): Asar us Sanadid, Indian Historical Review, ICHR, 2009, p. 88 (Hereafter Gulfishan Khan, Sufi Life of Shahjahanabad).

\(^{\text{30}}\) Mir Muttaqi had distinguished himself as an expert in archery and used to train the children of Mughals in swimming. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Serat-e-Faridiya, op.cit., p. 329.
Despite his close acquaintance with the Mughal emperor\(^{31}\) and his
disinclination to take up the post of Prime Minister\(^{32}\), he preferred to remain
aloof from power. Sir Syed’s father left little impression on his youngest son\(^{33}\).
because he spent most of his time in the company of Sufi saints. In short we
can say the paternal influences provided Sir Syed with an all important social
link and Sir Syed being a Syed (belonging to the Prophet’s linage) that
provides status in Muslim society and his personal access to the royal court, as
being the son of the Emperor’s close friend and above all, his spiritual
conditioning as the son of an intensely religious father with the Sufi bent of
mind\(^{34}\), all had different impressions on Sir Syed’s life. Sir Syed got the
religious atmosphere from his father and mother side and on the other hand
learnt the etiquettes and manners from his grandfather, which made Sir Syed an
aristocratic in nature and who imbibed the culture and tradition of the royal
court.

But the most lasting impact on Sir Syed was his mother Azizunnisa
Begum, as Sir Syed himself testifies about his mother, as an embodiment of
virtues of piety (taqwa), generosity, forgiveness, self-denial and complete trust
in God (takkawal), human virtues and hallmark of mysticism.\(^{35}\)

Sir Syed was guided on many occasions by his mother for example once
Sir Syed when gave his mother costly medicine for her cure of sickness, but his
mother offered it to a poor woman who was suffering from the same disease
and both of them cured and recovered from the diseases, it was lesson of being
kindness to other which she gave to Sir Syed. And on one occasion when Sir

\(^{31}\) He had known Akbar II, the emperor from his childhood and he had free access to the private
apartment and permission to sit in his presence when the other nobles kept standing. The
emperor used to address him as “brother Muttaqi”. For details, see Ibid, p. 319.
\(^{32}\) He suggested the post of Prime Minister to the emperor for his father in law, as stating his
inability to take up the post for himself. Ibid., p. 319.
\(^{33}\) As Sir Syed had devoted more pages to his grandfather and mother than to his father in Sirat-i-Faridiva which goes to prove that he was impressed less by his father.
\(^{34}\) S.Y. Shah, Higher Education and Politics in Colonial India: A Study of Aligarh Muslim
Shah)
\(^{35}\) Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Maqwalat-i-Sir Syed, Ed. By Muhammad Ismail Panipati, 16 vols,
Syed got an opportunity to take revenge upon an ungrateful but wicked friend, his mother persuaded him to forgive the enemy, which he obeyed. Yet at another occasion when Sir Syed was eleven years old, he slapped an old servant of his family and when his mother came to know that, she became unhappy and asked him to leave the house. However, he was permitted to enter the house only after apologizing to the old servant. Also being the youngest son of his father, Sir Syed received special attention and affection from his mother which to some extent played an important part in shaping his personality. Sir Syed describes his mother in Serat-i-Faridya as follows:

"Aizunnisa Begum was a lady of great ability and intelligence, of a naturally elevated cast of mind. She had read the Quran and some elementary Persian books... I myself had some lessons on the Gulistan from her, and recited my lesson on many of the elementary Persian books to him... She used to keep by her a scourage consisting of three thongs of plated thread and a wooden handle: to chastise me with: but although she must surely have got angry with me on many occasions; I was never beaten with those rope thongs."

In this way Sir Syed had deep impact of his mother’s tender caring and strict disciplinarian attitude which made Sir Syed a more disciplined person in life and with this impression of her mother on Sir Syed his personality was shaped in different ways. The impression of his mother also played a significant role in making Sir Syed great social reformers of Modern India.

(C) Socio-Religious Reforms Movements and Its Impact on Sir Syed

In making Sir Syed a foremost reformer of the Muslims of North India, the influences of his contemporaries involved in similar works in other regions and religions cannot be ignored. The correspondence between Sir Syed and Nawab Abdul Latif of Calcutta (1823-96) and the visit of the Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to
Calcutta, testifies that Sir Syed was familiar or aware of the similar developments in the other parts of India.\(^{38}\)

The fact that Sir Syed established the *Scientific Society* at Ghazipur in January 1864, after his visit to Calcutta in October 1863, shows the possibility that Sir Syed was influenced by the developments of Calcutta\(^{39}\) where Abdul Latif had already started his reform movement for the Muslim community and had established the Literary Society of Calcutta in 1863 which might have prompted Sir Syed to establish some kind of society at Ghazipur and the same was established in the form of *Scientific Society* in 1864. On the other hand Sir Syed also had close relations with other social reformer of India.

The biographic details of Swami Dayanand Sarswati (1824-1883) a prominent social reformer of North India show that Sir Syed had very friendly relations with Swamiji and both used to visit each other and discuss various subjects.\(^{10}\) In this way Sir Syed not only had relation with Muslim reformers but also with the non-Muslim social reformer of India and they had influenced Sir Syed to some extent.

Shan Muhammad who made an in-depth study of biography of Sir Syed considers that he might, have considerably swayed by the modernist reform movement of Turkey known as *Tanzimat Movement*.\(^{11}\) Besides these social reformers of India and other countries Sir Syed also influenced by the religious

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\(^{39}\) It seems that Sir Syed had close relations with Nawab Abdul Latif who had already established his Mohammadan Literary Society in Calcutta and had started his social reform activities much earlier than Sir Syed. See for details. S.Y. Shah, p. 101.

\(^{10}\) For example, one day Sir Syed told Swamiji that whatever Swamiji said was appropriate and reasonable but he could not understand how a small *havan* could purify the air. Swamiji asked him how much *dal* was cooked every day in his kitchen. Six or seven *seers* was the reply. “How much asafoetida do you put in it?” “One masha” was the reply. Then Swamiji said, “A such small quantity makes the entire *dal* delicious and its fragrance fills the room, so the good things thrown in the *havan* being converted into gases purify air”. See, Har Bilas Sarda, *Life of Dayanand Sarswati* (Ajmer : Bhagvan Swami, 1946), pp. 102, 107-7

teachings of Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824) and Shah Ghulam Ali (1743-1824). They played an important role in shaping the personality of Sir Syed. In making Sir Syed a rationalist, the influences of these two saints had greater impact on Sir Syed. The fact that Sir Syed grew up in a family that had close connections with such saints, should have helped him imbibe their doctrines. Sir Syed’s maternal grandfather had close contacts with Shah Abdul Aziz and other Wahhabis. The observation of his biographer, Maulana Hali mentioned that Sir Syed was influenced by the religious reform movement started by the great mystic Shah Waliullah and his successors. Even Sir Syed wrote many pages in praise of Shah Waliullah in Asar-us-Sanadid and hence Sir Syed has also been called ‘the spiritual heir of Shah Waliullah’. Not only the biographical facts of Sir Syed’s early life but also the character of his early theological writings point to the influence of the above mentioned religious thoughts as being the main influence on his outlook because of the fact that Madrasa-e-Rahimia of Shah Waliullah at Delhi had deep impact on the life of Sir Syed, and had provided conducive atmosphere for the development of rational as well as religious thought of Sir Syed. In the first half of 19th century Madrasa-e-Rahimia was the centre of intellectual activities where both kind of rational and traditional knowledge was imparted. In the later phase of his life Sir Syed had no hesitation in defending the Wahhabis and it has been reported

13. Shah Abdul Aziz fought vehemently against outdated medieval concept and emphasized the need of reinterpreting Islamic thought in the light of the dynamic problems of changing social order. Shah Ghulam Ali took a line, more strict than that of former on superstitious practices such as vows, offerings and amulets.


17. For example, see his works, Kalimat-ul Haq (1849) in which he has attacked the traditional was in which the saints have been worshipped by their followers and Ruh-i-summat dar Radil-i-Bidat (1850), which was about Wahhabi Movement.


19. Sir Syed published a review after the publication of Hunter’s Indian Mussalman, in the form of article which appeared in the leading paper in North India, The Pioneer and Aligarh
that he openly declared himself as a *Wahhabi*.\(^{48}\) In this way Sir Syed was not only guided by Wahhabis ideology but also had considerable impact by the Wahhabis ideas which made Sir Syed a more rational person in his social and religious outlook.

Sir Syed was also influenced by the religious practice of Syed Ahmad Shahid of Raibareli (1796-1836) and Maulana Shah Muhammad Ismail Shahid (1779-1831)\(^{10}\) and the *Mujahideen Movement*\(^{50}\), enacted by the former. Thus Sir Syed was influenced by the socio and religious reform movements started by his predecessors during 19\(^{th}\) century.

**[D] Impact of Intellectual Environment of Delhi on Sir Syed**

The intellectual atmosphere of Delhi, during the first half of the 19\(^{th}\) century was quite conducive for the literary development where Sir Syed produced a number of works because it provided quite conducive atmosphere to Sir Syed for his scholarly pursuits. It awakened the dominant interest of Sir Syed and made him aware of his knowledge. Not only did he read profusely\(^{51}\) but also participated in the various, social, cultural and literary discussions and debates that were organized from time to time. Even Sir Syed wrote on secular subjects as well as on religious subjects. In other words these writings of Sir Syed covered two broad discipline of the Islamic studies known as *Maqulat* i.e. the rational subjects and *Manqulat* the traditional subjects. Among the pre-mutiny


\(^{50}\) The movement had two fold programme: Resurgence of political powers through active struggle and all-out effort to improve the moral tone of Muslim society and revive true religious spirit. It was to a great extent influenced by Wahhabi Movement. For detail see, Muhammad Hedayatullah, Saiyyed Ahmad: A Study of his Religious Reforms Movement of Saiyyed Ahmad of Rai Bareli (Lahore: S.M. Ashraf, 1970).

writings of Sir Syed, the most important place is occupied by *Asar-us-Sanadid* which is a historical and archaeological work of great intellectual vigour and intrinsic interest and thus Sir Syed having these qualities wrote a book on archaeology in which he surveyed the historical monuments and principal buildings and inscription\(^2\) of his beloved city Delhi where he grew up as a boy to a mature thoughtful youth.\(^3\) The other pre-mutiny writings of Sir Syed are primarily of scientific in nature as they belong to the domain of *Maqulat* – the rational subjects. A booklet covering the art of mechanics entitled “*Tashil fi Jarr-e-Saqil*” (Introduction to the Art of Mechanics) which was corrected by his teacher Maulana Nurul Hasan (d. 1868) and was published by the Orphan Press for the Agra School Book Society in 1844. While the other treatise namely the *Tarjuman Fawaed al Afkar fi Amal al farjan* (translation of the Result of thought upon the use of compasses) is concerned with the science of geometry. Both of these treatises are Urdu adaptation of the original Arabic and Persian works of Khawaja Farid (grandfather of Sir Syed). Initially the idea and plan for under translation of these two works was conceived in an occasional discussion with two East India Company officers, Captain George William Hamilton who Sir Syed described as a great man of scholarly disposition and the Reverend John James Moor “a pious and God-fearing person and who was the Secretary of *Agra School Book Society*.\(^4\) Sir Syed also published *Fawaid al Afkar* from his brother Munsif Sayyid Muhammad Khan’s *Sayyed al Akhbar Press* Delhi in 1849, when Sir Syed got transferred from Agra to Delhi as *Munsif* under the auspices of the *Vernacular Translation Society* of Delhi College then the Principal being Dr. Alois Sprenger and latter enjoyed close associations with the Muslim aristocracy of Delhi the other *Maqulat* writings

\(^2\) As Sir Syed dealt in great details not only the life of Delhi in his *Asar us Sanadid*, but he also gave details descriptions of the Delhi’s Monuments as well as the sketches of the Principal buildings of Delhi and its inscriptions in ditto, just to make the buildings and inscription of Delhi for the in perpetuity for the People of the world.

\(^3\) Sir Syed had passed his mature life in Delhi and he had vividly described the social, cultural and intellectual atmosphere of Delhi, in his *Asar al Sanadid*. For details, see Gulfiishan Khan, *Safi Ile of Shahjahanabad*.

\(^4\) Gulfiishan Khan, Saiyyed Ahmad Khan: Some Early Influences in *Contribution of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to Islamic Studies*, ed. by Abdul Ali and Saiyyid Alisan, p. 48.
of Sir Syed one of them was a treatise entitled *Qual-i-matin dar ibtal-i harakat-i-zamin* (form assertion with regard to the falseness of the motion of the earth is also a Purdy scientific in nature.

These writings of Sir Syed reflect the impact of intellectual perception of Sir Syed and his experiences of the intellectual societies of Delhi which were established by East India Company’s rule at Delhi e.g. the Institute of Higher Learning and learned societies of Delhi College being the foremost of such institution and the other learned societies of such as the *Archaeological Society of Delhi* and *Vernacular Society* set up under the auspices of Delhi College for the translation of European works into Urdu.

Besides it was the period which witnessed the growth and development of vernacular journalism in Urdu, introduction of printing presses, lithographs and the spread and dissemination of new ideas and learning as dispersed by those Colleges and Societies, through the medium of vernacular languages and printing presses, as reflected in the vividly intellectual atmosphere of the imperial capital Delhi then popularly known as Shahjahanabad, and who had been termed by Christian missionary C.F. Andrews as the ‘Delhi Renaissance’. In this way by a close examination of the writings of Sir Syed Ahmad before 1857 we can say it marked the deep impact and influences on his mind. It seems that Sir Syed’s interests in European sciences, modern education had greater impact also on his writings as Sir Syed influenced by coming closer and witnessing the growing impact of the colonialism and the western culture and its manifestation, as represented by the East India Company’s rule in North India.

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[E] Impact of Western Society on Sir Syed during his visit to England

On the other hand Sir Syed’s visit to England in 1869 which gave him what Margaret Case calls the “cultural shock” and fully concerned him of the necessity of modernizing Indian society. On his way to England Sir Syed befriended a co-passenger, Miss Marry Carpenter who was an educationist and was a dynamic lady working for female education in India. He was highly impressed and influenced by her views on general education and women’s education in particular.57

During his stay in England he participated in a number of functions and receptions and on various occasions met a galaxy of luminaries’ viz., Lord Stanley of Alderly, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Sir John William Kaye, Sir Bartle Frere, Duke of Argyll (1868-74) Secretary of State, etc., whose attractive manners, refined character and profound knowledge, left a deep impression on his mind.58 After the visit of England Sir Syed was transformed into a great admirer of the English culture. Therefore it may be concluded that Sir Syed’s visit to England and its famous University of Oxford and Cambridge made Sir Syed an observer of the western culture and traditions. His stay of seventeen months with full of zest, ignited his mind to revolutionize the Indian society, particularly the Muslim society through the medium of English language, education and culture. His motto became “educate, educate and educate”.59 “All the socio-political ills of India” he once told his friend Graham: “might be cured by this treatment (education).”60 Therefore the visit of England had great impact on the educational moment of Sir Syed in India.

Therefore, we could say Sir Syed had got many traits and qualities from his family. He received the religious knowledge from the environment of his

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56 He got an opportunity of visiting England when his son Syed Mahmud was awarded a scholarship by Government to study law in London. For a brief account of his travel, see G.F.I. Graham, pp. 116-119. For ther further details of account of Sir Syed Travel to England and its impact on his personality, See Asghar Abbas. Sir Sayyid Ka Safar Nama Musafiran-i-London, Educational Book House, Aligarh, 2009 (Hereafter Asghar Abbas, Safarnama).
57 G.F.I. Graham. Ibid., p. 119.
60 Ibid.
family's association with the Sufi life of Delhi. The rational ideas he got from the Madrasa-e-Rahimia of Shah Waliullah, the intellectual atmosphere he got from the intellectual gatherings of Delhi, the liberal attitude he received from the Liberal Society of England, the Western culture and traditions and the advanced civilization and administration of colonial rule all these had made great impression on Sir Syed's mind.

In this way Sir Syed had a great impact on his life to all these things which made Sir Syed a great educationist and social reformer of Modern India and who worked for the Muslim community during the 19th century.

[F] Revolt of 1857 and its Impact on Sir Syed

Nineteenth century was a period of great turmoil for the Muslims of India. Sir Syed was posted at Bijnaur district (U.P.) state when the great revolt of 1857 broke out on 10th May 1857 from Meerut (U.P.). And within two days it reached also at Bijnaur where Sir Syed successfully saved the Europeans. It was due to the loyalty of Sir Syed to the British that he safely escaped the Europeans. Because Sir Syed considered it his first duty to protect the lives of European officers and their families stationed at Bijnaur as being in the service of the British government during the course of revolt of 1857. He spent every anxious moment at their side on day and night guarding them and remained prompt and alert in his loyalty to the Government.61

After the suppression of the revolt, Britishers had taken Muslims as the sole originators of the rebellion and fell harshly on them. With the capture of Delhi a general massacre followed and thousands of Muslims were hanged. They were burnt alive and a reign of terror began which had no parallel in history.62

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The slaughter of the innocents, helpless women and children was revenged in a manner that no one ever anticipated. Sir Syed’s cousin Hashim Ali Khan had been murdered by the troops and his mother and aunt had to go to Hazarat Nizamuddin Auliya’s tomb (1233-1324) with great difficulty for their safety and security when her house was ransacked. Sir Syed was shocked and traumatized because of the plight of the people which he witnessed during the revolt of 1857. Sir Syed saw this tragedy with his own eyes and it seared his soul. His hair turned grey and in moments of melancholic despondency he even thought of leaving the country and settling elsewhere. When Sir Syed returned to Delhi he came to know that his house had already been ransacked and his mother also suffered due to rebellion; even for more than three days his mother Azizunnisa, aunt who was a blind sister of Azizunisa and an old woman called Zaiban, they had nothing to eat and no water was available for two days and thus Sir Syed found them in great difficulty.

The revolt of 1857 also resulted in a major destruction of the architecture of the historic city of Delhi and it witnessed its destruction alongside the brutal killing, total financial ruin and forced expulsion of the residents of Delhi. There was much destruction of the old city of Delhi that lay around the last court of the last Mughal Emperor, the Red Fort of Emperor Shahjahan. The population of the city and suburbs fell drastically. Religious places were special targets because in the British perception, these served as the main Jihadi centres during the uprising. Muslim religious elites were considered symbols of resistance and therefore they were the objects of retribution. Of the two famous mosques of the city, the Fatehpur Mosque was originally bought by Chunna Mal, while the other the beautiful Zinatul mosque was bought by a Hindu banker. Masjid-e-Akbarabadi, the elite mosque in the

2 See A.H. Hali, op.cit.
66 Ibid.
hierarchy of the Delhi mosques, where the sons of renowned Shah Waliullah gave their lessons was razed to the ground. And when peace returned to Delhi, the Muslims were ousted from all responsible positions. The nobles officials once in power, were no more in their respective offices. Every avenue of life was closed to them and if even a man stood in need of a career, he was a Musalman.

The rebellion of 1857 as described by the famous poet of 19th century Delhi Mirza Assadullah Khan Ghalib as “vast human tragedy” as he was also an eye witness to the rebellion.

Under these circumstances Sir Syed Ahmad Khan devised various ways to improve the condition of his co-religionists. In such a situation Sir Syed had twin tasks. He had to prove that the Muslims were loyal to the British government because when peace returned to Delhi and when Muslims were allowed to return to their homes, they were required to give proof of their loyalty before gaining entrance to Delhi. On the other hand Sir Syed had to prove that Muslims were loyal to British and at the same time to bridge the religious antagonism between Islam and Christianity. With this aims in mind, Sir Syed wrote two monographs viz. Asbab-e-Baghawat-i-Hind (The Causes of the Indian Revolt) in which Sir Syed identified the various causes that led to the rebellion and showing that it was not a popular rebellion as he traces the

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Footnotes:

69. William Dalrymple, The Last Mughal, The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 454-64.


73. Sir Syed traces the outbreak of rebellion of 1857 to a variety of causes especially to the despotic rule of British, Missionaries activities, non-inclusion of Indians in making laws, etc. See, Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind (the causes of the Indian Revolt) was privately printed by Sir Syed in 1858 and translated into English in 1873 by his two European friends Auckland and Graham. For the English translation see Hafeez Malik and Morris Dembo, op.cit., Appendix A, pp. 113-56.
outbreak of rebellion to a variety of causes especially to the despotic rule of British, missionary activities, non-inclusion of Indians in making laws etc.\textsuperscript{74}

On the other hand Sir Syed wrote other monograph in the form of \textit{Loyal Mohammadans of India} in which he highlighted the eminent services rendered by Muslims during the rebellion and their loyalty towards the British; and at the same time showed the similarities between Christianity and Islam and the cordial relations existed among the followers of these religion from time immemorial.\textsuperscript{75} In this way Sir Syed wanted to create rapprochement with British government by his scholarly writings and for the same he tried to field the gap between Islam and Christianity. With these aims in mind Sir Syed worked for the betterment of the Muslim community after the great revolt of 1857.

\textbf{[G] Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh Movement}

The movement for the regeneration of Muslim community was launched by Sir Syed Ahmad with the sole aim in mind to ameliorate condition of Muslim community after the revolt of 1857. It was through the modern education which Sir Syed thought that it would cure the all ills of Muslim community and soon commenced his educational activities and to provide modern education to the Muslim community after the revolt of 1857, for this he started his Aligarh Movement in 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

\textbf{(1) Muslim Backwardness}

Sir Syed's Aligarh Movement was primarily launched to eradicate the educational backwardness of Muslims. It was considered necessary because they were not prepared to adopt the modern educational system of British. Why the Muslims remained aloof from the educational system of colonial government? In this respect detailed enquiry was made to know the progress

\textsuperscript{74} See Hafiz Malik and Morris Dembo, op.cit., pp. 113-56.

\textsuperscript{75} Sir Syed Ahmad, \textit{“Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan”}, ed. Shan Mohammad, Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1972, p.34-58 (Hereafter, \textit{Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed}).
and problems of the Muslim education. Lord Mayo during the period of 1870 required from the all British Presidencies the status of education of Muslims in comparison to Hindus. The following tables based on the Report of British Government on the problem and progress of Muslim education in British India in 1870 are as follows which depict the progress of Muslim education in British India during 1865-66 to 1870-71.

**Table -1**

**Number of Colleges and Students in British India during 1865-66**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Type of Institution</th>
<th>No. of Institution</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1021</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.W. Provinces</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1122</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GRAND TOTAL.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1426</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1578</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# TABLE-2

Total Number of Students In selected Provinces during 1870-71

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>Hindu Students</th>
<th>Muslim Students</th>
<th>Percentage of Muslim Students Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Hindu Students Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>93,830</td>
<td>4,285</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>149,178</td>
<td>15,492</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.W. Provinces</td>
<td>121,914</td>
<td>24,266</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>47,267</td>
<td>31,330</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oudh</td>
<td>28,452</td>
<td>9,127</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>440,641</td>
<td>84,500</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table -3

**Comparative Performance of Muslim Students in Various Examinations held during 1870-71**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bengal Province</th>
<th>N.W. Provinces</th>
<th>Oudh Province</th>
<th>Punjab Province</th>
<th>Central Province</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>1323</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1566</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Based on the “Report of Syndicate of the Calcutta University on the business year 1870-71 in Educational Records III, pp. 497-501.

**Note:**

(i) In Matriculation 6 Muslims passed from Madras University, while 258 Brahmins, 103 Hindus, 30 Christians passed. In F.A. and B.A. there were no Muslims. (Source: “Report of the Syndicate of Madras University” Ibid. pp. 505-7.

(ii) In Bombay University of 904 appeared at Entrance Examination only 2 Muslims passed. In F.A. and B.A. there were no Muslims. (Source: “Report of the Syndicate of Bombay University”. Ibid. p. 509)  

A = Appeared, P = Passed, E.E. = Entrance Examination
Mayo's enquiry into the progress and problem of the education of the Muslims revealed their unequal backwardness in different regions and at various levels. Then over all educational position in British India was not at all dismal for in 1870-71, while the percentage of the Muslim population was 22.8 that of Muslim students in various educational institutions was 18.7 (See Table No. 1). While the Muslims were very backward in Bombay, Madras and Punjab it was not so in N.W. Provinces. Muslim constituted one seventh of the whole body of students though according to Census they were less than that and they were making rapid progress in education. In Oudh also Muslims were very advanced in education. (See Table No. 1).

But considering higher education alone, the position of the Muslims of British India as a whole was very pathetic. Of the 1,578 students enrolled in 26 colleges of British India in 1865-66 only 57 (3.5%) were Muslims. With the expansion of higher education in British India during 1865-1870 the number of Muslim students also increased. At the college level in N.W. Provinces, the position of Muslims in 1870-71 was slightly above (14%) than their percentage of population (13.5%). (See Table No. 2).

The Annual Report of the Syndicate of the Calcutta University for the year 1870-71 shows that out of 1894 candidates who had appeared at the entrance examination from all over India there were only 110 Muslims (5.6%) and of the 64 passed, there were 15 from N.W. provinces, 39 from Bengal, 5 from Punjab, 2 and 3 from Central Provinces and Oudh. Out of the 12 Muslims who passed four were from Bengal, 2 from N.W. Provinces, 1 each from Punjab and Oudh. Still the dismal was their position at B.A. level there were only 2 Muslims from Bengal, out of the 212 candidates appeared at B.A. Both of them failed (see Table 3). In short, during the period of 1858-70, the three universities of British India, produced 668 B.A’s of whom 22 (3.2%) were Muslims. Though there were 22 B.A’s from N.W. Provinces alone, there was not a single Muslim. The general literacy among the Muslims of N.W. Provinces in 1881 was very low – 2.72% (See Table No. 3). From the above
analysis it can be concluded that the position and performance of the Muslim students declined as the level of their education went up and Muslims remain a backward community in receiving the higher and modern education.

Nawab Abdul Latif Khan stressed the cultural aspects and traced Muslim backwardness to their detachment to Urdu and the neglect of provincial (Bengali) language and English and "little willingness" to shed old and traditional ideas on education. Badruddin Tayabji traced Muslims backwardness in education to them "feelings of pride for the glories of their past Empire and the consequent inability to reconcile themselves to the present circumstances and appreciate modern education. Besides he attributed their backwardness to their poverty and their "vague feeling" that European Co-education was antagonistic to the traditions of Islam. But to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who considered that the want of sufficient encouragement to oriental language and literature and the attempt of the Government to make one kind of education to suit all classes of the people made it difficult for the Muslims to benefit by the education provided at the public institutions. On the other hand Sir Syed was of the opinion that Muslims considered English education as "mean and degraded" in comparison to their learning; and they called English institution as "places of ignorance or brutality."

Therefore Muslim backwardness was one of the factors which Sir Syed thought to eradicate through modern education and for this very reason also he launched his educational movement to ameliorate the condition of Muslims in India.
[2] Modern Education

Sir Syed had impression of modern education to bring a change in the thought process of Muslims. To Sir Syed education meant western education. His appreciation of western education and his aversion toward indigenous education do not seem to have been born out of any pre conceived notion or prejudices. Like his predecessors, Raja Rammohan Roy, he grasped the suitability and significance of western education and realized the futility and unsuitability of indigenous education for the present age. Hence he rightly preferred western education to indigenous education, since his philosophy was to “confirm with age”.

Sir Syed had some objections towards indigenous education in because of its defective system of imparting education as he observed that:

“The old Muhammadan books and their tone of writing do not teach the followers of Islam independence of thought, perspicuity and simplicity, nor do they enable them to arrive at the truth of matters in general: on the contrary they deceive and teach men to veil their meaning to embellish their speech with the fine words, to describe things wrongly and in irrelevant terms to flatter with false praise, to live in a state of bondage, to puff themselves up with pride, haughtiness, vanity, self-conceit to hate their fellow creatures, to have no sympathy with them, to speak with exaggeration, to leave the history of the past uncertain and to relate facts like tales and stories.”

Sir Syed observed painfully that despite these defects such books and learning prevailed among the Muhammadan only due to the preferences of Muslim rulers; and as soon as their reign clinched such learning also became defunct and it could not stand the test of time. Its utility led to its failure.

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81 At times, he used the term modern, or English or higher education interchangeably.
82 Sir Syed’s speech at the laying out of the foundation stone of Victoria College Ghazipur. 1964, in Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad, p. 115.
84 Aligarh Documents, ibid., p. 362.
Hence he was against the continuance of indigenous institutions like the Maktab and Madrasa which were the centers of such learning.\footnote{See Sir Syed's letter to Mohsinul Mulk. February 11, 1870. in Khutat-e-Sir Syed, ed. By Saayyid Ross Masood. Badaun: Nizami Press, 1931, pp. 35-38.}

During his visit to a village school when he found the school actually occupied by the cattle of the locality, instead of children, he began to doubt the effectiveness of the system of education imparted in the government schools. In one of his earliest pamphlets on education – Review of Education (1859) – not only did he criticize vernacular schools, but also condemned the policy of imparting education through the medium of vernacular and pleaded for the introduction of English education.

He thought that progress and prosperity lies in the acquisition of English education without which the nation would remain backward. In his speech at Calcutta in 1863, he said:

"The reason why we are so backward is that whilst we were learned in and have benefited by the philosophy, science and arts of the antiquity, we are almost entirely ignorant of those of modern times".\footnote{Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, "Patriotism and the Necessity of Promoting Knowledge in India" English translation of a lecture delivered in Persian at the Mohammadan Literary Society of Calcutta on 6th October, 1863 in Nawab Abdul Latif: His Writings and Related Documents, Dacca, Samundra Prokashan, 1968, ed by Enamul Haque (Hereafter Lateef Documents).}

All through four decades (from 1857-1898), notwithstanding, the non-cooperative and yet critical attitude of a section of Muslim community, Sir Syed pursued and propagated the idea and importance of modern education with courage and confidence. "All the socio-political ills of India", he once told his friend Graham, "might be cured by this treatment (education). Cure the root and tree will flourish".\footnote{G.F.I. Graham, op.cit., p. 7.} Sir Syed believed that as long as the people were not educated according to the needs of the time, they remained poor and ignorant.\footnote{Akhitar ul Wasey, Education of Indian Muslims: A Study of the All India Muslim Educational Conference, Delhi, Press Asia International, 1977, p. 7. (Hereafter, A. Wasey).}

Hence, Sir Syed put his energies to work for the propagation of modern
education towards the Muslim community to improve their condition during 19th century.

[3] Education for Masses or Education for Elites

Sir Syed is being criticized by scholars for his approach to education for elites\(^89\) and the MA.O. College which he established for the education of Sharif families of Muslim community\(^90\), represents elites society of Muslims, and therefore they believed that Sir Syed as a believer of blue blood who never aimed at leveling down the social classes among the Muslims. Though Sir Syed did not give top priority to the educational requirement of the poor nor did he neglect their education. ‘Unless the education of the masses is pushed on as it is here.’ Syed Ahmed wrote from London, ‘it is impossible for a native to become civilized and honored; Indeed, he regarded \(I'lm\) as the precondition for worldly and other-worldly salvation—knowledge not only in the customary sense, but as a combination of religious texts and the sciences in their time\(^91\). On the other hand it seems that Sir Syed was influenced more by Macaulay’s ‘downward filtration theory’ than by Benthameto’s ‘Utilitarian Philosophy’ which had stressed more on higher education and the education of the high classes.\(^92\) Sir Syed being a product of Mughal aristocracy and having witnessed the decline and disintegration of the Mughal aristocracy class was bothered about their regeneration.\(^93\) He had pinned the hopes of bringing up a group of political leaders from the Muslims who in due course would regain and restore

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\(^{92}\) It may be noted that he was presented with a full set of MaCaulay’s work in 1866 as a recognition to his work connected with Scientific Society. See Letter from Secretary to the Government of N W. Provinces, to Sir Syed, n.d., in *Aligarh Documents*, vol. III, pp. 1093-94.

\(^{93}\) In many of his writings Sir Syed spoke about the education of the children of the noble and well to do Muslims e.g. See *The Report of the Select Committee for the Better Diffusion and Advancement of Learning among the Muhammadan of India*, English Translation, Banaras : Medical Hall Press, 1873, reprinted in Aligarh Documents, vol. II, pp. 58-60 (Hereafter *Sir Syed Report*).
the lost status of the community and thus he believed it to be "the easiest and better way to educate the whole community" through their political leaders.\(^{94}\)

In the second half of the 19\(^{th}\) century India, there still existed the class differences and where education had not succeeded in breaking those barriers. Sir Syed was afraid that irrespective of the education and qualification, aristocracy would never tolerate a man of low caste being associated with the process of legislation which affected their lives and property.\(^{95}\) Besides he thought that Viceroy also would prefer a person only of good breeding as his colleague to sit in his council and hence he gave more importance to the education of the upper class.\(^{96}\) Though Sir Syed gave top priority to the educational needs of the elite of the society, but he did not want to restrict the advantages of education only to the elite of the society but he was quite conscious of the significance of the education of the masses and its role in liquidating illiteracy.\(^{97}\) He believed that the best way to spread mass education would be through the education of a few scholars, who would in turn educate their fellowmen in the proper manner.\(^{98}\) His strategy for the mass education seems to have been born out of his dissatisfaction with the prevalent system of education which produced only pseudo-scholars and so he did not like to advocate it. Moreover the College which Sir Syed established for the education of our country though at that time Muslim aristocracy and affluent class generally received education and children of common people had no access and for it Sir Syed was criticized but this criticism does not hold much water and certainly the college could not meet the needs of the common people: but it was not that Sir Syed altogether was blind to the institution and training of the Muslim masses, their social reform, their economic betterment and their well-being. It was with a view to meet these needs that Sir Syed established the

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\(^{94}\) Aligarh Institute Gazette, October 10, 1879 (Hereafter AIG).

\(^{95}\) Sir Syed's speech at Lucknow on 28 December, 1887, in Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed, p. 204-205.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., p. 208.

\(^{97}\) Sir Syed's letter to Scientific Society, October 15, 1869, 'Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed' p. 231.

\(^{98}\) AIG, November 8, 1872. Also see Maqalat-i-Sir Syed, vol. XII, p. 277.
Mohammedan Educational Conference in 1886, so that the passion behind establishment of the College may fructify here in the form of a movement.\textsuperscript{99} Besides, he might have been confronted with the problem of raising resources for a number of schools and hence thought of training a few at one institution—which would be much cheaper and effective means to diffuse education amongst the masses. However, mass education though significant was only of secondary concern to him.


Sir Syed’s idea to establish his dream of Oxford at Aligarh included the idea of residential system of institution. Sir Syed also laid much emphasis on the residential accommodation of the students which would comprised of hostels for which he believed to be an essential for the development of character, corporate life and moral values for the students. He believed that residential system would instill discipline, infuse a spirit of brotherhood and develop a feeling of Muslim solidarity and make them class conscious.\textsuperscript{100} Sir Syed also observed that to provide a special environment to the children of affluent class, to form their study in a residential place where the sons of wealthier people could be provided, play-ground, mosque, library, common reading room, dining hall and common uniform, and all these facilities would enable them to study in a healthy place in the form of residential institution because at home they would not get the same and also would spoil their mental development.\textsuperscript{101} Therefore Sir Syed propagated and later on established an institution in the form of M.A.O. College in 1877, because he thought that such arrangement would facilitate students coming from higher classes and various parts of India and would provide a conducive atmosphere for the development of their personality and he thought that if such residential system of education was preferred in Oxford and Cambridge such system could be provided in India also.

\textsuperscript{99} A. Wasey, op.cit., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{100} Sir Syed Report, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., pp. 59-60.
[5] Emphasis on Character Building

The educational philosophy and programme which Sir Syed evolved to take his community from traditionalism to modernism was a unique combination of Westernism and Islamic values. As Sir Syed belonged to an aristocratic family which had the tradition of Islamic faith and learning and a very religious background and on the same way he was educated in traditional manner. Islamic ideology became part and parcel of his life, yet by serving the British and being exposed to Western culture, he had also developed immense appreciation for the Western values and appreciated their culture. But did he neither dare to break fully from the Islamic heritage nor whole heartedly embraced the Western culture despite, he knew that it would be inevitable for the progress in modern times.

To him, modern education and Islamic ideology were the two sides of the same coin. In Sir Syed’s scheme of education religious teaching had an important place. Muslim students, Sunni or Shia, attended obligatory classes in their respective religious beliefs unto a certain standard. A special series of books for religious teaching for all classes was prepared under the auspices of the committee for religious instruction. The first period of every working day was devoted to religious teaching. This included Sundays when for its European staff the college was closed. On Friday there was sermon after the mid prayer. Attendance was registered at these daily programmes. These arrangements were imposed to make the students form a religious habit of prayers and primary ritual which Sir Syed regarded as a distinct feature of the Muslim.

More stress however was laid on principals of morals, than the details of rituals. These principals were outlined as follows by the Trustee:

“In our religious instruction all each our students that the essential of religious are to help those related to us; to show compassion and kindness to all the creatures of God; to cultivate and to curb anger

Ibid., p. 10.
and pride. Thus we teach what our duties towards God; the duties of the one Muhammadan towards another, and of a man to this neighbor, whatever his religion, the duties of children towards their father and of the young towards the old; the right behavior towards the other nation with whom we live. We teach them the excellence of truth, and its various kinds - truth of the heart, truth of the tongue, truth of our intentions, truth to our proneness and the truth in our actions. The books of religious instruction... are full of instruction on these subjects.\(^{103}\)

Sir Syed had aimed at was to make religion a living force in the formation of students character. He had studied at Oxford 'the methods adopted to give religious instruction of Christianity to the students of Oxford. So Sir Syed substituted the mosques for the Chapel and the Quran to the Bible and creating office of Dean in the college to be filled by a pious Muslim, hoped similarity to pray side by side in their own way but in the same mosque to lessen their differences. Conscious efforts were also made to wear the students from Eastern manners, as all boarders were to dress decently. If they chose the Eastern dress or style, the uniform was to consist of coat, trouser and fez. "Ill shaped laced or dyed clothes or dresses made of them and transparent materials were banned.\(^{104}\) No students were allowed to have long hair or curly hair, to use dentifrice to blacken the teeth and to use henna to redden the palms or to wear more than one ring was forbidden.\(^{105}\) All students were asked to keep white and clean dress. All boarders were taught Western manners and etiquettes. The boarders had to take their food at table in the College dining hall.\(^{106}\) The students had to play cricket and foot-ball under the supervision of English mentor. In 1878 when the First Cricket Eleven was formed in India in the M.A.O. College,\(^{107}\) In the boarding houses, there were many societies formed on the model of Cambridge University to develop the mental faculties of the students. In this way the scheme of education prepared by Sir Syed had the aim of providing teaching to the students in moral upbringing, European

\(^{103}\) Proceeding of the Government of North-West Provinces, [Education Department], June 1873, p. 49.


\(^{105}\) Ibid., p. 233, from ibid., p. 233.

\(^{106}\) Ibid., p. 233.

\(^{107}\) Ibid., p. 234.
Sir Syed Ahmad Khan shown in a cartoon by Awadh Punch (Urdu Akhbar) as snake charmer. The snakes are marked as subscription for his M.A.O. College.
manners, and to develop their character with the religious values; so they had to imbibe all these traits and particularly the emphasis was focused on moral and character building in students of MAO college, so that they could move in the modern world with the spirit of Islam also with knowledge of modern education and western sciences to face the new world.


Sir Syed was successful in giving the practical shape to many of his thought on education which paved the way for the emergence of a number of educational organisations and institutions e.g. he established Scientific Society in 1864 at Ghazipur and Muhammadan Educational Conference in 1886 even he established elementary school (Maktab) in 1859 in Moradabad and a High School at Ghazipur in 1864 but most important was the establishment of M.A.O. College in 1877 at Aligarh which was his dream of Oxford, later on which became Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. When did the idea of M.A.O. College come into his mind, and why did he establish such a College? Focusing on these aspects will give the aims and objectives of Sir Syed Educational Mission and the purpose behind the establishment of M.A.O. College.

It has been suggested that Sir Syed was mainly inspired by the anonymous letter written to him in 1867 by an English man regarding the necessity of establishment a separate institution for imparting English education to the Indians. But the fact that Sir Syed was too conscious of its need and importance after the revolt of 1857, as it is evident from his monograph on education in entitled “Review of Instruction” and his subsequent speeches on various occasion, especially at the Muhammadan Literary Society at Calcutta in 1863 and his establishment of a Maktab in 1859 and a High School at Ghazipur in 1864, where teaching of English formed one of the

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Sir Syed launched his educational movement after careful study of his place in India and he made a systematic effort by organizing a “Committee for Better Diffusion and Advancement of Learning Among the Muhammadans of India” on 26 December 1870, to identify the specific reasons for the aversion of the Muslim community towards English and to place the education of the Muslims on a better and sounder footing. The committee of which Sir Syed was the Secretary succeeded in elucidating the opinion of the cross-section of the community pertaining to the problems of the education of the Muslims through an open essay competition in Urdu and realized the importance of making private efforts for the secular as well as spiritual education at one and the same institution, as it would not be possible for the government to make such an arrangement in a public institution.

And Sir Syed realized that it was necessary to pursue his idea of opening a modern institution with facilities for instruction in oriental languages, Islamic religion, along with English and other subjects. He had the blueprint of the institution and encouraged by the British Government as stated that the scheme

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111 The Committee notified that essay competition would be open to all the Muslims and there would be three prizes of Rs. 500, 300, 150 for the first, second and third best essays respectively. The Committee received twenty five essays which were scrutinized by a select committee consisting of 13 members and the prizes were awarded and the report was finalized by 15th April 1872. See, Selected Documents from Aligarh Archives, pp. 149-150. MIG, 25 October, 1872.
was “entitled to every encouragement” which the government could give. Sir Syed also had a band of close but committed associates to give moral support to his programme. But what it lacked was finance. So he got the earlier committee dissolved as its purpose was over and set up a new committee on May 12, 1872 to raise funds for setting up a modern institution which in turn appointed a number of local sub-committees in different parts of India. And after gradual pursuing of his mission to establish a modern institution, Sir Syed and his associates were successful and the dream of establishment of an Oxford realized. When the foundation of school was laid on the birthday of Queen Victoria by Samiullah Khan, one of his friends and associates and thus school started functioning with class 9th from 1st June 1875 and by the time Sir Syed succeeded in raising it to the status of a College by dint of his perseverance. Not only did he seek the cooperation and help, patronage from the Government and philanthropists but also invited them to visit the College at Aligarh on various occasions.

It seems that many British officials, especially the Governor- Generals of India and the Lieutenant-Governors of N.W. Provinces showed much enthusiasm and keen interest in Sir Syed’s enterprise. It was not only because the official policy of giving encouragement to the private educational efforts of the Muslims but also due to Sir Syed’s success in cultivating excellent personal relationship with the British and remaining loyal to them cultivated good rapprochement between Sir Syed and British. On the one occasion, he

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112 Officiating Secretary to the Government of India to the Secretary of North West Provinces dated 6th April, 1872 in the Aligarh Documents, vol. II, p. 400.
113 Among the close associates of Sir Syed were Maulana Samiullah Khan, Nawab Mohsinul Mulk, Nawab Vigurul Mulk, Raja Jai Kishan Das, Raja Syed Baqar Ali Khan, Lutf Ali Khan Chattari, Mohammad Inayatullah, etc.
114 Syed Ahmad Khan to C.A. Elliot dated 14 June 1872, Selected Documents from Aligarh Archives, p. 150, also see AIG, Feb. 21, 1872. There were 65 members in the Committee and all were Muslims. For details of the Committee, see “Rules for the Guidance and Management of the College Fund Committee, 1872, in Aligarh Documents, vol. II, pp. 381-86.
116 For example Sir Syed invited Viceroy Lord Lytton to lay the foundation stone of the college in 1877. For details see, Syed Ahmad Khan to private Secretary to the Viceroy, 13 Sept. 1876 in Selected Documents from Aligarh Archives, pp. 273-276.
appreciated their rule as "most wonderful phenomena they could ever
seen".\footnote{An address presented by the M.A.O. College Fund Committee to his Excellency, Lord Lytton, dated 8th Jan. 1879, in Aligarh Documents, Vol. III, p. 699 (Hereafter Lytton Address).}

Apart from Sir Syed’s remaining loyal to British, Sir Syed also
attempted to make future generation of Mohammedans better citizens and
better British subjects by instilling in them "that loyalty which springs not from
servile submission to a foreign rule but from genuine appreciation of the
blessings of good government".\footnote{Lytton Address (In Aligarh Document), op.cit., p. 699.} 118 This was one of the most important aims of
Sir Syed for establishing the M.A.O. College. The other important aims of Sir
Syed were to "dispel illusory traditions of the past which have hindered the
progress of the Muslims, remove prejudices which have hitherto to exercise a
baneful influence on Muslims, reconcile Oriental learning with Western
literature and science and inspire the dreamy minds of the people of the East
with the practical energy which belongs to those of the West".\footnote{Ibid., p. 699.}

In this way Sir Syed established his dream of Oxford at Aligarh but why
he established his Oxford at Aligarh, because when funds for the College was
arranged, Sir Syed pondered over the site of the College and in a democratic
way, he issued a Circular in July 1872 seeking the opinion of the people about
Aligarh as the site\footnote{See the Circular of the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College Fund Committee July 1872, loc.cit. Response to the circular was varied. Though many people preferred Aligarh, some suggested Lucknow, Delhi, Agra, Allahabad, Meerut etc. Nawab of Rampur, however, suggested Aligarh as the site. See his letter to Syed Ahmad, 24 December 1872, File Book No. 29, Sir Syed Archives (SSA).} and then putting it for vote at the meeting of the M.A.O.
College Fund Committee held on 8 November 1872, when the majority (47 out
of 52 members) favoured Aligarh as a site.\footnote{Proceedings of the meeting of the College Fund Committee, 8th November 1872 in Aligarh Documents, vol. II, pp. 417-8.} The voice of Aligarh as the site
for University was made after taking into consideration on the geographic,
economic and social factors. Sir Syed explained the reason to choose Aligarh
as a smaller town for the college because he thought that there were no other
Site Map of M.A.O. College (1877)
(Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh)
famous higher educational institutions located there the establishment of the College would give the place a name which would eclipse the fame of all other towns in India. “Are not the towns of Oxford and Cambridge with their limited number of population more conspicuous than all other famous towns of England?” asked Sir Syed. Besides, he was swayed by its moderate climate, proximity to Delhi, convenient rail and road links, considerable Muslim population and then mattered and moral support and cooperation and lastly the sacredness name itself. However, of all these factors, it was the financial support of the rich landed aristocracy of Aligarh that seem to have swayed the decision of Sir Syed in favour of making it the site for the college and thus Sir Syed was able to find a Muslim Oxford at Aligarh, with the cooperation of a British Government and the Hindu-Muslim help and their heartiest cooperation for establishing his dream of Oxford at Aligarh.

(7) Sir Syed’s idea of a University

Sir Syed’s efforts to establish a full-fledged university was not achieved during his lifespan as he sought the same. When the foundation stone of the

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122 Though there were a number of educational institutions at Aligarh, all of them provided only school education and there was not a single college in the district. In 1868, there were 101 halqabandi schools 200 indigenous schools and 3 anglo-Vernacular Schools. Standard of education was higher at Aligarh and it was selected as one of the 8 experimental districts for introducing Halqabandi system of education. Only 2.22 percent of the population was literate in 1872. See for details, H.R. Nevil, Aligarh : A Gazetteer, Allahabad, Government Press, 1909, Northwestern Provinces, p. 154. (Hereafter Aligarh District Gazetteer).
124 From Delhi, Aligarh is at a distance of 126 kms by rail.
125 Aligarh is situated on the main Rail route and also being the junction has convenient with all parts of the country. Besides the trunk road connects it with other towns.
126 According to the Census data of 1872, the population of Aligarh was 1,073,256 of which 955,044 were Hindus, 117,911 were Muslims and 301 others. See Aligarh District Gazetteer, pp. 70-71.
127 In Aligarh district there were a number of wealthy landlords like Mardan Ali Khan of Chattari, Faiz Ali Khan, Hussain Ali Khan, Abdul Rahman Khan, Abdul Latif Khan, Mahmood Ali Khan, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Nawab Mumtaz ud Daula, Mazhar Ali Khan, Syeds of Jalali etc. who gave enormous amount of money towards the establishment of the educational institutes. For details of Muslim Zamindars of Aligarh, see. Land Settlement Report of Aligarh District, 1874 (Microfilm copy NML) Reel No. 17, pp. 20-27.
M.A.O. College was laid in 1877 as Sir Syed expressed his desire for the University. To quote:

"From the seed which we have sown today there may be spring up a mighty tree whose branches like those of the banyan tree of the soil, shall in turn strike firm roots into the earth and themselves send forth new and vigorous saplings; that this College may expand into a university."

Even the idea of a university originally put forward by Sir Syed at the very first instance, discussed in the 1873 plan of the scheme of College. It seems that it happened due to oversight because in a meeting of the Fund Committee held on August 31, 1873 Syed Mahmud had said that "I think what we mean is not a College but the university". Hence the word College was substituted by the word university and the copies of the resolution of the meeting along with the scheme were sent to the local authority and to the Central government.

Some important members like Samiuallah Khan, and the high officials like Lieutenant Governor of North Western Provinces William Muir doubted the feasibility of such a scheme which according to them might not have popular support and he wrote to the Viceroy Northbrook that "with few exceptions the native press was too strongly hostile". The criticism from certain conservative quarters was also mounting up. And in this context Sir Syed had his own doubts regarding the availability of sufficient amount of finance and hence at a meeting held at 21st December 1873 it was resolved by the Committee that let the beginning of the University be made in a humble manner by opening a school and later on College in 1877. But the desire of a university of the founder was unfulfilled for a long time and the idea of a university put forward by Sir Syed seems to have provided stimulus to Blunt.

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129. William Muir wrote to Northbrook: I fear he took at things in respect of support of the native community in too far hopeful light... His supporters are of the enlightened and advanced class which carries little weight with Mohammadan public. William Muir to Northbrook, 12th August, 1873. Northbrook Papers (N.P.) Reel No. 5, p. 345 (Microfilm Copy), Nehru Museum Library (NML), New Delhi.
130. Ibid.
131. See AIIG, April 11, 1873.
who in 1884 prepared a blue print of "Mohammedan university" and forwarded it to the Nizam, Salar Jung II for his consideration because he wanted to establish it at Hyderabad, but the strongest opposition came from Sir Syed himself who observed that official patronage to Oriental studies would do "more harm" and could give the impression that the government wanted to keep the Muslims as ordinary coolies by denying them Western education, science and continuing teaching traditional language and literature. On this stage the departure of Ripon (Viceroy of India) also mattered, and the scheme could not be materialized. Meanwhile the demand for establishing a separate university in North-Western Provinces continued primarily to disassociate the Colleges of the Province from the distant Calcutta University. In this way the demand for the local university was finally approved by the Lieutenant Governor of the Provinces A.C. Lyall as well as Governor General in Council. But before practical steps towards starting a university could be taken up Ripon's term of Viceroyalty come to an end and thus the support of the viceroy was ended the concept of establishing a local university after the departure of Ripon from India.

Meanwhile the political development of the Indian sub-continent since 1886 considerably distracted the attention of Sir Syed from education and in fact, to a great extent diluted his enthusiasm for the establishment of the university. The British attitude towards the Congress and its political aims led Sir Syed's attention to divert the Muslims from Congress as his philosophy was to remain loyal to the British government.

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135 Sir Syed to Director of Public Instruction, North West Provinces and Oudh, dated 22 Feb. 1885 in (Selection from the Vernacular Newspapers of North Western Provinces (SVNNWP).
136 See Mihir-v-Nemoroj (Bijore) 22 Feb. 1884, in S.V.N.N.W.P., p. 155.
137 The Hindistant (Lucknow), 20 Feb. 1884, p. 163 in S.V.N.N.W.P.
138 Home Education A, Proceedings, November 1884, No. 7 (NAI)
139 Secretary to Government of India to Secretary to Government of North West Provinces and Oudh, No. 323 dated 28 October 1884, Home Education A, Proceedings, November 1884, No. 41 (NAI).
Moreover his attention from education to politics also diverted due to outbreak of students strike, in the MAO College in 1888, mainly due to the suspension of a student for misbehaving with an employee of the mess\textsuperscript{[10]} which tarnished the image of the institution and impaired its prospects of expansion.

The other problems was the financial crisis at M.A.O. College which also hampered the prospects of expansion of the College into a university as – Sir Syed responded in the meeting of the Trustees held on August 12, 1890, that Raja Amir Hasan who contributed Rs. 600 per year had not made any payments for the last three years as he was persuaded to believe by the opponents of the College that it was sinful for a Shia to help an institution where Sunnis were also taught. On the other hand Sir Syed also reported that the Collector of Aligarh informed the College that due to financial losses, the Municipal Board of Aligarh would not pay its annual grant of Rs. 1200 for some time.

The major financial crisis which the M.A.O. College faced during lifetime of Sir Syed was the embezzlement of 1895. The embezzlement of 1895 which made Sir Syed weak and frustrated as Shyam Behari Lal, a head clerk of M.A.O. College, who handled all cash transactions on Sir Syed’s behalf had withdrawn Rs. 1,07,198 from the Bank of Bengal by forging the signatures of Sir Syed and seven Trustees of the M.A.O. College in 1895. Though the embezzlement was discovered later on and Shyam Bihari Lal was arrested and committed suicide while in jail but the great loss of College made Sir Syed frustrated.\textsuperscript{[11]} The Annual Report of 1898-99, prepared by the officiating Principal Theodore Morison, gives an idea of the financial condition of the College on the day of Sir Syed’s death. He writes:

“...At the time of Sir Syed death, the College owed debts to dozens of persons, to members of staff for unpaid salaries, to brick-

\textsuperscript{[10]} The strike had its origin in student employee clash. A student of the college, Syed Husain was suspended by Sir Syed, for thrashing the bearer of the mess, for his carelessness in keeping his lunch properly, resulting in its eating away by a stray cat. For further details see: S.K. Bhatnagar, M.A.O. College, op.cit., pp. 95-96.

\textsuperscript{[11]} See S.K. Bhatnagar, op.cit., pp. 127-128.
layers, tile-makers, builder, to gardeners and coolies, to printers, and book sellers and to debenture holders, for interest. The list seemed interminable and every day our creditors sat round the College building, saying they were starving, or they wrote angry letters. Hyderabad did not pay its contribution for four months, while Salar Jang and Patiala did not pay at all. Consequently, it was extremely difficult to carry on the work of the College without suspending payments at all. 

Due to all these unfavorable circumstances during the life time of Sir Syed that he could not carry out his mission to establish a full-fledged university despite his committed and constituent efforts and cooperation from the Colonial rulers.

**[H] Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muslim Political Consciousness**

Sir Syed Ahmad a great educationist and social reformer of modern India was also a voluminous writer and wrote a number of books, monographs pertaining to different subjects. Though much of his works dealt with educational and social aspects of his community, but he also contributed a number of articles in *Tahzibil Akhlaq* and *Aligarh Institute Gazettee*. The speeches and lectures of Sir Syed which were delivered on different occasions in the form of public speeches dealt with topical problems. In these writings and speeches we find some of his political ideas which are closely related to those circumstances in which Sir Syed lived. Though Sir Syed did not participate in any political organization and he rather focussed his attention purely on educational development of his community, because combating any political agitation was likely to jeopardize his campaign, yet he was aware that the inevitable result of education would be a political consciousness for the Muslim community. On a number of occasions Sir Syed was compelled to stand to the demand of situation and he gave his political consciousness for his country and he dared to speak on different issue which was the need of the time.

A close examination of the political conditions of the 19th century India in which Sir Syed wrote extensively and delivered his public speeches on these
issues will bring his political thought and ideas in relation to political condition of the time and it will also help us in understanding the changing situation of 19th century of India –

(1) Urdu-Hindi Controversy

The most important event which took place in the first half of the 19th century was the Urdu-Hindi controversy. And Sir Syed strongly came out with his arguments in favour of Urdu language. It was during 1867 when the Hindu community put their claim to recognition of Hindi as an official language in place of Urdu and Persian. Mr. Babu Dinanath Ganguli, Secretary Etawah Debating Club, accused the Aligarh British Indian Association for advocating the use of Urdu as the standard vernacular language of the United Provinces. One of the reasons for adopting Hindi as the official language of the court and was to undermine the dominance of the Urdu speaking elite due to the political reasons British government was concerned to build up landlord power. Nevertheless, once the bureaucracy began to assume control over matters such as local posts, courts and police which were used to be in the hands of local magnates and just to cut down their power, Government in the close of 19th century introduced the Nagari Resolution of 1900.

But during Sir Syed’s life in 1867, “Urdu-Hindi controversy was less mobilized among the Hindu community and Sir Syed viewed this movement with great horror and came to the conclusion that it was difficult for the two communities to live together. While trying to unite the two, he met the charges of the protagonists of Hindu and the campaign subsided for the time being. There were certain sober Hindus who doubted the sincerity of the protagonists of that. Pandit Sambhunath Secretary Literary Society Fatehpur, who knew the truth and admitted that of Hindi in Devanagari script if were introduced, the

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13 ALG, January 24, 1868.
general population would find many difficulty. But inspite of this. Raja Sheoraj Singh of Kashipur who incited Hindus on the grounds that urdu deprived many of its words from Persian and Arabic that Nagri character may be written.... with same the facility as Persian and favoured the adaptation of Nagari as official language. But government did not listen to their clamour. When Sir Syed was alive this movement was calmed down but after his death, it was raised with stronger voices.

(2) Civil Service Examination

The other issue of discontent which both the community felt was the holding of the Civil Services Examination which was held in London and it was not held in India simultaneously. The British Indian Association of Calcutta and Bombay submitted memorandum to the Government pleading to conduct Civil Services Examination in India also. Sir Syed, a staunch supporter of British also extended his support to Surendranath Banerjee's struggle for the cause of holding the Civil Service examination in India.

(3) Election for Legislative Council

On the question of election for the Legislative Council and the representative Government. Sir Syed's did not favour and he held his opinion that it is unsuitable for the Indian condition, and wrote his comments in Aligarh Institute Gazette about it. Sir Syed made his position quite clear when in 1883, the
Legislative Council was debating a Local Self Government Bill for Central Provinces where the Muslims were in a small minority. He told the Council:

"The system of representation by election means the representation of the views and interests of the majority of the population... in a country like India, where caste distinctions still flourish, where there is no fusion of the various races, where religious distinctions are still violent, where education in its modern sense has not made an equal or proportionate progress among all the sections of the population, I am convinced that the introduction of the principle of election, pure and simple, for representation of various interests on the Local Boards and Districts Councils would be attended with evils of greater significance than purely economic considerations. So long as differences of race and creed, and the distinctions of caste form an important election in the socio-political life of India, and influence her inhabitants in matters connected with the administration and welfare of the country at large, the system of election pure and simple cannot safety be adopted. The larger community would totally override the interests of the smaller community, and the ignorant public would hold Government responsible for introducing measures which might make the differences of race and creed more violent than ever."\(^{150}\)

Due to these reasons Sir Syed opposed the system of election.

(4) Indian National Congress

The other important issue of the 19\(^{th}\) century was the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885 which provided a platform for Indian people to put their grievances to the British government. But opposition of Indian National Congress by Sir Syed made him the most controversial figure in modern India. Sir Syed’s attitude towards Indian National Congress became first time clear when he opened his political campaign against the Congress in December 1887. His first assault came with a speech in the Kaisharbagh Baradari during the All India Muslim Educational Conference at Lucknow. He said:

"It should be borne in mind that for a respected person to sit with the Viceroy in Council the essential requisite is the respectability of that person. Will the rich of our country tolerate that the members of the lower classes, even though they may have B.A. and M.A. Degrees and may possess enough competence, should rule over them and control their property and possession? Never, as no one would like it.

\(^{150}\) Cited from Robinson, *Separatism*, op. cit., p. 118.
The membership of the Council is highly honorable, and the Government is bound to give it to none except respected gentlemen. The Viceroy cannot address an ordinary person as ‘my colleagues’ or ‘my honourable colleagues’, nor can he invite them to grand dinners and state functions in which great dignitaries like Dukes and Earls participate.\footnote{Sir Syed’s lecture at Lucknow, 28 December, 1887. See \textit{Majmua Majmuah Lectures wa Speeches 1863-1869}, edited by Mohammad Imamuddin Gujarati, Lahore, Mustafii Press, 1990, pp. 298-299 (Hereafter Majmua Lectures).}

In this speech Sir Syed’s views were aristocratic and he seems to be the supporter of elite class in the Councils on the other hand he showed his hostility to the inclusion of elected representation in the Council and to its expansion. Here Sir Syed had his opinion about the election of representation in the council and such was demanded by the Indian National Congress, and thus Sir Syed thought it was unjust demand of the Congress and thus head raised his concerns about it and openly came against the Congress and its policies.

Sir Syed’s keeping away from the Congress was also due to his educational scheme for which he was banking upon the British government for the promotion of various educational scheme for which he was afraid that his association with the anti-British Congress might possibly jeopardize his educational plans. Sir Syed expressed his fear in 1887 when he said:

“Where education in its modern sense had not made an equal or proportionate progress among all sections of population, the political agitations for the introduction of the principle of election would be attended with evils of greater significance.”\footnote{See Sir Syed’s Speech at the Imperial Legislative Council. 12th Jan. 1883, in \textit{Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed}, op.cit., p. 157.}

In this way Sir Syed wanted that first Muslims should acquire education and then participate in politics

On the other hand Sir Syed also expressed his dissatisfaction against the Congress demands through the \textit{Aligarh Institute Gazette}, Sir Syed propagated his ideas and the Congress demand for the expansion of the Council and the
holding of simultaneous competitive examination in India and England, Sir Syed wrote in *Aligarh Institute Gazette* in 1890. To quote:

> "The first condition for the introduction of a competitive examination is that all people in that country should belong to one nation... the second requisite is that the different nationality of a country should be on an equal footing in respect of competition...."\(^{153}\)

He was afraid that due to educational disparity between Muhammadan and Bengalis all posts would be monopolized by Bengalese and even the non-Bengali Hindus who were more advanced than the Muslims in English education would not get a sufficient number of posts. To quote:

> "...Can the Mohammadan cope with the Bengalis in higher English education? I ask the Hindus and Mohammadan of Bihar whether they are able to compete with the Bengalis. The answer is of course, in negative".\(^{154}\)

Thus Sir Syed was very much aware of the advancement of the other community and he wanted the same for the Muslim community through education and that is why he opposed the agitational politics and demand of Congress to hold the competitive examination in India. He wanted parity of Muslims in education so that they could sit in the examination.

Due to these factors Sir Syed opposed the Congress and its agitational politics to save his movement of educational reform.

**[I] All India Muslim Educational Conference and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**

Sir Syed is generally known only as the founder of the present Aligarh Muslim University. Not many are aware of the fact that the farsighted Sir Syed, besides establishing the M.A.O. College, had for mass participation provided to the Indian Muslims a more widely educational platform in the form of *All India Muslim Educational Conference*. To provide equal educational opportunity to the Muslim masses all over India, Sir Syed started his vehicle of mobilizing the
Muslim community in the educational movement through the *All Indian Muslim Educational Conference*.\textsuperscript{155}

Sir Syed’s visit to England in 1869 and his close observation of the University of England particularly of Oxford and Cambridge had kindled him considerably that he decided to launch his educational movement in India with educational plans which he prepared in England. Therefore he considered necessary to unite and to organize all the existing societies\textsuperscript{156} of 19\textsuperscript{th} century India. Just to prepare a single platform to provide for the educational need of the Indian Muslims on all India basis.

Sir Syed did not approve the political character of some of the associations. For example the *Central National Muhammadan Association* of Amir Ali. Sir Syed believed that without gaining ground in education participation in politics would be a fatal mistake. He declined to participate in the *Central National Mohammadan Association*’s meeting held in Lahore in 1888.\textsuperscript{157} Conveying his ideas to Maulvi Niyaz Muhammad, an advocate from Lahore who was a trustee of M.A.O. College, he stated that he thought it “improper for Muslims to take part in any political organization”.\textsuperscript{158} But Sir Syed was in favour of an all India platform and for the same he advised Nawab Mohsinul Mulk to form an association exclusively for Muslims and to campaign for its membership before his arrival to India\textsuperscript{159} as Sir Syed was in England when he wrote this letter to Nawab Mohsinul Mulk. And with the help of his associates. Sir Syed established the *All India Mohammadan Educational*
Congress\(^{160}\) on 27\(^{th}\) December 1886 at Aligarh. In its inaugural meeting, it was presided over by Maulvi Samiullah Khan the co-founder of the M.A.O. College.

The main objectives of the Conference were to popularize Western education among the Muslims of India so that they could take part in the social and cultural life of their country and could contribute to its material and intellectual advancement. Besides this, certain other items were also included in the list of its aims and objectives, for example concluding research on the traditional education of Muslims; publication of the biographies\(^{161}\) of reputed scholars and writers and tracing and preserving rare books written by the earlier Muslim savants. It means that Sir Syed was not merely interested in modern education: he also wanted to revive and reform the traditional Muslim learning.\(^{162}\) From the very beginning the annual session of the Conference were held at various cities of the country under the Presidency of the prominent personality of the time\(^{163}\) and it helped in expanding the Educational horizon.

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\(^{160}\) In the inaugural meeting the All India Muslim Educational Conference was christened “Mohammedan Educational Congress”. Later in its 5\(^{th}\) meeting held at Allahabad from 28\(^{th}\) to 30\(^{th}\) December, 1890 under the Presidentship of Sardar Mohammad Hayat Khan, it accepted an amendment, seconded by Sir Syed, which read as follows:

This gathering feels that the name of this national educational body of ours, named Mohammedan Educational congress, creates various doubts in the minds of people, some misled by the word congress, having something in common with the political party of that name, Indian National Congress; others taking it on the other extreme to be a rival to it: whereas, in fact, it has nothing to do with either of the two. A change in its name therefore appears imperative, and it should be renamed “Mohammedan Educational Conference”.

Later in its 10\(^{th}\) meeting held at Shahjahanpur from 27\(^{th}\) to 30\(^{th}\) December, 1895, under the presidency of Nawab Mohsinul Mulk, an amendment, moved by Syed Mahmood, was passed:

“This Conference feels that in view of further elucidation of its educational aims and objectives which are before the Conference, the addition of ‘Anglo-Oriental be made to the name and from now on, it be called “Mohammedan Anglo Oriental Educational Conference”.

In its 36\(^{th}\) meet held at Aligarh in 1923, under the presidency of Sahibzada Aftab Ahmed Khan an amendment was moved and passed to the effect that the word ‘Mohammedan’ be deleted from the name of the Conference in favour of the word ‘Muslim’.

It was moved by Nawab Sadryar Jung Habib-ur-Rehman Khan sherwani. See Anwar Ahmad Marharawi (Ed.) Muraqqa-e-Conference (Aligarh, 1935), p. 2.

See Appendix (H) in Akhtarul Wasey, op.cit., pp. 85-94.


for the Muslim community. It was one of the vital aspects of Aligarh Movement to provide modern education to the Muslim masses.

In this way the *All India Educational Conference* played an important role in fulfilling the mission of Sir Syed. A large number of schools and colleges in different parts of the country owe their origin directly or indirectly to the Conference. Among such institutions Shibli College, Azamgarh. Islamia College, Etawah. Shuaibia College Agra and Islamia College, Sikandra Rao district Aligarh is noteworthy. The *Conference* also extended full support to the management of *Nadwatul Ulama* Lucknow. In this way it served the very purpose of Sir Syed educational mission not for only to the elite class but also extend its needs to the masses.