

Chapter – 72

Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan

(1817 - 1898 AD)

Syed Ahmad Khan was born on October 17, 1817AD in Delhi. His father's name is Syed Mohammad Muttaqui Khan. Most of his training was done by his mother, who was a wise and far-sighted woman. In the early age of Syed Ahmed, the influence of his maternal grandfather Fariduddin's personality also worked significantly. Fariduddin was an ingenious individual, an administrator and a scholar. Once, he remained as Minister of the state as well. Syed Ahmed Khan inherited the quality of management from him. Religiously, he was influenced by the Madrasa of Shah Abdul Aziz, and also due to the company of Shah Ghulam 'Ali Naqshbandi.

After his education, Syed Ahmed's first job post was as "President Amin". In 1841AD, he passed the exam of Judiciary and then he was appointed as Judge. He worked for 35 years. During this time, he was also regularly engaged with writing his books. Since he was more interested in historical and religious discussions, so most of his books were on the same subjects. Besides writing and composing, his favorite hobby was educating people, which he continued with his employment. His first school was opened in Muradabad. Then he established a scientific institute in Ghazipur, which was intended to introduce western arts and sciences in India. He also opened a school where he started teaching English. In the same period, he started publishing a newspaper as well. But his most important

task was the establishment of 'Aligarh College. In return for his services, the British Government gave him the title of "Sir". The Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar awarded him the titles of "Arif Jang" and "Jawad ud-Dawla.

Sir Sayyad believed in "*Education for everyone*" and in this the religion was not involved. But during his stay in Banaras, there were some events that changed his outlook. The Hindus of Banaras started the movement to eliminate Urdu language and Persian script and replace it with "Bhasha language" and "Devanagari script". On this, Sir Sayyad began to think that it is now difficult for Hindu and Muslim to work as one nation and to make joint efforts.

In 1876AD, after getting retirement from his job, Sir Sayyad Ahmed Khan came to 'Aligarh. And with the collaboration of Muhammadan College Fund Committee, he formally inaugurated 'Aligarh College on January 8, 1877AD. This college administered both religious and regular education. He also arranged teaching of English in this college. Muslim scholars were deeply offended by this move of Sir Sayyad. But Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan realized that English education is vital for the development, so he did not care for anybody. He was severely opposed when a magazine name "*Tahzeeb ul-Akhlaque*" was published." The Islamic scholars did not write in his fatwa that learning English is Kufr (*infidelity*) but wrote that "A person whose belief is like Syed Ahmed is not a Muslim and any sort of help should not be provided to the person who wants to establish such an institute."

However, the 'Aligarh College continued to grow. Sir Sayyad wanted to do more. Thus he founded the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference in 1887AD. Its main purpose was to awaken the Muslims of India and prepare them for education. In this regard, Sir Sayyad's hard work led to the

formation of the Muslim League in political and semi-political affairs, and that was considered as the voice of Indian Muslims.

After the failure of the Muslim government in 1857AD, all Muslims suddenly became victims of social, economic and political aspects. Sir Sayyad played a vital role in driving the nation out of this despair. In this connection, his services became famous as "Aligarh Movement". And then the occurring events after 1868AD in India forced him to present a two-nation theory. This idea later became the cause of "Pakistan Movement". In order to establish a better relationship between the ruling group and the general public, Sir Sayyad also wrote a book called "Reasons of Insurgence of India". In this he states that the Hindus, in fact, had provoked the Muslims for all the disturbances of 1857AD, moreover the British themselves had made some mistakes too.

The last days of Sir Sayyad were in great disappointment. He was first let down by his own son Syed Mahmood, who was made Joint Secretary of 'Aligarh College, which he could not handle properly. It gave a bad impact on the college and its condition rapidly gone downwards. The second major trauma was the monetary fraud done by the Hindu Treasurer of the college. Sir Sayyad was also getting older so his health deteriorated very fast. He died on 27 March 1898AD in 'Aligarh.