

RARE BOOK

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This thesis presents the social thought of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in its essential aspects but is not an exhaustive study of all the aspects of his varied personality.

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I, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work.

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The thesis consists of eight chapters dealing with 'Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan', 'Individual and Social Relationship', 'Individual and Social Progress', 'Individual and Civilisation', 'Individual and Custom', 'Education', 'Religion' and 'Conclusion' respectively.

As sociologists describe the continuity of human actions in terms of social relations, so Sir Syed is aware of the role of social relationship as a process of interaction. He clearly and lucidly brings out the importance of social relationship in changing man and society. To him an individual can ill-afford to ignore the significance of social relations. He well-realised the hidden meaning of positive and negative social relationships in respect of individual welfare.

The positive social relationship includes good behaviour, moderation, self-culture, sympathy, co-operation, respect for others, nobility, truthfulness, sociability and imitation. These qualities infuse new life into the individual as a social being.

The negative social relationship deals with jealousy, shortsightedness, mendacity, hypocrisy, bigotry and flattery. These prepare an individual for social isolation and are destructive in their nature. Social discord and individual maladjustment are the results of the negative aspects of social relationship. Human vices, social ills and national hatred are their products.

In Sir Syed's concept of individual and social progress, intellect and understanding play a great role. He postulates that

national progress without individual progress is not possible. Social progress is in keeping with the pace of time. National progress is dependent upon the conditions of progress which must accord with the time-spirit. To understand the social conditions against the background of the time-spirit is a step towards the achievement of progress.

Sir Syed points out that it is individual himself who is responsible for the development of his own powers and the improvement of society in which he lives. National progress rests entirely on the collective behaviour and morality of individuals rather than on any outside agency or authority. The root of social progress lies in the desire of individuals for improvement, advancement and prosperity.

Sir Syed defines civilisation in his own unique way as an attempt to transform values, to change bad into good, to adjust the pattern of behaviour to the law of Nature and to develop human qualities. Hence, civilisation is the manifestation of tendencies, aptitudes and behaviours developing from within. In simple connotation, civilisation differentiates between the progressive and static conditions of society. To civilise oneself is to humanise oneself as a member of one human family.

Sir Syed describes customs and their reactions on man and society. Custom is what is repeatedly done, forms a large part of the laws of every country, makes religion powerless and rules like an absolute monarch.

Sir Syed dedicated his whole life to the cause of education. His main object was to enable the Muslims to regain their lost status and prestige by adopting modern system of education and thus by adjusting themselves to the spirit and form of modern life. Two problems confronted them; To provide higher education for their community and to combine secular education with religious instruction. Sir Syed solved these two problems by founding the M.A.O. College which combined the secular and religious aspects of education and harmonised the spiritual outlook of the Muslim community with the fundamentals of Western sciences. Through the agency of modern education, ties of friendship between the Muslims and the British were strengthened, removing mutual distrust and suspicion.

According to him

The chief function of education is to improve morals, cultivate fellow-feelings and protect human rights. It develops the power of thought and creates a desire for the acquisition of knowledge. Its purpose is to make man generous, magnanimous, broad-minded, virtuous and honest. It also helps to eradicate the causes of poverty and evil. Without it, no progress in society is possible.

Education and training are closely inter-related. Without training no real education is achieved. Training promotes morality, develops personality and fosters co-operation, unity and sympathy. Mere education does not civilise a person, unless it is sustained by training.

The philosophy of naturalism was tending to undermine the very foundation of religious belief in the 19th century. Islam as well as other religions ^{was} challenged by naturalism. In order to protect religion, Sir Syed devoted himself to its study against the background of modern philosophy and science and came to the conclusion that the touchstone of religion is human nature, or Nature itself. Thus, religion emanates from the human heart or Nature which is the creation of God. In order to make religion understandable or realisable, it requires a rationalistic approach. Sir Syed explains thus : The universe is governed by the law of Nature. In the acceptance of Nature, there is no denial of God. In Nature man sees a design which is the work of a Designer. Religion is the phenomenon of the universe as created by God.

To Sir Syed education and religion are the problems of individual and social progress. ^{While describing} In chapters relating to 'Education' and 'Religion' he brings out the essentials for the cultural existence of man and the upliftment of society. Without education and religion an individual does not fulfil his mission of life. His socialisation can only be through the factors of education and religion. Thus in the social thought of Sir Syed all factors of socio-cultural importance play their role for the well-being of human personality, the good of society and the welfare of the nation.

CHAPTER I

LIFE AND WORK OF SIR SYED AHMED KHAN
(1817 - 1898)

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan stands out as a great man of his age. His huge stature contributed to the making of his domineering personality. His elegant manners attracted attention from everyone. His outstanding achievements threw his *Contemporaries* into the background. *His* qualities helped him ⁱⁿ sustaining the position he occupied in his life-time.

Maulana Hali tells us that in the beginning he was not a 'brilliant boy', *but* later ^{on} shone out as the most illustrious figure of his day. His true greatness lay in his tenacity of purpose and in his indomitable will, which qualifies his character and for which he received approbation from all quarters — friends and foes alike. His bitterest antagonist, could not but appreciate what he said and did.

His noble and strenuous efforts to improve the condition of his discontented people, his high ideal to spread knowledge and enlightenment amongst the illiterate and the ignorant, his keen desire to impart the scientific learning of the West, and his persistent exertions to found learned societies and educational institutions were the colourful aspects of his dominant personality.

Social Background

~~And~~ Syed Ahmed Khan had a feeling that the British rule was an unavoidable necessity for India. He, therefore, sought the co-operation of the foreign rule in bringing about reform in the domains of society, education and religion. To achieve the end in view, he could not afford to be orthodox and intolerant. Nor could he be anti-religionist. He respected all religions, as it was not in the spirit of Islam to oppose any religion. He could not revolt against the British, as the Quran does not preach disloyalty of a Muslim to a non-Muslim ruler. In the circumstances there was no alternative left for him but to seek the help of the British in the work of social and national uplift.

The important reforms, effected by Lord Warren Hastings and Lord Cornwallis, had failed to produce any anticipated benefits. The old system was being replaced by a new one, which had yet to take root and function in a smooth and efficient manner. No step hitherto was taken to improve the social condition. *In those days there was no class in India, able and willing, to assist the officers and to do voluntary work without any reward or recompense.* The Government had not yet realised the big mistake it had committed in taking away entire responsibility from the Indian hands.

Later, during the time of Lord William Bentinck the most important decision, which gave rise to a controversy, was the question of promoting only the cause of the English language and education at the expense of the vernacular education. The English language thus became the only medium of exchange of thought and correspondence at the Government level. It was believed that English would open the doors of European wisdom and learning for Indians.

In 1854, Sir Charles Wood, afterwards Lord Halifax, in his memorable Education Despatch, laid the foundation of higher education controlled by the State. The Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie (1848-58), planned a University education with affiliated Colleges which were established in each of the Presidency towns. But his aggressive political policy soon nullified down his educational and domestic reforms. The new *drastic changes* introduced by Lord Dalhousie in the socio-political structure alarmed the common people, who saw a lurking danger in the air. The brewing trouble could not be *checked but developed into a revolt.*

Lord Dalhousie's order of things great odds *had* to be faced by him in introducing reforms of socio-political nature. As a social reformer, he closely watched the development of the great *revolt* in the country. There were two main currents which were instrumental in influencing his thought-world : the

socio-political discontent in India and the influence of Western civilisation and culture.¹

The first part of the nineteenth century witnessed in India a remarkable interest in religious discussion and analytical study. Fresh avenues of religious thought were explored and new sects founded, such as Brahma Samaj and Theosophical Society. These stood for the unity of all religions. Christian missionaries were already in the field. They attacked the religions of India, including Islam. Muslims were deplorably backward in education and their political power was on the wane.

In such a state of affairs, only a man of great quality and calibre could rise to the occasion and dispel ignorance and fanaticism by the spell of modern knowledge and learning. Who could this man be other than Sir Syed Ahmed Khan?

Career of Sir Syed

Sir Syed played the role of a great leader of the Indian Muslim community in the nineteenth century. He was at the helm of their affairs for more than five decades occupying more or less the position of a renowned teacher. His subtle wit, his charming expression, his strong views, his dynamic power, and his unique qualities combined in him a thinker, a reformer, an orator, a man of letters, a philosopher and a leader.

1. S.M. Abdullah : Urdu Prose under the Influence of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p.3; published by Mohammed Ashraf, Lahore, 1940.

He was a great scholar of oriental learning.² It certainly redounds to his credit that, though he was ignorant of the English language and other European languages, yet he was well-versed in the fundamentals of the British constitution and the principles of Western jurisprudence. Brought up as an oriental scholar, he became the apostle of English learning amongst his co-religionists. He was not only an educational and social force but also a political power of no mean importance. In fact, he was a dynamic factor in inspiring and guiding his community and his country. To regenerate a decadent community is a glorious tribute to his name.

Sir Syed's career can be conveniently divided into three distinct periods which show the progressive stages of his mental development :

Period I - From the beginning of his literary activity to 1857.

Period II - From 1857 to his visit to England in 1869.

Period III - From 1870 to his death in 1898.

Period I

Sir Syed's early education was conducted on traditional pattern which left an indelible impression on his character. In his early life, he came in contact with the Wahabi Movement

2. Hali, Altaf Husain : Hayat-e-Jaweed, p. 24.

through his attachment to the renowned Wahabi leader, Shah Ismail Shaheed.³ During this period he evinced fervour and interest in scientific research and undertook the work of editing at the instance of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.⁴

The following books were written by him during this period :

Jam-e-Jam (1839) - Jam-e-Jam was the first historical work written by him in Persian, which gives a short account of the forty-three Mughal Emperors from Amir Timur to Abu Zafar Sirajuddin Bahadur Shah, the last ruler of the Mughal Dynasty.

Jala'ul-qulub be-Zikr il Mahhub (1839) - It is a life-sketch of the Holy Prophet, describing the true traditions of Islam. This treatise was widely read in Maulood assemblies, annually held in memory of the Holy Prophet.

Tokha-i-Hassan (1844) - A refutation of Shia doctrines.

Bahe-i-Sunnat dar Kadd-i-Siddiqat (1850) - A conclusive and analytical treatise from the Wahabi point of view.⁵

Sir Syed translated Abi Sina's Persian treatise on gravitation, Al-Tashil fi Jarra-Sagil, into Urdu in 1844. His other two treatises, Fawaidul-Afkar fi Amalul Farjan, a translation of his

3. S.M. Abdullah : Urdu Prose under the Influence of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p.10; published by Mohd. Ashraf, Lahore, 1940.

4. Ibid., p. 11

5. Maulana Hali tells us that except this, he never wrote any other book or article on this subject.

grand-father's book of the same name and Qawl-i-Matin dar Ibtal-i-Amin, a treatise on the refutation of the idea of the movement of earth, are true specimens of his traditional learning.

Asarus Sanadid (1847) - When Sir Syed was posted at Delhi as a Sader-e-Amin, he, with the assistance of his personal friend and a great scholar, Shaikh Inam Baksh Sahbai, wrote his most important work, Asarus Sanadid, being an account of the remains, ruins, antiquities, architecture, monuments and mausoleums of Delhi. As a standard work on the subject, it has received encomium at the hands of European savants also. It is an authentic source of the history of Delhi. Mr. Robert, the then Collector of Delhi, attempted an English translation of the book but left it unfinished. The celebrated French orientalist, Mr. Garcin de Tassy, published its French translation in 1861. It attracted the attention of the Royal Asiatic Society, which, in appreciation of Sir Syed's high quality of research in antiquities, elected him an honorary member of its body.⁶

A'in-i-Akbari (1855) - In 1855, at Bijnour, he edited the historical work, A'in-i-Akbari, and wrote a history of Bijnour. A'in-i-Akbari as edited by him, of which only the first and the third volumes are extant; the second having been lost during the Mutiny of 1857, is a living testimony to his diligent researches and sustained endeavours in the exposition of detailed critical notes, copious glosses, elaborate illustrations and correction of mistakes. His history of Bijnour was also lost during the Mutiny.

Sir Syed edited two more historical works, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri and Tarikh-e-Feroz Shahi of Barni, which were highly appreciated and valued for his scholarly acumen, insight and labours.

6. Halli, Altaf Husain : Hayat-e-Jaweed, p. 50

Among his theological works of this period, ^{Some of them are:} One of them dealt with an enquiry of the word, nasara, used for Christians by Muslims and gave cause for misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims. He ably proved that the nomenclature was derived from the word, nasr, meaning help, and the word, nasara, bore no other meaning than a helper. This nipped in the bud the controversy about the word, nasara. His other treatise, Taby'inul Kalam, has an importance of its own in the field of theological research as it establishes the unity of the Holy Quran and the Bible. It is an attempt to discover possibilities of social intercourse between the Christians and Muslims. It is indisputably the first book of its kind. Its chief aim is to establish the basic unity of all Semitic religions and to create an atmosphere of religious appreciation and tolerance.

Period II

Sir Syed was stationed at Bijnaur when the Mutiny of 1857 broke out in all its ferocity. This sad episode was a turning-point in the life of Sir Syed, and highlighted the great qualities of his mind and heart. In the midst of rioting and bloodshed, Sir Syed saved many lives including those of Englishmen and Englishwomen who found a welcome shelter under his benign care, when the hand of man was wreaking vengeance on all alike. Though the wave of revolt was passing over from district to district bringing in its wake acts of violence and bloodshed,

It was the *brave* and courageous personality of Sir Syed, who could save human lives in that gloomy hour from destruction. During this period of uncertainty and risk, his deep regard for the British and his unshakeable loyalty to the British Government ever remained firm and steadfast.

The after-effects of the Mutiny were terrible. The Government began to punish ruthlessly the mutineers and others who were suspected of sedition. Thousands of innocent persons suffered owing to the personal animus or malice of an informer, but Sir Syed played the role of a saviour by bringing home the hard fact to the authorities that the innocent had to be differentiated from the guilty and thus saved many a family from ruin. He had the satisfaction of exerting his influence in the direction of tempering justice with mercy. A big Taluka, yielding an annual rental of one and a half lakhs of rupees, formerly owned by a rebel chief, was recommended by the Collector of Bijnaur, to be awarded to Sir Syed for his loyal services rendered at the time of the mutiny, but he boldly declined the offer, as his conscience did not permit him to enjoy an estate at the price of the blood of his countrymen.⁷

It was at this critical stage that he discarded the idea of migrating to Egypt as he thought that his stay in India would be a service done to his community and his country.

7. C.S. Srinivasachar : Social and Religious Movements in Nineteenth Century, pp. 6 and 7.

Out of this turmoil, he evolved a new social outlook and a new religious approach in order to bring about an atmosphere of reconciliation with the British.

He was perturbed to realise the evil effects of the Mutiny for which the Muslim community had been held mainly responsible. He also felt that his co-religionists were in the grip of religious ignorance and their pristine faith had degenerated into irrational and outmoded customs, practices and beliefs. That his community in particular had adopted an attitude of indifference towards Western education, was a sore point with him. It was also a fact that the Mutiny had widened the gulf of estrangement between the rulers and the ruled. He felt that something had to be done to remove the misunderstanding and to bring the two nearer to each other. It struck him that the remedy for the social malaise lay in a spiritual approach. In short, he made strenuous efforts to prove to the rulers the fidelity of the Muslim community and to show that Muslims and Christians both belonged to kindred Semitic religions and that there was between them common ground for mutual appreciation and trust rather than for hatred and suspicion. He further convinced both his community and the British Government that Muslims were not religiously enjoined (as unfortunately it was so thought) to revolt against the Government. In his *Tarikh-e-Sarkashi-e-Bijnour* he analysed the causes of the Mutiny and tried to bridge the gulf between the Government and the people by removing *misgivings and* *misapprehensions*. He wrote another famous treatise, *Asbat-e-*

Bagawat-e-Hind, which was translated into English by Col. Graham. In this book, he made the point clear that if the Muslims had erred, it was only due to their ignorant attitude and they could easily be won back, if the Government tactfully dealt with them.

In the Asbab-e-Bagawat-e-Hind, Sir Syed brought out some valuable and practicable suggestions for the rulers of India, which they had never received from any other source. He stated boldly his views on the subject, which created a strong impression at the time on the governing class. He did not even hesitate to point out the blemishes of the administration which helped in the outbreak of the Mutiny. The existence of bad feelings between the natives and the rulers was due to want of sympathy on the part of the latter. He pointed out that mere sentimental grievances should not be the criterion of judging the actions of those in power, but at the same time it was a great mistake to disregard the sentiments of a subject people, and the magnitude of this error was heightened, when one dealt with the oriental people.⁸

In 1860, he started a bilingual paper, "The Loyal Mohammedans of India," with the idea of bringing the facts to light in regard to families and persons who had remained loyal to the British Government during the Mutiny and described the Muslim gentry who helped and rescued the British during the Mutiny.

8. The Home News : November 20, 1835.

His other literary works during the period are Commentary on the Bible, Essays on Islam, Life of the Prophet Mohammed and A Rejoinder to Dr. Hunter's book entitled "Are the Mussalman of India Loyal?"

The Scientific Society

Sir Syed founded the Scientific Society at Ghazipur in 1864, mainly with a view to reconciling the oriental with the occidental ways of thinking. This, he proposed to achieve through the translation of standard English works into Urdu, so that his community which was ignorant of Western ideas, or was not in touch with Western education, might come under the influence of European thought and culture. The Society had to be transferred later to Aligarh with its founder. It may be observed here that with the establishment of this Society, an honest effort had been made by Sir Syed to bring Hindus and Muslims on a common platform of non-controversial nature. The Duke of Argyle (the then Secretary of State for India) was its patron, Lieut.-Governor of the Punjab and Bengal, were its Vice-patrons and Maharaja of Patiala, was its principal supporter. *The society won* great popularity and some important treatises on subjects like history, agriculture, biography and political economy were published by it.

The Victoria School

Convinced of the utility of Western arts and sciences, he worked out a plan for Anglo-oriental education in India.

Two months after the establishment of the Scientific Society, he laid the foundation stone of an English School at Chazipur in 1864, which was later called the Victoria School.

The British Indian Association

On 10th May 1866, he inaugurated the British Indian Association, a fore-runner of the Indian National Congress. The aim of the Association was to keep the members of the House of Commons in touch with Indian public opinion. He saw the necessity of bringing Indian affairs before the British Parliament for discussion, but regretted the indifference with which they were dealt with. For this state of affairs he blamed his countrymen, who showed utter disregard for espousing their cause.

He also deplored the fact that Indians had little or no voice in the management of the affairs of their country. Whenever any measure adopted by the Government was objectionable to them, they just brooded over it and complacently accepted it but discontent rankled in their heart. He made it clear that it was the duty of the associations to express their frank and honest opinion on the acts of the Government.⁹ He thus educated the people in politics and exhorted them to become conversant with the ways of the Government.

9. History of Revolt in Bijnaur - A district in United Provinces.

Period III

This period extends from the time of his visit to England to his last days and is characterised by the transformation of his ideas under the Western influences in matters of education, religion and politics. He was deeply influenced by the ideas and movements in England of the nineteenth century.

His writings of this period give a clear indication that his life was coloured with the ideas of the Victorian age. The advance of democracy, the general diffusion of modern knowledge and the progress of science in Europe created an intellectual and spiritual agitation in him. On account of Darwinism, a conflict arose between belief and reason of which he was an advocate in India. As an expression of revolt manifested in the clash between religion and science, he was in forefront as a pacifier. All traditional moorings were swept away by the stormy upsurge of science in which his contribution was no less insignificant. In the domain of conflict in ideologies, he showed an edifying way to social peace and concord. As a defender of faith, he attempted to establish the truth of religion on scientific grounds.

He saw the weakness of the Muslim community which was completely aloof from the thoughts and movements of the nineteenth century. He endeavoured not only to bring about a change in the dogmatic outlook but also to make them realise the importance of independence of mind in individual as well as social life.¹⁰

10. The Daily Telegraph, 4th March 1886.

Sir Syed had the long cherished desire to visit England in order to gain, by personal experience and observation, a fuller insight into the civilisation and culture of the West, and acquaint himself with social, religious, educational and political institutions of Europe. He, therefore, accompanied his son to England in 1869. He carefully and minutely studied the systems of education at different levels prevailing there with a view to introducing it in India in a modified form.

After his return from England in 1870 he became all the more convinced that his own community as well as his ^{other} countrymen were in urgent need of modern education. He had shaken off the orthodox belief that the Western sciences could be as well taught in vernacular as in English. His zeal for the spread of modern education was misunderstood by his co-religionists. Some called him an atheist, others believed him to be anti-Christ, and the priest of Mecca denounced him in contemptible terms. This did not hinder him, nor did it deter him in the attempt to implement the scheme of an Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh.

Sir Syed now took upon himself the task of persuading his community not only to co-operate with the British rule but also to acquire Western knowledge and culture.

His works, ^{of this period} mainly devoted to education, politics and religion, greatly influenced the thought of those who helped in the cause of his mission. His important works are as follows :

- 1. Khutabat-i-Ahmadia (compiled in 1809-70, in London);
- ii. Tahzibul Akhlaque (published on 24.12.1876) - A Journal of outstanding merit;
- iii. Tafsir-ul-Quran (started in 1876 - incomplete) - An original contribution to Muslim Theology.

In 1871, Dr. Hunter published his book, "Our Indian Mussalmans" in which he tried to insinuate that the Muslims of India had no better choice than to remain hostile to the British. This could not escape the notice of Sir Syed, who gave a caustic rejoinder, supported by relevant facts, to Dr. Hunter's book. His criticism could not but be appreciated and was first published in the 'Pioneer' and then an Urdu translation of it was released in the Journal of the Scientific Society.¹¹

Sir Syed was one of those modern writers, who had rightly grasped the spirit of controversy in the matter of Islam raging then in Europe and adopted the new method of defence for protecting Islam which was exposed to the onslaught of Western civilisation.

This led him to expound his theory of modern Islam reconstructed on social, economic, educational and political ideas in consonance with modern scientific methods of research. Such ideas are prominently expressed in his Khutbat.

The methods he followed in the preparation of his book were based upon the critical examination of the sources of the life of the Holy Prophet and the results of his scientific researches in the fields of religion, culture and physical sciences.

11. Scientific Society, 24th November 1871 to 23rd February 1872 fourteen issues.

Sir Syed said that, with the exception of the infallible authority of the Holy Quran, Hadith (tradition) and Fiqha (schools of canon law) have to pass through the test of reason and natural laws. He affirmed that there was nothing against the laws of Nature in the Holy Quran.¹²

In Tahzibul Ahlaque, he vigorously attacked social conservatism. The Journal was brought out by Sir Syed in order to modernise the religious ideas of Muslims, to induce them to take to Western education and to reform the community. It dealt with religious, social and educational topics.

It aroused hostile criticism. Sir Syed was dubbed as an apostate, a worshipper of Nature and an atheist. The newspapers — Anwarul-Afaq and Nurul Anwar — were started as means of counter-propaganda and Sir Syed was ridiculed in the pages of the Gudh Punch.¹³

Sir Syed had realised that Islam in India was surrounded with dangers, which were ^{to} be faced with courage and perseverance. He perceived clearly that the attacks of the Christian missionaries against Islam were creating serious misunderstandings in the minds of the people, which had to be counteracted by religious, social and educational reforms.

The second danger was political in nature based on the erroneous assumption, that the Muslims of India had been conspiring against the British.¹⁴

12. S.M. Abdullah : Urdu Prose under the Influence of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p.28; published by Mohammed Ashraf, Lahore, 1940.

13. Ram Babu Saksena : A History of Urdu Literature, p. 271.

14. Maulana Hali : Hayat-e-Jaweed, p. 113.

Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College

Finding that the time was now ripe for formulating a scheme of liberal education for the people of India, particularly the Muslims, on anglo-oriental lines, he organised an Educational Board of which he was the Secretary. Soon, a comprehensive scheme was drawn up by the Board, highlighting the establishment of a central institution. It clearly pointed out the prejudices entertained by conservative and orthodox Muslims as absurd and detrimental to the best interest of the community. It finally brought home the conviction, how necessary it was to rescue ancient Muslim learning from oblivion, to imbibe new arts and sciences and to place the work of Muslim education in purely Mohammedan hands with a view to training Muslim children in the best tradition of Islam.¹⁵

This was, indeed, a wholesome scheme, inclusively pure and simple and exclusively rich in detail, for the creation of a Muslim University. Sir Syed threw himself heart and soul into the task of securing subscriptions for his College. In less than four years he collected sufficient funds to establish the M.A.O. School which developed into a Residential College on 24th May 1875, that being the auspicious day of Queen Victoria's birth.¹⁶

In June 1876, Sir Syed retired from Government service and personally looked after the institution by settling down at

15. C.S. Srinivasachari : Social and Religious Movements in the Nineteenth Century, p. 27

16. Ibid., p. 27.

Aligarh. Sir John Strachey, the then Lieut.-Governor of the United Provinces, secured the present site for the Aligarh College.¹⁷ Lord Northbrook took great interest in this institution and was to have laid the foundation-stone of the College, but as he resigned the Viceroyalty shortly afterwards, he could not do so. He was the first big donor of Rs.10,000/- to the College.¹⁸ On the 8th January 1877, Lord Lytton came to Aligarh and laid the foundation-stone.¹⁹

In 1878, Intermediate classes were opened; in 1881 B.A. and M.A. classes were introduced and the institution accommodated 1,000 boarders, had ten boarding-houses which developed an atmosphere of educational traditions of its own. Sir Syed was as careful of moral training and discipline of his pupils as he was of their success in examinations.²⁰

It was one of the foremost objects of the College to impart religious instruction along with secular subjects, as its founder firmly believed that secular education without religious training was "comparatively futile and ineffective".²¹

It took about twenty-five years for the College to build up its academic standards and its traditions. Sir Syed had to travel

17. C.S. Srinivasachari : Social & Religious Movements in the Nineteenth Century, p. 28

18. Ibid., p. 28

19. Ibid., p. 28

20. Ibid., p. 28

21. Ibid., p. 28

throughout the length and breadth of the country at his own expense, exhorting his co-religionists to give pecuniary help to the new institution and creating an interest in Western education. He cheerfully underwent all worries and troubles and at last his earnest endeavours were crowned with success.²²

A Catholic spirit was observed in the founder of the College in opening its doors to Hindus, Christians and Parsees alike, along with the Muslims. Unlike the Madras Pachaiyappa's College and the Benaras Central Hindu College, the Aligarh College admitted students professing different religious faiths.²³

Sir Syed's principal aim was to revive Islamic society on modern conception of religion compatible with the spirit of progress. To achieve this, he endeavoured to discover scientific 'truths' in the Quran and proved that the scripture and the physical sciences are not opposed to one another.

Sir Syed ~~discussed~~ some of the problems of Muslim society :

scientific interpretation of Islam; a new emphasis on the personality of the Holy Prophet; the doctrine of Abrogation (Nasikh Mansukh); a criticism of the fundamental principles of Hadith and Fiqha; Islam in relation to progress, civilisation and higher education; slavery and Islam; progress of society and Islam *was the main theme of his writings and speeches.*

22. C.S. Srinivasachari : Social & Religious Movements in the Nineteenth Century, p. 29

23. Ibid., p. 30

Sir Syed and Politics

A retrospect of the earlier events throws light on Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's socio-political career. The Mutiny of 1857 was an eye-opener to Sir Syed, which made him realise the seriousness of the social and political conditions in India. By temperament, politics had no appeal for him, but the socio-political circumstances shaped and affected his thinking. The safe-guarding of the interest of the people and the stability of the Government became his primary concern. The ~~political~~ political awakening in the people compelled him to realise the importance of political events which were agitating the minds of men of his times.

Lord Lytton, who was Sir Syed's guest at Aligarh in 1877, was much impressed by his personality and his erudition and nominated him a member of the Imperial Legislative Council in 1878. It was a very happy moment of his life, as he realised in his own person the cherished desire he had expressed in 1858. He was appointed again a member in 1881 by Lord Ripon and remained in the Council for five years and did yeoman service to his country.

He was the first Indian who was permitted to introduce private bills, which eventually found place on the Indian Statute Book.²⁴ The Vaccination Bill and the Kazi's Act were introduced and passed at his own initiative. In the heat of opposition by the then Lieut.-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Syed made an inspiring and memorable speech, every word of which turned out to be true in the course of events.

24. C.S. Srinivasachari : Social & Religious Movements in the Nineteenth Century p. 30.

On 12th January 1883, in the course of a discussion on the Central Provinces Local Self-Government Bill, he fervently objected to the introduction of the principle of election in India.

In fact, Sir Syed favoured the system of elections^{based on separate electorates} which was^{later} incorporated in the Montague Chelmsford Reforms,²⁵ and opposed the system of representation by ^{Common}electorate. He observed :

" The system of representation by election means the representation of the views and interests of the majority of the population, and, in countries, where the population is composed of one race and one creed, it is no doubt the best system that can be adopted.

" But, in a country like India, where caste distinctions still flourish, where there is no fusion of the various races, where religious distinctions still prevail, 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 District Councils would be attended with evils of greater significance than purely economic considerations. So long as differences of race and creed and distinctions of caste form an important element 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 be safely adopted. The majority community would collectively over-ride the interests of minority community, and the ignorant public would hold the Government responsible for introducing measures which might make the differences of race and creed more sharp than ever."²⁶

25. C.S. Srinivasachari : Social & Religious Movements in the Nineteenth Century, p. 30.

26. Ibid., p. 31.

Moreover, Sir Syed's concept of^a nation was not based upon communal, sectional or religious considerations. He defines it as a conglomeration of all inhabitants of one country irrespective of castes, colour or religion. Hindus, Muslims, Europeans and Eurasians are the subjects of the same Government and inhabit the same country. Different as their political status is,²⁷ socially, they all are one nation.²⁸ Society binds individuals or groups together. Hindus and Muslims have close relationship with one another in social matters, while politics sets them apart.²⁹ In his speech at Gurdaspur on 27th January 1884, he said: "We (Hindus and Muslims) should try to become one heart and soul and act in unison; if united, we can support each other, if not the effect of one against the other would tend to the destruction and downfall of both. In the old historical books and traditions you have read and heard, and we see it even now, that all the people inhabiting one country are designated by term one nation. So that from the oldest times the word nation is applied to the inhabitants of one country, though they may differ in their characteristics.

"Hindu and Mohemmadan br@thern, do you not people any country other than Hindustan? Do you not inhabit the same land? Are you not burnt and buried on the same soil? Do you not tread the same ground and live upon the same soil? Remember that the words Hindu and Mohammadan are only meant for religious distinction;

27. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 168

28. Ibid., p. 167

29. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1888, p. 800.

otherwise all persons, whether Hindu or Mohammadan, even Christians who reside in this country, are all in this particular respect belonging to one and the same nation. Then all the different sects can only be described as one nation; they must each and all unite for the good of the country which is common to all."³⁰

He opposed the Indian National Congress and advised Muslims to stay out of it, because it was too presumptuous and not because it was predominantly Hindu. He would have advised Hindus to stay out of it too, had he reasons to offer advice to them or to suppose it would have been accepted. Already he had dissociated himself from a purely Muslim movement of the same type and for the same reason. He withdrew his active support from the National Mohammadan Association, founded by Amir Ali and others of the younger Muslim group at Calcutta in 1877.³¹

In 1887, Lord Dufferin appointed Sir Syed a member of the Public Service Commission. ^{in this capacity} He was able to do very useful service to his country. He strongly advocated the retention of the Statutory Civil Service whereby Indians, without being appointed by the Civil Service Commission in England, might aspire to rise by the highest posts in India.³² He gave expression to his views thus :

" The British rule in India is perhaps the most wonderful phenomenon the history of the World has ever seen; and I sincerely hope that the results which are destined to follow from it will be still more wonderful. I have

30. C.S. Srinivasachari : Social & Religious Movements in the Nineteenth Century, p. 32.

31. W.C. Smith : Modern Islam in India, pp. 18 and 19.

32. C.S. Srinivasachari : Social & Religious Movements in the Nineteenth Century, p. 34.

heard it said that the English rule in India is for the sake of England. I have also been told that England rules India for the good of India. I, for one, am an advocate of neither of these opinions. I regard the British rule in India as a benefit both to India and to England, and the more we advance, the more clearly we shall see the advantages which both countries derive from this union. The prosperity of India is the prosperity of one of the most important and most intrinsic portions of the British empire, and it is my sincere conviction that any policy must be unsound which does not consider the interests of the two countries identical. I do not consider that the mission of England in this country is to educate it in order to leave it. On the contrary, I hope, a day may come when the people of India will regard England not as a greedy accumulator of wealth, nor as a foreign tyrant, but as a mother from whom they desire nourishment and support, both material and intellectual. That will be a day of the greatest prosperity to India, and of the greatest glory to England. The British rule in India will then be upon the basis of eternal strength — fearless of any foreign aggression or inimical policy. The more we advance in our political course, the stronger will become the ties of friendship between us and the British rule will then be regarded, neither as a rule of conquest and of arms, nor as a calamity to India, but as a great blessing from Heaven."³³

Sir Syed and Social Reforms

Sir Syed expressed the view that the religion of Islam bore no other feelings towards Christians than those of real friendship. If there are any people in the world with whom Muslims

33. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. III, No.19, 1289 H., p. 188.

ought to have friendly relations, they are Christians, who are styled in the Muslim scripture as 'Ahl-e-Kitab', the 'People with Holy Scriptures'.³⁴

It was the belief of Sir Syed that mankind was created to do good to all. To believe in universal brotherhood of man, is the height of morality. Against such a background, political relations would give rise to feelings of mutual friendship and cordiality.³⁵ In fact, Sir Syed held liberal views on social questions and bitterly opposed conservatism preached by the Mullahs. Unlike the latter, he favoured the idea of reforming or changing out-dated social customs for the betterment of his community.

He earnestly believed that it was high time for Muslims to set on foot systematic social reform. He believed that it should proceed without affecting Islam. He always remarked that it was their own fault that they allowed religion to enter into every social matter. He wisely discriminated between religion and society. He showed great moral courage in breaking the barriers of customs which did not permit inter-dining between Muslims and Englishmen.

Sir Syed was, indeed, a man of calibre. He had the courage to face the retorts and rebukes that were hurled at him by his community because he set out to reform out-dated customs.

34. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. III, No.19, 1289 H., p. 189.

35. Ibid., p. 189.

Sir Syed was a great champion of women's rights. He was no less in favour of discarding the purdah, as it was a hindering factor in the way of their education and progress.

He was of ^{the} definite opinion that the progress of female education depended on the education of men. He saw the necessity of widening liberal education. He was earnestly anxious that Muslim girls should be brought up and educated in a proper manner. But any scheme envisaging the spread of education among girls, through the agency of schools was with him a premature adventure. He was of the opinion that the system of home education prevailing in the educated and cultured society was beneficial to the community at that stage. He advocated the cause of female education on lines of least change or modification and condemned the tendency to Anglicise the Muslim girls. He went so far as to say that inter-communal marriages were a curse to the society.

Sir Syed presented his theory of social reform as 'khair-e-jari'. Social welfare does not consist in constructing bridges or mosques or palaces. These are not as permanent as the service done to human or national cause. ~~The former~~ have neither authoritative sanction of religion, nor is there any reward for such works in the world beyond. By recognising them as virtuous acts, the idea of service gets discredited. Social service should lead to the cultivation of the qualities of truthfulness, honesty, morality, love and sympathy in man.³⁶

36. Mukammal Majmoos Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 120.

The social reform which attracted his attention and about which he wrote incessantly included the topics of poverty, vice, ignorance, orphans, beggary and widow-remarriage. He was of the view that poverty is the root-cause of vice and crime which plague human society.³⁷ He traced the causes of vice in the vicious human nature, social environment, lack of control and defiance of social norms.³⁸

Sir Syed devoted his attention to the care of orphans with a view to improving their lot. Benefitting from the experiences he had of the Western countries in looking after the orphans, he suggested the ways for their protection and their welfare.³⁹ He appealed to the good sense of the people to help the orphanages with money and material.⁴⁰

Beggary had been condemned by him as a great hindrance to individual and national progress. It creates immorality and social disequilibrium and degrades the individual and the nation.⁴¹ He was also aware that if it is not tackled in time, it would go to negate all efforts for social uplift and national progress.⁴²

37. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, 1st Moharram 1289 H., p. 120

38. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 12th September 1873, p. 120

39. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 24th March 1871, p. 178

40. Ibid., p. 178

41. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 26th December 1873, p. 812

42. Ibid., p. 812.

Sir Syed poignantly pointed out the evils of enforced widowhood. The woman is in need of gentle treatment at the hands of man because of her delicate nature and especially the widow, deserves all human sympathies.⁴³ The evil that has spread on account of the suppression of widow-remarriage tarnishes the fair name of Muslim society. He appealed to the Muslims to encourage widow-remarriage and earn the blessings both in this world and in the next for their virtuous deeds.⁴⁴

Sir Syed's approach to the problem of widow-remarriage was more realistic. He expressed the shallowness of the religious attitude towards the perpetuation of this evil. He pleaded for organised charity to fight the cause of widows.

In Sir Syed's philosophy, 'self-help' stands out pre-eminent as an active lever in the general upliftment of man. No progress can be possible, unless it is based on individual character and self-help.

Sir Syed was not unaware of what the Muslims had achieved in the past and how they had fallen subsequently in the present age. This unhappy state of affairs was entirely due to their social malaise. It was only by educating them that their moral, social and economic conditions could be improved. He believed

43. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 17th October 1873, p. 651

44. Ibid., p. 651.

that political rights and privileges could come to the Muslims as a result of their acquisition of modern knowledge and not through political agitation or propaganda. It was through education, trade, commerce and social reform that they could attain the status of a free civilised community. In this manner, Sir Syed summed up his socio-political convictions in the interest of his community. In virtue of his struggle for the cause he championed and the social service he rendered to the country and the community, Sir Syed occupies a prominent place in modern Indian History.

Sir Syed breathed his last on 28th March 1898, full of honours and achievements and was buried in the great Mosque of his College at Aligarh. So passed away a great and noble soul, the man who showed a new path of knowledge and enlightenment and built an edifice of social and national importance. His work has indeed a lasting value and will serve as a beacon of light for generations to come.

CHAPTER II

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

Social life is the result of human responses and social relationships. They connote changes in individuals and life. In other words, social relations depict the interaction of human mind due to the operation of human interests and are a continuous reappearance of the phenomena of behaviour of individuals.

The development of human personality is governed by the positive and negative aspects of social relations. As Cooley observes, they are not a series of futile repetition of conflicts, but an eternal, onward growth of increasingly humane, rational and co-operative types of human beings.¹ They are, in fact, universal, and occur in all human groups and at all cultural levels.²

Social interaction or relationship leads to contacts of individuals. The process of social relations is a factor of the development of human personality. It changes human nature and the pattern of culture. Every individual achieves the status of a personality as a result of his participation in the group.³

Social relationship involves reciprocity in the field of social or individual interaction. Where there is no interaction, there is no social relationship.

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1. Bogardus : The Development of Social Thought, pp. 495 and 496.
 2. F.E. Merrill and H.M. Eldredge : Culture and Society, p. 488, Printise Hall, Inc. New York, 1962.
 3. E.E. Roster and G.W. Hart : Introduction to Sociology, pp. 25 and 27.

Human society is ^{has} viewed as a social relationship through which, and by means of which, individuals communicate with each other, share common knowledge and understanding, attain a certain objective and work out a mode of life. Social relationships exist in some form or other within every society, or group, or institution. No society exists without the elements of co-operation and conflict, sympathy and jealousy, love and hatred. *It will be interesting to note Sir Syed's ideas about human society and social relationship.* Sir Syed observes that social relationship makes man active participant in society.⁴ Every individual has the capacity of abandoning evil under the pressure of good environment and of acquiring commendable habits.⁵ He gets rid of the negative aspect of his character, takes to virtue and does good in order to acquire a good name.⁶ Since the world is transitory and life is short, man is remembered after his death for his virtuous and righteous deeds.⁷

Sir Syed defines social relationship as an interaction of individuals. If an individual looks into his own self, he will find the existence of a dual relationship. One is his relation to God and the other is his relation to fellow-beings.⁸ The latter should not be a cause for hatred or enmity towards fellow-beings. One must regard others as brothers and bestow love and affection on them.⁹ We have to take into account positive aspects of social relationship as love, friendship, co-operation, kindness and sympathy. Such adoption is the only way by which obedience to God, brotherly

4. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 7th June 1867, pp. 361 and 362

5. Ibid., p. 362

6. Ibid., p. 362

7. Ibid., p. 362

8. Ibid., p. 114

9. Ibid., p. 114

feelings, sense of social unity and human sympathy can be developed, and it is indeed the first step towards the functioning of social relationship.¹⁰ *He has repeatedly expressed these ideas in different words throughout his books and speeches.*

Sir Syed considers social relationship as a sine qua non for the free play of social interaction in classes, groups, societies and institutions. There are many matters in which individuals may share the cultural and social heritage with others as brothers. They may help one another, develop among themselves true love, establish true friendship and promote genuine desire for the progress of their country.¹¹ In this way, the whole world becomes one city in which different nations live, having their needs in common.¹² Thus they depend upon one another in an unconscious functioning of social relationship.¹³

Sir Syed describes another characteristic of social relationship, that it changes with the pace of time. Time itself is a determining factor. As the force of universal change cannot be evaded, so the future form of relationship cannot be predicted with any amount of certainty.¹⁴ Since every change works gradually and slowly, the future can be foretold only on the basis of experience.¹⁵ Time changes human thoughts, beliefs,

10. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 7.6.1867, p. 114

11. Ibid., p. 114

12. Ibid., p. 170

13. Ibid., p. 171

14. Tanzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. III, 1st Rajjab 1289 H., p. 120

15. Tanzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. I, 1311 Hijra, p. 120.

traditions and customs. But moral values are not subject to changes. Sympathy or love defies the law of time. Thus, social relationship is affected by temporal changes or by a succession of events.¹⁶

Social relations play a significant role in society. They remove shortsightedness and conservatism, create healthy feelings and eliminate prejudices.¹⁷ Nations or individuals are equally benefited by, and acquainted with, each other's ideas by coming into close contact and fostering intimacy.¹⁸ Thus, progress is achieved and feelings of mutual co-operation are cherished by nations or individuals, for making contacts is one of the human instincts. There is no bar of religion, country or region to social relationship.¹⁹ Narrow-mindedness creates social distance and misunderstanding which ultimately become a hindrance in the attainment of progress.²⁰ The remedy for this lies in the establishment of social relationship between individuals, societies and nations.²¹

Sir Syed observes that some nations, even professing different religions or creeds, move forward because of social relations and contacts, while others having no social contacts remain unprogressive.²² Social relations are the main sources of acquiring such qualities as good character and honesty.²³ If

16. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. I, 1311 Hijra, p. 120

17. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 20th October 1871, p. 660

18. Ibid., p. 660

19. Ibid., p. 660

20. Ibid., p. 660

21. Ibid., p. 660

22. Ibid., p. 661

23. Ibid., p. 661

contacts with others are abandoned, progress or general development is retarded.²⁴ A nation which has no desire to make contacts with others, cannot take advantage of new ideas and there can be little hope for its reforms. Ignorance, social distance and conservative thinking and living become the order of the day when an individual or a nation abandons relations with others.²⁵

Sir Syed studies social relationship in respect of individual and society. He classifies human relationship under two categories — positive and negative. He includes good behaviour, moderation, self-culture, sympathy, co-operation, respect for others, nobility, truthfulness, sociability and imitation in the positive aspects of relationship. He calls jealousy, short-sightedness, mendacity, hypocrisy, bigotry and flattery as negative aspects of relationship. *His positive and negative aspects of social relationship will now be described in some detail.*

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

1). Good Behaviour

The success of human actions in society depends on good individual behaviour. National progress, national honour and national reform can come through good habits, good behaviour and good character and not by titles and high posts.²⁶ Sir Syed stresses the point that in order to bring about a state of civilised existence, man should show regard and respect for the

24. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 20.10.1871, p. 113

25. Ibid., p. 661

26. Inteqab-e-Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 70.

feelings, sentiments, beliefs, convictions and aims of his fellow-beings; otherwise chaotic conditions would prevail in society.²⁷ As there is no uniformity of human action and thinking, so it is difficult to appraise the individual merits, views, dogmas and beliefs. Sir Syed wants the people to respect others' views, but at the same time he holds that to yield to the views of the opponent or a superior person in order to please him, is not the way of good behaviour. One should adhere to truthfulness, virtue and kindness in dealing with opponents.²⁸ Impoliteness and misbehaviour are social evils.²⁹ The behaviour of an individual should comprise good actions, friendly attitudes, proper etiquette and noble manners.³⁰ The attainment of permanent and full independence depends on good behaviour. Sir Syed quotes John Stuart Mill that even a despotic Government cannot bring disaster to a country, if its people are endowed individually with the ideas of reform and progress. The thing that is harmful for reform and progress is the form of despotic Government, which undermines good human qualities and

27. Inteqab-e-Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 43.

28. Ibid., p. 43

29. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 129.

30. Ibid., p. 130.

creates bad qualities in man.³⁴ The idea of subjecting oneself to the despotic will of the ruler is a great hindrance to human progress and civilisation and is the chief cause of 'uncivilisedness' and 'unculturedness' in India, Turkey, Egypt and other parts of Asia.³⁵ Sir Syed adds, that any people, who have lost qualities of good behaviour, cannot be helped even by a good Government.³⁶

ii). Moderation

Sir Syed lays emphasis on the need for moderation in human action and relationship. Every human work or action within limits is good and suitable for society. Whosoever maintains moderation in action, lives a life of harmony and commands respect among his fellow-beings.³⁷ Thus moderation in human actions has a unique social value.³⁸

iii). Self-Culture

Sir Syed deals with self-culture in the context of the status and place of man in society.³⁹ To him, man is the noblest creation of God. He is endowed with powers that, if properly developed, rightly directed and effectively controlled, will take him to any height of progress in the sphere of human activity.⁴⁰ As is the noblest of creation, he should understand and appreciate the purpose for which he is created.⁴¹

34. Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 67

35. Ibid., p. 67

36. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 132

37. Aligarh Institute Gazette, 14th February 1873, p. 105

38. Ibid., p. 105

39. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 10th January 1868, p. 29

40. Ibid., p. 29

41. Ibid., p. 29

Sir Syed considers human mind as a controlling and directing force.⁴² It is only the disciplined or cultured human mind that can bring about harmony and bliss for man and the society.⁴³

Since mind is the source of self-culture, man achieves social status, progress and prosperity through its functioning.⁴⁴ It is, indeed, a sovereign force working in human body.⁴⁵ It is, therefore, necessary to guard it against unhealthy influences of society which work for its undoing.⁴⁶

The greatest enemy of the human mind is the lower-self (nafs-e-ammara) which gives vent to passions and defies moral values. 'Nafs-e-ammara' is the demonic force that rules man.⁴⁷ It operates from within, works stealthily and acts deceptively. If no care is taken against its subtle and mischievous machinations and promptings, man is lost for ever.⁴⁸ It is the characteristic of 'nafs-e-ammara' that it gives the illusion of a friend.⁴⁹ It presents vice as virtue.⁵⁰ In unguarded moments the human mind submits to it and untold troubles befall him.⁵¹

In the field of social relationship, judgments are formed on the appreciation of human capabilities for social integration and for sponsoring the cause of social welfare. The spirit of sacrifice is given its due place in human affairs and the spirit

42. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 10.1.1868, p. 29

43. Ibid., p. 29

44. Ibid., p. 29

45. Ibid., p. 29

46. Ibid., p. 29

47. Ibid., p. 29

48. Ibid., p. 29

49. Ibid., p. 29

50. Ibid., p. 29

51. Ibid., p. 29

of self-interest is socially condemned.⁵² In other words, man, devoid of self-culture, is isolated in society. Social vices are born of egotism and self-centrism.⁵³ The fact is that individual good is so linked with social good that it is hardly possible for an individual to prosper at the expense of society.⁵⁴ What he gains at the cost of society is ^{only} a temporary gain.⁵⁵ Therefore, in the cultivation of self-culture, word and deed, thought and action, are equally important.⁵⁶ Evil thoughts are as disastrous in their consequences as evil actions.⁵⁷ This is due to the fact that the mental faculty of man plays a decisive role in the development of his personality.⁵⁸ The discipline of mind is the prime necessity.⁵⁹ Sir Syed, in fact, gives a religious colour to his social philosophy by making the good of this life and of the next depend on social good. Thus the social function of man assumes a metaphysical significance in his eyes.⁶⁰ For him, indeed, social good is based on the fear of God; which factor can make man sacrifice his self-interest for the achievement of a higher social goal.⁶¹ Thus, God is not simply to be worshipped in lonely meditation, but is a force that inspires man to social action.⁶² In fact, this is self-culture as conceived by Sir Syed. It is this quality of self-culture which

52. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 10th November 1869, p. 32.

53. Ibid., p. 32

54. Ibid., p. 32

55. Ibid., p. 32

56. Ibid., p. 32

57. Ibid., p. 32

58. Ibid., p. 32

59. Ibid., p. 32

60. Ibid., p. 32

61. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 28th October 1867. p. 835

62. Ibid., p. 835

brings happiness to one and all, and is a beacon-light for generations to come.⁶³ On the other hand, if man is self-centred and pursues only his personal ends in utter disregard of the interests of others, he is hated, dishonoured and denounced.⁶⁴

iv). S y m p a t h y

Sir Syed's idea of sympathy forms ^{an important} a part of the wider progress of the interplay of factors in human society. Man should entertain sympathy for others and serve his own interest without being self-centred.⁶⁵ The individual draws his strength from collective sympathy which works through individuals. In this way, human sympathy assumes a concrete shape and contributes to the growth of the group.⁶⁶ Sympathy is not merely passive contemplation but an active reaction. It evokes a strong response in the human heart and lifts man from a state of helplessness to a state of helpfulness.⁶⁷ Sympathy creates submission to God and strengthens the feelings. It also cements brotherhood, national unity and ^{thereby} paves the way for social progress.

To help others in distress is an act of sympathy. Every act of nature has some benefit behind it, though it is difficult to understand its mystery. To help others, directly or indirectly,

63. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 28th October 1867, p. 834

64. Ibid., p. 834

65. Ibid., p. 834

66. Ibid., pp. 834 & 835

67. Ibid., p. 835

68. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p.23, Navil Kishore Press, Lahore.

is to help oneself. In reality, social sympathy is sympathy with oneself.⁶⁹

Generally, we understand by sympathy a kind of help which is rendered to somebody in distress and misery. But misery is relative. What is misery for one in certain circumstances is no misery for another.⁷⁰

Kindness, sociability and sympathy do not connote the same meaning. Kindness is a natural virtue which is not confined to man. Sociability is found only among living fellow-creatures. Sympathy is born of wisdom and is characteristic of man alone. Therefore, one who is not sympathetic is not completely human. Absence of sympathy adversely affects society.⁷¹

Human beings are involved in social interaction. The closer is the kinship, the greater is the sympathy. Sympathy plays an important role in society. It starts from one's home and spreads over the whole world, but, with its extension, it begins to lose its force. True sympathy is that which is based on the law of Nature.⁷²

69. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 23

70. Ibid., p. 23

71. Ibid., p. 23

72. Ibid., p. 23

v). Co-operation

Co-operation as a positive social relationship promotes common good. Sir Syed defines the process of co-operation as a form of social interaction wherein two or more persons work together to attain a common goal.⁷³ It is a voluntary social relationship and comprehensive in its effect. Co-operation works in countless ways.⁷⁴ The aim of a person becomes one with the aim of another.⁷⁵ This idea thus acquires a collective force and prevails in the society.⁷⁶

Sir Syed describes the necessity of co-operation. In the absence of co-operation in society, individual success is not possible. Co-operation is essential for the realisation of human values of friendship and love. This contributes to the development of national good as a whole.⁷⁷ Another advantage of co-operation is immunity from the oppression of the State.⁷⁸ It is a significant fact that co-operation among individuals can gain such intensity and strength as to counteract successfully the tyranny of the State. This has become very clear in modern times when the State has assumed such powers as to allow very little freedom to the individual. This conflict between individual and the State has become a baffling problem of modern

73. F.E. Merrill and H.W. Eldredge : Culture & Society, p. 494
Prentice Hall, New York.

74. Arnold W. Green : Sociology, p. 59, McGraw Hall Co.,
New York, 1956.

75. Ibid., p. 434

76. Ibid., p. 434

77. Safar Nama-e-Punjab Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 10

78. Ibid., p. 10

times. Thus, Sir Syed, with extraordinary foresight, had rightly emphasised the importance of the spirit of co-operation as a great cementing force working for the preservation of individual freedom and the promotion of individual well-being.⁷⁹

The co-operative spirit cannot be confined to any creed or caste.⁸⁰ The fear among men that the spirit of co-operation will ultimately lead to the formation of anti-religious forces, is hardly justified.⁸¹ In reality, religion has nothing to fear from anything, least of all, from the spirit of co-operation.⁸²

Co-operation is a great socio-cultural force. The records of history confirm the view that co-operation had animated the nation's soul of the great civilisations of the past. The individual has lived not in isolation, but as part and parcel of the social whole.⁸³

It is sometimes argued that the difference in temperament and the diversity of individual character make the universal application of co-operation impossible. Sir Syed concedes that there is a conflict of individual interests in a civilised society.⁸⁴ What he insists upon is that it is not the conflict of individual interests that counts, but it is the social basis of

79. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 14th July 1871, No.28, Vol. VI, p. 434

80. Ibid., p. 435

81. Ibid., p. 435

82. Ibid., p. 435

83. Safar Nama-e-Punjab Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, pp. 11 & 12.

84. Ibid., p. 12

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co-operation which is essential for the development of society.⁸⁵
 In other words, individual conflict does not preclude collective
 co-operation and in this way conflict and co-operation go hand
 in hand.⁸⁶

There can be no doubt that the realisation of national good
 is desired by one and all. Individual differences do not count
 when the collective values are at stake.⁸⁷ In the time of crisis,
 individuals give up all their differences and disputes, because
 any injury to the nation as a whole adversely affects all.⁸⁸ Sir
 Syed compares the nineteenth century West with India of that
 time and laments that the spirit of co-operation that has animat-
 ed the civilisation of the West and contributed to its glory,
 was conspicuously absent in India.⁸⁹

vi). Respect for others

Respect for others as a social value holds a special place
 in the estimation of Sir Syed. But persons, who win respect in
 society on the basis of wealth, power and other forms of osten-
 tation display false glamour.⁹⁰ Sir Syed argues that such per-
 sons deem themselves as respectable, but their respect does not

85. Safar Nama-e-Punjab Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 12

86. Ibid., p. 12

87. Ibid., p. 12

88. Ibid., p. 12

89. Ibid., p. 12

90. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Safarul Muzaffar 1313 H., p. 100

rest on solid foundation.⁹¹ It is without substance.⁹² Respect should grow from within.⁹³ It is found in moral and spiritual values.⁹⁴ In fact, real human worth cannot be assessed by mass opinion.⁹⁵ It is rather the verdict of one's own conscience that decides it.⁹⁶ Sir Syed attributes every case of social relationship to conscience or the sense of morality.⁹⁷ It is this moral consciousness to which man should address himself in a state of doubt or despair.⁹⁸

vii). N o b i l i t y

Nobility is acquired and not awarded by Nature.⁹⁹ Nobility is in fact a virtue which can be cultivated. Man is not born with nobility. It is, however, the privilege of man to make nobility his asset. In the East, nobility is determined on the basis of ancestral lineage. Sir Syed raises his voice of protest against the unwarranted monopoly of this virtue by the undeserving few. According to him, nobility is a personal acquisition and not transferable by blood or profession.¹⁰⁰

Accident of birth does not justify the creation of social distinction among men. Individuals, who lack the virtues which their fore-
eminent/fathers possessed, try to live in the halo of their

91. Tahzeedul Akhlaque, Safarul Muzaffar, 1313 H., p. 100

92. Ibid., p. 100

93. Ibid., p. 100

94. Ibid., p. 100

95. Ibid., p. 100

96. Ibid., p. 100

97. Ibid., p. 100

98. Ibid., p. 100

99. Ibid., p. 100

100. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 24th January 1868, p. 53

good name. But those who are really noble do not cite examples of their forefathers to justify their claim to nobility.¹⁰¹

Indeed, they have no claim to any virtue. Their nobility is in their actual living. They leave their example to posterity.¹⁰²

The real nobility is the outcome of one's own personal conduct and character.¹⁰³ The prestige one enjoys on the merit of his

birth redounds to the credit of his ancestors only.¹⁰⁴ Respect for birth is fraught with grave dangers.¹⁰⁵ Sometimes even per-

sons of no standing gain respect simply because they happen to be the descendants of some great and noble personalities.¹⁰⁶ But such respect should not be given any encouragement.¹⁰⁷

What then, is the hallmark of nobility? First of all, it is the feeling of gratitude expressed for all that we have through others. Gratitude also runs as a trait in the nobility of character. It is a true appreciation of one's own debt to all those who have done good. Loyalty to the benefactor is the ideal of moral life. Man should have faith in moral virtue and cultivate trust in those to whom he owes so much.¹⁰⁸ Thus Sir Syed condemns ingratitude as a moral sin. Gratitude is also a form of loyalty. To disown our benefactors is to betray our ourselves. Only loyalty to them can inspire confidence in ourselves.¹⁰⁹

101. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 24.1.1868, p. 58

102. Ibid., p. 58

103. Ibid., p. 59

104. Ibid., p. 59

105. Ibid., p. 59

106. Ibid., p. 59

107. Ibid., p. 59

108. Ibid., p. 59

109. Ibid., p. 60

11) Truthfulness

Truthfulness is a human quality as well as a social virtue. This is looked upon by the worldly man as simple mockery and few, indeed, tread the path of truthfulness. There is no doubt that adherence to truthfulness has its own difficulties.¹¹⁰ Hence, Sir Syed calls upon man to stick to truth even at the cost of his life. But what ensnares the mind of man is falsehood. According to Sir Syed, the lure of falsehood is grounded in a peculiar form of human weakness. The moment temptation, vanity, pomp and show lose their hold on our minds, we become free from falsehood.¹¹¹ There are, however, degrees of falsehood. There is a falsehood which captures only our fancy and does not take any firm root in the mind.¹¹² This is not dangerous. But if vain ideas overpower us and sink deep into our hearts, then indeed we are lost.¹¹³

The path of truth leads to a life of self-realisation. Unfortunately man turns to falsehood because of the fear of his own kind. But Sir Syed, as a religious man, justifies only one form of fear — the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of God is the guarantee of truth.¹¹⁴ It is often urged that to utter truth in all circumstances would involve man in serious situations. Truth, thus, becomes harmful to life. But is it true? The fact is that it is not truth but falsehood that is fraught with serious consequences.¹¹⁵

110. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 20th April 1866, p. 50

111. Ibid., p. 50

112. Ibid., p. 50

113. Ibid., p. 50

114. Ibid., p. 50

115. Ibid., p. 50

Sir Syed lays down certain principles for the pursuit of truth. To speak truth requires freedom from all personal interests.¹¹⁶ Man should be inspired with love of truth without any vacillation, even in the most unfavourable circumstances.¹¹⁷ Man faces dangers and holds aloft the torch of truth.¹¹⁸ But a man who is subject to personal influence and the tyranny of public opinion, cannot hold his ground.¹¹⁹ In other words, he succumbs to personal pressure and cannot maintain any justice.¹²⁰ These conditions have a universal validity and can be observed everywhere notwithstanding socio-cultural differences.¹²¹ Sir Syed analyses the motivation that works in the individual in determining his attitude towards truth and falsehood. The temptation to indulge in falsehood comes from personal considerations and the consequent neglect of social obligations.¹²² The good of the society is sacrificed at the altar of individual caprice.¹²³ Sir Syed ultimately sees in religion the effective force to counteract personal considerations.¹²⁴ Only a man, endowed with religious fervour, can have the strength to defy his personal gains.¹²⁵ The fear of incurring pleasure or displeasure often restricts the freedom of speech and the sense of justice, which obviously causes the suppression of truth.¹²⁶ Similarly, cultural

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116. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 4th July 1873, p. 425
 117. Ibid., p. 425
 118. Ibid., p. 425
 119. Ibid., p. 425
 120. Ibid., p. 425
 121. Ibid., p. 425
 122. Ibid., p. 425
 123. Ibid., p. 425
 124. Ibid., p. 425
 125. Ibid., p. 425
 126. Ibid., p. 425

traditions such as social etiquette and fear of current public opinion, place restraint on the free expression of truth. The only force that can break all these restrictions, is the religious principle.¹²⁷ If even this principle is allowed to be over-shadowed by other considerations, then there is no other power in this world to impel man to utter truth.¹²⁸

ix) Sociability

Sociability is a quality which is eminently human and humane. It is indispensable for human life. It has more than an ephemeral significance.¹²⁹ Sir Syed *enumerates* the intrinsic traits of sociability as -

Cordiality and amiability;
 To mix with poor and help the needy;
 To help and support members of one's own fraternity;
 Obedience of parents;
 Responsibility for one's own family;
 Reverence for elders;
 Solicitude for the young;
 Sympathy for the distressed;
 Patience in suffering;
 Control of anger;
 Adherence to truth;
 Freedom from rancour and jealousy;
 Generous behaviour towards the enemy;
 No abuse of power in authority;
 Showing respect and regard for the rights of others;¹³⁰

127. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 4.7.1873, p. 425

128. Ibid., p. 425

129. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 4th June 1867, p. 362

130. Ibid., p. 362

Thus, sociability ultimately depends on righteousness and purity of life.¹³¹ It is a virtue which emancipates man from the cares and anxieties of the day-to-day life. Man earns the goodwill of all and what is more the pleasure of God.¹³²

x). Imitation

Imitation is a quality of copying. It is an experimental process based on trial ^{and} error. It is an important aspect of social relationship in which individual or society is influenced by another individual or society. The characteristic feature of imitation is the tendency to build up the mechanism of habits, sentiments, ideals and patterns of life.¹³³ To Sir Syed, the process of imitation lies in following others and in moulding one's own action after the pattern of others.¹³⁴ He, like two modern Sociologists, Tarde and Ross, enumerates the following forms of imitation :¹³⁵

The young imitate elders;
Men of little intelligence and understanding
imitate men of superior intelligence and understanding;
The ignorant imitate the learned;
The uncivilised imitate the civilised.

Imitation is directed towards a model or an ideal. A nation politically dominated looks up to its masters as the paragon of virtues.¹³⁶ The political subjugation makes a nation blind to its

131. The Scientific Society Aligarh, 7th June 1867, p. 362

132. Ibid., p. 362

133. Park and Burgess : Introduction to the Science of Sociology, pp. 345 & 346. Chicago University Press, Illinois, 1944.

134. Tahzeedul Akhlaque, Vol. IV, No.4, 1290 Hijra, p. 38

135. Ibid., p. 38

136. Ibid., p. 38

own virtues and it is prone to imitate even the vices and follies of its masters.¹³⁷

Sir Syed observes that it is the tragedy of the down-trodden nations that they have lost the capacity by which they can distinguish between good and evil.¹³⁸ Thus, the politically weak nations look to the politically strong nations for guidance in all matters.¹³⁹ It is natural that man falls into evil ways lightly and the good takes time to manifest itself in him.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, very often they imitate the vices of the civilised and neglect all that is good in them. Sir Syed pleads that only virtues and good deeds of civilised nations must be imitated. He emphasises the need of distinguishing between what is worth imitating and what is not.¹⁴¹ If this distinction is not made, it will be fatal for the healthy development of any individual, society and community. He raises his powerful voice against blind imitation, "Imitate by all means what is worth imitating but avoid the vices that are associated with the national character of the civilised people."¹⁴²

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

The function of society is to maintain and preserve harmony and concord among its members and to counteract forces that are

137. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. IV, No.4, 1290 Hijra, p. 38

138. Ibid., p. 38

139. Ibid., p. 38

140. Ibid., p. 38

141. Ibid., p. 38

142. Ibid., p. 38

detrimental to its normal growth.¹⁴³ As conflicting desires pulsate in the heart of every individual, their unrestricted fulfilments tends to undermine the harmony of group life. Hence, control is exercised by society through law and order.¹⁴⁴ The individual is thus directed to serve the social interest, and if need be, to subordinate his personal interest to that of the society.¹⁴⁵

Sir Syed observes that it is essential to maintain harmony through social adjustment. All members of a society should develop moral and social values to such an extent that social harmony and social concord can be guaranteed. In this way, the negative aspects of social relationships, actuated by jealousy, bigotry and flattery can be minimised.¹⁴⁶

1). Jealousy

Jealousy is a negative aspect and is aroused under certain conditions. It makes one covet the honour, the wealth or the blessings of life enjoyed by others. The jealous man wishes ill of others and wants to live at the cost of others.¹⁴⁷ Sir Syed considers jealousy as an insatiable evil desire. It amounts to revolt against what God ordains.¹⁴⁸

One may, of course, desire all that is good in life, but the idea to deprive others of their good is sinful.¹⁴⁹ Jealousy ruins

143. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 28th December 1868, p. 833

144. Ibid., p. 833

145. Ibid., p. 833

146. Ibid., p. 833

147. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 19th April 1867, p. 245

148. Ibid., p. 245

149. Ibid., p. 245

not so much the person against whom it is directed as the person who is subject to it.¹⁵⁰ He is deprived of his joys and remains a victim of his own passions.¹⁵¹

Jealousy is detrimental to the healthy growth of society as it upsets social equilibrium.¹⁵² A jealous man becomes blind to the merits of his friends and loses the very sense of appreciating the values in others.¹⁵³ Consequently he loses his own status in society and evokes a negative reaction from its members.¹⁵⁴

Jealousy distorts the vision and makes it impossible for a man to see the good in others.¹⁵⁵ He is invariably ungenerous in his attitude to his surroundings and looks at everything from his own selfish motive; and thus disturbs social harmony.¹⁵⁶ Sir Syed not only brings out the evils of jealousy but also shows the way to remedy them by a process of transvaluation of values.

11). Short-sightedness

The mental process, which does not take into account the consequences of one's actions, is characterised as short-sightedness or the 'neglect of consequences' (na akibat andeshi).¹⁵⁷

150. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 19.4.1867, p. 245

151. Ibid., p. 245

152. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 28th October 1868, p. 833

153. Ibid., p. 833

154. Ibid., p. 833

155. Ibid., p. 833

156. Ibid., p. 834

157. In Urdu 'na akibat andeshi'.

According to Sir Syed short-sightedness takes three different forms : The first category consists of men who ignore the consequences of their actions.¹⁵⁸ The second category includes men who know what they should and should not do, but due to their recklessness are apt to minimise the evil consequences of their actions.¹⁵⁹ The third category consists of men who act with full consciousness and know what is good and evil but their actions are governed by ideas and values which, in fact, are devoid of realism. They may follow dead convention or custom and imitate others. The actions of such men are motivated by a blind fervour but with no insight and foresight. They act on the spur of the moment.¹⁶⁰

These three forms of human behaviour, though related to one another, yet differ to some extent. The first form makes man.

158. Aligarh Institute Gazette, 6th January 1871, p. 2

159. Ibid., p. 2

160. Ibid., p. 2

no less than an idiot; he lacks judgment and his lot is, therefore, beyond repair. The second form includes intelligent men who look forward and foresee their future, but are in no way capable of mending their ways. The third form deserves condemnation. To this category belong men who are not fools but are fully conscious of good and evil. Their fault is that they are stuck up in their own illusions and errors and suffer from an irremedial malady. They have intelligence and knowledge, but their knowledge is not fruitful and is worse than ignorance.¹⁶² Sir Syed sees in short-sightedness hindrance to human progress.¹⁶³

111). Mendacity

Men cannot command respect among his fellow-beings due to mendacity. He is despised by every one and even when he happens to speak the truth, no one believes him.¹⁶⁴ Mendacity has a purposeful meaning; it is not a mechanical contrivance.¹⁶⁵ It is meant to achieve some objective, a personal gain or the satisfaction of some vital needs. It may also be due

162. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 18th February 1871, p. 2

163. Ibid., p. 2

164. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 25th August 1871, p. 530

165. Ibid., p. 531.

^{The desire to} to assert oneself in society and gain respect by hook or by crook.¹⁶⁸
 It may also happen that man, in order to get his material interest served, not only consciously expresses misleading views but also adheres to his false or wrong opinion.¹⁶⁹ Whenever man finds a chance to secure his interest, he lies against his own conscience.¹⁷⁰ When he has to express publicly in his own interest false opinion, he will do it unhesitatingly even though it happens to affect adversely the vital interests of many people.¹⁷¹ In any case, it is personal interest that carries weight with him. This pre-occupation with his own self makes him blind to the interests of his own fellow-beings. Mendacity is for him a means of self-aggrandisement.¹⁷²

Self-deception sometimes leads one to indulge in mendacity.¹⁷³ One of the causes of mendacity is to be found in one's own self.¹⁷⁴ Sir Syed himself admits that the deception wrought by human mind in worldly matters is far too extensive. The baneful effects of mendacity are so extensively diffused in the world that even religion is not safe from its influence. Deception in religion is not infrequent and mendacity in different forms penetrates into the sacred precincts of religion.¹⁷⁵

The evil of mendacity is much more pronounced in political and social life. ^{Some time} A havoc is caused when people give way to mendacity.¹⁷⁶ The evil of mendacity assumes gigantic proportions when the press

168. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 20.8.1871, p. 531

169. Ibid., p. 531

170. Ibid., p. 531

171. Ibid., p. 531

172. Ibid., p. 531

173. Ibid., p. 531

174. Ibid., p. 531

175. Ibid., p. 531

176. Ibid., p. 531

yields to its lure. It is the function of the press to form and mould public opinion on right lines. This is the reason why the press enjoys such a prestige in democratic society. But, if the press is corrupt, dominated by vested interests and fabricates news to dupe the public, then the national welfare is doomed.¹⁷⁷ People are brought up in falsehood and the future can be anything but bright.¹⁷⁸

iv). Hypocrisy

Sir Syed considers hypocrisy as a social disease. Its major symptom is the lack of correspondence between the external form of behaviour and the internal attitude. According to him, hypocrites fall into two categories : the first category consists of those who are pious but show themselves to be ~~more~~ ^{more} wicked than they really are.¹⁷⁹ The other category comprises those who pretend to be religious and virtuous, but spend their time in intrigue and profligacy. They conceal their vices under the cloak of virtue.¹⁸⁰ They are good only in appearance but dangerous in social intercourse.¹⁸¹ But there are people who do not belong to either of the ^{two} categories. They ^{not only} deceive others ^{but often} deceive themselves.¹⁸²

~~Hypocrisy creates human and social problems.~~

One of the methods of judging ourselves is the opinion

177. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 25.8.1871, p. 532

178. Ibid., p. 532

179. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 93

180. Ibid., p. 93

181. Ibid., p. 93

182. Ibid., p. 93

formed about us by our enemies.¹⁸³ We will then become our own critics and will be able to see ourselves in the right perspective.¹⁸⁴ The judgment of the enemy is always instructive, whereas the opinion of the friend is often misleading.¹⁸⁵ Sir Syed, agreeing with Plutarch, considers the enemy as a true teacher, because, without a hostile critic, we will not become aware of our failings or follies.¹⁸⁶

Further, Sir Syed insists that we should reflect on what others take us to be. It is really for us to consider whether we deserve the praise or the blame. In short, Sir Syed is emphatic in his views that the spirit of criticism should be the guiding factor for individual and society.¹⁸⁷ Criticism can counteract the evils of hypocrisy which flourish in the atmosphere of bigotry or fanaticism. Constant searching of one's own heart can give a death blow to all forms of hypocrisy and prepare the way for a safe and sound individual life.¹⁸⁸ As we are liable to be deceived, we should be very careful in thoughts and deeds. To take much interest in and to show bigotry to, any particular sect or group creates innumerable troubles.¹⁸⁹ There are many people who are famous for their piety but follow absurd and satanic principles considering them as virtuous.¹⁹⁰ Sir Syed

183. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 94

184. Ibid., p. 99

185. Ibid., p. 94

186. Ibid., p. 94

187. Ibid., p. 95

188. Ibid., p. 95

189. Ibid., p. 96

190. Ibid., p. 96

states that he never found among them any person possessing the qualities of the heart.¹⁹¹

There is nothing more useful than to correct one's behaviour through the examination of one's own self. David, in his prayers, has very beautifully described the fears of hypocrisy by which man deceives his own self. He prayed to God to test him in order to find out the vices in him and finally to guide him to the right path.¹⁹² In short, hypocrisy is the height of moral depravity.

v). Bigotry

Sir Syed condemns bigotry as a destructive factor of civilisation.¹⁹³ He considers bigotry among the worst qualities of man.¹⁹⁴ This is such a bad quality that it destroys all human virtue and goodness.¹⁹⁵ The behaviour of a bigoted individual clearly shows that the best human qualities of righteousness and justice are wanting in him.¹⁹⁶ If he falls into an error, he cannot easily come out of it, because of his bigotedness.¹⁹⁷ In most cases, a bigot is compelled to do wrong things due to his adherence to bigotry. It is impossible for him to choose the path of straightforwardness and truthfulness. Bigotry deprives him of thousand virtues.¹⁹⁸

Sir Syed further examines the actions of the bigot as the out-

191. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 96

192. Ibid., p. 105

193. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 11th September 1871, p. 12

194. Ibid., p. 12

195. Ibid., p. 12

196. Ibid., p. 12

197. Ibid., p. 12

198. Ibid., p. 12

come of personal maladjustment. A man cannot satisfy all his wants by himself. As a social being he requires the help and support of others. But due to his bigotry, he turns dissatisfied against his own people and is not inclined to form friendship with anyone except those who think and feel like him.¹⁹⁹

The bigot is deprived of the blessings of culture and society, things of utility, comfort, intelligence and respect.²⁰⁰ Man who is free from bigotry seeks perfection in every aspect of life, but a bigot cannot attain any excellence in art and science, because he has pre-conceived or prejudicial notions which he is not prepared to modify.²⁰¹ In short, he is blind to values, knowledge, truth and beauty. The power of his mind becomes static. He is like an animal who is carried away by the impulses, which he cannot withstand.²⁰² Thus, bigotry is an individual curse and when it infects a nation, it becomes a national calamity. Historical knowledge confirms this assertion. Bigotry has brought about the fall of nations and has sapped their vitality in the course of centuries. Many nations who had attained a high stage of morality, knowledge, wisdom, skill, science, civilisation, culture, power, honour, prestige, wealth and progress, have reached the depth of humiliation, contempt, and degradation on account of their bigotry. While other nations with their unprejudiced attitudes have attained all worldly benefits.²⁰³ They borrowed good things from every country and nation and thus rose to the highest pitch of progress.²⁰⁴

199. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 11.9.1871, p. 12

200. Ibid., p. 12

201. Ibid., p. 12.

202. Ibid., p. 13

203. Ibid., p. 13

Sir Syed exhorts his countrymen to get rid of all the traits of bigotry as it is the source of all evils. They should imbibe broad-mindedness, straightforwardness and frankness. Bigotry, be it in the domain of religion or in the sphere of worldly affairs, is a subversive force, creating trouble and mischief in human relations.²⁰⁴ Sir Syed makes it clear that there is no relation between religion and bigotry. It is excellent to be perfect in matters of religion, but bigotry in religion is most harmful to man and to religion itself.²⁰⁵ An open-hearted man is a true friend of his religion; he rightly propagates his religion and proves its true precepts on the basis of reasoning and wisdom. He calmly listens to opposition and answers doubts peacefully.²⁰⁶

As firm believers in religion we should eradicate bigotry from our hearts, because all human beings are our brethren. We should love all, be truthful to all, have friendship with all and wish the good of all.²⁰⁷ The main characteristic of a bigot is that he is puffed up with pride and does not condescend to maintain friendly contacts with fellow-beings.²⁰⁸ Arrogance creates blindness in his perception of things and pride leads him to his doom.²⁰⁹

Sir Syed remarks that a bigot cannot acquire any degree of perfection in knowledge and progress in skill and crafts. He is

204. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 11.9.1871, p. 12
 205. Ibid., p. 13
 206. Ibid., p. 14
 207. Ibid., p. 14
 208. Ibid., p. 14
 209. Ibid., p. 14

altogether unaware of the importance of world affairs, He deprives himself of the beauties of Nature, loses the means of livelihood, worldly respect, acquisition of wealth and honourable life and ultimately finds himself degraded in the eyes of others.²¹⁰ The bigot is like an animal which is with the herd but does not know what others are doing.²¹¹ Therefore, Sir Syed pleads that bigotry may be shunned in the interest of brotherhood, love and friendship.²¹²

vi). Flattery

Sir Syed considers flattery like bigotry as the worst pattern of human behaviour. It is deadly in its effect and leads to self-degradation.²¹³ It conquers the human heart through subtle ways.²¹⁴ Sir Syed is no less aware of the changing pattern of flattery. He observes that love in the form of flattery widens its range of influence to the enemy himself. People, at the expense of their self-respect flatter persons in power, as if they love them and this compels them to favour flatterers and makes them consider false love as just and right.²¹⁵ Flattery softens the human heart. Man is entrapped by deceitful acts of flattery and his wisdom is clouded due to the acclamation of flatterer.²¹⁶ The charm of flattery is like putting on other's clothes on one's own body.²¹⁷ Sir Syed remarks that as flattery is a worst form of human trait, so is praise a worthy quality. To praise others in a proper way is to make one happy.²¹⁸

210. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 11.9.1871, p. 15

211. Ibid., p. 15

212. Ibid., p. 15

213. Ibid., p.100

214. Ibid., p.100

215. Ibid., p.100

216. Ibid., p.100

217. Ibid., p.100

CHAPTER III

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

In the evolution of human society progress signifies a series of processes connoting the continuance of a movement or a force, or an activity, or an increase in the momentum of a phase of social life, or an approach towards a goal. Thus, progress implies a desirable goal with an adequate means for attaining it, but conditions underlying progress vary widely. The well-being of mankind consists of three main elements, namely, subjugation of nature, perfection of social machinery and personal development.¹ True progress includes all these elements.

Auguste Comte interpreted progress in terms of the growth of reason. Spencer and Fiske, following the teachings of Adam Smith, regard the growth of sympathy as the essential factor in progress. Reason is the only true guide that helps in discovering the ways of truth and progress. Sir Syed's thoughts on social progress are based upon the application of reason to the acquisition of knowledge, the improvement of conditions, the building up of character, the promotion of unity, and the development of civilisation. Social progress as conceived by him is the result of social conditions and various other factors. He evaluates social progress in terms of harmony and adjustment.

1. F.M. Giddings : The Principles of Sociology, p. 356, p. 356.
The Macmillan Co., Ltd., London. 1920.

In the estimation of Sir Syed, social progress is a purely intellectual and scientific process.² It consists of the development of scientific spirit, the growth of theoretical knowledge and the promotion of economic prosperity.³ National progress can be complete only when a synthesis of the intellectual and material aspects of life is effected.⁴ Sir Syed divides nations into three categories. The first category comprises those nations that possess a creative spirit enabling them to adopt new ways and create new values.⁵ The second category includes those nations who have inherited glory from the past and try to preserve it in the present without creating anything new.⁶ The third category is of those nations which can neither create anything new nor preserve the old. They bring disaster to themselves, destroy what their ancestors had achieved and go down in history unmourned and unhonoured.⁷

FACTORS OF PROGRESS

Sir Syed describes social progress in the following manner :-

Social Factors

Sir Syed's view about the social factors of progress is that what is best for an individual is best for society. He propounds

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2. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 22nd November 1872, p. 726
 3. Ibid., p. 726
 4. Ibid., p. 726
 5. Ibid., p. 726
 6. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 31st January 1873, p. 72
 7. Ibid., p. 72

the idea that individual progress implies social progress as well as national progress. However, the existence of good society helps an individual to find his place in the social order and to fulfil his special function as its member.

1). Individual and National Progress

Sir Syed is of opinion that without individual progress, national progress is meaningless.⁸ He advocates that individual progress is essential for the collective betterment of society.⁹ Individual is responsible for the progress or retrogression of society to which he belongs. Disciplined individuals promote the general welfare of society.

The condition of every country depends upon the mental equipment of its individuals. When the minds of the people are enlightened and their morals are good, the country will reach the height of progress. On the contrary, when the people are steeped in darkness and ignorance, their decline begins and gradually they suffer from decadence.¹⁰ National progress lies entirely in individual progress.¹¹ Hence, as the individual is, so is the society. If he is morally strong, so will be the society otherwise the society will drift towards decadence and disorder.¹²

8. Intekhab-e-Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 71, Muslim University Aligarh Press, 1927

9. Ibid., p. 71

10. Ibid., p. 71

11. Ibid., p. 71

12. Ibid., p. 71

11). The Pace of Time

Sir Syed is positive that progress is determined by the circumstances or the 'pace of time'. National progress is possible only when the conditions of progress are modified according to the "pace of time".¹³ The time and circumstance change but unfortunately men fail to change themselves. There are two categories of people — those, who are rigidly orthodox in their ideas and beliefs and those, who are progressive in their outlook. The latter keep pace with the progress of civilisation and are useful to society, while the former works as a reactionary force to impede its progress.¹⁴

Opinions, habits, ways of life, laws of society and joys and sorrow of the people are uniformly affected by the 'pace of time'. This leads to the progress of a civilised nation.¹⁵ Sir Syed observes that a nation remains for a time in a state of progress and after sometime the progress ceases.¹⁶ It ceases when the faculty of adapting to changed conditions is lost to a nation.

Modern sociologists like Giddings and Hobhouse are of the opinion that adjustment to the existing condition of society is the way to social progress. To act according to time and circumstances

13. Mukammal. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches by Sir Syed, p. 155

14. Safar Nama-e-Punjab Sir Syed Ahmed, p. 124

15. Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 19

16. Ibid., p. 17

is necessary for achieving social progress. Sir Syed discloses the fact that when a nation becomes conscious of its backward condition, it naturally thinks of making progress.¹⁷ Thus, he postulates that the main condition of progress is in the realisation of the condition of decadence and the struggle for getting rid of it.¹⁸

iii). Self-help

According to Sir Syed, self-help is the basis of individual progress and if it is found in many people, then it leads to national progress, national strength and national stability.¹⁹

Dependence of the individual or group on others minimises the desire and need for self-help.²⁰ This results in diminishing the human urge for self-respect and honour. When a nation loses all sense of self-help, it degrades itself in the eyes of other nations.²¹

The advanced nations have achieved progress and honour by adopting the principle of self-help. Dependence on others and self-help are opposed to each other. The latter destroys the evil in man while the former brings ruin to him.²²

Sir Syed agrees with William Dragoon that liberty depends upon the endeavours of people. If people constantly strive and

17. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 196

18. Ibid., p. 278

19. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 127, Nsvil Kishore Press.

20. Ibid., p. 127

21. Sir Syed cites the example of the English people and says that they scrupulously follow the principle of self-help.

22. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 129

properly utilise their abilities, they can maintain their liberty.²³
Perseverance and diligence are the means of success and progress.²⁴

Self-help includes many other fine qualities such as courage, determination and self-confidence.²⁵ Man, lacking these qualities, degenerates and degrades himself in society. Self-help serves as an incentive to productive human activities.²⁶

There is a great similarity of thought in regard to the ideas of self-help between Sir Syed and Samuel Smiles. The influence of Samuel Smiles on Sir Syed seems to be positive. The following extracts from his book, *Self-help*, are taken into account for the purpose of comparison :

" The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigour and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates.²⁷

" National progress is the sum of individual industry, energy and uprightness as national decay is of the individual idleness, selfishness and vice.²⁸

" The highest patriotism and philanthropy consists, not so much in altering laws and modifying institutions, as in helping and stimulating men to elevate and improve themselves by their own free and independent individual action."²⁹

23. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 131

24. Ibid., p. 131

25. Ibid., p. 131

26. Ibid., p. 131

27. Samuel Smiles : *Self-Help*, p. 1, London, 1906

28. Ibid., p. 3

29. Ibid., p. 3

Socio-psychic Factors

It is a fact that every individual has a desire for progress and happiness. According to Sir Syed, human nature is in need of progress in all directions. The sole desire of an individual is to satisfy his needs and fulfil his aims.³⁰

1). Determination

Human nature is dynamic as well as relative. It is a source of human action and is endowed with many qualities. The most valuable quality of human nature is its power of determination.³¹ Individual determination is the main source of progress. Owing to superstition and conservatism the power of determination wavers and incentive to progress vanishes.³² Even the down-trodden and backward nations attain progress through determination.³³ It is determination by which the weak become strong and the strong become stronger but superstition and conservatism weaken the power of determination. The absence of determination causes degeneration. It damps the creative spirit of an individual and makes him conservative in thought and action.³⁴

Sir Syed observes that when a nation is determined to make progress, it ultimately achieves it. God also helps such a nation that aims at progress.³⁵ Any nation, which is in a wretched and

30. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 27th March 1880, p. 345

31. Ibid., p. 345

32. Ibid., p. 345

33. Ibid., p. 345

34. Ibid., p. 345

35. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 31st May 1872, p. 334

backward condition, should develop the power of determination and adopt methods for making progress.³⁶ Thus determination is the first step towards the attainment of social progress.³⁷

1). Discrimination between good and evil

A nation progresses and reforms itself, when its people are able to make a distinction between good and evil.³⁸ This is essential for national progress.³⁹ To distinguish between vice and virtue, good and evil, gain and loss, is a step towards progress.⁴⁰

According to Sir Syed, the progress of a nation begins when it thinks seriously, desires strongly and directs its energies persistently and intelligently towards its goal.⁴¹ Nations, lacking such discriminative power, remain backward, while those which pursue ideas of reform and differentiate between good and evil, are enjoying the benefits of progress and reform.⁴² God's grace descends on the nation, which moves with the spirit of time, appreciating what is good and discarding what is evil.⁴³ The nation, which does not adjust itself to the existing conditions and fails to discriminate between the beneficial and the harmful, drifts towards degeneration and decay.⁴⁴

36. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 31st May 1872, p. 334

37. Ibid., p. 334

38. Ibid., p. 335

39. Ibid., p. 335

40. Ibid., p. 335

41. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 26th May 1871, p. 322

42. Ibid., p. 322

43. Ibid., p. 322

44. Ibid., p. 322

111) Disunity

Disunity is an obstacle in the way of progress. Due to this socio-psychic factor some countries are unable to make any progress and many are left behind in the race of civilisation and advancement.⁴⁵ Co-operation and unity are the basis of social progress. A country is looked upon with contempt, when its inhabitants lack the unity of action and are involved in internal dissensions.⁴⁶ Disunity creates a disorganised social condition in a country.⁴⁷ It also restricts ways and means of social progress.⁴⁸ When disunity persists even good measures applied to progress give bad results. Sir Syed asserts that the main cause of backwardness in India is national disunity which has been accentuated by religious differences.⁵⁰

Economic Factors

The economic factors of progress are important for the general welfare of individuals and the common good of a country. The people should properly utilise their productive ^{resources} and develop their trade; otherwise they will be losers in the sphere of progress.⁵¹ If the people of a country do not make use of rational means and scientific methods ^{of production}, the Government of that country will have to *face* many difficulties and consequently it will become weak.⁵² In such countries, the productive capacity and per capita income will be very low.⁵³

45. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 23rd June 1871, p. 386

46. Ibid., p. 387

47. Ibid., p. 387

48. Ibid., p. 387

49. Ibid., p. 387

50. Ibid., p. 387

51. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 16th June 1871, p. 370

52. Ibid., p. 370

53. Ibid., p. 370

i). Utilisation of Production

People, who do not take advantage of productive resources and their scientific exploitation, are responsible for national weakness.⁵⁴ To be inefficient and incapable of meeting the needs of a country, is putting a stumbling block in the way of advancement. To depend upon others for primary needs endangers social stability. Countries which always stand in need of help from others and are unable to provide for their own essential needs come to grief.⁵⁵

National progress cannot be attained by mere idle imagination.⁵⁶ It can be achieved only by providing the various economic needs of the people according to the productive capacity of the country.⁵⁷

ii). Trade

Trade is an important means of social progress. The small States of Europe have attained a high standard of progress and increased their national income by expanding their trade.⁵⁸ If India wants to attain progress, it is essential for her to encourage handicraft, industry and trade.⁵⁹ Trade will prove an effective remedy for eradicating national poverty from the country.⁶⁰

Trade offers/ scope for progress.⁶¹ It is through trade/ show that man can

54. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 16.6.1871, p. 372

55. Ibid., p. 372

56. Ibid., p. 372

57. Ibid., p. 372

58. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 22nd November 1872, p. 726

59. Ibid., p. 726

60. Ibid., p. 726

61. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 31st January 1873, p. 73

his capacity, skill, wisdom and honesty. It leads to the improvement of industry, handicraft and skill. Not only worldly benefits are achieved through trade, but it teaches us to work honestly and to acquire skill and knowledge.⁶² Trade makes a man love travel and creates feelings of magnanimity in him, which are helpful in over-all progress.⁶³ Trade imparts experience also.⁶⁴

Sir Syed classifies trade into 2 categories, 'civilised' and 'uncivilised'.⁶⁵ The civilised trade is done on co-operative basis, irrespective of caste, creed or religion and gives out profits in proportion to the invested share capital. There is great scope for the expansion of such trade so that the entire population of a country may be benefited. The uncivilised trade is carried on with the motive of self-interest, or in quest of personal power or status.⁶⁶ It has little scope for expansion and does not bestow any benefit on the country.⁶⁷ Thus, social progress is only possible through civilised trade.

Geographical Factors

Sir Syed mentions that geographical factors play an important part in social progress and that human actions are determined largely by geographical and physical forces. Soil, climate, food

62. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 31.1.1873, p. 73

63. Ibid., p. 73

64. Ibid., p. 78

65. Tanzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. I, pp. 59 & 60, 1333 Hijra.

66. Ibid., p. 60

67. Ibid., p. 60

and natural phenomena are the four physical factors, influencing human nature, social progress and civilisation.⁶⁸ Thomas Buckle (1821-1862) also enumerates four physical factors; climate, food soil and general aspects of nature.⁶⁹ Thus, there is a striking similarity of ideas between Sir Syed and Buckle in regard to the role of geographical factors in determining human progress.

1). Soil

It has been observed that the fertility of soil has a powerful influence upon the progress of a nation. From the very beginning, India, Egypt, China and Asia Minor endowed with fertile soil, have been the cradles of civilisation; while other countries like Tibet and Arabia are backward on account of lack of fertility of the soil.⁷⁰

ii). Climate

The influence of climate upon human beings is profound. If the climate of a country is good, the inhabitants are naturally healthy, vigorous, strong, hardworking and sturdy. Climate has been more effective than soil fertility in the progress and the civilisation of nations.⁷¹ The soil of European countries is less fertile than soil in some tropical countries, but the climate there is pleasant and invigorating. The Europeans are not only healthy but also highly advanced in science and technology.⁷² They utilise their knowledge and labour to make up for the deficiency of soil.

68. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1st November 1867, p. 692

69. Bogardus, Emory, S. : The Development of Social Thought, p. 279, Longmans Green & Co., Ed. June 1950.

70. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1st November 1867, p. 692

71. Ibid., p. 692

72. Ibid., p. 692

Thus, the climate is more favourable for European countries than for the hot countries of the East.⁷³ Sir Syed's contention is that India, like other fertile hot countries, has ceased to make progress.⁷⁴ This remark does not seem to be quite convincing,⁷⁵ because India and some other countries with hot climate had once very advanced and progressive civilisations. There are other factors and not the climate alone which are responsible for the backwardness of the Orient as a whole and of advancement and progress of Europe. It, however, does not mean that climate has no effect on the progress, or otherwise, of a nation.

11). Food

Sir Syed comes out with the proposition that people to whom food is cheaply and easily available do not make as much progress as others do. What he means to convey is that where the supply of food is easy and abundant, the rate of population growth is high and consequently the necessities of life become proportionately scarce.⁷⁶ He has in mind the picture of India in contrast to that of Europe. He also postulates that the birth-rate depends upon food supply. In hot countries less food per capita is required than in cold countries, and where an abundance of food is found, the birth-rate is very high.⁷⁷ It is difficult to produce food in cold climate and that is why the birth-rate in cold countries is low.⁷⁸

73. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1st November 1867, p. 692

74. Ibid., p. 693

75. Ibid., p. 693

76. Ibid., p. 693

77. Ibid., p. 693

78. Ibid., p. 693 — Sir Syed's views on the relationship between the food production and birth-rate are debatable. His contention that birth-rate is high in those countries where there is an abundance of food and it is low in those places where it is not in abundance is not true everywhere and for all times. U.S.A., Australia and Canada produce so much food that they are in surplus still the birth-rate there is not higher than in India or China.

iv). Natural Phenomena

According to Sir Syed, natural phenomena mould and form the habit, character and nature of a nation and excite the imagination and stimulate the rational faculty.⁷⁹ Comparing India with Greece, Sir Syed says that the natural forces in India excite the imagination and dominate the mind more than in Greece.⁸⁰ In India, where Nature continually exhibits its power, man feels his inferiority and finds himself helpless.⁸¹ He ceases to think or to enquire.⁸² Superstitions and prejudices tend to dominate over his reason and wisdom.⁸³ On the other hand, where Nature works smoothly and quietly, man becomes bold and courageous and tries to dominate Nature.⁸⁴ Sir Syed observes that in India Nature has been unfavourable. Earthquakes, floods, tempests and hurricanes have continually ravaged the country and have disturbed the minds of the people.⁸⁵ Consequently, the people have become susceptible to superstitions and have lost all sense of judgment and discrimination.⁸⁶ Indian literature is full of illustrations depicting the effect of Nature on the feelings and imagination of the Indian people.⁸⁷ An exaggerated respect for the past is common in India.⁸⁸ Fantastic deities are worshipped and strange customs have come into vogue which are unacceptable to reason and intellect.⁸⁹

79. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1.11.1867, p. 693

80. Ibid., p. 693

81. Ibid., p. 693

82. Ibid., p. 693

83. Ibid., p. 693

84. Ibid., p. 693

85. Ibid., p. 693

86. Ibid., p. 693

87. Ibid., p. 693

88. Ibid., p. 693

89. Ibid., p. 693

In Greece, on the other hand, as Nature is more quiet the mind of man functions in a rational way. Man ponders over the natural phenomena and makes efforts to find out their causes and effects. Thus intellect functions and assumes superiority over imagination in every respect, with the result that literature and science have developed, and great philosophers, scholars and statesmen have left behind them great records of their work.⁹⁰ The less turbulent phenomena of Nature have proved to be most useful and advantageous for European nations.⁹¹ Sir Syed's ideas pertaining to geographical determinism have a strain of resemblance with the ideas of the 19th century geographic social thinkers like Buckle (1821-1862) and Semple (1844-1904). Sir Syed observes that Nature has been responsible for the differences in the tendencies and natural characteristics of nations.⁹²

Biological Factors

Sir Syed seems to have come under the influence of the bio-organismic theory of progress of the 19th century. The progress, made in the biological science and especially the theory of evolution made Sir Syed to develop his bio-organismic thoughts on social progress. The basic principles underlying his ideas are summed up as follows : First, society or social group is a kind

90. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1.11.1867, p. 693

91. Ibid., p. 693

92. Majmood Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 37

of social organism in the biological sense of the term. Secondly, society resembles in its essential characteristics the constitution and the functions of a biological organism. Thirdly, society is subjected to the same biological laws as those by which a biological organism functions and lives.⁹³

1). Group, Society and Nation as Organic Units

Society is an organism. The life of society, like the life of an organism, is far longer than the life of any of the units or parts.⁹⁴ Sir Syed, in the light of these organic similarities, analyses the characteristics and functions of group, society and nation. The nation is like a human being.⁹⁵ When the organic system of man gets weak, he falls a prey to diseases. Similarly, when a nation shows signs of decay, the decadence occurs in all aspects of its life.⁹⁶ Sir Syed says that when progress ceases decay sets in. God has created everything subject to the law of growth and decay. He compares the decadence of the nation with the falling of a beautiful green, flourishing tree. The land is the same on which it had grown; the sky is the same which had watered it; the rays of the sun are the same which had given vitality and nourishment to it; but its internal condition became so bad that it could neither absorb nutrition nor avoid degeneration setting from within. Consequently, it was uprooted and became a fuel for the oven.⁹⁷

93. Sorokin, Pitrim : Contemporary Sociological Theories, p.202, Mapper & Brothers, New York, 1928.

94. E.B. Bogardus : The Development of Social Thought, p. 294
Edi. 1950.

95. Majmoa Lectures and Speeches Sir Syed, p. 477

96. Ibid., p. 460

97. Ibid., pp.440 & 441

11). Four Biological Stages

Sir Syed's biological interpretation of social progress is characterised by the four stages of infancy, youth, manhood and old age. There are stages of growth and decline in a nation's career as in man's life. Man is born; he grows; reaches the prime of life; gets old and in the end dies. Similarly, a nation reaches the height of progress and at last decadence follows.

The decadence of a nation is as natural as the coming of an old age for a man. The disease of old age is known to people. Such a disease cannot be treated or cured as it is natural and inevitable. But the well-wishers and reformers of a nation can diagnose the disease and know that its treatment is within the scope of possibility.⁹⁸ Sir Syed observes that progress follows, decay, social regeneration follows social degeneration, and rise follows fall.

Evolutionary Factors

The evolutionary factors of progress envisaged by Sir Syed are based on cause and effect. Everything is related to a causal nexus. Social activity and progress are governed by various causes.⁹⁹ Without a cause nothing can happen. There is a close relationship between cause and effect.¹⁰⁰

1). Cause and Effect

The whole society and its social phenomena are the resultant phases of cause and effect. Sir Syed explains that we are living

98. Mahmoodul Hasan : Sir Syed ke Adabi Karname, p. 251,
Article : 'Life & Death of Nation'.

99. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 8., 1312 Hijra.

100. Ibid., p. 8

in the world of cause and effect and the causal chain allows no exception.¹⁰¹ The first cause that created the world has not yet been discovered by scientists. That cause may be called God or we may give it whatever name we like. It, therefore, follows that all causes and effects are linked together in a chain arrangement and are inseparable. God is in everything that has been created.¹⁰²

There is some similarity between the evolutionary ideas of Sir Syed and Spencer. Spencer traced everything in the world through causal links to two fundamental factors — matter and motion. As a result of the operation of some first cause, integration of matter began to take place, accompanied by a concomitant dissipation or motion. As a result, matter passed from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity.¹⁰³

ii). Evolution of Man

Sir Syed believed in human evolution, 'the struggle for existence', 'natural selection' and 'the survival of the fittest'. According to him, man has ascended stage by stage from the lower order of life to a higher one. From the evolutionary point of view, man and apes probably are descended from a common ancestor.¹⁰⁴ The relationship between man and ape is closer than that between man and any other species of animals.¹⁰⁵ But man is superior to all other animals.¹⁰⁶ His superiority lies in the efforts he makes for

101. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 8. 102. Ibid., p. 8
 103. Herbert Spencer : First Principles, Section III, p. 145
 104. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 192, 1313 Hijra.
 105. Ibid., p. 193
 106. Ibid., p. 193

progress.¹⁰⁷ Man can make progress as much as he likes.¹⁰⁸ There is a difference between man and animal from the evolutionary viewpoint. An animal cannot make progress beyond a certain limit, but man can make progress ad infinitum, as he is endowed with a particular creative faculty.¹⁰⁹ If man fails to make progress, he is no better than an animal.¹¹⁰

Man has been in the evolutionary stage. Nobody knows how far he has yet to march on his evolutionary path.¹¹¹ Evolutionary theory of Sir Syed has some similarity to Darwin's doctrine of descent. Darwin stressed on a certain continuity. Only those survive who are best fitted to meet the changing conditions of their environment. Sir Syed emphasises that human actions and social relations are governed by the laws of evolution, growth and decay.¹¹² As a realist, he considers 'the law of evolution merely a law of biological growth and decay and not a law of human progress'.¹¹³ The passing out of man from society does not mean his social extinction for his spirit, ideas, thoughts, and notions continue to exist in society, and society is thereby enriched.¹¹⁴ To visualise one's decadence is a sign of progress. Sir Syed emphasises that 'Progress inheres in decay and that in decay there are germs of progress'.¹¹⁵ Thus, the perpetual and cyclical laws of growth and decay symbolise

107. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 193.

108. Majmooa Speeches wa Lectures Sir Syed, p. 222

109. Ibid., p. 222

110. Ibid., p. 222

111. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. 2, pp. 194 and 195

112. Dr. Topa, I. "Sir Syed Ahmed Khan - A Study in Social Thought" p. 226. Islamic Culture Vol. XXVII, No. 4, October 1958.

113. Ibid., p. 225

114. Ibid., p. 226

115. Ibid., p. 226

the continuance of society.¹¹⁶ He believed in the continuity of nation, group and individual.¹¹⁷ Every nation is subject to laws of progress and decline.¹¹⁸ In the history of all nations there comes a crisis, a period during which the future is uncertain, and that period is often not more than the life-time of a generation.¹¹⁹ If a nation does not realise the danger, irremediable decay sets in and final extinction follows.¹²⁰ The period of an individual is limited to a certain period, but the period of a nation increases with the accumulation of their past and present achievements and thus a nation survives and attains progress.

Perfection-idea as Hindrance to Progress

Social life is dynamic and changeable. In a dynamic world an individual cannot remain satisfied with his own actions considering them as perfect. It is absurd to think in terms of perfection. Accepting the law of progress Sir Syed quotes a Persian proverb (Her Kamal-e-ra Zawale), i.e., every perfection is subject to decline.¹²¹ The moment man begins to think that he has become perfect, his struggle for investigation and research comes to a dead stop. All his faculties become crippled and individual decline sets in.¹²² Only God is omnipresent and perfect, to err is human.¹²³ The illusion of perfection is the cause of

116. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 21st March 1893, p. 277

117. Ibid., p. 279

118. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. 1, p. 39, Article: 'Al-Ilm Hijabul Akbar', Shawwal 1331 Hijra.

119. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 21st March 1893, p. 277

120. Ibid., p. 279

121. Ibid., p. 279

122. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol.2, p. 16

123. Ibid., p. 16

124. Ibid., p. 16

man's downfall.¹²⁵ The human urge for investigation and research knows no limit and it is ^a folly to suppress it in the name of perfection.¹²⁶ To think of perfection as already realised leads to a passivity of thought and action.¹²⁷ Sir Syed warns us against perfection-idea, as it cuts at the ^{very} root of social progress. The idea of perfection is a factor of national degeneration and a threat to future progress.¹²⁸ Sir Syed's condemnation of perfection-idea is a real contribution to the evolutionary theories of social progress. His idea is based on evolutionary analytical approach and calls upon man to abandon non-progressive principles and eschew the idea of perfection in all aspects of life; because everything is in the process of evolution.

Further, Sir Syed divides people into two groups; one group considers their forefathers as having reached the summit of perfection, adores them and finds no fault with them.¹²⁹ The other group is not satisfied with their past cultural heritage and continues to promote and encourage social and scientific research.¹³⁰ The result is that the former falls into the pitfall of social conservatism and the latter marches towards progress.¹³¹

Importance of National Heritage

Sir Syed considers the preservation of national heritage as a sign of progress and advancement.¹³² The cause of national decadence

125. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol.2, p. 16

126. Ibid., p. 16

127. Ibid., p. 16

128. Ibid., p. 16

129. Ibid., p. 17

130. Ibid., p. 17

131. Ibid., p. 17

132. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 2nd December 1871, p. 764

is to give up distinctive national characteristics, heritage and ways of life and to follow in the footsteps of an alien nation.¹³³

It is necessary to preserve national traditions and customs.¹³⁴

Sir Syed adds that the extinction of national traits and characteristics or the neglect in their preservation will certainly put an end to national status and prestige and result in the loss of national entity by its final absorption in an alien culture.¹³⁵

Sir Syed advises us not to give up the basic principles on which the existence of the national individuality depends.¹³⁶ Introducing

changes for the betterment of society is in no way derogatory.

The existing pattern of society, ^{which} is in harmony with the ideal of civilised life, it should be preserved.¹³⁸

Travel as a Means of Progress

Sir Syed regards travel as a means of progress. He states that all civilised nations have looked upon travel as a means of progress.¹³⁹ He regards travel as a 'book of knowledge'. It is through the study of this book alone that a complete knowledge of the world and its peoples can be obtained.¹⁴⁰

Sir Syed considers that travel promotes mutual understanding.¹⁴¹

133. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 2.12.1871, p. 754

134. Ibid., p. 754

135. Ibid., p. 754

136. Ibid., p. 756

137. Ibid., p. 756

138. Ibid., p. 756

139. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 14th February 1868, p. 99

140. Ibid., p. 99

141. Ibid., p. 100

The advantage of travel lies in the fact that the scope of understanding and the range of thought are widened.¹⁴² Travelling creates sympathy and makes one understand the sufferings and feelings of others.¹⁴³ Suspicion, which is the bane of social intercourse between races, would change into mutual trust and confidence for purpose of progress in different fields.¹⁴⁴

142. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 14.2.1868, p. 100

143. Ibid., p. 100

144. Ibid., p. 100

CHAPTER IV

INDIVIDUAL AND CIVILISATION

Civilisation is a social phenomenon that raises ^{an} individual's biological state to a higher plane of values. It is transmitted through education and knowledge from generation to generation. It is not the monopoly of any particular race but grows, develops and passes from man to man, from race to race and from region to region. It is, in short, the story of human society in progress.

Definition and Scope of Civilisation

Civilisation is an external aspect of life, while culture springs from the mind and is the outcome of mental development. There is a common saying that "what we are is culture and what we use is civilisation". There is a great difference of opinion among the thinkers in defining civilisation and culture. But it is agreed on all hands that civilisation is the utilitarian aspect of social life that includes material objects and the techniques of making and using them and that culture consists of ideals, values and emotions.

1. Alfred M. Lee (Editor) : Principles of Sociology, Chapter on Race & Culture by Edward B. Reuter, p. 140. Barnes & Noble, New York, 1953.

Eminent sociologists like R.K. Merton, William F. Ogburn, R.M. Maciver, Alfred Weber, C.A. Ellwood, Tarrance, F. Stuart Chapin and Anthropologists like E.B. Taylor, A.A. Golden Weiser, K. Young and J. G. Frazer hold exactly the same kind of opinion in differentiating civilisation from culture.

Sir Syed in his essay headlined 'Civilisation' clarifies the root-sense of the word, civilisation, which is derived from the English or Latin word 'civic' or 'civicus', which means citizen or 'city-life'.² The hidden meaning of the derivation lies in the springing up of cities when primitive man took to settled and corporate form of life and needed a wider scope for the development of his activities in the field of art and in the domain of social relations.³ He defines clearly civilisation as "to ~~do~~ ^{transform bad into} good ~~to bad~~ (determining ^{what is} good or bad) or to change a state of bad into a state of good."⁴ ~~in other words~~ ^{what is} means by civilisation the "existence of external patterns of social and national behaviour,"⁵ ~~and it~~ ^{and it} ~~is~~ the 'expression of tendencies and aptitudes developing from within, which are inherent in man and only require time to blossom and flourish'.⁶

Sir Syed differs from modern thinkers in respect of relationship between civilisation and culture. According to him both are synonymous and inseparable. He maintains that civilisation is culture and culture is civilisation.⁷ Though modern sociologists make a distinction between civilisation and culture, they cannot deny the fact that both are closely inter-related. The manifesta-

2. Mukammal Majmooa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 58

3. Ibid., p. 58

4. Dr. I. Topa : Sir Syed Ahmed Khan - A Study in Social Thought, p. 233, Islamic Culture Vol. XXVII, No.4, October 1953, published by the Islamic Culture Board, Hyderabad-Deccan.

5. Ibid., p. 233

6. Ibid., p. 233

7. Ibid., p. 233

tion of an object may be predominantly civilisational or cultural, But it is never bereft of civilisational and cultural aspects.

Sir Syed mentions several characteristics of the civilised people. He says that to be civilised is to show kindness and sympathy to others in their misery and distress and to participate in their welfare.⁸ Sir Syed looks back to the past to find out the values of civilisation and adds that our ancestors embodied in their lives the pattern of a civilised society. Their traits were friendship and love, generosity and magnanimity, forgiveness and forbearance, sagacity and courtesy, tolerance and sympathy.⁹ As they have left for posterity an example to follow, it is up to us to look to them for light and guidance and to work for the good of humanity.¹⁰ Thus, according to Sir Syed, ^{promotion of} scientific knowledge, development of technology, discoveries and inventions, morality and religion, discipline and training, fear of God, sympathy and mercy, love and virtue, truthfulness, social intercourse and contacts are the fundamentals of national civilisation.¹¹

He elucidates further the nature and the scope of civilisation. He raises a number of questions in regard to civilisation, such as, What is it composed of? Is it something artificial and man-made? Is it something that is evolved haphazardly or

8. Majmoqa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 459
 9. Ibid., p. 459
 10. Ibid., p. 20
 11. Ibid., p. 102

has Nature given birth to it in the instinct of man? What is its meaning and purport? Is it such a thing that has been coined by common people or philosophers? Or is it such a thing that its meaning or its relationship to things is found in the law of nature.¹²

It is in the very nature of man to like or dislike a thing according to the dictates of his 'reason' and to reform the evil and change it into good.¹³ This is the essence of civilisation.¹⁴ There is no doubt that this tendency or desire for change is inherent in man temperamentally or instinctively.¹⁵

There are two forces at work in the nature of man in his onward march towards civilisation, viz., good and evil.¹⁶ But what one nation approves of as good may be considered a negative value by the other.¹⁷ When some people get together and settle down in a particular place, their needs, their urges, their food, their modes, their living, their thinking, their joys, their sorrows, their likes and their dislikes become uniform in course of time.¹⁸ Hence, their moral values also become uniform and similar.¹⁹ The collective urge or desire for diffusion or transmission of ideas and feelings in any nation or a group of people become a part of civilisation.²⁰ So long as different groups are settled in different places, their needs and desires are also different and dissimilar, and their concepts and ideas about civilisation also vary accordingly.²¹

12. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 113, Navil Kishore Press

13. Ibid., p. 114

14. Ibid., p. 114

15. Ibid., p. 114

16. Ibid., p. 114

17. Ibid., p. 114

18. Ibid., p. 114

19. Ibid., p. 114

20. Ibid., p. 114

21. Ibid., p. 114

As human knowledge advances, civilisation also makes rapid strides. In other words, The transformation from the state of bad into a state of good sets reaction in material and moral spheres of life.²² Civilisation manifests itself in individuals in their avoidance of pain, in their enjoyment of pleasure, in their progress of arts and sciences, and in their sublimation of feelings and emotions.²³ Thus, civilisation plays a vital role in individual's life.²⁴ Civilisation is a process of sifting the good from the bad and is a positive step in the direction of uplifting man from a lower to a higher level.²⁵ Civilisation is a moderating force in determining the factors of human behaviour and ideas.²⁶ It teaches man to value time, to investigate into the occurrence of things, to co-ordinate them to perfect human conduct and knowledge and ultimately to utilise them in a proper manner for the good of all.²⁷ And what is the up-shot of all these strivings? It brings in its wake spiritual and material happiness to man and gives him a moral stature, a genuine contentment and a real dignity which exalt him from a state of barbarism to a position of civilised existence.²⁸

Sir. Syed cites the theory of H.T. Buckle by way of comparison in regard to the acquisition of civilisation:²⁹

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22. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol.II, p. 115
 23. Ibid., p. 115
 24. Ibid., p. 115
 25. Ibid., p. 116
 26. Ibid., p. 116
 27. Ibid., p. 116
 28. Ibid., p. 116
 29. Ibid., pp. 116 and 117

- i. To investigate into the cause and nature of perceptible things about which we have insufficient knowledge and to strive for propagation of knowledge thus obtained inductively. The more the success is achieved in this direction, the more assured will be the progress of man towards civilisation.
- ii. To cultivate the spirit for ascertaining the unknown before investigation;
- iii. To correlate human findings for the purpose of human progress, leading to one's own convictions;
- iv. ^{To realise that} [] the great enemy of civilisation is the method of conducting the affairs of life by the state or religion in which case there can be no progress, i.e., the state should teach the people what they should do and that religion should likewise ^{teach} what they should believe.

Sir Syed also agrees with the last point of Buckle with regard to the interference of the State in matters of individual thinking and living and considers it as a great hindrance in the way of human progress and civilisation.³⁰ This has also been responsible for the 'uncultural' and the 'uncivilisational' attributes of the people of India, Egypt, Turkey and other parts of Asia.³¹ Regarding the dictates of religion in the life of the people, Sir Syed partly agrees and partly disagrees with Buckle; his attitude being that Buckle's viewpoint is only partially correct as religion is decidedly a civilisational factor. According to him, irreligion is positively a stumbling block in the progress of civilisation. But a greater.

30. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 117

31. Ibid., p. 117

hindrance in the way of civilisation is experienced, when religion gets mixed up with erroneous ideas, prejudices, superstitions and imaginary beliefs, resulting in the distortion of its distinctive features. Sir Syed supports his views by showing the plight of Islam in the nineteenth century, which was engulfed by the darkness of 't^agheed' (imitation), whereas according to him no true religion like Islam can ever impede the progress of man as the laws of Islam and the aim of civilisation are one and the same.³²

Factors of Civilisation

Sir Syed looks upon the great nations of Europe as truly civilised and cultured, while he regards the Chinese and the Turks as less civilised. Similarly, the original inhabitants of North America, Australia, South Africa and the savages of South America are hardly civilised.³³ Thus, physical, geographical and religious factors promote or deter the progress of national civilisation.³⁴

Of all the factors of civilisation, the first and foremost factor is man himself. This is due to his organic and biological cast which is far-superior to that of other beings.³⁵ He also possesses a grand mastery over other species owing to his intellectual faculty and manual skill.³⁶ He can give more comfort and leisure to himself through his ingenuity which is denied to other creatures.³⁷ In other words, he can create for himself such conditions as help to

32. Dr. I. Topa : Sir Syed Ahmed Khan - A Study in Social Thought, pp. 235 and 236

33. Mukammal Majmoa/Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 58

34. Ibid., p. 58

35. Ibid., p. 60

36. Ibid., p. 60

37. Ibid., p. 60

make his life more comfortable and purposeful than is possible in Nature.³⁸ It is because of this creative and inventive spirit that he has survived and flourished in this world of eternal struggle for the consummation of his material and spiritual well-being.³⁹

The distinctive quality of man is his instinctive urge that guides him to seek the company of his own fellow-beings; the chief cause being that an individual, owing to the limitation of his faculties and the accident of birth, is incapable of going beyond his inherent powers.⁴⁰ But in spite of the superiority enjoyed by man as against other creatures, he has not been able to attain a civilised level in a uniform way all over the world. As nations differ in their cultural achievements, it is necessary to take into consideration the basic cause of these varying phenomena. It is incumbent on us to examine in detail, how certain nations have overcome difficulties in the face of adverse circumstances in their own way and according to their own genius.⁴²

Civilisation has been influenced by factors -- geographical environment, inter-communication, religion and government.⁴³

1). Geographical Environment

Sir Syed observes that the factor of fertility or productivity of any land is not the essential cause to promote or hinder civilisation.⁴⁴ Apparently it appears that wherever there is abundance

38. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 60

39. Ibid., p. 61

40. Ibid., p. 61

41. Ibid., p. 61

42. Ibid., p. 61

43. Ibid., p. 61

of food in fertile areas, people swarm the place and found the facilities to acquire a higher type of civilisation.⁴⁴ But this is not all. The primitive life, led by the islanders of the South-Eastern belt of Asia, shows clearly that their homeland is a veritable centre of idleness, ignorance and tyranny in spite of generous gifts of Nature.⁴⁵

The continents of South America and Africa bear testimony to the fact that the inhabitants of those regions have lived through the epochs of history like mushrooms or self-growing plants of the forests without any plan or purpose. The region of Africa watered by the Nile has had a chequered past and witnessed the ancient glory, dignity and pomp of the Pharaohs.⁴⁶ Similarly, the lands of Syria and Mesopotamia, irrigated by the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, *which* were in ancient times, the seats of civilisation and culture, as evidenced from the historical records of the unearthed twin-cities of Babylon and Nineva.⁴⁷ The ancient empire of Persia presents a glorious record of achievement and no less were the attainments in the field of human progress and civilisation in the basin of the Ganges.⁴⁸ Similarly, the contribution of the Chinese is a landmark in the history of the world.⁴⁹

44. Mukammal Majmooa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 62

45. Ibid., p. 62

46. Ibid., p. 62

47. Ibid., p. 62

48. Ibid., p. 62

49. Ibid., p. 62

ii). Inter-communication

Inter-communication between individuals or nations is considered as the most vital factor of civilisation. Nations handicapped by extensive land barriers are deprived of the means of healthy and free intercourse.⁵⁰ They are, thus, incapable of communicating their thoughts and exchanging their material goods and making human relationship purposeful.⁵¹ It, therefore, goes without saying that no nation can ever reach the height of civilisation without inter-communication and inter-relationship.⁵²

It is said of nations that, if they become static, they cannot adapt themselves to ~~the~~ ^{changing} conditions of civilisation.⁵³ The nomadic people drawing their sustenance from animal milk, or from the trade of domesticated animals, are the best illustrations to bear out this proposition.⁵⁴ They are like the ancient Scythians and Tartars, who could not show any cultural progress because of ~~the~~ narrow range of intellectual development.⁵⁵ Similar is the condition of the Beduins, Africans, Tibetans, Bhootanese, Caucasians and those inhabiting the mountain ranges of Atlas and Aros.⁵⁶ By these illustrations, Sir Syed pointedly shows that inter-communication between nations is essential for the growth of any nation in culture and civilisation.⁵⁷

50. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 62

51. Ibid., p. 62

52. Ibid., p. 62

53. Ibid., p. 62

54. Ibid., p. 62

55. Ibid., p. 62

56. Ibid., p. 63

57. Ibid., p. 63

Migration is a factor in transmitting cultural traits, traditions and customs from group to group, people to people and country to country.⁵⁸ When people thus break through the time-honoured barriers, they carry along with them new desires, new ambitions and new outlook fostering the processes of transmission and cultural synthesis. The latter process is also instrumental in making the savage and barbarous nations vie with the highly civilised people.⁵⁹ Thus, inter-communication is one of the dynamic factors in the advancement of civilisation.

111). Religion

Religion is a civilising force and a means of social control. Since the dawn of history religion has been conceived as a means of worship of some supreme power. The idea of such worship originated with the Phoenicians and the Egyptians and was developed by the Greeks and the Romans.⁶⁰

Religion has developed the power of imagination among the poets of all times, who produced unrivalled pieces of art in Egypt, Chaldes, Greece and Italy. Their art is a proof of their advanced civilisation.⁶¹ In the same way, the religion in China is a depiction of the history of civilisation from the stage of atheism and agnosticism to the stage of positivism and monotheism. Moreover, it is due to the influence of

58. Mukammal Majmooa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 63

59. Ibid., p. 63

60. Ibid., p. 64

61. Ibid., p. 64

Christianity that its followers have become fond of learning, dignity and power.⁶² Similarly, Islam has been helpful in the progress of civilisation and has not been against civilisation as it is sometimes contended.⁶³ The influence of religion as a factor of civilisation is proved beyond doubt, Only a defective religion can be detrimental to civilisation.⁶⁴

iv). G o v e r n m e n t

It is an acknowledged fact that a despotic ruler has absolute power and control over his subjects. In such circumstances, no man can attain the state of perfection and individual freedom is out of question.⁶⁵ The urge for freedom and the fostering of new ideas, as a contributing factor, in the change of thought and action, are strongly opposed by a tyrannical Government which ultimately hinders human civilisation.⁶⁶

The division of men into isolated national groups is an obstacle to the development of universal civilisation. Civilisation can never be attained without the freedom of thought and action.⁶⁷ Hence, freedom and independence are the prime factors in the advancement of civilisation.⁶⁸ The degree of civilisation varies with the extent of freedom individuals enjoy.⁶⁹

62. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 64

63. Ibid., p. 65

64. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 61

65. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 65

66. Ibid., p. 66

67. Ibid., p. 66

68. Ibid., p. 66

69. Ibid., p. 66

Sir Syed's conception of civilisation is of a comprehensive nature and embraces almost all aspects of life. It is humane and universal; it touches many facets of society; it is composed of internal and external processes of social life.⁷⁰ It is of no consequence to know whether a man goes to heaven or hell, but it is of great significance to know whether 'he has done service for the good of his fellow human-beings or not.'⁷¹ Sir Syed lays stress on the fact that it is the duty of an individual to do good to the community, for all of us are indeed brethren and belong to one family as branches of one tree, we should do good to one another.⁷² Sir Syed considers civilisation as creative, practical and good whose traits are based on the laws of Nature and not on religious bias or regional prejudice. He strongly advises that we should give up all bias and prejudice; co-operate with others in sympathy and virtue without hatred and pride and devote ourselves to the service of our fellow-beings.⁷³ It is wrong to consider those customs and habits as constituents of civilisation which are in fact the outcome of the age-long prejudices of country and religion, because peoples of different countries have different customs and habits, and look upon each other with contempt and hatred.⁷⁴ In fact, civilisation has no relationship at all with contemptuous attitude and behaviour towards the customs and habits of others.⁷⁵ Sir Syed further clarifies that every man should do

70. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 529

71. Ibid., p. 530

72. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 20

73. Ibid., p. 41

74. Ibid., p. 41

75. Ibid., p. 41

his duty assigned to him by God and promote the ever-lasting good of human and national welfare.⁷⁶ There can be no doubt that the 'Ever-lasting good' is an essential attribute of civilisation.

76. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 121.

CHAPTER VINDIVIDUAL AND CUSTOMS

Custom as a social force exercises a restraining influence on an individual. It is a socially prescribed mode of behaviour, transmitted by tradition and enforced by social sanction. Custom once established is difficult to change. A custom can make something appear right at one time and wrong at another. Individuals ordinarily conform to the prevailing customs in order to avoid being conspicuous or being an object of ridicule or persecution.

Custom as defined by Sir Syed

Customs and traditions are group-accepted techniques of control that have become well-established and are transmitted from generation to generation. They are group-sanctioned and the individual members of the group are constrained to conduct themselves in accordance with the dictates of custom and tradition.¹ Sir Syed maintains that the system of social control, based upon customs and traditions, deprives man of his initiative and of his power of judgement and weakens his moral and intellectual faculties.²

As a social thinker, Sir Syed has carefully studied the origin, development and function of customs in relation to individual and society. He defines custom as an institution which

1. Emory S. Bogardus : Sociology, p. 475, Macmillan Co., New York, 1949 (3rd edition).

2. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : Intikhab-e-Mazameen-e-Sir Syed, p. 12, Aligarh, 1920.

has been transmitted from past generations and adopted by people, though it is difficult to find out how it came to be established.³ Distinguishing between habit and custom, Sir Syed says that "habit is the product of our own temperament, which guides us instinctively and spontaneously to do a certain act repeatedly, while custom is a force which reacts upon us from outside and by which we do a function repeatedly".⁴

with Sir Syed agrees/the definition of custom as adopted by some English writers. They are of opinion that "custom is what is repeatedly done, or is that what has been done continuously for a long time."⁵ Custom is always an unwritten law which is unanimously supported for ages by the people and the sanction of custom assumes the form of law".⁶

Sir Syed discusses custom in relation to law and says that many codifiers of law define custom as a law which is never written down, but which has been prevalent with the sanction and willingness of the common people for ages.⁷ Custom forms a large part of the/unwritten law of a country.⁸ In England, 'common laws' are the unwritten laws and the great jurists of the country have defined the common laws as the ancient customary laws of England. Similarly, customs and traditions of India are the 'common laws' of the country.⁹

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- 3. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 83, Lahore 1900
 - 4. Ibid., p. 83
 - 5. Ibid., p. 83
 - 6. Ibid., p. 83
 - 7. Ibid., p. 83
 - 8. Ibid., p. 83
 - 9. Ibid., pp. 83 and 84

Factors influencing the formation of customs

Sir Syed mentions the following factors as determining customs :

- i. Climate of a country;
- ii. Socio-cultural factors;
- iii. Processes of imitation and assimilation;
- iv. State of progress or decadence of a nation.¹⁰

There is no doubt that climate and other physical characteristics of a country determine, to a large extent, the nature of customs that prevail there.¹¹

Sir Syed is also aware of the fact that socio-cultural factors influence the formation of customs. He maintains that as there are differences in the social and cultural patterns of various nations, the customs of these nations also reflect these differences.¹²

Although imitation and assimilation of the customs of other nations is a mark of open-mindedness and wisdom, yet blind imitation is unwise and harmful.¹³ People should discriminate between good and bad customs in adopting or rejecting the customs of other people.¹⁴

Sir Syed admits that there is not a single nation in the World which is completely free from pernicious customs.¹⁵ In

10. Tahzeebul Akhlaq, Vol. II, p. 7, published by Navil Kishore Press, Lahore.

11. Ibid., p. 9

12. Ibid., p. 9

13. Ibid., p. 9

14. Ibid., p. 9

15. Ibid., p. 10

one country, however, bad customs may preponderate and in another the reverse may be the case.¹⁶ According to Sir Syed, the nation which has few bad customs as compared to other nations can be regarded civilised and advanced.¹⁷

Sir Syed is conscious of the fact that no individual can throw off the yoke of custom and remain immune from its socio-cultural influences.¹⁸ His actions are governed by social customs.¹⁹ He is forced by Nature and environment to adopt such customs as are prevalent in society in which he moves.²⁰ He is born with a pliable nature which is shaped mostly by customs and social environment.²¹

The Hold of Customs

Before discussing the good and bad effects of customs on society, Sir Syed tries to show the tremendous influence they have on men's every-day life. He points out that even religion is powerless against a well-established custom. There may be customs that prevail even against religious sanctions. They take such deep roots in the hearts of the people that the powerful agency of religion is unable to uproot them.²² The hold of custom on individuals is very strong and abiding.²³ It is surprising that even scholars and philosophers, who ponder over intricate problems of life, bow down their heads before customs.²⁴

16. *Tahzeebul Akliaque*, Vol. II, p. 10

17. *Ibid.*, p. 11

18. *Ibid.*, p. 11

19. *Ibid.*, p. 11

20. *Tahzeebul Akliaque*, Vol. I, p. 15

21. *Ibid.*, p. 15

22. *Muhammedal Makmoos Lectures and Speeches Sir Syed*, pp. 54 and 85

23. *Ibid.*, p. 35

24. *Ibid.*, p. 25

Sir Syed thinks that it is no use merely to discriminate between good and bad customs.²⁵ What is really important is to find out whether it is desirable to improve them and to devise ways of improvement.²⁶

It is a matter of common observation that a custom having religious sanction behind it has a more powerful influence on individuals than other customs.²⁷ He clarifies the relationship between religion and custom by emphasising the fact that rigid adherence of the individuals to religious customs comes in the way of progress, and any attempt to reform them is to expose oneself to the charge of heresy.²⁸

Sir Syed finds a close relationship between custom and society. He brings out the importance of such a relationship and dwells on the role of custom in a changing society. In every country, various customs exist in conformity with the patterns of society.²⁹ Sir Syed holds that even culture and society are the cause of the development of customs, and customs are partly the product of culture and society.³⁰ There are other causes also which give rise to customs, e.g., the nature of a country, the different needs of different people of various countries, the divergences of temperaments *among* nations and differences in their tastes and in their physical structure and lastly differences in the progress of knowledge and technique.³¹

²⁵ Muhammad Ali Jinnah Lectures on Sir Syed, p. 25

²⁶ Ibid., p. 25

²⁷ Ibid., p. 25

²⁸ Ibid., p. 25

²⁹ Ibid., p. 25

³⁰ Ibid., p. 25

³¹ Ibid., p. 25

The Reform of Customs

A close study of human societies will reveal the fact that customs vary and sometimes they are contradictory. Their inconsistency is an argument in favour of the need for change and reform.³²

There are three kinds of customs prevalent among peoples -- religious, governmental and cultural. The ancient Greeks, the Egyptians and the Hindus worshipped idols, and, as a religious custom, they considered it as a means of salvation. The Muslims and the Jews consider the worship of idols as irreligious and believe that worship of any other being but God will condemn them to hell.³³ Though the Jews, the Muslims and the Hindus offer animal sacrifices as a part of their religion, a Buddhist states it as hattaya. Religious customs and beliefs vary considerably according to geographical conditions and characteristics of peoples. Similarly, customs, relating to government, are different from one country to another. Here Sir Syed gets a good example from the contemporary U.S.A. He mentions that some American States consider the abolition of slavery as a duty of the government, whereas other States claim that the State should uphold the right of the master over the slave.³⁴

32. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, II, 22

33. Ibid., p. 89

34. Ibid., p. 90

There are marked differences in the social and cultural customs of different nations. In European society, it is a mark of respect to be bare headed, while *having* shoes on. Among Hindus, respect is shown by covering one's head and having bare feet.³⁵ Sir Syed, giving another example of the variety and relativity of customs, points out that a girl of Western nation freely selects a man as her husband, but an Indian girl is not allowed to converse with her husband for certain days even after her marriage. Similarly, bigamy is considered a vice and crime in Western society, but this custom has religious sanction among Muslims.³⁶ Polyandry and polygamy are permitted in certain tribes and groups but are prohibited by others.³⁷ These are a few examples of customs which are considered by certain nations as immoral, while other people warmly approve of them.³⁸ It is obviously difficult to say that everyone of these heterogeneous customs is good and useful. If *blind adherence* to custom is rigorously enforced, no nation will be able to give up evil customs.³⁹

Sir Syed does not lend support to the blind adherence of custom and tradition. He maintains that the reform of customs is necessary for the healthy growth of human society.⁴⁰ As customs are the product of the conditions of a society at a particular time they should undergo change with the change of conditions.⁴¹ To show aversion to change may be due to habit,

35. *Asbab-e-Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed*, p. 90
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 90. Here also we must keep in mind that Sir Syed is describing the condition of lower and upper class Muslims in the 19th century.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

because, man has been brought up from his infancy in the midst of customs which have become his second nature.⁴² Sir Syed points out that those who blindly adhere to customs do not realise that they were adopted by their ancestors after considerable modification and change. When our ancestors reformed the customs of their ancestors, why should we not reform the customs of our ancestors?⁴³ Sir Syed strongly urges for the reform of the customs, otherwise human society, according to him, would become static and there would be no change for the better in its pattern of life.⁴⁴ He, however, fully realises the strength of opposition to any efforts at the change of customs. In the beginning, the people are shocked by even a mild criticism of a time-honoured custom.⁴⁵ The chief reason for this, is lack of knowledge and defective education.⁴⁶ Defective education does not enable them to overcome their prejudices and to realise the need for reform and change.⁴⁷

Sir Syed points out that the reform of customs has a beneficial effect on man's mode of living and the development of his intellect. Rigid conformity to a group-way of life, leads to the stagnation of human intellect and its creative faculties. It also results in the decline of arts and science and national decadence.⁴⁸ Progress becomes an impossibility in such a condition.⁴⁹ When a man undertakes the reform of customs, he is

42. *Maximal Mansoor Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed*, p. 92

43. *Ibid.*, p. 92

44. *Ibid.*, p. 92

45. *Ibid.*, p. 92

46. *Ibid.*, p. 92

47. *Ibid.*, p. 92

48. *Ibid.*, p. 92

49. *Ibid.*, p. 92

faced with the difficult problem of discriminating between the good and bad elements in a particular custom. Experience, education and training help one to differentiate between good and bad customs.⁵⁰ Some people suggest that a custom should be reformed only when all the people are in agreement as to its desirability, but such a unanimity is difficult to obtain because of the temperamental conservatism of the majority.⁵¹

Sir Syed's approach to the question of reform of custom is highly individualistic. He offers sound advice to the person who intends to change or reform customs, saying that he should have the courage of his conviction and face the opposition with determination, boldness and firmness.⁵² He must persist in his course of action even when it is condemned by his own people. In the course of time, they will begin to appreciate his work and will recognise him as their leader. *The progress or retrogression of a nation ultimately depends on a person who is a true benefactor of his nation.*⁵³ According to Sir Syed, change or reform in custom is indispensable for the progress and advancement of society, society and people. Moreover, it is an acknowledged fact that customs change with the time.⁵⁴

Sir Syed points out that moral or intellectual progress rest upon the proper use of custom. Imitating others dull the edge

50. Mukhammad Mahmood Lectures and Speeches Sir Syed, p. 53

51. Ibid., p. 53

52. Ibid., p. 54

53. Ibid., p. 54

54. Ibid., p. 54

of human initiative.⁵⁵ He is aware of the fact that man is not a machine and that his actions are not completely determined by external forces. Rather, he is like a tree, which spontaneously grows through a vital force which God has created.⁵⁶ To live without custom and tradition is not possible. One should, however, insist on the retention of only such customs as can justify themselves at the bar of reason and the rest be abolished without hesitation.⁵⁷ Those customs which are good and useful may be observed, those which are in need of improvement may be reformed and those which are bad and vicious may be given up.⁵⁸ It is a great mistake to stick to customs, when our reason tells us that they are positively harmful.⁵⁹

Sir Syed believes that customs are relative to the age in which they flourish and are specific to the community which adopts them. A custom may be good for a community at a particular time, but may be positively harmful at a later time. Similarly a custom which suits one community may be unsuitable to other communities.⁶⁰ To adhere mechanically to customs, even if they are good, is harmful for it stunts intelligence and cramps creative faculty.⁶¹

Sir Syed was conscious of the fact that a person would be well-advised to follow the example of one who is wiser than himself. But there is a difference in following the example of a wise man and in adhering to customs.⁶² As a matter of fact

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55. Intikhab-e-Mazameen-e-Sir Syed, p.11, Muslim University Press, Aligarh, 1927.
 56. Ibid., p. 12
 57. Ibid., p. 12
 58. Ibid., pp.12 & 13
 59. Ibid., p. 13
 60. Ibid., p. 15
 61. Ibid., p. 15
 62. Ibid., p. 15

adherence to customs is blind and proceeds from complete ignorance of their virtues or evils. The slave of custom never makes use of his intelligence.⁶³

Sir Syed attributes the backwardness of oriental people to their rigid observance of customs. In many Eastern countries, public life is dictated by custom. There was a time when the people of the East were richly endowed with creative intellect and had introduced beneficial usages which, in the course of time, crystallised into customs.⁶⁴ Now, those very people are in a sad plight because customs, hardened by age and time, hold them tight under their grip. Thus great in the past, they have fallen in the estimation of progressive and advanced nations of the present age. The so-called civilised nations of the West advanced from their primitive stage of society because they were not the slaves of custom. The early history of the East also records that its people did not rigidly and slavishly adhere to customs in their hey-day and their spirit moved freely undeterred by the bonds of custom.⁶⁵

Sir Syed takes up the question as to why the nations of Europe, despite their adherence to some of the ancient customs, are making progress in every respect. He sees no reason to revise his opinion about blind adherence to custom as harmful and frankly admits that if the nations of Europe become blind followers of customs, they too will meet with the same fate. The

63. Intikhab-e-Mazameen-e-Sir Syed, p. 15

64. Ibid., p. 16

65. Ibid., p. 16

difference between the European and Eastern countries in respect of adherence to customs is that in the West customs are reformed from time to time and adapted to new conditions so that they no longer act as hindrance to progress. In the West, an effective, old custom is transformed into a useful practice and the people gain by conforming to it.⁶⁶ This tendency of adaptation and improvement is noticeable in the spheres of technology, politics, education, ethics and religion.⁶⁷

Sir Syed finds great difficulty in setting a criterion for good customs. He says that it is very difficult to assess the customs of a country and to judge their merits.⁶⁸ Every nation likes its own customs and is very often satisfied with them.⁶⁹ He further adds that the things to which man gets used become pleasant to him and he likes them whole-heartedly.⁷⁰ But this does not mean that the assessment of good and bad should depend on the likes and dislikes of man. As a matter of fact, good and bad customs are relative terms. One should not just assume that a custom is good or bad, but should open-mindedly and carefully examine it, for a certain custom which is really bad, cannot be held good merely by social approval.⁷¹ Nevertheless, it can be said that even a good custom may become bad in course of time.⁷²

66. Intikhab-e-Mazameen-e-Sir Syed, p. 17

67. Ibid., p. 18

68. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 7

69. Ibid., p. 7

70. Ibid., p. 7

71. Ibid., p. 8

72. Ibid., p. 9

Sir Syed advocates that we should whole-heartedly welcome good customs and traditions, but set our face against bad customs, whether they belong to our own country or to other countries.⁷³ Thus, the adoption of customs and their reform should be based on an unprejudiced and unbiased consideration of their merits.

73. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. I, p. 15

CHAPTER VI

E D U C A T I O N

The basis of education is in the acquisition of knowledge from others, in the moulding of character, in the learning of arts and crafts, in the adjustment of human relationship, in the understanding of behaviour and in the appreciation of the time-spirit. Education is, therefore, the kindling of the human mind from inside for the reception of information. One has to educate oneself rather than be educated.

Sir Syed defines education as the process to bring out whatever good there is in man.¹ It keeps active and alive the powers bestowed by God on man.² The education of man does not mean the pouring in from outside but the drawing out from the innermost recesses of the heart.³ Education implies such knowledge as helps in finding out truth, improving morals, cultivating fellow-feeling and recognising human rights.⁴ Therefore, it is our duty to humanise ourselves and not to animalise our existence.⁵ Knowledge gives pleasure to the senses and brings solace to the soul. It is acquired through experience and observation. It helps in the understanding of truth and in dealing with human beings.⁷

1. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 75

2. Ibid., p. 75

3. Ibid., p. 75

4. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 222.

5. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 78

6. Ibid., p. 223

7. Ibid., p. 223

The Aim and Scope of Education

Sir Syed considers education as a source of progress. It enables an individual to attain status and honour and helps a nation in acquiring high position in the comity of nations. Education makes man generous, magnanimous, sympathetic and considerate.⁸ Without education man is bereft of all social and cultural benefits. The purpose of education is to make man virtuous, humane, honest and righteous⁹ and to develop in him feelings of mutual help, co-operation, self-respect and enterprise.¹⁰ Illiteracy breeds poverty, while literacy is the source of welfare and prosperity. A nation without education falls a victim to pauperism, poverty and crime.¹¹

It is only through education that society maintains its status and dignity.¹² Civilisation and culture flourish in an educated society.¹³ All kinds of knowledge and science develop through it.¹⁴ Education and knowledge change the fate and condition of man or nation.¹⁵

Education is also a source of spiritual pleasure, mental peace and physical comfort.¹⁶ It teaches man to behave with fellow-beings in a civilised way and to adopt an attitude of straightforwardness towards God and society.¹⁷

8. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 127

9. Ibid., p. 459

10. Ibid., p. 462

11. Ibid., p. 75

12. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 10th February 1871, p. 82

13. Ibid., p. 82

14. Ibid., p. 82

15. Ibid., p. 83

16. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 7th May 1871, p. 519

17. Ibid., p. 519

Education promotes three qualities : first, to civilise one's own self; secondly, to make oneself worthy of the duty and thirdly, to prepare oneself for avocation.¹⁸

Complete reformation depends on education alone. Education dispels the darkness of ignorance and social vices from society.¹⁹ Human heart becomes pure and free through education.²⁰ As the fulfilment of human needs and desires depend on education, so it is futile to think of social peace and concord without education.²¹ An individual overcomes the difficulties of life and achieves success by means of education.²² Sir Syed does not think of the advantages of education in a limited sense. It provides a very wide scope for human progress and welfare through invention, technology, science and trade.²³

The object of acquiring knowledge or education is to reform one's self with a view to promoting material welfare and attaining spiritual peace.²⁴ Education brings about happiness to the individual and soul. It teaches us to be honest and true to others, to respect the feelings of others, to be tolerant and to observe piety towards all.²⁵ It also teaches us to be obedient and true to God and to be straightforward and honest in our dealings with the fellow-beings.²⁶

18. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 7.5.1871, p. 520

19. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 30th June 1871, p. 403

20. Ibid., p. 403

21. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 24th May 1872, p. 319

22. Ibid., p. 319

23. Ibid., p. 320

24. Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 24, printed at Muslim University Aligarh, 1927.

25. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 8th March 1881, p. 519

26. Ibid., p. 519

Education and Training

According to Sir Syed, education and training are inter-related. Mere education without training is meaningless.²⁷ Training implies the living together, the co-operation with each other, the dining together and the participation in cultural and social activities.²⁸ Proper training develops the sense of truthfulness, honesty, morality, affection, sympathy, love, self-respect, virtue, regard, freedom and duty.²⁹ It is inevitable for the improvement of character and the acquisition of civilisation and progress.³⁰ Without training no nation can be called a living nation.³¹ Sir Syed points out that if a nation wants to achieve national progress and national honour, training and education of a high order are necessary.³² A nation cannot be called civilised, unless it is enriched with high standards of education and training.³³ An educated nation develops a scientific outlook and thinks collectively of its progress and welfare, cherishes in its heart a zeal for co-operative activity and takes a pride in her educated people.³⁴ Proper training cultivates in man the power of resolution, makes him an active member of society, develops in him national feeling, exhilarates his heart, removes the feeling of passivity and the habits of laziness and enriches his life individually and collectively.³⁵ Hence training is inseparable from edu-

27. Mazameen Sir Syed, p.24, printed at Muslim Univ. Aligarh, 1927.

28. Majmooa Lectures Sir Syed, p. 422

29. Mazameen Sir Syed, p.488 (Safar Nama-e-Punjab, p.254).

30. Ibid., p. 211

31. Ibid., p. 422

32. Ibid., p. 439

33. Majmooa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 443

34. Ibid., p. 268

35. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 14th May 1895, p. 459.

education. As a means of socialising and civilising an individual its value is high.

Means of Education

- Sir Syed states that time is a factor to which the means of education must adjust itself. Education and knowledge, science and invention change according to the conditions of time.³⁶ The means of education should conform with 'knowledge' and 'science' of the time. Oriental education and its means have no place in modern era.³⁷ Oriental sciences and languages have lost influence in every-day life and are not in keeping with the pace of time. It is a futile effort to revive oriental learning, knowledge and language as time has changed.³⁸ Western education and sciences should be acquired as a measure of expediency and a source of progress.³⁹

The progress and prosperity of a nation is possible only when proper steps are taken in accordance with the urges of the time.⁴⁰ National progress depends upon such means of education that would meet the new needs brought about by the changing pace of time.⁴¹

36. Safar Nama-e-Punjab of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p.111.

37. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 15th January 1881, p.67

38. Ibid., p. 67 | One should not conclude that Sir Syed is oppos-

39. Ibid., p. 68 | ed to the teaching of all Oriental Sciences. He only wants that the sciences which have not made any progress in the last one thousand years should not be taught, e.g., such geography which teaches that earth is flat is not only useless but also harmful. Similarly, the old medicine, philosophy, logic and physical sciences which have not kept themselves abreast with modern changes should not be taught.

40. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 195

41. Ibid., p. 196

Success today is assured only for those who adhere to education and training adjusted to the needs of time.⁴²

In spite of the long history of oriental learning and without showing any disrespect to the great achievements of our ancestors, it cannot be denied that what was considered original in the past has now become out-dated in the light of the progress in scientific knowledge which has changed our thoughts and ideas in many respects and of which our ancestors had no notion.⁴³ If now we were to tread the old and beaten path, we would be thrown back hundreds of years from the present age and all hopes of improvement and progress would be lost to us.⁴⁴ Indeed, it would be a grave mistake to think that we have to do nothing because our ancestors had already done everything.⁴⁵ Such ideas should be discarded in order to achieve progress in conformity with the time-spirit. As every moment brings a change, so we must keep pace with it.⁴⁶ Thus to think that the past achievements of our ancestors would satisfy the ever-increasing present requirements or that the old learning would stand in good stead as against modern learning would be a regrettable and painful mistake.⁴⁷ If we stick to the old ways and confine ourselves to the achievements of our ancestors and ignore the new knowledge of the West, we would look little better than animals, the species of which cling together with fright and remain unmoved.⁴⁸

42. Majmoca Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 155

43. Ibid., p. 248

44. Ibid., p. 248

45. Ibid., p. 111

46. Ibid., p. 112

47. Ibid., p. 112

48. Ibid., p. 112

Sir Syed's interest in education particularly modern education, as he calls it, has been an abiding nature. In consonance with the time-spirit, the English language and the new means of education were considered its vehicle. The old 'Khanqahs' and 'Maktabs' were to be discarded and in their place the foundation of 'national education' was to be laid, and new means of education as reciprocation, avoidance of translation, English as medium of instruction and formation of associations should be adopted.⁴⁹ This alone would usher in progress, signify intellectual advancement and establish harmonious relationship between individual and individual.⁵⁰

1). Reciprocation

Sir Syed advocates reciprocation as a means of education. We should take advantage of the knowledge of other nations who had once acquired it from us and have improved it to an astonishing degree.⁵¹ Such a bargain should not be a matter of disgrace but of pride.⁵² If we turn the pages of history, we will find that, as a general rule, no nation has excelled others in whom the seed of progress had not been sown from without.⁵³ We generally find, that

49. Mukammal Majmooa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 175.

These were the centres of old and orthodox type of education devoid of any modern methods or techniques.

50. Ibid., p. 175.

51. What Sir Syed wants to point out is that during Renaissance the Europeans, who had just emerged from living in the Dark Ages, learnt most of the sciences and art from our orientals should also not be shy and hesitant in learning sciences improved by the West.

52. Majmooa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 112

53. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : Address to the Natives of Hindustan on Education, p. 3, 1863.

while one nation makes an invention another nation takes advantage of it, and by dint of its labour and perseverance, brings it to a high standard of perfection.⁵⁴ The Muslims, in the beginning, had little knowledge of philosophy and physics. They first borrowed from the Greeks and developed it to a high standard, its testimony is borne by the works of the Muslim savants.⁵⁵ Nations, like individuals, thrive better on mutual assistance — lending or giving to others that they have, and borrowing or getting from others what they have not.⁵⁶ This reciprocation in education leads to the growth of knowledge and the spread of civilisation.⁵⁷ Sir Syed points out that so long as our countrymen do not add to the store of their knowledge and are content to remain in the state of apathy and selfishness, they cannot expect to make any progress.⁵⁸

11). T r a n s l a t i o n

Sir Syed considers futile the translation of books from English to vernaculars as a means of education in view of the rapid advance in the field of scientific research and the richness of English literature. No doubt, Sir Syed, in the beginning of his educational campaign was in favour of the translation of English books into Indian languages. He himself states that the well-wishers of the country, who are ardent to quicken the pace of progress in

54. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : Address to the Natives of Hindustan on Education, p. 3, 1863.

55. Ibid., p. 3

56. Ibid., p. 5

57. Ibid., p. 5

58. Ibid., p. 5

modern knowledge and science should endeavour to introduce the translation of the English works into the vernacular — Urdu.⁵⁹ The translation of standard and advanced books on sciences of other countries into our language will make our country progressive in the field of knowledge and give prominence to it in the world.⁶⁰ The first stage of progress in education of a country is the transmission of knowledge in sciences and technology through translation.⁶¹ He was the first educationist who harboured the idea that a University of oriental language should be started for the purpose of translating modern standard works into Indian languages.⁶² He had actually put into practice his idea by inaugurating the Scientific Society at Aligarh. Its main task was to translate modern standard works into an Indian language in order to educate the nation.⁶³ Those who have done translation know it for a fact that there are insurmountable difficulties in translating the technical terms of a foreign language.⁶⁴ The other unavoidable difficulty is that by the time a translated work is ready for publication the knowledge transmitted through it becomes stale and out-moded.⁶⁵ In this age books on sciences are numerous, and no association, society or government can undertake the translation of so many books.⁶⁶ It is essential to achieve knowledge and

59. The Aligerh Institute Gazette, 30th June 1871, p. 403

60. Ibid., p. 403

61. Ibid., p. 403

62. Safar Nama-e-Punjab of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 248

63. Ibid., p. 248

64. Ibid., p. 249

65. Ibid., p. 249

66. Ibid., p. 249

education through the English language.⁶⁷ Sir Syed's advice is as follows :-

1. Promotion of knowledge can be done only through the English language.⁶⁸
- ii. Translation of modern works of knowledge is impossible, for modern sciences are not restricted to one place and their progress has not ceased. Day-to-day new discoveries are made.

Sir Syed, however, concedes the importance of translation to some extent for the secondary form of education; but for higher education, i.e., University education, the translations, according to him, are not only useless but also harmful for the country.⁶⁹ By sticking to translations we, instead of moving forward, will go backward.⁷⁰ Sir Syed thinks that it is a mockery to impart modern knowledge through the means of translation.⁷¹

67. Safar Nama-e-Punjab of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 13

68. Ibid., p. 249

69. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 260

70. Ibid., p. 251

71. Sir Syed was opposed to give higher education through translated books. He was quite realistic. He knew the difficulties of finding able translators, publishers willing to print highly technical books not having big audience and customers interested in purchasing such translations. He correctly foresaw that dependence of higher education on the translations in vernacular meant the inability of the students to read more than a handful of books and this would mean that they would be unaware and ignorant of the wonderful work being done in English and other European languages. In other words, the standard of higher education would deteriorate if it was to be imparted through translations.

111). English as Medium of Instruction

Sir Syed, after realising the importance of the English language, feels that the education in Indian languages cannot cope with the requirements of modern life. *Their* only use is in private and domestic affairs. The use of vernacular as medium of instruction will harm the cause of education. In *Bye* teaching the Western sciences through the English language, the interest of the country is better secured.⁷² Thus it becomes imperative to learn English to acquire modern knowledge.⁷³

It was not the intention of Sir Syed, that the Hindus should give up Sanskrit and the Muslims Arabic, both being sacred languages.⁷⁴ But for the sake of worldly progress, or the welfare of the nation or to make man adjustable with the time-spirit, the learning of English language becomes inevitable as worldly interests concern both the Hindus and the Muslims.⁷⁵

English is absolutely necessary as a means of communication between the ruler and the ruled and as a vehicle of social progress.⁷⁶ It is a means of social interaction between different nations and its study helps an individual to become conversant with the history, religion and literature of other countries.⁷⁷

72. G.F. Graham : The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 217

73. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 210

74. Ibid., p. 219

75. Ibid., p. 219

76. Ibid., p. 345

77. Ibid., p. 385

Sir Syed makes bold to say that without the knowledge of English one cannot discharge the duties assigned to oneself and ^{can not} even serve one's own religion.⁷⁸ Hence it is the duty of every parent to give education to his children through English and make them learn it as this step will help them to live a respectable life. Without it, government services are not procurable as the knowledge of English is a pre-requisite for employment.⁷⁹ Moreover, one is deprived of the amenities of life if he fails to learn it.⁸⁰

iv) Formation of Associations

The formation of associations and societies is one of the means of imparting education. The wealthy and the learned should come forward to help the country by forming associations and societies for the advancement of arts and sciences and setting up schools whereby education could be easily made available.⁸¹

Associations and societies should devise quick methods for spreading knowledge. Books dealing with arts and sciences should be brought out at cheaper cost for wider circulation all over the country. Articles on the advantages and the need of education should be written in easy and simple language/^{and} free publicity should be given to them. Such publicity should be entrusted to persons who are conscious of their responsibility to the country. No sentimental

78. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 421

79. Ibid., p. 475

80. It is an interesting thing to note that what Sir Syed said a century ago about making English as the medium of instruction is still very much true. Though the arguments put forth by the nineteenth century educationists in this connection were somewhat different from those used at present. Most of our present-day educationists however agree with Sir Syed about keeping English as the medium of instruction, at least at the University stage.

81. Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 36

or provocative articles should be published.⁸² Academic and scientific works or contributions should be encouraged, and prizes be awarded for the best works in order to create an incentive in the people.⁸³

Sir Syed was a man of practical approach in pleading the cause of education through the formation of associations. In other words, it is the principle of self-help that sustains associative efforts without the aid of Government, if the Government fails to cope with the task of education due to their limited financial resources.⁸⁴ Moreover, it is none of the concerns of the government to undertake the ^{full} responsibility of educating the people, and it is even impossible to do so.⁸⁵ Sir Syed strongly maintains that the education of children cannot be sufficiently imparted unless the nation takes upon itself the task of educating them.⁸⁶ This could be done by planning education of children on the basis of mutual aid, mutual efforts and well-established associations, societies or organizations.⁸⁷

In a country like India different people, having diverse needs, beliefs, aims and interests, have adopted a uniform system of education.⁸⁸ This is a matter of great admiration, but be it remembered that the people of a country like India have not profitted in

82. Mukammal Majmooa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 36

83. Ibid., p. 36

84. Ibid., p.103

85. Ibid., p.103

86. Ibid., p.103

87. Ibid., p.103

88. Safar Nama-e-Punjab of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 113

respect of their aims and interests by this policy of the government. They have to forego their own pattern of education through associations and societies.⁸⁹ So long as the people of the country do not take up the work of education in our hands, argues Sir Syed, we cannot acquire national education and achieve national honour. It is not within the power of the Government to attend to all aims and interests of the people.⁹⁰ In national matters, to expect from a Government to do everything would signify our own cowardice and our inactivity would bring us disgrace and grief. It should be our duty to undertake the work of education in our own hands and expect no assistance from the Government. Thus the Government and the people will discharge their respective duties.⁹¹

The relation between education and Government is close in the sense that the principles of administration and government are better understood and appreciated, if the people are educated.⁹² It is only through education that people can acquire rights which the Government fails to give them.⁹³

Sir Syed does not agree with the views that national progress can be attained by ^{merely} discussing and debating political issues.⁹⁴ The general complaint on the part of the people is that they have no representation in legislature and no share in the sphere of administration, but Sir Syed regrets to say that this is due to the fact

89. Safar Nama-e-Punjab of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 252

90. Ibid., p. 252

91. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 219

92. Ibid., p. 223

93. Ibid., p. 223

94. Ibid., p. 223

that they have neither education nor ability to represent themselves in the legislature.⁹⁵ No doubt, freedom is the natural right of a citizen, but the exercise of that right in an apt manner depends on education.⁹⁶ The efforts of the Government in the way of social and educational reforms will remain incomplete, if the people do not care to look after their own education and training.⁹⁷

Classification of Education

Sir Syed classifies education into different categories such as general education, higher education, religious education, technical education, child education, female education and life education.⁹⁸

1). General Education

By general education Sir Syed means elementary education which is to be given to the rural people and labour classes.⁹⁹ Its aim is that common people acquire it in large numbers and derive benefit from it.¹⁰⁰ But general education without higher education is meaningless.¹⁰¹ General education is no incentive to national progress without higher education.¹⁰² Hence the object of general education is achieved only when higher education reaches its culminating point.¹⁰³

95. Mukarram Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 124

96. Ibid., p. 124

97. Ibid., p. 129

98. Ibid., p. 432

99. Ibid., pp. 35 and 36

100. Ibid., p. 107

101. Ibid., p. 107

102. Ibid., p. 107

103. Ibid., p. 107

14). Higher Education

In the days of Sir Syed, the problem of higher education was not only discussed from the standpoint of oriental learning but also from the point of view of imparting knowledge of modern sciences through the English medium. To Sir Syed, higher education is not acquired simply by memorising parrot-like a few books and passing examinations or by talking in English.¹⁰⁴ It is one of the principles of higher education that children should stay and receive education in close association with teachers and scholars.¹⁰⁵ In order to maintain a high standard of education, the circumstances of parents should be such that they can afford to give education to their children.¹⁰⁶ Higher education means that an individual must know something of sciences and arts, but, at the same time, he must be perfect in one of them.¹⁰⁷ The Universities only lead us to the door-way of higher education. Here Sir Syed mentions the sad state of affairs in the Indian University teaching. He complains that the Colleges and Universities in India teach something about every science but do not make the students perfect in any one of them.¹⁰⁸ Sir Syed further adds that after giving a student a degree, emphasis should be laid on research work.¹⁰⁹ He is cognisant of the fact that real progress in higher education is made through post-graduate research leading to new inventions and original contributions, which benefit the nation.¹¹⁰ It is strange that one who takes a University

104. Akhari Mazameer Sir Syed, p. 62

105. Mukammal Majmooa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 264

106. Ibid., p. 264

107. Ibid., p. 283

108. Ibid., p. 283

109. Akhari Mazameer Sir Syed, p. 63

110. Ibid., p. 64.

degree claims to be a great scholar.¹¹¹ Freedom becomes his faith, though he does not understand what it means.¹¹² His heart pulsates with patriotic fervour, but he does not understand what it is.¹¹³ It is, therefore, wrong to consider University degrees as symbolic of higher education.¹¹⁴ The purpose of higher education should not be just to seek employment. In fact those who do so have not really acquired higher education.¹¹⁵

Higher education fulfils the needs and requirements of society and enables an individual to adjust himself to the conditions of society.¹¹⁶

iii). Religious Education

Sir Syed does not ~~understand~~^{underestimate} the importance of religious education. In fact he was of the view that religious education and secular education should progress side by side, for both contribute to national progress and national honour.¹¹⁷ He exhorts the Muslim community to give religious education to children and make adequate arrangement for it with private aid.¹¹⁸

To rely on the Government for religious education is not a correct approach.¹¹⁹ The Government is not supposed to be partial

111. Akhari Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 64

112. Ibid., p. 64

113. Ibid., p. 64

114. Ibid., p. 64

115. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 289

116. Ibid., p. 286

117. Ibid., p. 109

118. Ibid., p. 422

119. Ibid., p. 108

to any community in matters of education.¹²⁰ It has to evolve a uniform educational policy for all.¹²¹ It cannot fulfil the specific needs of a particular community.¹²² Sir Syed suggests that religious education should be managed by the people themselves.¹²³ The Government may give some help in this connection and more than that would not be proper for it to do.¹²⁴

iv). Technical Education

By technical education, Sir Syed means, education in crafts. It is necessary that everybody should clearly understand the basic principles of a particular occupation, trade or craft and should be able to make use of the special equipment of his profession.¹²⁵ He further states that technical education is real education and ~~more~~^{more} theoretical education is useless.¹²⁶ He includes in technical education the study of subjects such as mechanics, physics and chemistry.

v). Child Education

Sir Syed realises the importance and utility of child education as the future of the child depends on how he is educated.¹²⁷ His education at an early stage depends chiefly on impressions.¹²⁸ Sir Syed points out that impressions received in childhood exercise a more abiding influence than is generally supposed. They sink deep

120. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 108

121. Ibid., p. 130

122. Ibid., p. 210

123. Ibid., p. 210

124. Ibid., p. 210

125. Ibid., p. 397

126. Ibid., p. 401

127. The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College Magazine, 2.6.1891, p.603

128. Ibid., p. 603

into the soul of the child and there they remain as a latent force. The eye and the ear lend themselves to the process of education and transmit impressions and ideas which can hardly be dislodged from the mind.¹²⁹ In view of this, Sir Syed invites the attention of the parents to realise their responsibility towards the education of their children. Since in childhood the mind dominates the body, the question of early education becomes a very serious matter and should not be neglected by any means.¹³⁰ Sir Syed suggests that the child should be taught the fundamentals of morality at an early stage.¹³¹ It is important to impress upon children the necessity of truthfulness.¹³² In this connection the responsibility of the teacher is particularly heavy in a country like India where so few parents have any definite idea of *what* they owe to posterity.¹³³

Sir Syed points out that children have three distinct traits : mental, moral and physical; each of which requires careful handling and treatment.¹³⁴ The mental trait cannot be replaced by the moral and the moral by the physical. To make physical and moral training subservient to the mental is not a healthy tendency.

The success of education depends on the manner under which children are brought up.¹³⁵ There are a good many homes, which undo the work of the school-room.¹³⁶ Education in these circumstances will

129. The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College Magazine, 2.6.1891, p. 608

130. Ibid., p. 604

131. Ibid., p. 604

132. Ibid., p. 604

133. Ibid., p. 604

134. Ibid., p. 604

135. Ibid., p. 605

136. Ibid., p. 605

necessarily be defective.¹³⁷ Sir Syed wishes to impress the necessity of keeping order and neatness in the homes, for there is nothing which makes a more marked impression upon children than their surroundings.¹³⁸ He also points out the importance of the treatment meted out to children and the relationship maintained between the parent and the child. Genial attitude, feeling of affection and occasional strictness will put a stop to wanton mischief of the child.¹³⁹

The child, according to Sir Syed, is a gifted creature. He is the perfect model of Nature.¹⁴⁰ The childhood is the proper period for training and education. Man can make his career if, as a child, he has received proper training and education.¹⁴¹ The child is inquisitive by nature, his desire for learning is keen; his mental power is strong; his observation is critical; his habits are formed by the examples of others.¹⁴² Therefore, no opportunity should be lost in giving him proper education and training.

Sir Syed is not wrong when he says that the period of ~~child~~ childhood ranging from seven to fifteen years is most eventful in building the character of the child.¹⁴³ This period has a peculiar importance for intellectual and moral "development" in a child's life and the seeds sown at this stage bloom in abundance

137. The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College Magazine, 2.6.1891, p.605

138. Ibid., p. 605

139. Ibid., p. 605

140. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 56

141. Ibid., p. 56

142. Ibid., p. 56

143. Ibid., p. 56

and bear juicy fruits later on.¹⁴⁴ If no particular care is taken of the child during this transitory period and no correct measures are adopted for his training, there is every likelihood of his future being regretfully marred through sheer negligence, as bad habits acquired by untrained youths become their second nature, and it becomes very difficult to change them at a later stage of life.¹⁴⁵ A similarity of behaviour between parents and children is partly due to heredity and partly to imitation, it is the duty of parents to set examples of unblemished character for the emulation of their children.¹⁴⁶

Sir Syed is of opinion that the scheme of child education should be formulated on a collective and co-operative basis.¹⁴⁷

The Role of Boarding House in Child Education : The great service rendered by Sir Syed to his country was the founding of the Madrasat-ul-Uloom. Apparently, it was a beneficial act done to all the people of India.¹⁴⁸ The Madrasat-ul-Uloom soon assumed an importance of its own as a centre of training because of its having a boarding house for the students. Residence in boarding house develops in students a sense of sociability, a spirit of comradeship and fosters the realisation of moral values and obedience.¹⁴⁹ The boarding house as conceived by Sir Syed was meant for intellectual training as well.¹⁵⁰ Students from different provinces and of different creeds and castes, meet together and dine together, pray together, play

144. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 57

145. Ibid., p. 57

146. Ibid., p. 57

147. Ibid., p. 59

148. Hali : Hayat-e-Jawâd, p. 72

149. Ibid., p. 72

150. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 176

together, debate together and learn to live together on the campus of the same College. Thus they cultivate a true brotherly affection, develop a deep sense of unity and a strong feeling of love and service.¹⁵¹ The boarding house provides a congenial environment for young students to partake, in social activities which nurture their physical, mental and emotional faculties.¹⁵²

Sir Syed says that his object in establishing the boarding house is to create friendly relations and to promote contacts.¹⁵³ The fundamental principle of the boarding house, is unity and it is most beneficial for the discipline of students.¹⁵⁴ It is essential for a student to be studious and painstaking while living in the boarding house. To guard against the forces of distintegration of that life, Sir Syed takes effective measures even to the extent of minute details such as uniformity in dress etc.¹⁵⁵ He suggested that the College students as boarders should have one dress as a mark of distinction and of unity; for uniformity in dress will create harmony in their sentiments and behaviour.¹⁵⁶ The boarders should dine in full uniform and should be disciplined in every respect.¹⁵⁷

Sir Syed describes the 'College Life' in his own way. The 'College Life' is in itself an open book for the student. "Indeed, it is a book which is not written by any author but is always open before the eyes of a student as it is prepared by the generous hands of Nature".¹⁵⁸ It is always with the

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151. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 176
 152. Ibid., p. 372
 153. Ibid., p. 373
 154. Ibid., p. 453
 155. Ibid., p. 454
 156. Ibid., p. 455
 157. Ibid., p. 455
 158. Ibid., p. 452

student in the form of 'living together' and 'assembling together' in the College.¹⁵⁹ This mode of life gives an insight into the true object of life and shows ways and means of success in life.¹⁶⁰ The term 'College life', according to Sir Syed, is not applicable to day-scholars, but only to boarders.¹⁶¹ The aim of the 'College life' is to infuse the feeling of brotherhood and to promote social relations and contacts.¹⁶² It provides the pattern for the kind of life to be lived when one leaves the portals of the College and helps to overcome future difficulties and hardships.¹⁶³

vi). Female Education

Sir Syed is altogether opposed to trying haphazard experiments with the female education.¹⁶⁴ He would not like to see girls sent to schools removed from the direct control of their parents. Moreover, he thinks that it is quite unnecessary in the first instance, to place books before them except such as are likely to serve them in their capacity as wives and mothers.¹⁶⁵ Sir Syed raises a cogent issue that as the modes of living and the needs of families are not the same on account of different social patterns and customs, it is necessary that the arrangement for female education should be according to the wishes of the husbands and the elders.¹⁶⁶

159. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 452

160. Ibid., p. 452

161. Ibid., p. 452

162. Ibid., p. 453.

163. There is no doubt that the alumni of Aligarh University have created a special place in the Indian society for themselves and have played a very important role in the political and social life of the country and this could become possible mainly because of the advantages of 'College Life' as envisaged by the founder of that University.

164. Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College Magazine, 5.1.1892, p. 18

165. Ibid., p. 18

166. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 31st January 1868, p. 71

He is against any interference of the Government in the matter of female education and strongly favours the idea that the Government should not be responsible for female education in view of the peculiar social conditions in which the Indians are placed.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, the interference of the Government will create suspicion in the Indian community and it is possible that some difficulties may arise in the way of national progress.¹⁶⁸ He agrees with the idea that female education and training is a basic need for the progress of man, and, in general, for the progress of a nation. But the education and training of men should be given preference to the education of women. It is imperative for the Government to make effort first in the direction of male education. When men reach a high standard of education and training, they themselves will make their womenfolk come up to their level of education.¹⁶⁹

The education of women is necessary for their moral training, which can be imparted through religious education.¹⁷⁰ In other words, the aim of female education should be moral education, to bring them out from darkness and ignorance.¹⁷¹ Their civility eliminated, the wielding of the cane or any other hackneyed methods of punishment so commonly used for boys in schools. Their generous character created awe and respect in the girl-students.¹⁷²

167. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 31.1.1868, p. 71

168. Ibid., p. 71

169. Ibid., p. 71

170. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 12th May 1871, p. 292

171. Ibid., p. 292

172. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 215.

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Sir Syed is of opinion that female education may well look after itself if the education of men is improved.¹⁷³ If men are well educated and enlightened, this will necessarily have a preponderating, though indirect, effect on the education of women, for enlightened fathers, brothers and husbands will naturally be most anxious and desirous to educate their female members.¹⁷⁴ In other words, the education of men leads to the education of women.¹⁷⁵

Sir Syed's ideas about the education of women are the same as those of his ancestors. The modern methods of female education, either by the Government or private institutions, are unsuitable to the present conditions in India.¹⁷⁶ He is not in favour of setting up girls' schools on the model of European Girls' Schools.¹⁷⁷ It is but fair to the women of the country that they get well acquainted with matters pertaining to their faith and realise the importance of moral values. They should look after and manage their household affairs, rule like queens in their homes, rear up their children in good tradition, train their daughters to be virtuous, God-fearing and learned in worldly and religious matters.¹⁷⁸ Their education should, therefore, be confined to self-study, or it should be imparted by mutual co-operation of womenfolk without any outside aid.¹⁷⁹ The time is

173. Mukarramal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 410

174. Ibid., p. 410

175. Ibid., p. 410

176. Ibid., p. 411

177. Ibid., p. 215

178. Ibid., p. 329

179. Safar Nama-e-Punjab of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 103

not ripe to make the girls stand in line with the school boys. The traditional system of education as it was imparted by our ancestors will suit the coming generation of girls and safeguard their rights.¹⁸⁰

Life Education

Sir Syed is a great advocate of forming contacts with fellow-human beings.¹⁸¹ Such human contacts are a dynamic, civilising process, superior to education through books. This is termed as life-education.¹⁸² Since individual behaviour plays an important role in forming contacts with fellow-human beings, life-education moulds the behaviour of people without any schooling, teaching or training. Man gets practical experience by life-education.¹⁸³ Individual character, good behaviour and contacts, good action, national solidarity and national respect are achieved through life-education.¹⁸⁴ It inculcates the sense of duty and protection of rights. It helps to understand worldly affairs and to meet the needs of human life.¹⁸⁵ Through life-education experience is gained, personal virtue is acquired, self-control is achieved and self-education is obtained.¹⁸⁶ Life-education helps man in the affairs of life and enriches him with experience. Sir Syed says that mere knowledge gives no experience. Experience is

180. Safar Nama-e-Punjab of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, p. 103

181. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 132

182. Like many other English words, Sir Syed has used this word also in Urdu and has not attempted to translate it.

183. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, p. 132

184. Ibid., p. 132

185. Ibid., p. 133

186. Dr. I. Topa : Sir Syed Ahmed Khan - A Study in Social Thought p. 240, Islamic Culture, Vol. XXVII, No.4, October 1953.

efore, superior to knowledge. It is experience rather than
more
nowledge, and character rather than/living which make man more
pected and honoured. 187

Dr. I. Topa : Sir Syed Ahmed Khan - A Study in Social Thought,
p. 240.

CHAPTER VII

R E L I G I O N

Concept of Religion

Religion is a potential factor in the life of an individual. Sir James Frazer interprets religion as a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.¹ According to Max Muller, religion is a faculty of the mind which enables a man to grasp the infinite independently of sense and reason.² Tylor defines what constitutes religion is a belief in spiritual beings.³

The study of religion deals with the beliefs of social groups in relation to the supernatural phenomena, their overt behaviour and their symbols. Religion, like culture, is a means of social adjustment, an expression of cultural pattern and a reflection of social development. It is an instrument of social control and offers a set of moral values to govern human actions.

Sir Syed considers religion as a standard by which the actions of men and their motivations are judged as good or bad.⁴

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1. Don Mortindale and Elio D. Monachesi : Elements of Sociology, pp. 465 and 466. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1951.
 2. Ibid., p. 464
 3. Ibid., p. 464
 4. Sir Syed : al Khutbat Ahmedia, p. 1. printed by Faiz A'm Press, Aligarh, 1870.

Religion takes its birth in the human heart. That is why the heart is considered as the source of religion. What emerges from the heart is called a belief, which is the fountain-head of religion. Religion without belief is unimaginable. It is not proper to question the validity of one belief as against another.⁵ Religious differences have existed in every age and country.⁶

To Sir Syed religion is a true gospel.⁷ It is a life-principle as well.⁸ A true religion not merely comprises a variety of beliefs, but it is also based on absolute truth.⁹ In fact, truth is the underlying spirit of religion and belief is its embodiment.¹⁰ The criterion of a true religion is that it is based on the true principle.¹¹ Sir Syed explains that the true principle is nothing other than Nature or the law of Nature that manifests itself in material or immaterial phenomenon and exists in the system of the universe.¹² Only such religious principles are true as conform to the law of Nature and not the so-called religious principles based on superstitions.¹³ As Nature is true and perfect, the principles derived from it are also true and perfect.¹⁴

Sir Syed, however, refutes the atheistic belief that Nature or the law of Nature is the sole cause or the governing factor

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- 5. Sir Syed : al Khutbat Ahmedia, p. 2
 - 6. Ibid., p. 3
 - 7. Ibid., p. 4
 - 8. Ibid., p. 4
 - 9. Ibid., p. 4
 - 10. Ibid., p. 4
 - 11. Ibid., pp. 4 and 5
 - 12. Ibid., p. 5
 - 13. Ibid., p. 5
 - 14. Ibid., p. 5

confusion in respect of religion as it does not satisfy his common sense or reason. In the past, religious scholars and leaders ¹⁴³
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explained their ideas in a dogmatic manner with the result that their works were neglected by modern scholars.²² Sir Syed lays stress on conducting research in religious subjects with a critical eye.²³

By adopting such a method of study, religion can survive along with modern sciences; otherwise it would lose its value.²⁴ In regard to Muslims, he advises them to cultivate a true scientific spirit in understanding 'Ilm-e-Kalam', 'Hadith', 'Fiqa' and 'Tafsir'.²⁵

The true criterion of religion is that it should conform to human nature or the law of Nature. If religion is not in accordance with human nature, a doubt arises whether such a religion is ordained by God at all.²⁶ Sir Syed accepts this as the criterion for judging the truth of a religion including Islam. He strongly believes that Islam conforms to the law of Nature.²⁷

Sir Syed considers religion as a means of social cohesion. It offers the pattern of conduct and lays down the terms of morality.²⁸ A man having faith in religion feels that there is a

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21. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 7th February 1893, pp.127 & 128
 22. Ibid., p. 128
 23. Ibid., p. 128
 24. Ibid., p. 128
 25. Ibid., p. 128
 26. Safar Nama-e-Punjab, p. 197
 27. Ibid., p. 197
 28. Tahzebul Akhlaque, Vol. II, Rabiul Awal 1313 H., p. 102

of the whole universe.¹⁵ He regards Nature as a law which needs the presence of a Creator to enforce it and maintain its uniformity.¹⁶ He points out that the whole continuity of the universe and all that is in it, is due to one Supreme cause named differently by different people.¹⁷

Religion, Sir Syed says, consists of the commandments, the doctrines and the messages, which God sends through His messengers, so that men may believe them and act up to them.¹⁸

Rational Approach to Religion

Sir Syed points out that man has learnt to believe in reason.¹⁹ Although the rational faculty of man recognises the existence of some Architect, or a Creator for the whole universe, yet it is beyond human reason to understand the form of His existence, His identity and His attributes. Human reason is constrained to accept His attributes which cannot be known except by belief.²⁰

Just as the development of modern science is due to the researches conducted by scholars in their respective fields, in the same manner religious problems should be studied and discussed by research scholars of religion. This is possible only through scientific approach.²¹ The modern man finds himself in a state of

15. Sir Syed : al Khutbat Ahmedia, p. 5

16. Ibid., p. 6

17. Ibid., p. 6

18. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 18th October 1892, p. 1100

19. Ibid., p. 1101

20. Ibid., p. 1101

21. The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 7th February 1893, pp.127 & 128.

Creator who rules the whole universe.²⁹ When one is convinced the omni-presence of God he performs such actions as please Him and abstains from actions likely to incur His wrath.³⁰

As circumstances and conditions of life differ, all men cannot have the same beliefs, dogmas and rituals.³¹ In other words, people differ from one another in the details of religion. This difference has often been the cause of ill-will, coercion and persecution.³² But Sir Syed is of the view that there should be no discrimination among the peoples on the ground of their different faiths.³³ On the contrary, it should be the duty of the adherents of every faith to form social relations with the followers of other faiths and to remove from their hearts the feelings of envy, hatred and opposition.³⁴

Sir Syed's Interpretation of Islam

Sir Syed makes his position clear in his exposition of Islam. He does not lay any claim to be religious nor does he consider himself an authority on religion.³⁵ He, however, justifies a rationalistic approach to the study of Islamic problems by taking into account the historic period of the Abbaside Caliphate when, due to the influence of Greek philosophy and natural sciences, the Muslims

29. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Jamadiul Awal 1296 H., p. 54

30. Ibid., p. 55

31. Ibid., p. 55

32. Ibid., p. 55

33. Ibid., p. 55

34. Ibid., p. 55

35. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 239.

had begun to harbour doubts about the truth of their religion.³⁶

The following three methods were adopted by the Muslim thinkers of those times to protect Islam against the influence of Greek philosophy.³⁷

- i. Exposition of inconsistencies of Greek philosophy in the light of Islamic principles;
- ii. Critical study of scientific and philosophic problems;
- iii. Alignment of the Islamic doctrines with the scientific and philosophic thinking.

This resulted in the creation of a new science or knowledge which is called Ilm-e-Kalam.³⁸ Thus Greek philosophy and natural sciences got incorporated into the religious books of the Muslims, though they have no direct bearing on the religion of Islam.

Sir Syed argues that in modern times philosophy and science bristle with problems different from those of the past and one is prone to reject the doctrines of Islam as unscientific truths.³⁹ Therefore, new orientation of Islam is needed. Formerly, the Muslims had to contend with the Greek thought which was based on imaginary problems with imaginary arguments or intellectual problems with intellectual arguments.⁴⁰ The problems of modern natural

36. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 240

37. Ibid., p. 240

38. Ibid., p. 241

39. Ibid., p. 241

40. Ibid., p. 241

sciences are not based on imaginary assumptions but on experiments, or can they be compared with the theories enunciated by past writers and thinkers who were basically influenced by intellectual reasoning.⁴¹ Old theories have been exploded and new scientific knowledge has taken their place.⁴²

Discussion and research are needed to preserve Islam against the onslaught of modern knowledge and science.⁴³ Muslims stand in need of a new science of Kalam and a new approach to religious problems.⁴⁴ Sir Syed further feels that a uniform criterion should be applied to all religions in order to prove their truthfulness.⁴⁵ Such a test will show how far a particular religion is in accordance with human nature and the law of Nature. If so, it is a true religion.⁴⁶

Sir Syed's views on Islam are definite and positive. ^{according to} Islam, ^{him, though} though historically late in appearance, is essentially the light of God which is eternal.⁴⁷ All the Prophets preceding Mohammed stood for Islam and Mohammed has only confirmed the eternal truth. Islam is a religion based on the unity of God and the unity of men. It is created by God to look after his own interest and the welfare of others. Thus brotherhood and mutual relationship in matters of the world is the urge of mankind as conceived by Islam.⁴⁸

Majmoos Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 241

Ibid., p. 241

Ibid., p. 242

Ibid., p. 244

Ibid., p. 245

Mukammal Majmoos Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 246

Ibid., p. 193

Ibid., p. 202

the religion of Islam is liberal and enjoins upon its adherents to observe tolerance and to show respect to other religions.⁴⁹ Prophets of Jews and Christians are honoured by Islam which teaches tolerance towards these religions.⁵⁰ To show disrespect to the leaders of other religion is against the spirit of Islam.⁵¹

Islam does not stand in the way of worldly progress and worldly knowledge. It is a matter of regret that Muslims have begun to think that modern worldly knowledge will destroy their religion.⁵² Sir Syed believes that Islam will withstand the impact of modern worldly knowledge as its foundation is laid on true precepts.⁵³ Those who believe in the truthfulness of Islam know it for a fact that Islam is not affected by external influences.⁵⁴ Islam is a light in the heart and works from within.⁵⁵ The things of the world have no effect in changing the core of Islam, for it *has* its foundation on the Quran — the word of God.⁵⁶

Sir Syed believes that there is harmony between the Word of God and the Work of God. The Nature is the work of God and religion is His word.⁵⁷ It would be a great mistake to consider the word of God and the work of God as contrary to each other.⁵⁸ There can be no deviation from His word or work.⁵⁹ The Quran is the

49. Akhari Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 31

50. Ibid., p. 31

51. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 40

52. Mazameen Sir Syed, p. 4

53. Ibid., p. 4

54. Mukammal Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 276

55. Ibid., p. 276

56. Ibid., p. 276

57. Safar Nama-e-Punjab, p. 197

58. Ibid., p. 198 (c.f. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, 1314 H).

59. Ibid., p. 198

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word of God ~~as~~ revealed to the Prophet — Mohammed. The Quran does not contradict the laws of Nature, i.e., the work of God.⁶⁰ But the Ulama (Religious Scholars) and the commentators have included in their commentaries of the Quran unscientific and irrational matter without realising the fact that the Quran bears testimony to the validity of the laws of Nature.⁶¹

In view of the above interpretation of Islam, Sir Syed discusses some of the socio-religious problems of Islam such as 'determination and free-will', 'resignation', 'polygamy' and 'divorce'.

Determination and Free Will

Sir Syed throws light on the problems of determination ~~and~~ free will in respect of human activities. God has bestowed upon man the power of action, both good and bad.⁶² He ~~has~~ also given him the power to discriminate between good and bad. Thus he is fully responsible for his actions.⁶³ Human nature is characterised by two factors — active and passive. One stimulates his actions and the other restricts them.⁶⁴ He is supposed to make full use of his potentialities. Endowed as man is with the power of discrimination he acts or refrains from

60. Majmoa Lectures wa Speeches Sir Syed, p. 252

61. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. III, 1st Rabiul Awal 1314 H., p. 108

62. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. III, 1st Rabiul Sani 1314 H., p. 123

63. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Rabiul Awal 1313 H., p. 103

64. Ibid., p. 103

action according to his will.⁶⁵ God has created man in conformity with His own nature and made him free to act within his own limitations.⁶⁶

Sir Syed adds that God has created in human nature a discretionary faculty which gives man freedom to act or not to act. In view of wavering human nature, the messengers of God and the Prophets guide men to maintain moderation in their actions.⁶⁷ As God is in the know of man's doings, He knows his fate. But human conduct is not determined by God's will. Any good or evil action is done by man himself.⁶⁸ It is the belief of Sir Syed that the welfare of man lies in the moderate use of his faculties which God has given him. Man is free in respect of his actions. His conscience leads him to good actions by sublimating the brute force in him.⁶⁹

Resignation

Sir Syed clarifies the common misunderstanding in regard to the term resignation (tawakul). Resignation is wrongly considered to indicate the suspension of human faculties or activities. Such a distorted view ignores the real spirit of resignation. Sir Syed takes great pains to expose the mischief that is wrought by wrong notions about resignation. According to him, resignation is the surrender of oneself to the

65. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Rabiul Awal 1313 H., p. 104
 66. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. III, 1st Ziqad 1313 H., p. 35
 67. Tahzeebul Akhlaque, Vol. IV, p. 13
 68. Ibid., p. 13
 69. Ibid., p. 13

will of God.⁷⁰ In fact, it is the belief in God as a power that helps us in our efforts and does not make us dispense with our own actions.⁷¹ True resignation is not incompatible with human endeavour and struggle. God helps those who help themselves, and He has no sympathy with people who are lethargic and inactive.

Polygamy

Sir Syed did not favour the institution of polygamy. He says that it is wrong to believe that Islam allows Muslims to practise polygamy as a virtuous act.⁷² On the contrary, there is no unqualified sanction to polygamy in Islam and it is only permissible under exceptional conditions.⁷³ It is, therefore, a condemnable practice because it is against the law of Nature on which Islam is based.⁷⁴

Sir Syed points out the social implication of polygamy. God has created for man a companion to stand by, to share his joys and sorrows, to console him in time of trouble and distress and to give him comfort and happiness.⁷⁵ Moreover, God has created women so that mankind may grow in numbers and make this world their earthly abode.⁷⁶ Only when a woman fails to fulfil this divine purpose, it is made permissible for man to

70. The Scientific Society, Aligarh, 5th July 1872, p. 415

71. Ibid., p. 415

72. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : al Khutbat Ahmedia, 1st Edn., p. 255

73. Ibid., p. 255

74. Ibid., p. 257

75. Ibid., p. 257

76. Ibid., p. 257

take to another wife along with his first wife or he can divorce the first wife, but in no case the rights of the first wife have to be overlooked or ignored.⁷⁷ This is the Islamic way of finding out a solution of such a social malaise. It not only puts a check to polygamy but provides for a healthy married life.⁷⁸

Islam allows polygamous marriage under restriction.⁷⁹ A Muslim who has been compelled to contract a second marriage must adhere to the Quranic law.⁸⁰ Truly religious and pious people refrain from contracting polygamous marriages for they realise that it is difficult to do equal justice to several wives and the failure to do so would make them answerable before God.⁸¹ In view of the conditions imposed by the Islamic law polygamy becomes almost impossible.⁸² Sir Syed quotes verses of the Quran :

" You will not be able to deal equally between your wives, however much you wish to do so. But turn not altogether away from one, leaving her as in suspense. If you do good and keep from evil, lo! God is Ever-forgiving, Most Merciful. "

" But if they separate, God will compensate each out of His abundance. God is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. "
(Chap. IV - Nisaa 'Women', 129 and 130).⁸³

77. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : al Khutbat Ahmedia, p. 257

78. Ibid., p. 257

79. Ibid., p. 263

80. Ibid., p. 264

81. Ibid., p. 264

82. Ibid., p. 264

83. Ibid., p. 265

It is a matter of great regret that some religious leaders and wealthy people do not hesitate to take to more than one wife in the name of Islam and divorce them at their sweet will or pleasure.⁸⁴ In fact, these practices give a free licence to the exercise of their passions and are an indication of their moral degradation. It is because of these persons that Islam is condemned in the eyes of the world.⁸⁵

D i v o r c e

Sir Syed considers divorce as a disintegrating force for family and society.⁸⁶ Divorce disrupts social cohesion and domestic relationship. It destroys conjugal love and fidelity and produces evil consequences for posterity.⁸⁷ He justifies divorce in certain circumstances, namely, where deep-rooted misunderstanding and ill-feeling have developed between husband and wife; where the enjoyment of matrimonial life by husband and wife becomes impossible, where the temperamental differences of husband and wife make the domestic life a veritable hell and where the divine purpose for which man and woman have been made to live together is defeated.⁸⁸ The problem of children of the divorced woman is not so serious in its consequences as that of children whose parents continue to live a life of constant

84. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : al Khutbat Ahmedia, p. 266

85. Ibid., p. 266

86. Ibid., p. 266

87. Ibid., p. 267

88. Ibid., p. 268

bitterness and never-ending quarrels.⁸⁹ Sir Syed finds a remedy in divorce for ending the recurring worry, tension and conflict between husband and wife.⁹⁰

As Islam permits man to divorce his wife, it grants a similar permission to woman also. Woman is allowed to take divorce under specific conditions and in extreme necessity.⁹¹ A husband is always counselled to be patient, magnanimous, generous and tolerant towards his wife.⁹² These are the Islamic ways to control divorce and promote domestic happiness.⁹³

89. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : al Khutbat Ahmedia, p. 268

90. Ibid., p. 268

91. Ibid., p. 277

92. Ibid., p. 278

93. Ibid., p. 278

CHAPTER VIII

C O N C L U S I O N

It is difficult to analyse the thoughts of Sir Syed Ahmed in the light of the social philosophies of western thinkers of the 19th century as there is little evidence of interaction of such ideas on him. He is, undoubtedly, influenced by the western social thought as such, but how far individual social thinkers have shaped his structure of thought is very difficult to ~~say~~. Sir Syed has seldom acknowledged his indebtedness to any one social thinker. On the basis of his collected writings, ^{the} conclusion becomes inescapable that he was deeply influenced by the western social thought. In other words, although his background was oriental and Islamic, yet his structure of thought was western and modern. His unusual responsiveness to the factors of social change and to the urges of the time-spirit proved of great avail to him in crystallising his ideas. He had quick perception in assessing the human and social conduct and had the resolute will to take prompt action.

Sir Syed found the solution of Muslim social decadence in the formation of a Muslim-British alliance. This was not enough. As the social system was under the stress of change, the people had to think of the change in their own interest. He knew it for a fact that "unless India adjusted herself to modern ideas and

says, it would not be possible to infuse new life into her dead bones and to herald a new age of thinking and activity for her.¹ India then was passing through a transitional period from a medieval pattern of life to a modern way of life. This new change in the country produced perplexing conditions for human and social adjustment. In these circumstances a leader, with vision and grit, in the person of Sir Syed won the hearts of the people who had no courage and strength to face the situation. Such an emergence of his leadership is linked up with problems of human conduct and social progress. The Muslims, in entrusting their fate to a great leader of Sir Syed's status, were a contributory factor in the development of modern India. The title of 'Musleh Azam' (the great Reformer) conferred upon him was a befitting tribute.

The thought-currents of Sir Syed were the result of socio-political discontent then prevailing in the country and of the impact of western civilisation on him. The state of socio-cultural degeneration touched him to the core. He correctly assessed the implications created by social ills and political malaise. The Revolt of 1857 gave him ample opportunity to study human responses and social reactions. He came to the conclusion that the power of human character could only convert the baser metal into gold and bring about the regeneration of man. His liberal outlook was a challenge to orthodoxy. He faced all

1. Dr. Tops, I, : Sir Syed Ahmed Khan — A Study in Social Thoughts. p. 225. Islamic Culture, Vol. XXVII, No.4. October 1953.

difficulties with fortitude and courage. He was a hard and robust realist and was noted for his foresight. He was honest in his views and boldly expressed them. His iron will was unyielding. He presented his ideas in a rationalistic manner. As religion was the bed-rock of his philosophy, it was from this source that his social thought flowed.

The development of Muslim religious thought in India, according to Sir Syed, was influenced by three important factors; Christian missions, Hindu revivalism and Muslim degeneration. He was aware of the fact that religion played a great part in civilising man as well as in retarding human progress. Convinced of the rationality of Islam, he once said that "I am a Mussalman not because I was born in a Muslim house, but because I believe in Islam by my own conviction and research".² He believed that Islam is no doubt the true religion of man, the fountain-head of civilisation and the source of human progress.

In his socio-religious thought, there is a stern advocacy of rationalism. The religion pervaded his whole life and till the last days of his life he was busy writing the commentary of the Quran. Though his thoughts were centred in the Quran, he was ever ready to accept what was presented or interpreted in a rationalistic way. By adopting such an attitude of mind he was made the unfortunate target of blasphemy or slander by his co-religionists. He was not only a radical thinker but also a social reformer.

2. O'Malley : Modern India and the West. p. 148.

He tried to convince the Christian missionaries as well as the orthodox Ulemas of their irrational stand in the matter of religion. His opponents dubbed him as Kafir. If his interpretation of religion could be labelled as Deism, it was nothing but an elaboration of the Islamic doctrine under the garb of a natural religion. That is why the references are found in his religious writings to Nature or the laws of Nature. His ideas were mocked by modern science and knowledge. He thought of natural laws as unchanging and unchangeable. He applied the principle of naturalism to Islam and discovered that Islam was a religion of Nature. To interpret Islam in the light of modern philosophy and science became his object so that he could make the Muslims realise that their religion was not the cause of their decline. Sir Syed paved the way of interpreting modern progressive ideas for the understanding of Islam. This innovation in the evaluation of Islam goes to the credit of Sir Syed. The Muslims could not accept all his modern views, but it goes without saying that he presented a new phase of Islam to suit the changing pattern of Muslim society.

Sir Syed knew it for a fact that Muslim society would not welcome any progressive ideas as it is custom-bound, conservative, dogmatic and anti-western. Therefore, the remedy proposed by him was to make Muslims change their religious ideas in the first instance. If he could succeed in changing them, then he saw a ray of hope for them.

The whole conception of their religion was based on blind authority and old sanctions which could not be questioned. They considered him a renegade ~~who~~ was after the destruction of their religion and society. He faced the difficult situation in order to make his people feel for a change in their religious outlook without damaging the foundation of their religious life. Therefore, he resorted to the study of Quran which is the fundamental ^{source} of Muslim ~~belief~~. He tried to understand the Quran from the standpoint of naturalism. In explaining the Quran he made it explicitly plain that the spirit behind the laws of Nature is reflected in the laws of the Quran. So, there is no conflict between naturalism and the Quranic doctrine. ^{In the} West through the exposition of naturalism human mind ^{has} definite signs of progress, in understanding and appreciating the value of scientific laws. In the same manner, Sir Syed adopted a similar attitude towards the Quran in the hope that if Muslims were to understand the Quran in the spirit of naturalism they would follow the path of progress like the people of the West, and they would not be averse to the progressive ideas emanating from the West. In other words, he made the point clear that the Quran as a book of religion is progressive and is in no way against the spirit of modern science.

Sir Syed belonged to the 19th century school of individualism. He believed that the source of all progress, social, economic, religious, moral and political, is the individual and not the society. Therefore, after realising the ~~decadent~~ condition of his

co-religionists and his countrymen, he dedicated his life to the task of 're-conditioning' them and their society on the avowed principles of individualism. To him the awakened man is the product of education and training. The awakening of his faculties is the result of conscious and sustained effort through a process of assimilation, rejection and absorption. Thus, the human personality emerges out. To Sir Syed, individualism, as conceived in the West, is basically an Islamic conception. Therefore, the welfare of individual received his primary attention. The social aspect of individual was his secondary thought ^{but} the national good of individual was his ultimate concern. It may be possible that the western interpretation of individualism served as an impetus to his social thought. Knowing the basic structure of Muslim society from the Islamic point of view, he reinterpreted the philosophy of individualism in the light of the Islamic doctrine.

Sir Syed's thoughts on education were the reflection of his age. He considered education as an activating agent for Muslim uplift from ignorance and misery. He was of the opinion that Muslims should learn to adjust their old system of education to the new changing conditions. He realised that modern education would lead to the correction of morals and the improvement of outlook.

Although he was not much enamoured of the old 'Maktab' (learning centre), yet he was not ignorant of its value. He was convinced that it had outlived its utility. He was also aware of the defects of the new system of education. The criticism

levelled against the English system of education was that it ignored religious education, produced lack of faith, gave rise to laxity of morals and took no cognizance of natural aptitude of the taught. The well-to-do Muslims educated their children at home and were indifferent to the existing system of education controlled by the Government. Imitating them, the middle-class Muslims neglected the education of their children. Muslims in general had no desire to take to western learning. Lastly, they were not on friendly terms with the British, with the result that they detested English education. Thus the task of Sir Syed became difficult and arduous. He courageously fought for the cause of modern education and succeeded in establishing an educational institution at Aligarh, aiming at imparting secular and religious education, which thoroughly met the needs of the Muslim community.

He holds the view that unless the nation takes the sole responsibility for the education of its children, it cannot be sufficiently imparted. The education of children can be arranged on the lines of mutual help through well-organised societies. No Government can impart education to the whole country. So long as the people do not take upon themselves the task of education, national education is not possible. The interference of the Government in national matters is a sign of 'cowardice, inactivity and degradation'.

Sir Syed holds progressive views on social problems and suggests reforms for the reconstruction of society. The problem of

socio-cultural degeneration, he faced with a brave heart, a penetrating intellect, an unshattered hope and an unflinching resolution. He saw in social decline of Muslims the cause for their estrangement from modern thought and inspirations and attempted to change their ideas and outlook, so that they could take the road to progress.

Though Sir Syed complained against human decadence, he did not abandon himself to a state of despondency. He was not a pessimist at all. He had a strong hope for the ultimate recovery of man from moral degeneration and for that aim he fought. He was of opinion that any edifying change from a state of social decadence to a state of social progress could not be easily affected, unless there was an organised effort sustained by deep thinking and sound reasoning. The problem of social decadence thus resolves itself into a problem of individual psychology. As the individuals constitute the society, social progress becomes their concern and obligation. The individual is the fountain-head of all activity and the influence of his spirit determines the social life to which he belongs. This is how Sir Syed explained the importance of social progress against the background of social decadence in an age which was not receptive to ideas of social reconstruction. In this way, he was a precursor of his time. ~~On~~ On the ~~problem of~~ 'Individual and Social Progress' he discusses the main factors of social progress on the basis of individual progress. In other words, a civilised individual is the source of social progress. Sir Syed lays bare the fact that social progress

is not an end, but it is a means for individual progress.

Progress is never a completion but a continuity of human activity. There is no perfection in any human achievement. Progress is a continuous process which gains from strength to strength in the stages of life, individual, ^{and} social, national. Herein lies the originality of his thought in expounding the meaning of progress.

His ideas on 'Individual and Custom' have an importance of their own, for Sir Syed was not ignorant of the fact that there are hindrances in the way of individual, or social or national progress, if customs are adhered to blindly. Since Sir Syed was a great believer in the principle of progress, he outright ^{warned} the individual ^{against} the dangers of following customs which do not go with the time-spirit.

Sir Syed ^{brings to} an essential aspect of individual progress in the light of social and national progress. Here Sir Syed's contribution seems to be original in his definition of civilisation as uniquely different from the 19th century social thinkers. Civilisation is a collective human desire for change from a state of bad to a state of good.

In short, the elucidation of Sir Syed's ideas in relation to individual and society and all their kindred activities is an attempt to bring about a new outlook, a new aspiration and a new objective. The inter-relationship of individual and society, as

3. Dr. Topa, I. : Sir Syed Ahmed Khan — A Study in Social Thoughts, p. 226. Islamic Culture, Vol. XXVII, No.4. October 1953.

conceived by him, was the ~~fundamental~~ of his social thought. He was a moralist in the sense that he saw in the upcoming of an individual, properly educated, aptly trained and rightly civilised, the hope of a social regeneration which the India of those days stood in need of. Basing his thoughts on civilised individualism, he made it explicit that an individual has to go through a process of sublimation in order to become a useful member of a civilised society. He establishes that the process of individualisation remains incomplete, if man is bereft of social influence. He believes that without the basis of such a relationship, individual will never realise his potentialities as a social being. Thus the social thought of Sir Syed depicts "What is best for the individual, is best for the society".

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