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## SIR SAYYID AHMAD KHAN (1817 – 1898)

The War of Independence, in 1857, brought in its wake untold misery and unending troubles and tribulations for the Indian Muslims. They were made the special target of the British wrath. The cruelty that the British perpetrated on the Muslims, the torture and agony of it, the sadistic acts of genocide and all, could not find adequate expression in words though, yet W.W. Hunter epitomised it saying, "If a politician wanted to create sensation in the House of Commons, he could do it by relating the conditions of a single Muslim family of Bengal".

The War of Independence, finally and irrevocably put an end to the Mughal Empire and firmly established the British Raj in India. As the English had no enmity or *causes belli* against the Hindus either historically, politically or religiously, so, now they had no bones to pick with the Hindus. Contrarily, they deemed it as an act of urgent exigency to eliminate the Muslims as a nation; a precondition to their strangle-hold on India. During those days of terror and persecutions when being a Muslim was considered crime enough to invite the white wrath, it took a lot of courage for an Indian Muslim to come to the forefront and hold brief for his nation with the pen or with the words of mouth. In these circumstances, it was Sayyid Ahmad Khan who dared to take up this delicate but highly important task of defending the rights of the Muslims.

### HIS LIFE

Sayyid Ahmad Khan was born on October 17, 1817 in Delhi. He belonged to a family that had been associated with the Mughal Court at Delhi. His grandfather Sayyid Ha'adi had been awarded the title of *Jawwad-ud-Daula* in the reign of Emperor Alamgir II. His maternal grandfather was also an influential person who was sent to Iran by Lord Wellesley as attaché. Later on, Sayyid Ahmad's father was offered a high post in the Court by Emperor Akbar II.

As it was customary, Sayyid Ahmad learned the Holy Quran at home. A well-known sufi-saint Shah Ghulam Ali initiated his religious education. As for worldly education, his maternal uncle taught him mathematics while a family Hakeem, Ghulam Haider, taught him early courses in medicine. He also had the opportunities of attending literary meetings where he had the good luck of enjoying the company of the literary stalwarts of his time like Mirza Ghalib, Imam Bakhsh Sehbai and Sadrud Din Azurda.

In his education, nurturing of his personality and in the development of his moral character; the one who played the most significant role was Azeem-un-Nisa Begum, Sayyid Ahmad's mother. One instance, here, would reveal the quintessence of the moral standard his mother had made as her guiding principle to inculcate into her child. Once Sayyid Ahmad slapped a servant. When his mother came to know about this incident, she, banished Sayyid Ahmad from home immediately, and did not allow him back till he apologised to the servant.

Sayyid Ahmad's father died in 1838 forcing the young man to look for a job to meet family expenses. In his quest for a gainful employment, he sought permission of his aunt's husband, who was working as *sadar amin* in Delhi, to learn to work in the *katchehry* (tehsil courts). After training, he was appointed as *sarishtadar*. In February 1839, he joined the Commissioner's Office as *naib munshi* (Deputy Reader) and, soon after, in 1841, became sub-judge in Fatehpur Sikri. He was transferred to Bijnor in 1855. Only three years later, he was promoted as *sadr-us-sudur*. 1867 saw him rise in rank to become judge of the Lower Court.

By this time Sayyid Ahmad had established himself as a person of some potentials. His son Sayyid Mahmud, a promising young man, won a government scholarship to go to England for higher studies. The opportunity helped Sayyid Ahmad Khan to proceed to England with his son. They sailed for England on April 10, 1869. His seventeen month stay, though not very long, was fruitfully used in studying system of education in England in general and that of the Cambridge University in particular. He also collected material to write *Khutbat-e-Ahmadia*.

Sayyid Ahmad settled permanently in Aligarh after retirement in 1876, and decided to pursue his life-time plan for education. In the meantime, Lord Lytton appointed him member of the Imperial Legislative Council. He became the first Indian to introduce bill for the welfare of his fellow countrymen, envisaging compulsory small-pox vaccination for everyone and appointment of Qazis. For four years, he performed his duties most efficiently and with devotion and expressed his views most eloquently and fearlessly. A case in point is the Ilbert Bill which was to empower Indian judges to adjudicate in criminal cases involving Englishmen all over India. Sayyid Ahmad supported

the bill vehemently while a Hindu member of the Council, Shiv Prasad, opposed it.

Sayyid Ahmad lived a vigorous and eventful life. Working as a public servant, he found time to write books on topics as varied but as important as religion, history archaeology, politics and literature. He left behind a treasure trove of 42 books that influenced and inspired movements in thought, and generated a lot of heat through intellectual debates in his life time as well as in the times to come. To crown his achievements, there existed a large number of organisations and societies that contributed to the speedy reawakening of the Muslims of India which resulted in resurgence of Muslim nationhood through length and breadth of the Indian sub-continent. He founded the following societies and organisations which stood testimony to his unflinching dedication to the cause of the Indian Muslims

- (1) Scientific Society (1864)
- (2) British Indian Association (1866)
- (3) A Committee for the Better Diffusion and Advancement of Learning Among the Mohammedans of India
- (4) Mohammedan Civil Service Fund Association (1883)
- (5) All-India Mohammedan Educational Conference (1886)
- (6) Indian Patriotic Association (1888)
- (7) Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association (1893)

In 1895, the College treasurer, Sham Bihari Lal, embezzled a large sum of one lac and seventeen thousand rupees from the College fund which brought the College almost to the brink of collapse. This incident adversely affected Sayyid Ahmad's health. Added to it was the constant torture of his son Sayyid Mahmud's habit of drinking. He died on March 27, 1898.

## INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Sayyid Ahmad was a man of robust intellect. In his own words, nothing pleased him as much as writing, which is undeniably vouchsafed through his singular gift of writing. In writing, his main interest lay in producing works of literary and intellectual nature. The genius in him did not feel shackled in the least. During his tenure as government servant, Sayyid Ahmad wrote no less than a dozen books on religious, social and historical topics from 1840 to 1857.

### Important Books

**Jam-e-Jum** (1840): It comprises of short narratives about 43 kings from Amir Taimur to Bahadur Shah Zafar.

**Jila-al-Quloob Ba-zikar-al-Mahboob** (1842): It is a short biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

**Tuhfa-e-Husn** (1844): This was the translation of two chapters of Shah Abdul Aziz's *Tuhfa Asna Ashria*.

**Aasar-us-Snaeed**: It is a descriptive account of old Delhi, with drawings of the monuments, together with a chapter on the famous persons of Delhi. It was this book which evinced deep interest in the western intellectual circles. Sayyid Ahmad had put in tremendous hard work to collect material for this book. Collecting material on the subject was an uphill task as the buildings of archaeological importance had been almost destroyed by the ravages of time and inscriptions on them had been rendered illegible. Many a time, putting his personal safety aside, he climbed crumbling walls, dilapidated columns or tall towers to cast a closer look at the indecipherable inscriptions. Describing one such precarious venture Sayyid Ahmad underlined the hazards of his adventurous task. He recalled, 'To read those inscriptions, on *Qutab ke Lath* in Delhi, which could not be read because of the height, a sort of trapeze or a *machaan* had to be erected opposite those inscriptions. Moulana Sehbai would watch me with great anxiety and would pale for fear underneath while I read the carved words perched dangerously high above'.

The first edition of *Aasar* was published in 1847 and two more editions (1854 Delhi, 1870 Lucknow) came out subsequently during Sayyid Ahmad's life. Garcin-de-Tassy, the famous French orientalist, translated it into French. On the basis of this translation, the Royal Asiatic Society, London, conferred honorary fellowship on Sayyid Ahmad Khan

**Tasheeh Aaeen-e-Akbari** (1855): This is one of the important and valuable works of Sayyid's early intellectual accomplishments. It is a testimony to his special interest in historiography. He not only edited, corrected main body of Abul-Fazal's *Aaeen-e-Akbari* but also explained and elucidated difficult points, interpreted outlandish Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Sanskrit terms and added a large number of pictures making the book all the more valuable, in content and approach.

**Tasheeh Tarikh-e-Feroze Shahi** (1862): Sayyid Ahmad brought out a corrected version of the *Tarikh-e-Feroze Shahi* after comparing four manuscripts.

**The Causes of the Indian Revolt**: From 1857 to 1870, Sayyid Ahmad concentrated on explaining to the Government about the Indian "Mutiny". He felt that the Muslims had suffered greatly at British hands, and yet it was vital to restore them to the confidence and patronage of their rulers. This short but important booklet traced

the causes of the War of Independence which Sayyid Ahmad chose to call 'mutiny' or 'revolt'. In his opinion its most important cause was that the Indians were not associated with the process of legislation and consequently they had failed to comprehend the intentions behind the writ of the Government. The activities of Christian missionaries, he thought, proved catalyst in igniting the simmering discontent into a blazing conglomeration.

During this reign of terror, violence and persecution, Sayyid Ahmad openly accused the British of exacerbating the situation without giving any thought to his personal safety. He published five hundred copies of his book and sent all but two copies to members of the British Parliament. On coming to know his intentions, his friend Roy Shanker Das had suggested to him to put all those books to torch to save his life. But Sayyid Ahmad had argued, "I consider it as a service to the country, nation and the Government to make all my views public and, therefore, any harm that befalls me by doing anything which is beneficial both for the people and the Government is acceptable to me". On reading this book, the Secretary of State for India, Cecil Beadon, said, "This man has written an essay of highly rebellious contents, therefore, he must be asked to explain and if he fails to give a satisfactory answer, he must be severely punished". Later on, in 1873, this book was translated into English by Graham and Auckland Colvin. Sayyid Ahmad's interpretation of the events of 1857 gave him first chance to step into the limelight as a spokesman of his community.

**Tabeen-al-Kalam:** This book provides a comparative study of the Quran and the Bible and its interpretation. For this onerous task, Sayyid Ahmad hired the services of Moulana Inayat Rasool Charayakoti – a multi-linguist – who knew English, Arabic and Hebrew languages. He bought a printing press from Roorki for several thousands to publish this book.

**Khutbat-e-Ahmadiya:** This book is ranked among the representative works of Sayyid Ahmad. In actual fact, the inspiration to write down this book sprang from his deep religious indignation caused by the criticism of the life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) by William Muir in his book *The Life of Mohmet*, Sayyid Ahmad decided to write such an authentic book which could provide satisfactory answers to all those questions Muir had raised. It seemed a monumental task which needed comparable efforts and research work. Therefore, Sayyid Ahmad travelled all the way to England to collect material for his book. Simply reaching England did not make things easy for him. Numerous impediments he had to overcome and difficulties of various kind he had

to suffer in his mission in accomplishing the task of writing and publishing this book. His letters to his friends from London provide a Mohsin-ul-Mulk, 'These days, I have feelings of heart-burning. I am going through Muir's book which he has written about the life of the Holy Prophet. It has broken my heart and his bigoted views and injustice have grievously hurt me. I have resolved as decided earlier that I will write a book on the life of the Holy Prophet even if all the money is spent and I become a pauper – fit only to beg, yet, no harm, as at least, I shall be called up on Doomsday as the Beggar Ahmad who lost every penny in the name of his Grandfather'!<sup>1</sup>

In another letter on October 1, 1869, he again wrote to Mohsin-ul-Mulk, 'I am busy, day and night, writing *Essays on Life of Muhammad* and nothing else crosses my mind. Social contacts are totally suspended. On receiving this letter, go to Mir Zahoor Husain and together with him contact some money-lender to get rupees one thousand on loan for me. I shall return the amount with interest myself. I have also written to Delhi for one thousand rupees suggesting to collect and send the amount after selling my books, belongings and even utensils. May God help me! My eating and sleeping have become irrelevant in pursuit of this book'.<sup>2</sup> In yet another letter he wrote, 'I am busy, day and night, in writing the account of the life and activities of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). I have abandoned everything else. My back is aching because of continuous writing'.

### SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

Sayyid Ahmad founded this Society on January 9, 1864 during his stay in Muradabad. Its purpose was to translate books of foreign languages, and to search for rare and valuable books of Asian authors and, in particular, those books which discussed the rise and fall of nations and publish them. Another objective of this Society was to provide opportunities for contacts and interaction between the Indians and the British. However, the main thrust of the Society remained focused on translating books on science, mathematics and mechanical engineering.

The first ever meeting of the Society was held on January 9, 1864 at which the Duke of Argyll was appointed its patron. The membership of the Society was not restricted to any particular nationality. Besides Englishmen, there were eighty-two Hindus and one hundred and seven Muslim members who worked hard to achieve its objectives.

<sup>1</sup>Ross Masood, *Khutoot-e-Sir Sayyid*, Badaun, 1924, p.49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.49.

With the transfer of Sayyid Ahmad to Aligarh in 1864, the office of the Society was also shifted to Aligarh. The Society was formally launched on February 14, 1864 with its inaugural session in Aligarh. An independent building was constructed at the cost of thirty thousand rupees to house various departments of the Society. By 1875, it had translated and published 27 works from English into Urdu. During 1875-98, the Society managed to translate only 19 works due to Sayyid's ever widening activities.<sup>1</sup> Notable works which were translated included *History of India* by Elphinstone, *History of Iran* by Sir John Malcolm, *History of China* by Rollin, *Political Economy* by J.S. Mill and Harris' *Rudimentary Electricity*.

The Scientific Society launched a weekly *Aligarh Institute Gazette* on March 3, 1866. It was meant to project views on social, moral, educational and political matters. It had, basically, two goals to achieve – a two-way projection project – which aimed at informing the British about the feelings of the Indians regarding problems ignored as peripheral by the rulers but fundamental by the ruled, and, at the same time, sought to familiarise the Indians with the British system of government and the English way of life. Moulana Hali put it aptly when he said that after examining the earlier issues of the paper it was unmistakably clear that it wanted to bring the two nations closer by clothing the English views in Indian dresses and the Indian views in English out-fits.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier issues of the *AIG* carried political articles which were penned down by Sayyid Ahmad himself. The most distinctive feature of the paper was that it was bilingual with English and Urdu columns running side by side. Another feature of the *AIG* was the section at the end of each issue where the historical background of any significant contemporary event was given, with the editor's comments. In this way events were illuminated by being set in perspective, and Sayyid's aim of creating a historical consciousness among his readers was further pursued. Thus at the end of the Turko-Russian War of 1878, the *AIG* included a retrospective survey of its origin, progress and results, illustrated with maps.<sup>3</sup> The *AIG* attached great importance to the honour and dignity of the native press. It would give a befitting rebuttal if any Anglo-Indian newspaper ever dared to criticise the Urdu press.<sup>4</sup> However, the paper consistently maintained its image as an emblem of serious and serene journalism and never published any unconfirmed news or news from dubious sources. As a policy matter it never indulged

in Hindu-Muslim communal conflict but did its best to project the Muslim cause whenever the situation so demanded. A case in point is the paper's vigorous struggle to defend the Muslim point of view with regard to Urdu-Hindi conflict. The bulk of the material, in this regard, appeared in this paper. For twenty-two years of its life, the *AIG* appeared with consistent regularity without failing to appear on its appointed day.

### TAHZEEBUL AKHLAQ

Sayyid Ahmad established a magazine on December 24, 1870 on the lines of the *Spectator* of London, under the title *Tahzeebul Akhlaq*. Enunciating the purpose of such a magazine, he wrote in its inaugural issue, "The purpose of this magazine is to motivate the Muslims to acquire civilization to its perfection to neutralize the hatred with which civilized nations view them so that they may also be regarded as respectable civilized nation".

Those who contributed regularly for *Tahzeebul Akhlaq* included Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk, Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, Moulvi Chirag Ali and Sayyid Mahmud; most of the articles, though, were written by Sayyid Ahmad himself. The measure of his prolific pen is the number of articles he contributed in the first six years of publication. Out of two hundred & twenty six essays, Sayyid Ahmad wrote no less than one hundred and twelve. After the lapse of three years, when the magazine was restarted, Sayyid's share was thirty three out of seventy six essays.

*Tahzeebul Akhlaq*, in its own peculiar way, endeavoured to dispel doubts about Islam, created by the European writers. It tried to make the Muslims conscious of the social misdemeanour like spitting everywhere, backbiting and jealousy, etc., and exhorted them to improve their social behaviour. The magazine could also claim credit for popularising words like "nation", "national sympathy", and "national interest", creating at the same time feelings of Islamic brotherhood and nationhood among the Muslims. Sayyid Ahmad also tried to draw their attention towards the usefulness of the western education through this magazine. It adopted a specific linguistic policy to purify and purge Urdu literature off verbosity, exaggeration, and sycophantic approach.

### EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

After the War of Independence, Sayyid Ahmad grew more and more convinced that existence and survival of the Muslims of India depended on better relationship with the English, on western education and eschewing politics. In his opinion, cure for all kind of sufferings and difficulties facing the Muslims lay only in western education, therefore, he urged the nation to adopt "education, and only education" as its motto.

<sup>1</sup>Rahmani Begum, *The Politics of Educational Reforms*, Lahore, 1985.

<sup>2</sup>Altaf Hussain Hali, *Hayat-e-Javeed*, Lahore, 1966, p.155.

<sup>3</sup>*The Politics of Educational Reforms*, p.85.

<sup>4</sup>Abdus Salam Khurshid, *Sahafat Pakistan-o-Hind Main*, Lahore

The Muslims of India, prior to Sayyid's exhortation, avoided sending their children to the English schools for various solid reasons despite the fact that Shah Abdul Aziz had permitted them to acquire western education. They were genuinely apprehensive that their children might deviate from religion under the influence of western education. The Hindus took full advantage of the new situation and proceeded to acquire western education with utmost zeal and zest. This state of affairs compelled Sayyid Ahmad to take upon himself the daunting task of convincing and persuading the Muslims to get this education.

### COMMITTEE FOR THE BETTER DIFFUSION AND ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING AMONG THE MOHAMMEDANS OF INDIA

Sayyid Ahmad's dilemma, in this regard, appeared unsurmountable. His first task was to know and analyse the reasons behind the Muslim reluctance to send their children to government schools. Keeping this problem in view, a committee calling for the Muslim educational uplift was formed in Benaras. One of the aims of the Committee was to know why the number of Muslim students in school and colleges was so low, why they had lagged behind in classical eastern learning and why they showed little interest in modern sciences.

The Committee launched an essay-writing competition on this topic promising reward for the best essay. It received 32 essays in all and Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk's essay was adjudged the best. After going through these essays the Committee arrived at the conclusion that in order to attract the Muslim youth, there was an urgent need of opening academic institutions, free from the governmental influence, where they could also get their own religious education as well. Therefore, a Committee was set up to collect funds needed to establish such an institution. Sayyid Ahmad was appointed the life-Secretary of this Committee. This proposed Muslim educational institution was decided to be established in Aligarh, in 1873.

### THE M.A.O. SCHOOL, ALIGARH

The M.A.O. School, Aligarh was inaugurated on May 24, 1875 which coincided with Queen Victoria's birthday. Henry Siddons (June 28, 1875 – May 5, 1883), an Oxford graduate, was appointed as headmaster, with a salary of Rs.400/- per month.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, the M.A.O. School offered courses in Arabic, Persian, English, Mathematics, History and Geography. The School

<sup>1</sup>S.K. Bhatnagar, *History of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh*, n.d., pp.37-38.

was affiliated with the Calcutta University. Regular classes at School began on June 1, 1875 and the first batch of outgoing students took their examination in 1877.

The opening of the School was well-received and many well-to-do families and organisations came out with promises of financial help. The U.P. Government sanctioned a monthly grant of Rs.350/- for the School. Prominent Muslim leaders supported the School with endowments commensurate with their financial and social status. The Nizam of Hyderabad appropriated a *Jagir* worth Rs.90,000/- yielding a monthly income of Rs.200/- and Sir Salar Jang gave a grant of Rs.30.000/- from his personal *Jagir* with a monthly income of Rs.100/- for the assistance of the School. Hindus, for once, also extended financial help for the School. Maharaja of Vizianagram and Maharaja of Patiala contributed a handsome amount of Rs.3000/- each for the construction of the School.

The School which started with only four students (one of them, Hameed Ullah, the son of Sayyid Ahmad's right hand man, Samiullah Khan) took rapid strides as its total strength surged to 70 odd students, in a short span of only six or seven months. Sir William Muir paid a visit to the School on November 12, 1875 and the Maharaja of Patiala visited it on December 6, 1875. The School had, by then, earned a place for itself in academic field. If one man was ever to be named for this rapid progress, it was Moulvi Samiullah Khan who deserved the whole credit.

### THE M.A.O. COLLEGE

Two years after the inception, the School was upgraded to College. Lord Lytton, the Governor-General, laid the foundation stone of the College on January 8, 1877. The establishment of the College was the crowning success of Sayyid Ahmad's work and it is by that work that his name will always be revered amongst the Indians.

It was not an easy task to run a college. In its initial stages, besides facing severe financial constraints, it had to confront stiff opposition from a section of the Muslim community. Certain articles in Sayyid Ahmad's *Tahzeebul Akhlaq* had created misunderstanding about his religious views among the Muslims. Therefore, at the outset, when the College was still in its embryonic stages, there was a widespread impression that the religious views of its founder were bound to affect the minds of the Muslim youth studying in this institution. Such apprehensions greatly hindered Sayyid Ahmad's efforts to collect donations for the College. But he was not to be deterred by these odds. His dedication to the cause and unflinching determination met with the crowning success when he was able to accumulate so much funds that eight lac rupees were spent on the construction of the College building

in twenty years. Sayyid Ahmad put aside his ego and condescended to perform masquerades, sang *ghazals* on stage beside selling his books to accomplish the onerous task of establishing a College for the Muslims.

In a significant show of support to the great cause of education and Sayyid's mission, the Muslims of the Punjab were the first to offer financial help. As early as September, 1873, Khan Bahadur Barkat Ali Khan launched a publicity campaign in Lahore for the proposed College, while Sardar Mohammad Hayat Khan, in an article contributed to the monthly Urdu magazine *Koh-i-Noor*, Lahore, appealed to the Muslims of the Punjab to come forward and contribute generously for establishing the College.<sup>1</sup>

After Siddons, the first Principal of the College, Theodore Beck took charge on February 1, 1884 and worked as the Principal till September 2, 1899. Beck, a Cambridge graduate, had the distinction of being the President of the University Students Union. He, along with Sayyid Mahmud, succeeded in hiring the services of renowned teachers like T.W. Arnold, Walter Raleigh and Theodore Morison. The College also utilised the services of Moulana Shibli Nomani and Moulvi Abdullah Ansari.

From the very outset, the College laid special emphasis on religious education. Attendance was registered at daily prayers and no one could get promotion to the next class without passing the examination in *Diniyat*. All boarders had to fast in Ramazan. *Dars-i-Quran* was included in the courses of studies in 1887.

On another level the College sought to provide the cross-section of the Muslim students chance for social interaction to promote social, cultural and ideological cohesion for the sake of national integration. This was done by providing residential facilities to the students. In 1875, the College accommodated only 66 students in its hostels and in 1898 the College provided lodging and boarding to 250 out of 349 enrolled students. This facility for the Muslim students to live together enabled them, on the one hand, to study, analyse and comprehend the various problems of their fellow brethren and widen their vision but also cultivated a deep sense of camaraderie and national integration. Theodore Beck very aptly observed that through the residential system the College would form a little world of its own. Daily intercourse between the students themselves, common interests, common pursuits, studies, sports, conversation and meals awakened a keenness of fellowship and intellectual life that nothing else could do.<sup>2</sup>

It can be claimed without fear of contradiction that there was no modern academic institution prior to the establishment of the M.A.O. College,

<sup>1</sup>History of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh, p.37.  
<sup>2</sup>The Politics of Educational Reforms, p.231.

Aligarh where the Muslim students could get together in such large numbers to identify, discuss and resolve problems facing the Muslim community on the whole. Such a situation would have been conducive to the progressive evolution of national fervour and a vigorous national aspirations. The College at Aligarh did precisely the same by making available to the Muslims a platform to crystallize their thinking into national ideology. A time came when the old students of Aligarh College came to be recognised as a community distinguishable for the similarity of their deportments and fraternity of views. The life in Aligarh began to set a particular stamp on the students. On October 23, 1892 Sir Auckland Colvin said, 'To have been an Aligarh man is, I have found, over and over again, a passport to the respect and confidence of both the Englishmen and the natives'.<sup>1</sup> Tufail Ahmad Manglori aptly describes the situation saying, "With the passage of time the M.A.O. College, Aligarh became a centre for the whole Muslim nation from where national feelings originated and spread throughout the sub-continent. A point was reached when the voice of Aligarh echoed all over the country".<sup>2</sup> This statement is substantiated by what Ata Ullah Shah Bokhari said. This inimitable orator, while addressing the students in the Union Hall of the Aligarh College remarked, "When I left Lahore, a friend of mine said that I should address in the Jamia Masjid of the city if I wanted to address the Muslims of Aligarh but if I wanted to address the Muslims of India I should deliver the speech in the Aligarh Muslim University".<sup>3</sup>

All this was achieved by setting up numerous societies in the College. The first of the kind was Siddon's Union Club which was established on August 26, 1884 on the pattern of Cambridge University. It was meant to hold discussions, debates and speech-contests. Both students and teachers participated in these debates. In 1880, another society *Anjuman Alfazr* (جمعیت الفاظ) came into existence at the behest of Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan. It had two main objectives: firstly, to help remove the existing prejudices amongst the Muslim public about the College and secondly, to help the needy students.

#### ALL-INDIA MOHAMMEDAN EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

Although Sir Sayyid's greatest dream had been fulfilled in the form of MAO College Aligarh, yet he had a strong realization that this single college was too small to fulfil the educational needs of all the Muslims of India. In order to create educational awareness among all

<sup>1</sup>Iftikhar Alam, *History of the Mohamaden College*, Agra, 1901, p.168.

<sup>2</sup>Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Musalmanon ka Roshan Mustaqbil*, Delhi, 1945, pp.219-220.

<sup>3</sup>Mohammad Saeed, *Ahang-e-Bazgash*, Lahore, 1979, p.112.

the Muslims of India, he laid the foundation of All India Muhammadan Educational Congress. Sir Sayyid was of the view that taking part in politics would be extremely harmful for the national interests of the Muslims. He, therefore, urged them to remain away from the Indian National Congress and concentrate on getting modern education.

It is noteworthy that the meetings of the Indian National Congress and Muhammadan Educational Congress were held on similar dates, so that the Muslims could easily distance themselves from politics. During Sir Sayyid's life, the head office of Educational Conference was set up in Aligarh College and the secretary of the college management committee used to be the secretary of the Educational Conference as well. But After Sir Sayyid's death, the two institutions were separated from each other. In 1890, All-India Muhammadan Educational Congress was renamed as All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference. In 1923, it was named All-India Muslim Educational Conference. In the first twelve years of the Conference, its sessions were mainly held in Northern India, especially, in UP and Punjab. During these years, five of its sessions were held in Aligarh, one in Delhi and two in Lahore.

The first meeting of this Conference was held in M.A.O. College, Aligarh on December 27, 1886 with Moulvi Samiullah Khan in the chair. The Conference was attended by 161 delegates from the Punjab, Central India, Agra and Avadh. The Conference adopted a charter of aims and objects detailed as under:-

- (a) It would seek to arrange for higher studies for the Muslims.
- (b) It would apprise itself of the state of religious education in the English (medium) schools for the Muslims and try for its improvement.
- (c) It would aim at popularizing the education of oriental studies and *Diniyat* and helping the *Ulama* – the religious scholars – in their effort to carry the task forward.
- (d) It would try to comprehend the causes of the decline of religious institutions and tide over them.

The AIMEC continued to hold its annual meetings regularly. The moving spirit behind the Conference, Sayyid Ahmad, served it as its secretary for ten years, personally supervising the arrangements for the moot many days prior to its commencement. He took special care to see that the proceedings of the meetings were published every year.

The moots convened under the Conference proved great success for their results. People would travel long distances from every corner of India, sit together, talk about national problems and undertake to pursue the path of national welfare and integration with renewed zeal and zest. Prior to that, there existed a paranoic apathy among the Muslims towards

their community welfare problems and problems of national unity. They hardly ever gathered at one platform to discuss matters of mutual interests. What to speak of provincial level, the Muslims never assembled even at the local levels to identify or mull over their imminent sufferings. The AIMEC provided a unique opportunity to the Muslims of not only the cities but also of various provinces to sit together and think of ways and means for progress and national reformation.

The AIMEC was also instrumental in providing opportunity to the Muslims to display their inborn qualities. People like Moulana Shibli Nomani, Moulana Altaf Husain Hali, Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Moulvi Nazir Ahmad, to name the few, used their various talents, through oratory and poetry, to develop in them, a desire for education and to enkindle courage of conviction, a passionate self-respect and national sympathy. Abul Kalam Azad affirmed, "In fact, this Conference is the training institute for Urdu oratory where the oratorical qualities of the greatest contemporary literary figures were sharpened".

After Sir Sayyid's death, the Conference entered a new phase of its life and its meetings were held in Calcutta, Rampur, Delhi, Madras and Bombay. A meeting of the Educational Conference held in Dacca in 1906, was attended by eminent figures from Lahore, Patiala, Hyderabad Daccan, Patna, Bombay, Madras, Lucknow, Delhi, Calcutta and Assam. Such grand congregations were seen only in one or two other meetings of the Conference. The 1909 session of the Conference held in the Burmese capital Rangoon, was attended by 250 delegates from Punjab, Bengal, Bihar, Madras, Bombay, Hyderabad Daccan and Asam. It was chaired by Mhahraja of Mahmudabad. All the delegates reached the venue of the meeting after travelling for thousands of miles by sea. With the passage of time, the Educational Conference was able to gain the support of even those people who were opposed to the political views of Sir Sayyid. For this very reason, its meetings in 1899 and 1903 were presided over by Sayyid Ameer Ali and Badruddin Tayyabji respectively.

In 1893, the Conference approved Theodore Beck's proposal for conducting educational census, aimed at finding out the causes of educational backwardness. It attempted to investigate as to why some well off Muslims were also reluctant to educate their children. Those who were given the task of gathering facts and figures of educational census tried to explore some of the main factors which kept the children of school going age away from schools. Some of the factors discovered by them were poverty, religious reasons, carelessness and indifference. This research work continued very successfully for three years and the findings of this research were regularly presented in the meetings of the Conference. In the light of interviews with 1932

families, conductors of the educational census concluded that most of the families did not send their children to schools, only because of carelessness. The task of educational census was revived in 1905, but no significant progress was seen. As long as Theodore Beck remained alive, this project was highly successful. As an experiment, some members of the Conference were sent to Punjab, UP and Bihar for gathering information. Historical essays were read out and lectures were given on morality and educational progress of the Muslims, during the annual sessions of the Educational Conference. For instance, Sayyid Mahmud delivered a lecture on the promotion of Western education in India from 1881 to 1893. The Educational Conference gave its full backing for Gokhale's bill regarding compulsory and free elementary education. At different points of time, the Conference set up six sections or wings. In 1899, female education wing was set up with Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah as its secretary. It held regular meetings on the occasion of each annual session of the Conference. The Aligarh girls' school, which was afterwards upgraded as Intermediate College, was the outcome of the efforts of the female education wing of the Educational Conference.

Social Reform Wing was set up in 1901, with Khuaja Ghulam-us-Saqalain as its secretary. Social reform is an essential component of social life and no social progress is possible without it. The wrong ideas and destructive customs of the Muslims had ruined their social life and destroyed their ethical values. Under the auspices of the social reform wing of the Educational Conference, useful literature was prepared and distributed among the Muslims.

In 1903, from the platform of the Conference, a strong voice was raised against the social evils prevailing among the Muslims. They were urged to abstain from extravagance, futile customs and un-Islamic rites performed at the time of marriage and death. They were also advised to discourage the practice of begging by healthy and professional beggars.

The Educational Conference drew the attention of untrained teachers to receive professional training from training colleges. Scholarships were sent to the principals of provincial training colleges for the assistance of those teachers who were keen to receive training from these institutions. The Educational Conference laid emphasis on the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University Training College. At the same time, it laid the foundation of Teachers' Conference, to enable the Muslim teachers teaching at various Muslim educational institutions to assemble at one place in a year, to share their experiences and in the light of their mutual consultation, draw up practicable proposals for facilitating and promoting the education of Indian Muslims.

Of the multifarious branches of the Conference, the one which devoted itself for the development and preservation of Urdu language was *Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdu*. Many valuable articles and important tracts were published under the aegis of the Conference which included *Musalmanon ki Guzishta Taleem*, *Al-Jazia*, and articles "Kutab Khana Sikanderia", "Hugooq-uz-Zimmiyeen" and "Musalmanon ki Taraqqi-o-Tanazzuli kai Asbab".

On another level the Conference undertook to ensure that material prejudicial or repugnant to the Muslim culture or religion was not taught. It forced the Allahabad University to exclude a book titled *Cox's History* from its syllabus as it contained derogatory material against the Muslims. It also prevailed upon the University to refrain from dropping Persian language from its courses. The Government was forced to accede to the demand that religious education should be taught in the government institutions.

Although the AIMEC was a non-political organisation yet anything delivered from its platform was readily claimed as the unified demand of the Muslims of the sub-continent. Sayyid Ahmad delivered his first anti-Congress speech from its pulpit and the first ever political organisation of the Muslims – the All-India Muslim League – used it as its launching pad.

#### THE ALIGARH MOVEMENT – POLITICAL ASPECT

In the disastrous aftermath of the 1857 "Rebellion" the Muslims for the first time in their thousand-year encounter with India had found themselves a subject race, with their power finally broken, their dignity outraged, their sheer survival extremely doubtful and their very existence at stake. After the War the Muslims were subjected to relentless torture and sufferings of unprecedented proportions. The following give some idea of the spirit in which some of the British officers conducted post war changes. Lyall told his father in 1858, "If the Musalmans could by any means be entirely exterminated it could be the greatest possible step towards civilizing and Christianizing the Hindustan".<sup>1</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad, for once, felt so deeply agonised at these miseries that he decided to settle in Egypt but he changed his mind a little later. The reasons for his earlier decision to quit India were as cogent and strong as were the reasons for his later retraction. His explanation testifies how strongly he felt for his people. He said, "I was extremely shocked when I was offered the property of a family, worth one lac rupees, in exchange for my loyalty. I said to myself, "There would be no one more silly and insensitive in this world than I, if I accepted to

<sup>1</sup>Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, Cambridge University Press, 1974, p.102.

become a *Taalluqadar* by usurping their property while the nation faced annihilation. Therefore, I refused to take it and said that I had no mind to stay in India. In fact, it was absolutely correct and, at that time, I did not think that the nation would ever again rise and become respectable. I could not endure the plight of my nation. For a few days, I suffered this agonising thought. Believe me, this sadness and sorrow made me look aged and turned my hair grey. In those days, I realised that it would be gross impotence, and rank apathy on my part to leave my nation in the lurch and seek a safe haven for myself somewhere else, — nay! I ought to share their sufferings, and it was my national duty to gird up my loins to tide over those difficulties that befell them. I gave up the idea of migration and chose the path of national love".<sup>1</sup>

### HINDU-MUSLIM RELATIONSHIP

Sayyid Ahmad was a strong advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity. It explains why there was never any discrimination between a Hindu and a Muslim in either Aligarh Scientific Society, Aligarh School or College. He used to refer to Hindus and Muslims as two beautiful eyes of a charming bride. But Urdu-Hindi controversy exerted so deep an influence on his thought and activities and changed his political outlook altogether that it can be regarded as a turning point in his public career.

In the wake of a Hindu movement started to press for *Bhasha* language and Devnagri script, Sayyid Ahmad's political views started to evolve into definite shape and form. He came to believe that the Two Nations could not co-exist. During the course of a discussion in those days, his friend Mr. Shakespeare remarked in amazement that he (Sir Sayyid) was talking about education for the Muslims in particular for the first time. Sayyid Ahmad's rejoinder to him carried a prophetic note. He stated, "I am now convinced that these Two Nations will never participate in anything together from their heart. This enmity and conflict, though less emphatic at present, will gain in intensity with the passage of time due to the educated people. He who lives, will see". Shakespeare remarked that it would be regrettable if his prophecy came true. Sayyid Ahmad replied, "I too should much regret, but I am sure it would prove true".<sup>2</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad believed that survival of Urdu was extremely important for the Muslims. During his stay in England, Babu Shiv Prasad pushed his dislike for the former Muslim rule in India and its heritage to the extent of pressing the Hindu members of the Scientific Society to replace Urdu by Hindi as the language of translation in the

Society and the publication of the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* in Hindi as well. These demands jolted Sayyid Ahmad. In a letter to Mohsin-ul-Mulk from London on April 29, 1870, he warned, "If it comes to be, it would open an ending saga of split and strife between the Hindus and the Muslims. The rupture would never be healed. The two communities would be irrevocably rent asunder".<sup>1</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad considered *Bhasha* a dead language. In a letter to the *AIG* on May 7, 1869, he wrote, "Wherever I went from Allahabad to Bombay, I conversed with everyone i.e. peons, officials and collies, in Urdu. Everyone understands it fully well and answers in the same. I tried my utmost to find the ancient *Bhasha* which Allahabad Association wished to put into vogue, but could not locate it". In this way, the Urdu-Hindi conflict convinced him that the Hindu interests were at variance with those of the Muslims.

### OPPOSITION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Sayyid Ahmad strongly opposed the Indian National Congress and its demands. He suggested to the Muslims to stay away from the Congress. His letters to the first Muslim president of the INC, Badruddin Tyabji, throw light on his views on the question of Muslim participation in the Congress. Sayyid Ahmad entered the lists against Tyabji, with a forthright assertion that there was no such thing as India as one Nation. "Is it supposed that the different casts and creeds living in India can become a nation? Can their aspiration and goals be similar? In my opinion it is quite impossible and when it is impossible then there can be no such thing as the "National Congress".<sup>2</sup> In another letter on February 18, 1888, Sayyid Ahmad called the Congress "Misnamed National Congress".<sup>3</sup> Sayyid Ahmad's relentless opposition to the Congress based on strong weighty arguments and a widespread resentment among the Muslims against it, forced Tyabji to write to Hume that "The Nizam and all the dignitaries of the State such as Salar Jung, Munirul Mulk, Fateh Nawaz Jung and above all Husain Bilgrami have joined the opposition led by such well known men as Sayyid Ahmad, Ameer Ali and Abdul Lateef — under these circumstances I have come to the distinct conclusion, after the most careful consideration of which I am capable, that it is time to cease holding the Congress every year".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Khutoot-e-Sir Sayyid, p.66.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Karachi, 1973, pp.128-129.

<sup>3</sup>Shan Mohammad, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan - A Political Biography*, Lahore, 1976, p.149.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.152.

<sup>1</sup>Hayat-e-Javeed, p.117.

<sup>2</sup>Hayat-i-Javeed, p.162.

## DEMANDS OF THE CONGRESS

Demands of the Congress included the election of the members to the Legislative Councils and holding of the civil service examination in India as well. Sayyid Ahmad kept silent on these demands for two years. But in 1887, he raised his voice against these demands from the platform of the AIMEC for the first time, in its meeting held in Lucknow.

Then, what was the solution to the problems of Hindu-Muslim conflicts? Of the various ways suggested as possible means to resolve the complicated controversy, elections leading to the formation of democratic set up attracted the most attention. Sayyid Ahmad came out, immediately, with an outright rejection of the proposal. He thought that a system of elections did not suit the Indian malaise. Elections, and a consequent parliamentary system of governance could suit a place where there were no differences of colour, culture, race and religion among its inhabitants. But, in the case of India, in addition to these, there existed a disproportionate imbalance between the Hindus and the Muslims in population, education and wealth. He argued that "They want that the House of Commons and House of Lords should be copied. Let us imagine that the Viceroy's Council is formed in the manner desired, i.e. members are elected by the people. And let us suppose all Muslims vote for a Muslim candidate and all Hindus vote for a Hindu. Now count how many votes the Muslim candidate will get. It is certain that the Hindu candidate will have four times as many, because their population is four times as numerous. It will be a game of dice in which one man has four dice and the other only one".<sup>1</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad was of the firm opinion that since India was a multi-national country, this system was likely to meet with failure besides proving a trap of slavery for the minority. He said, "I deeply pondered over this matter even before the Congress came out with such a demand and have come to hold this conviction, after due consideration of John Stuart Mill's opinion, that in a political system where majority vote enjoyed supremacy, it was of fundamental importance that people governed by such a system should have unity of race, religion, language and historical traditions. Presence of these things make a responsible government viable and useful, but nothing would be gained in their absence except annihilation of the country".<sup>2</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad's apprehensions, in this regard, were not unfounded. He was afraid, and quite justifiably, that under this system of elections, Muslims could not be elected as members of the Councils.

<sup>1</sup>Jamiluddin Ahmad, *Early Phase of Muslim Political Movement*, Lahore, n.d., p.24.  
<sup>2</sup>Ameen Zubairi, *Tazkira-e-Sir Sayyid*, Lahore, n.d., pp.198-199.

Pointing out these perils, he explained, "Just consider the election situation. The Hindus and the Muslims are not equal in numbers in any district. Can you say that the Muslims will dominate the Hindus and capture self-government. Recently, a venerable Muslim belonging to an ancestrally bearded family of Calcutta met me and complained "that it was a great tragedy that eighteen Muslims were likely to be elected to the city Municipal Committee but none had succeeded: all the Hindu contestants were elected, instead. Now, the Government should nominate a Muslim. The situation is similar in every city. Even in Aligarh, had there been no special arrangement, no Muslim, not even our most respected friend, Moulvi Khawaja Mohammad Yusuf, could ever have got votes sufficient for his election, and, as a result, would have waited expectantly to be nominated by the Government".<sup>1</sup>

Again on November 23, 1886, Sayyid Ahmad further explained his point of view in an article published in the *AIG*. He argued, "If at any future time there should be a Parliament with Hindus and Muslims sitting on two sides of the House, it is probable that the animosity which would ensue would far exceed anything that could be witnessed in England. Moreover, the Mohammedans would be in a permanent minority and their case would resemble that of the unfortunate Irish members in the British Parliament who have always been outvoted by the Englishmen".<sup>2</sup>

### CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

The examination for the Civil Service, responsible for the administrative set up of India, was held in England which prevented the Indians from competing for it. In addition, the Government decreased the age limit for the examination from 21 to 19.

In this background, Surendranath Banerjea started an agitation against the downward revision of the age limit. Sayyid Ahmad fully endorsed this protestation. He considered this decision a conspiracy to close the doors of the services on the Indians. Once again through the columns of the *AIG*, Sayyid Ahmad urged the Indians to hold meetings all over India and to draw up memorials protesting against the change".<sup>3</sup>

Both Banerjea and Sayyid Ahmad, with mutual understanding on the subject, carried on the campaign against this decision of the Government. Banerjea visited Aligarh on June 21, 1877, where a meeting was held which was presided over by Sayyid Ahmad. As expected Sayyid Ahmad strongly criticised the Government, in his presidential address, on this controversy. On May 17, 1884, another meeting was held in Aligarh, at

<sup>1</sup>Sirajuddin Ahmad, *Sir Sayyid Key Lecturon Ka Mujmooa*, Lahore, 1890, p.253.

<sup>2</sup>M. Yusuf Abbasi, *Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia*, Islamabad, 1981, p.237.

<sup>3</sup>*Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia*, p.24.

which Banerjea delivered a strong speech demanding that the Civil Service Examination should be held in India as well.

Gradually this protest started gaining momentum and assumed the form of anti-government movement. It forced Sayyid Ahmad to review his stance, as fidelity to the British Government was an element of faith with him. Therefore, he disassociated himself from the agitation as he saw it assuming violent proportion. Consequently, he opted to oppose the holding of the Examination in India because he also saw little opportunity for the Muslims in it. He termed the suggestion for the Civil Service Examination to be held in India and England simultaneously as a demand resulting from the clamouring of the Congress and that the Congress might be projecting views of other nationalities but not those of the Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

#### REVIEW OF ALLEGATIONS ON SAYYID AHMAD KHAN

Apart from some Hindu historians, a few Muslims, like Moulvi Tufail Ahmad Manglori and Atique Siddiqui were of the view that Sayyid Ahmad Khan's opinion about the Congress were formed under the influence of Theodore Beck – Principal of M.A.O. College, Aligarh. Manglori ventilated his outburst saying, "During the reign of the Company (East India Company) the drummer announced the state proclamation that public belonged to God, country to the king and command to the Company Bahadur. Similarly, but unfortunately, the same was true of Aligarh College in Sir Sayyid's old age which announced that the nation belonged to God, College to Sir Sayyid and command to Beck Bahadur."<sup>2</sup>

However, the facts point to the opposite and contradict the alleged tutelage of Sayyid Ahmad to Beck. The year 1887 saw Sayyid Ahmad taking up cudgels against the Congress. Sayyid Ahmad took this stance at the ripe of age of 70, while Beck was only greenish 28. A young raw mind that Beck was in those days, could hardly be fancied to have influenced a man of Sayyid Ahmad's intellectual calibre, experience, insight and political acumen – and at that advanced age. The allegations were highly improbable as Sayyid Ahmad was under no obligation to Beck as the former was the employer, the latter an employee. Sayyid Ahmad was, in no way, obliged to follow Beck's counsels. As far as his views on method of election were concerned, he had aired his opinion long before the inception of the Congress. Once, speaking on Local Self-government Bill on January 12, 1883, he postulated, "Hindustan, in itself, is a continent that inhabits different nations which follow different

religions. A strict adherence to these religious codes separates even the neighbours. In India, where differences based on caste system still exist and where different nations have not blended well and where religious conflicts are in full swing, where education in its modern meanings has not developed in all sections of the society in equal proportions, I believe election to Local Boards and District Councils, for the sake of supporting various demands, based on its simple and pure principle of majority shall create larger problems rather than producing civilized concepts. So long as religious conflict and caste discrimination persist as the greatest factors in the socio-political situation in India, the pure system of election can not be set into motion satisfactorily".<sup>1</sup>

These views reveal Sayyid Ahmad's approach to the problem and thinking of a mind steeped in and imbued with the futuristic concern for the well-being of his nation. He laid bare his considered opinions on the subject on January 12, 1883, whereas, Beck arrived in India in November, 1883, nine months after his speech.<sup>2</sup>

Moulvi Tufail Ahmad also alleged that "Beck had so dominated Sayyid Ahmad in his later days that Sayyid Ahmad willingly surrendered *Aligarh Institute Gazette* to him". The fact is that Sayyid Ahmad's name always appeared as Editor on the *AIG*, right from its inception. Whereas the Gazette volumes from November, 1897 to 1899 are not available even in Aligarh itself.<sup>3</sup>

That the allegations against Sayyid Ahmad were ill-founded and biased are amply borne out by their inherent flaws. Those who levelled these charges of contradictions in Sayyid Ahmad's character and flaws in his personality, perhaps, failed to realize that the man was made of sterner stuff. He would openly and dauntlessly support a cause, without fear of criticism or condemnation, if he thought it was in the interest of his nation. Even Beck, once had the taste of Sayyid Ahmad's courage of conviction and bold defence of his national honour. The Principal, Theodore Beck, had made a particular uniform necessary for the students of the College for daily 'Drill'. The students, opting the easy way out, started wearing the same uniform to College. It was enough to make Sayyid Ahmad extremely angry. He condemned Beck saying, "There is a trick in it. He wants to ruin my life-long achievement". He delivered a lecture, afterwards, in the presence of Beck. Beck did not like the dress-uniform comprising Turkish cap (Fez), coat and the English shoes.

<sup>1</sup>Tazkira-e-Sir Sayyid, pp.169-170.

<sup>2</sup>A Mayers, *Theodore Beck and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan – The Myth of Provocateur and Puppet* (Unpublished Thesis), 1973.

<sup>3</sup>Sir Syed Ahmad Khan – A Political Biography, p.172.

<sup>1</sup>Tazkira-e-Sir Sayyid, p.205.

<sup>2</sup>Musalmanon ka Roshan Mustaqbil, p.299.

Sayyid Ahmad referred to Beck's disliking saying, "This dress of yours that is Turkish cap, coat and the English shoes is very nice. The same dress is used by the Sultan of Rome, his courtiers and servants. We have adopted the same. In India, some short-sighted, proud and myopic Englishmen wish to keep the Indian in an abject state and look down upon them. They oppose the use of this cap and shoes".

Moulvi Abdul Haq stated that the last sentence was applauded so enthusiastically that the hall echoed with it. Theodore Beck turned pale and became extremely nervous. At the end of the meeting, all the students tore off their coloured silk turbans. Some made shirts and some curtains out of them.<sup>1</sup>

As stated in the preceding lines, Sayyid Ahmad always gave priority to the interest of the Muslim nation and never cared for any opposition in this regard. Hume, the founder of the Congress, in order to coax the Muslims into joining the Congress, "gave a press statement in November, 1888, that the Congress enjoyed the support of Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General of India. Sayyid Ahmad issued a very strong riposte. He wrote that the activities of the Congress were against the interests of the Muslims as a nation. They would, therefore, oppose this party even if it enjoyed the support of Governor-General, Lord Dufferin, Secretary of State for India and all the members of the British Parliament.

Similarly, the daily *Pioneer* of Allahabad suggested in February, 1878, that the Director, Public Instruction should be included in the Managing Committee of the M.A.O. College. Sayyid Ahmad, without wasting any time, issued a rejoinder explaining that the suggestion was unwarranted and unacceptable. He took the plea that the fundamental principles of the College, i.e. self-help, cultural training and system of education, did not permit any English DPI to be installed to supervise these activities.<sup>2</sup>

All these facts go to prove conclusively that Sayyid Ahmad's ideas and thoughts about the Congress were the result of his considered personal opinions and, thus, Moulvi Tufail Ahmad's allegations had nothing to do with reality.

By and by, as the time passed, the profound wisdom and futuristic import of Sayyid Ahmad's views gained widespread approbation. In 1926, Moulana Mohamed Ali praised his political stance paying tribute to Sayyid Ahmad Khan with his typical objective aplomb, "Viewing the acts and deeds of the last generation today, it is very easy to be wise after the events. In my opinion, Sir Sayyid's methodology was based on wisdom

<sup>1</sup>Moulvi Abdul Haq, *Chund Ham Asar*, Karachi, 1959, pp.270-271.  
<sup>2</sup>History of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh, p.71.

and though I wish, he had not said that which slipped through his mouth, I am impelled to admit that no well-wisher of the Muslims of India could adopt a way other than that, for the guidance of the Muslims".

Allama Iqbal also commended the political stand-point of Sayyid Ahmad when he said, "I admit of this fact that the strategy adopted by, Sir Sayyid, half a century ago, was right and, after the bitter experience of the present times, importance of this strategy is being felt".<sup>1</sup>

In the same way, a famous nationalist newspaper *Madina* (Bijnor) commented, "When the Congress was established, Sir Sayyid restrained the Muslims from joining it and it is a fact that Sir Sayyid's action proved much useful. Exigencies, on which Sir Sayyid's restrictions were based, were absolutely justified and correct".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>M. Rafique Afzal (ed) *Guftaar-e-Iqbal*, Lahore, 1969, p.73.

<sup>2</sup>Madina (Bijnor), editorial, October 22, 1913.