Preface
At the time of the selection of this topic I had not the slightest imagination that so much of virgin material was still required to be unearthed and shown the light of the day. Sir Syed had written so much and on varied topics. In fact there is hardly any aspect of Islam on which Sir Syed has not written some thing or the other however little that may be such as theology to history, Islamic sciences to contemporary issues, controversial issues in Islam to ethical and moral teachings of Islam. Each has found mention in Sir Syed’s works. This study has taken into account only the religious ideas of Sir Syed. The thesis is divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter exclusively deals with the life and times of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. It was difficult to incorporate each and every important aspect of the life of such an illustrious personality. I have attempted to write his life in a manner so as to portray his psychological and intellectual progress as an enlightened thinker and scholar. I have relied largely on the work of Altaf Husain Hali who was his colleague and admirer.

The second chapter comprises of brief notes on Sir Syed’s important works. If I had enumerated all his works then it would have required a whole volume separately. For specific reasons, I have taken up only those works of Sir Syed which are relevant to my topic.
With the third chapter "Islamic Faith" begins the main emphasis of this thesis. This, the fourth chapter entitled "Islamic Metaphysics" comprises the theme of the thesis. These chapters deal with the Islamic concepts and metaphysical ideas in Islam as conceived by earlier thinkers followed by Sir Syed's own perception. In fact this is the most delicate subject. These were the ideas that invited harsh criticisms from the contemporary Ulama which consequently distorted Sir Syed's image among the Muslims in general. In these chapters I have dealt with the concepts of Tawhid, Prophethood, life hereafter as described by Sir Syed, and then his views on such metaphysical entities as Angels and Spirits, Paradise, and hell. I have taken care to genuinely present his ideas followed by the traditional and conservative views of the Ulama. Criticism of Ulama and counter arguments of Sir Syed have been discussed.

The fifth chapter entitled "Sir Syed on Rationalism" deals with the rational ideas of Sir Syed. Sir Syed is said to have revived the Mutazilite traditions in modern times. He is therefore termed as a neo-Mutazilite by many scholars. The concepts of Free-will and predestination are amongst the most controversial of issues of Islamic thought. In this chapter once again I have taken utmost care to present his ideas in their original form.
The sixth chapter is on “Sir Syed and Islamic Theology”. Since the Indian Muslims are traditionally heavily tilted towards the notion of Taqlid and Sir Syed was vehemently against Taqlid, this issue, once again, made Sir Syed the target of criticisms by the Ulama. But one of the main objectives of Sir Syed was to evolve a new interpretation of Islamic doctrines, Ijtihad was the best instrument and Sir Syed has made full use of it.

The seventh chapter entitled “Towards a new methodology of understanding the Qur’ân” exclusively deals with his Tafsir. Efforts have been made to highlight the methodology of Sir Syed’s Tafsir writing and discuss those ideas of Sir Syed which radically differ from traditional interpretations.