

Subject:- PERSIAN

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Unit-V

Topic- Study of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

Online Class Materials

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Syed Ahmad Khan

Political career

In 1878, Sir Syed was nominated to the Viceroy's Legislative Council. He testified before the education commission to promote the establishment of more colleges and schools across India. At the start of his political career, Sir Syed was an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity and India's composite culture, wanting to empower all Indians. In the same year, Sir Syed founded the Muhammadan Association to promote political co-operation amongst Indian Muslims from different parts of the country. In 1886, he organised the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference in Aligarh, which promoted his vision of modern education and political unity for Muslims. His works made him the most prominent Muslim politician in 19th century India, often influencing the attitude of Muslims on various national issues. He supported the efforts of Indian political leaders Surendranath Banerjee and Dadabhai Naoroji to obtain representation for Indians in the government and civil services. In 1883, he founded the Muhammadan Civil Service Fund Association to encourage and support the entry of Muslim graduates into the Indian Civil Service (ICS).

All-India Muslim League

Sir Syed's educational model and progressive thinking inspired Muslim elites who supported the All India Muslim League. Ahmad Khan founded the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference in 1886 in order to promote Western education, especially science and literature, among India's Muslims. The conference, in addition to generating funds for Ahmad Khan's Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, motivated Muslim elites to propose expansion of educational uplift elsewhere, known as the Aligarh Movement. In turn this new awareness of Muslim needs helped stimulate a political consciousness among Muslim elites that went on to form the AIML which led Muslims of India towards formation of Pakistan.

Overall, Sir Syed is hailed as a Muslim social reformer who promoted communal harmony and peaceful coexistence of all communities in India. However in later days he presented the idea of Muslim nationhood under the fear of Hindu domination which became the basis for creation of Pakistan and thus Sir Syed is also considered among the founders of Pakistan. In an undivided India under the British rule, he was worried about Muslim

backwardness and unwillingness to adopt modern education. He worked towards social and educational upliftment of Muslims so as to enable them to walk shoulder to shoulder with all other communities in India.

Two-Nation Theory

Sir Syed is considered as the first person to theorize the idea of separate nationhood for Muslims in subcontinent. In a speech at Meerut in 1866 he presented an overall scenario of post colonial phase in which he described Muslims and Hindus as two nations. He's regarded as the father of Two-Nation Theory and the pioneer of Muslim nationalism which led to the partition of India. Urdu-Hindi controversy is seen as the transformation of Sir Syed's views towards Muslim nationhood which he expressed in his speeches during later days.

While fearful of the loss of Muslim political power owing to the community's backwardness, Sir Syed was also averse to the prospect of democratic self-government, which would give control of government to the Hindu-majority population:

"At this time our nation is in a bad state in regards education and wealth, but God has given us the light of religion and the Quran is present for our guidance, which has ordained them and us to be friends. Now God has made them rulers over us. Therefore we should cultivate friendship with them, and should adopt that method by which their rule may remain permanent and firm in India, and may not pass into the hands of the Bengalis... If we join the political movement of the Bengalis our nation will reap a loss, for we do not want to become subjects of the Hindus instead of the subjects of the "people of the Book..."

Later in his life he said, "Suppose that the English community and the army were to leave India, taking with them all their cannons and their splendid weapons and all else, who then would be the rulers of India?..."

Is it possible that under these circumstances two nations—the Mohammedans and the Hindus—could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other. To hope that both could remain equal is to desire the impossible and the inconceivable. But until one nation has conquered the other and made it obedient, peace cannot reign in the land."