SIR AGA KHAN

Sir Aga Khan, also known as Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah was born in Karachi in 1877 which was the capital of Sindh at that time too when the British ruled the subcontinent. He was the son of Aqa Ali Shah and his third wife A'lia Shamsul-Muluk. Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah led a large number of people of strong Isma'ili sect of the Shi'a Muslim community and was a powerful voice representing Muslim interests in India and around the world. He was one of the founders of the All India Muslim League and became the president of the party too. He was inspired by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan’s beliefs that Muslims must first build their social capital through which their relations with other communities could get better, by getting advanced education before joining politics. He died at the age of 79 years near Geneva, Switzerland.

In 1885, at the age of seven, he succeeded his father Aqa Ali Shah, who was the eldest son of Hasan Ali Shah(Aga Khan I) as the 48th Imam of the Nizari Ismaili religion. His father was a member of the Iranian royal family, and his mother was the daughter of Fat′h Ali Shah, the second ruler of the Qajar dynasty. He had four wives. First, he married in 1896 in Poona, India with his cousin Shahzadi Begum. His second marriage was held in 1898, with Cleope Teresa Magliano who was a dancer. His third time married took plce in 1924 in France. His third wife did not accept Islam and so he divorced her in 1943. His last marriage was held in 1944 in Switzerland, with Yvomme. She accepted Islam and her name was changed to Umme Habiba. He had only four children from all of the marriages.

After the death of his father when Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah was only seven years, his mother took a plentiful parental interest in his education. He was blessed to have a talented and wise mother, who engaged the best scholars to teach him the Quran, Hadith, and oriental languages. He developed command over English, French, and German besides oriental languages like Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Hindi. Along with Islamic education, he also studied western thought, sciences, metaphysics, astronomy, and mathematics from his European tutors. He received education in Bombay and Poona until the age of eighteen. He also had an interest in philosophy and poetry. As a Muslim, he considered education a religious duty.

He started visiting the Ismaili communities outside Bombay in 1894. He made his debut as an educational reformer and visited The Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh in 1896 where he had a productive meeting with Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan. Because of the public services, he received recognition from Germon Emperor, the Sultan of Turkey, the Shah of Persia and other rulers. Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah established Aga Khan Schools in different parts of the British-India. . In 1906, the Aga Khan was a founding member and first president of the All India Muslim League, a political party which later helped Muslims to become an independent nation. The Aga Khan also took an active part in the Khilafat Movement and 1919, he led a delegation of prominent Muslim leaders from India to a hearing with the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George to discuss the case of Turkey. He played a vital role in establishing Aligarh University. He was chairman of the British Indian delegation to the round table conferences. In 1932 he suggested a pact of minorities that facilitated the announcement of the communal award. He represented India in the assembly of the League of Nations in 1932. He was the first Asian to be elected the president of the League of Nations in 1937. He also wrote several books. India in transition was one of them in which he had written about how the politics came into existence in India. Another well-known book is his autobiography, The Memoirs of Aga Khan: World Enough and Time.

He had a very big contribution to establishing party politics in India since he was the president of All India Muslim League and always keen to represent the interest of Muslims. He demanded a separate electorate and reserved number of seats in the parliament for Muslims in a meeting with Viceroy Lord Minto in Simla. This thing was further elaborated later as the Two-Nation Theory. In a meeting, he adopted the new policy for AIML for the self-rule inspired by the idea of Quaid e Azam. He set up the Muslim national funds for the progress and advancement of Muslims at every provincial level He was passionate about the educational reform of the subcontinent. He contributed a lot in the Pakistan movement, from the Round table conferences to the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, Cabinet Mission Plan, and up till the end to the partition issues.