Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Identity Formation of Indian Muslims through Education

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Abstract

The study places Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan as the central figure in the emancipation of South Asian Muslims of India after they were annihilated as a nation, politically, economically and morally by their defeat at the hands of the British colonists. Sayyed saw their plight and managed to bring the two communities together by removing their misunderstandings about each other. By shis pragmatic vision and untiring zeal he convinced the Muslims to come out of their isolation and gain modern western education without compromising their religious and cultural identity. The study offers insights into situations where teaching of foreign languages and culture raise concerns about national identity and subject construction of learners. It points directions for curriculum designers and for critical linguists.

1. Introduction

This study reviews the achievements of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98), the central revolutionary figure in the emancipation of the Muslims of India. After the foiled bid to gain independence from the British colonists in 1857, the Muslims had fallen on bad times.

Because of the vengeful policies of the British, and their own religious susceptibilities, they had become isolated politically and economically, from the mainstream affairs of the state.

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Educationally and morally they were backward and conservative. Sir Sayyid foresaw that if this continued they would be annihilated as a nation, forever. Because of the his relentless efforts and his vision to keep a balance between modern education and the ethnic identity of the Muslims, the community rose to be highly literate and could later on compete with the British and Hindus on many fronts. The study is relevant in all those situations where English teaching has caused concerns about the subject construction and identity of non-native learners. It also points directions for language policy makers and critical linguists.

2. Background

A reformer and visionary, Sir Sayyid, can be regarded as the pivotal figure for regenerating the Indian Muslims at a time when they were economically, morally and educationally at their lowest. Nazrul Islam says:" Sayyid Ahmed Khan, was one of the leading spirits of (this) Muslim revival" (1990). In order to truly appreciate his achievement one has to see Sir Sayyed against the background of the time in which he worked and lived. Following the British control of India, the Muslims had been vanquished by the combined might of the British and Hindus. They wallowed in poverty, cultural stagnation, illiteracy and self-pity till the time that Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who had observed with anguish the Muslim's plight, appeared as a savior on the scene. He resolved to help the Muslims out of this quagmire. For this, he had to face many challenges - the combined hostility of the British and Hindus, the criticism of his political and religious detractors, and most of all the extreme backwardness of the Muslims. Anyone with an average level of commitment would have backed off in the face of such formidable odds, but though Sir Sayyid shared the Muslims' sense of deprivation and injustice, he did not agree with their pessimism, despondency or fatalism. He resolved to face the challenge of emancipating his community from their educational backwardness, moral decadence and defeatism.

The British East India Company had been operating in India for almost a century before the British government officially took control of the Indian subcontinent by taking over power from the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar. The decline of the Mughal Empire had given a chance to the company to increase their strength in 1764, and by 1818 they were firmly in command of India (Ali 1993).

After the War of Independence of 1857, which the British termed a revolt, and the bloody reprisals which came in its wake, the condition of the Muslims had undergone a drastic change. From the position of rulers they had been reduced to the position of paupers (Hunter 1876). Their fiefs had been confiscated and they were deprived of their position as leaders and landowners. The British were openly hostile and suspicious of the Muslims and deliberately kept them out of government jobs. Although the Hindus had fought alongside the Muslims to cast off the colonial yoke, the British regarded Muslims as their sole enemy since they had wrested power from the Muslims.

The Muslims had been in power in India for almost two centuries and had evolved a system of education which worked essentially on a system of self help and addressed the needs of the people. Every influential person used to hire teachers from his own pocket for the education of his children and the poor children of his community. Adam says: "It was rare thing to find an opulent or head of a village who had not a teacher in his employment for that purpose. That class, however is alleged to have dwindled away and scarcely any such schools are now found to exist" (in Thorpe 1965). The British after gaining control of India from the Mughal Empire had abolished this system, which was suited to the genius of the people, saying in the words of the President of the Board of Control, of the East India Company, "we have a great moral duty to perform in India" (Spear, in Ali 1994). Gradually Western style education was implemented and English was made a prerequisite for certain kinds of jobs. After the replacement of the official language Persian with English as the official language, in 1837 by Lord Bentinck, the Muslims had become virtually unfit for any government jobs.

Rahman (1996) says that "Along with Persian, the cultural ascendancy of Muslims too melted away". Persian was not only the elite language; it was also a symbolic of Muslim identity. Stripped of its elite status, power and cultural ascendancy, it dwindled into oblivion. Its economic utility as a language of employability was finished in a single 'crowning stroke' (Shah 1990). As McCully remarks: "When economic trend and official policy join together they are formidable indeed" (in Thorpe 1965). These measures added to the economic and cultural downfall of the Muslims, which had deteriorated steadily after the War of Independence, so that this indigenous system of education went into oblivion.

As a reaction against the ruthless policies of the conquerors, the Muslims withdrew into a self induced isolation, refusing any contact with the British. The educational reforms introduced by the British were regarded with suspicion as attempts to anglicize them. As the traditional system of education was abolished by the British under the plan to reform Indian education, they gradually fell into a state of ignorance and cultural backwardness. It seemed that this once highly literate community would be lost in ignorance, despondency and pessimism. Sir Sayyed shared their sense of deprivation and injustice, but not their pessimism, despondency or fatalism, and linked the Muslim malaise to their educational inferiority. He was convinced that education was the only panacea for the problems of Muslims. Sir Sayyid felt the plight of the Muslims and resolved to convince the Muslims that their survival lay in embracing the education offered by the British. This was an arduous task as distrust ran deep on both sides. The scars of the brutalities unleashed by both sides on each other were hard to forget. The British held the Muslims as the sole proprietors of the 1847 Mutiny and the Muslims regarded themselves as victims of British oppression, and saw the activities of the British missionaries as a ploy to convert the Muslims into Christianity. Far sighted as he was, Sir Sayyid realized that the Mughal era was gone for good, and to survive in the new age the Muslims had to shake of their despondency and avail themselves of the new scientific education offered by the British. These educational reforms were implemented after Britain gained political stability. Kazi (1994) opines that under the guise of philanthropic motives they were basically for the control of the natives. The influence of these measures is still a major influence in education policies in the area now comprising Pakistan and India, ex-colonies of the British.

3. Education for Control

After establishing its political control over India, the next logical step for Britain was to create a situation in which the vanquished people should willingly accept their inferior position, whereby making the job of administration easier for the colonial power. Education is the foremost instrument to control a colonized people. It was the creation of a situation which the Marxist critic, Antonio Gramsci (1971) has called "submission by consent", in which the subjugated people concur in their own subjectivity by accepting their inferiority before the imperial power. Domination achieved by combining acceptance and coercion is more effective and lasting because the dominated is willing to cooperate with the colonizer in furthering the state of affairs.

This "hegemony", to use the term as Gramsci used it in the 1930s, is best achieved by interpellation of the native by using such ideological state apparatuses as education, church and the media (Althussar 1992). Education particularly, is very effective in influencing assumptions, beliefs and values. Thus, "domination by consent" is achieved through what is taught to the colonized, how it is taught and the subsequent emplacement of the educated subject as a part of the continuing imperial apparatus (Ashcroft 1995). The British had been involved in education before the East India Company became formally established as a political power in 1765. Thorpe says that missionaries were working, "indirectly through the missionary clause of the Charter Act of 1698 whereby it was necessary for the company to transport missionaries to India for proselytizing purposes" (Thorpe 1965). The *Calcutta Mudrassah* for Muslims was established in 1781 by Warren Hastings and a similar one for Hindus, the Benares Sanskrit College in 1791 with a view to provide classical and practical education to the diverse Indian society.

However because of the pressure from missionaries and the negative results of the Industrial Revolution in England, the British now included English literature in the curriculum, as it combined both the benevolent aspects of Christianity and of liberal education (Viswasnathan 1995), and would be effective for maintaining control of the Indian subjects. So although the British outwardly professed not to carry out any proselytizing activities, yet the natives saw in English teaching an ulterior motive of the colonists to convert them to Christianity. However the British felt confident that the Indians could be expected to have intellectual curiosity towards an education that had led the British to progress and would readily accept British education to "freely learn". Shah believes that the locals were intellectually and politically, if not superior, at least at par with the British colonialists (Shah 1990). Similarly Graham claims that the Indians' "intellectual sinews were fortified by the social bond of caste, seemed to withstand the philosophy, if not the technology of the Industrial Revolution" (Graham 1970). Macaulay's famous minutes of 1835, established the teaching of western education through the medium of English. He emphasized the superiority of English literature, as being "Superior to all the literatures of Europe" and asserted that this education would produce "a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in intellect". But cautions Thorpe, this was not the only factor in deciding the fate of English in India. The economic factor too was important here, since the British had made English a prerequisite for government employment.

Gradually the locals came to see the economic benefits of acquiring English language and education. To create a westernized elite, the "Chief's Colleges" (Rahman 1999) were established, where sons of local chieftains were educated to create a sympathetic pro Raj sympathetic elite. The Hindus readily accepted the education of British just as they had imbibed the Muslims education centuries ago. The Muslims after initial reluctance ultimately did accept it under the guidance of Sir Sayyid.

4. Results of the British Policies

British administrative policies were significant and far-reaching. The following were the results of the British Policies:

4.1 Alienation of Muslims

Although the Hindus, the other major community of India, had participated along with the Muslims in the bid for independence, their role was dismissed by the British as a temporary 'aberration'. The Hindus were quick to realize that their survival lay in cooperating with the British. They embraced the educational reforms introduced by the British and became close allies of the new rulers. "Persian or English it hardly mattered to them", and under the influence of Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) they availed all the opportunities offered by the British (Muhammad 2002). The Muslims on the other hand, were held responsible for orchestrating the whole movement. The British had wrestled power directly from them and were suspicious that they still harbored political ambitions. Thus their wrath was directed mainly towards the Muslims. The revengeful measures taken by the British resulted in disempowering the whole community, economically, morally and politically. These measures as well as their own religious susceptibilities, led the Muslims to remain aloof from the conqueror's sphere. Thoroughly discouraged and humiliated, the whole community withdrew into isolation. The British education system and the activities of the missionaries were taken as a British ploy to convert them to Christianity.

4.2. In the second place, the substitution of Persian with English as the state language had been an economical calamity for the Muslims. Persian was not only a source of income for them, but also an identity marker, the court language, symbolic of their glorious past. Automatically they were thrown out of jobs in which Persian was the requirement. Persian had "ensured a continued livelihood for the Muslim and Hindu service gentry, certainly in Northern India" (Bose et al 1998).

The Hindus were quick in their response to switch from Persian to English "in order to find continued service in government", but "the vast majority of Muslims remained aloof from the new Western educational institutions. Smarting from the loss of sovereignty and state power, Muslims, especially in urban centers, resented the imposition of English" (ibid). The substitution of Persian with English as the state language had been a calamity for the Muslims' employability but also for their education. Qureshi (in Thorpe 1965) points out that this measure reduced the otherwise well-educated Muslims to the level of illiterates: "This served the double purpose of seeking to make the English language popular and striking at the root of Muslim influence" (Qureshi, in Thorpe 1990). This measure further deteriorated the already impoverished Muslims to more penury and economic destitution. It was also a blow to their self-concept of their identity as a nation.

4.3 Thirdly, both by its policies and by their implementation, the British educational plan disturbed the indigenous system of "self-help" prevalent in India for centuries, and which suited the genius of the people. The system of paying the schoolteacher from the revenue collected from villages, was abolished, and these funds were diverted to "selected government schools in urban areas for providing 'modern' education" (Baqir 1997). With the deterioration of the general economic condition of the Muslims after the war and neglect of the British government, the traditional system of education could not continue. These measures acted to further impoverish the Muslim community. Hunter (1964) argues this point well: "A hundred and seventy years ago it was impossible for a well-born Muslim in Bengal to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich".

In the long run, the British policy resulted in marginalizing from the main stream national affairs and alienating them from the educational opportunities offered by the rulers. "growth of illiteracy which turned an educated community into one of the most illiterate in the world" (ibid). Baqir deplores the deliberate destruction of this traditional system, which led to the collapse of universal literacy: "The areas that constitute Pakistan had in place a very sound and firm tradition of providing education on the basis of self-help by beneficiary communities, a little more than a hundred years ago. This system provided universal education to males and females…." (Baqir 1997). He cites Leitner as forewarning that: "If the community-based system of education was demolished under the pretext of modernization of education, literacy would be wiped out from the Punjab" (Baqir 1997:181).

Baqir finds that this prediction came to be prophetically true. Later on, Quaid-a-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was to level his greatest criticism of the British on these grounds, as "one of the greatest reproaches against the British is the neglect of elementary education in the country" (Jalil 1997:33).

4.4. Another result was the creation a class system which created polarity in Indian society. The British educational system, based on utilitarian objectives, focused the urban elite and middle-classes and ignored the masses. What was wanted was a class of people who could serve as intermediaries between the ruled and the rulers (Macaulay 1995). It was hoped that this cadre of westernized, educated elite would in turn educate the masses through the theory of 'downward infiltration', but this could not happen due to the paucity of funds. Of more significance is the fact that the British education policy favored elitist patterns that have persisted to this day. Jinnah had foreseen that such educational policies would produce patterns of inequality in society. Jalil states: "Jinnah criticized elite concepts and institutions like the public schools and appreciated the need for mass and non-elitist elementary education", which he saw as the basis for creating a "viable social infrastructure in the long run" (Jalil 1997). Even in pre-partition Pakistan this policy of differentiated education had divided the society into roughly two strata - the westernized, English educated elite and the uneducated, vernacular-taught masses. This measure was significant because language had now become a means of not only defining ethnic linguistic groups but also of conferring economic, social and political privilege.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan had told the British about the shortcomings of their education system and that it would remain ineffective until some changes were introduced. In his memorandum – '*Strictures upon the Present Educational System in India*', in 1869, he based this argument on his paradigm of progressive education. It envisaged a truly progressive system, productive of three educated strata. The top most strata comprised of the intellectual elite or the creative scholars. The teachers stood in the middle, and transmitted to their fellowmen the knowledge thus acquired by them. The third layer of the pyramid was divided into three subdivisions: the professionals, the administrators and managers and then the working classes, all of whom were to be literate.

When the accomplishments of the indigenous system of education are compared with the British educational system, Sir Sayyid maintained that the former had excelled as compared to the latter, in producing many creative scholars of the top and middle strata. This number bore a just proportion to the existing population of India.

However those belonging to the lowest strata were very few and this he admitted was a great deficiency of the traditional education system. As compared to this, nearly after a century in operation, the modern system had not produced one learned person who could be considered a member of the highest or the middle class. The modern system, Sir Sayyid maintained had produced only letter writer, copyist, signalmen and railroad ticket collectors (Malik 1988) or as Quddus says, "Clerks and subordinates necessary for carrying on the administration of the country in English under the British masters" (Quddus 1979). The number of the very few who had reached the highest strata bore no sensible proportion to the whole population of the country.

5. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan had not only to convince the Muslims that Lack of Education was the Main Cause of their Backwardness, but also to Address the Problems in these three Areas

a. To remove the mistrust between the Muslims and British.
b. To convince Muslims that their salvation lay in acquiring modern scientific education.
c. To bring all sections of society to participate in the educational emancipation.

5.1 Policy of Reconciliation

With his farsighted vision, Sir Sayyid saw that if the standoff between the Muslims and British, continued, the Muslims would be further marginalized. Sir Sayyid's remorse was of a dialectic nature, simultaneously reflecting love for the Muslim nation and loyalty to the British. It is in this context that his policy of reconciliation with the British can be understood. For a man born in a feudal family, who had personally experienced the trauma of the declining Mughal Empire, he was highly pragmatic in his outlook.

He feared that if the Muslims did not change their attitude they would be completely annihilated, culturally, economically and politically by the combined power of the British and the Hindus. Henceforward all his endeavors were directed towards the educational emancipation of the Muslims and removing the mistrust between them As Malik states: 'It could be said that Sir Sayyid emerged from the ordeal of 1857 not only as a loyal employee of the British Government, but traumatized into a staunch Muslim nationalist (Malik 1989).and the British. His policy of reconciliation with the British can thus be seen as a historical necessity, imperative for his mission of Muslim emancipation.

Cooperation with imperial Britain was a practical necessity to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. He wrote his pamphlet titled '*Causes of the Indian Revolt*', which was accepted by the British as a friendly and sincere attempt. He pointed out that the Mutiny was actually triggered by the Muslim and Hindu soldiers' revolt against the use of beef and pig grease in the cartridges of guns which was repugnant to both religions. Bose et al (1998) report that this practice was "widely seen as an insidious plot by the infidels to pollute Indians before forcing their conversion to Christianity". Therefore the whole Muslim community should not be penalized for what was a lone act of a disgruntled group. In fact some Indians, including Sir Sayyid, had fought the battle on the British side, rescuing several Englishmen from rioters. Seeley points out that "The Subcontinent was conquered by Indian arms, Indian men and Indian resources" (in Shah 1990). This effort and others like, '*The Loyal Mohammedans of India*', *Taḥqīq ḥifẓ naẓirah*, (*The Commentary on the Bible)*, and his review on W.W. Hunter's '*The Indian Mohammedan*', went a long way in removing misunderstandings and misconceptions which the British and the Muslims harbored against each other. Bose et al (1998) point out that the "reform-oriented current within Indian Islam was led by Saiyid Ahmed Khan, who sought to alter British conceptions about inherent Muslim loyalty and urged his co-religionists to accept Western education but not necessarily all its ideals".

5.2 Steps to convince Muslims to Participate in their own Emancipation

The greatest hurdle in the way to achieve emancipation of the Muslim community was to bring them out of the isolation in which they had withdrawn. Sir Sayyid linked the Muslim malaise to be the result of their educational inferiority and backwardness. The curriculum at that time was composed of logic, syntax, rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, scholasticism, Islamic jurisprudence, mathematics and commentary of the Qur'an. (Thorpe 1965).

Believing that the future of Muslims was threatened by the rigidity of their orthodox outlook and obsolete education system, Sir Sayyid feared that if they continued to boycott modern, scientific education they would be left behind economically and politically. He was convinced that modern education was the only panacea for their problems. He thought, "All socio-political ills of India may be cured by this treatment. Cure the roots and the tree will flourish" (Hali 1994). Henceforward all his endeavors were directed towards the educational emancipation of the Muslims

The aftermath of the harsh reality after the War of Independence resulted not only in the loss of political and economic influence, but also degeneration of the Muslim society (Ali 1994). Muhammad points out that, "The Muslims had fallen to many vices and their society was in a state of decay" (Muhammad 2002). Shah Waliullah (1703 – 65) was the last Muslim reformer who had attempted to rid the Indian Muslims from their dogmatic, superstition ridden orthodoxy. However, by Sir Sayyid's time, society had again relapsed into moral decrepitude, and Islam had been reduced to mere ritualistic observance by a majority. "The Muslims were strangled in superstition and conservative ideas which prevented them from availing the advantages beneficial to them. Their rigidity and fanaticism were a stumbling block in their way to success" (Muhammad 2002). Bose et al find that, "It was religious narrow-mindedness which, according to him, had prevented Muslims from taking advantage of the new education".

5.3 Educational Projects of Sir Sayyid: Scientific as well as Moral

Sir Syed wrote extensively with a view to change the thinking of society. The '*Tahzibal-al-Akhlāq*' was started to instill in the Muslims the crucial importance for acquiring western knowledge. This journal was an interpretation of Islam, rightly named in English as 'Mohammedan Social Reformer'. Sir Sayyid instituted his Scientific Society in 1863 in Ghazipur to create a scientific temperament among the Muslims by translating western classics into Urdu, thus making Western knowledge available to Indians in their own language. It was "an important device for opening the Muslim minds to the wider experiences of mankind in all branches of learning" (Thorpe 1965) and went a long way in bringing awareness about the importance of scientific education in the traditional Muslim society.

However, Bose et al (1998) observe that Sir Sayyed's rational approach to Islam and western education brought him into conflict with the more dogmatic and conservative faction of Muslim Ulema, especially the *Deoband* and *Farangī Maḥal* ulemas. The Muslims had turned "with much greater enthusiasm to reformist movements, seeking an internal regeneration of Islam", mainly because of the repressive measures by the British. Usmani quotes Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal observation that "the real greatness of Sir Syed consists in the fact that he was the first Indian Muslim who felt the need of a fresh orientation of Islam and worked for it--- his sensitive nature was the first to react to modern age" (Usmani)

5.3. Initial Ventures: A Vernacular University

Although Sir Sayyid knew that modern scientific knowledge was only available in English but in the beginning he had not espoused the cause of English as a medium of instruction. He believed that modern education could be acquired only through the mother tongue and promoted the adoption of Urdu as the <u>lingua franca</u> of all Indian Muslims. In 1863, he spoke to the Mohammedan Society in Calcutta about the unsuitability of English as a medium of instruction:

No prohibitions stand in the way of learning a language spoken by any of the many nations of the world. But learning a language is one thing and, to make it the medium of instruction is another (Hali, 1994).

He thought Urdu was a must for the identity of the Muslims and to foster a Muslim "sense of community" among them.

In 1867, Sir Sayyid developed a plan for a truly national and vernacular university, and entered into a dialogue with the government on this crucial issue. However Bayley, the Secretary of the Government of India, discouraged his plan on academic grounds, by making the distinction between the vernacular as a necessary medium of instruction for education of a popular kind and the English language as an essential prerequisite for education of a higher kind, since the 'object of university education is to prepare and fit the mind for the pursuit of knowledge in the wide sphere of European science and literature…only through the medium of English language' (Malik 1989). He also emphasized the non-availability of scientific texts and literature in the Indian vernacular, as a reason against the local languages.

Sir Sayyid's idea for a vernacular university was strongly opposed and even derided by the British. Being a pragmatist and looking at the ground realities, keeping in view the strong nationalistic element in Hindu community, he abandoned his commitment to a vernacular university. He realized that English was the only via media for Muslim education and with time this conviction made him a supporter of education through English. When the proposal for the University College came up with the stipulation that English teaching would be a prominent feature, but the medium of instruction as well as the examination system would be based on the vernacular, Sir Sayyid opposed it vehemently. He, along with other reformists, criticized it a as an attempt to 'keep us in slavery'. Rahman (1996) states:

By this time (1881), Sir Sayyid regarded the teaching of traditional subjects in the vernaculars as a conspiracy against the Muslims in particular…since English, being the language of power, made the vernaculars ghettoizing.

5.6 Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College

Sir Sayyid's greatest contribution to Muslim education was the establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College (M.A.O. College) in 1875, at Aligarh, which developed into the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in 1920. It was envisaged on the pattern of Oxford and Cambridge universities which Sir Sayyid had visited in 1869. The experimentation for this great edifice of human struggle and will power began as early as 1859. In that year, Sir Sayyid established the *'Murād ābād Punchāʾitī Madrassah'*. Hindu and Muslim students were taught Urdu, Persian and Arabic along with English. The school functioned without government help as Hindus and Muslims financed it themselves. This school reflected Sir Sayyid's perception of modern education as catering to mass education and social equality. In 1864 Sir Sayyid graduated to a still higher conception of higher education when he established an English high school in Ghazipur, which was subsequently christened as High Victoria School. The College was affiliated with the Allahabad University for Arabic, Science and Law. Because of the efforts of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his colleagues, the number of Muslim students as opposed to Hindu students was greatly increased. Hali states: 'In a very short space of time the college had done much to raise the standard of Muslim education' (Hali 1979).

Through the efforts of Sir Sayyid and his friends, among whom Shibli Nomani, Altaf Hussain Hali, Maulana Mohsinul Mulk and <u>Maulvi Abdul Haq</u> are noteworthy, the M.A.O. College came to acquire the symbol of Muslim friendship and cooperation, and was not just a center of learning. It created a new value system among the Muslim students. It instilled a consciousness of Muslim solidarity, nationality and social obligation. Moin ul haq says that the object of the college was thus not purely educational in the narrow sense of the term. 'The college was much more than a seat of learning; it soon became the centre of the political, cultural and literary life of the Indian Muslims' (in Thorpe 1965). It was an effort for national regeneration in all its aspects.

The M.A.O. College was not just a centre of learning but in time it came to symbolize Muslim friendship and cooperation, and their separate national identity. The college soon became the centre of political, cultural and literary life of the Indian Muslims. The mission of the college was thus not purely educational in the narrow sense of the term. It was an effort for national regeneration in all its aspects – educational, moral and cultural. The M.A.O. College became the fountainhead for most of the future leaders and intellectuals. The alumni introduced liberal thoughts in their teaching and gradually radical thoughts were also introduced, which gave impetus to nationalist ideas. When the Muslims of India demanded a separate homeland based on identity and culture, it was the students of Aligarh who provided the main impetus to the movement.

They were to hold important posts in Pakistan afterwards. A few leading names are: Maulana Mohammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Hasrat Mohani, Abdul Majeed Khwaja, Zafar Ali Khan, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim. Together they developed organizations such as the <u>Urdu Defense Association</u> and the '*Anjuman taraqqī urdū*', committed to the perpetuation of Urdu. All these efforts led to the adoption of Urdu as the official language of the <u>Hyderabad State</u> and as the medium of instruction in the <u>Osmania University</u> the Muslims in northern and western India. When the time came to mobilize Muslims to demand a separate homeland, Urdu came to symbolize and become an integral part of political and cultural identity of the Muslims of India. To meet the need for the Muslims to have capable leaders and followers, Sir Sayyid established the Mohammadan Educational Congress in 1886.

6. Criticism Against Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan

Sir Sayyid has been criticized by his detractors for being a partisan of the British and for creating a westernized elite and neglecting the education of women. Some view Sir Sayyid's educational philosophy as replicating the British policy of ignoring the masses of India and serving education for the urban elite. However, the fact is that nearly one-third of the student's population at M.A.O. College was supported by scholarships. Public funds were allocated for the underprivileged students of the college, so that the students belonging to the middle class could get financial support by these funds. So besides being the educational centre for modern education and a brain trust of Indian Muslim politics, Malik (1989) says that 'the M.A.O. College became an instrument of vertical social mobility for the sons of lower and middle classes'.

Another common misconception is that Sir Sayyid ignored Oriental Studies in forming the curriculum at MAO College. But the fact is that while he fully appreciated the need of imparting instruction based on western learning, he was not oblivious of the value of oriental learning and wanted to preserve and transmit the rich legacy of the Muslim past to future generations. Documentary evidence establishes the fact that the Aligarh Muslim University was established with a view to bring the Indian Muslims educationally at par with the rest of the world. For this, the students were given modern scientific and technological education through the medium of English, in an 'in-house' school system which was essentially based on western lines. The fact that these students were later to become the greatest force in the Pakistan Movement, which led to the creation of the Muslim state of Pakistan, confirms the fact that their English education did not construct their subjectivity or influence their identity. This was due to the fact that Ethics and Urdu were important subjects at Aligarh, and there was a strong stress on religious observance. Besides this '*Dīniyyāt* i.e. religious studies, were an essential part of the courses taught at the university, and the day's proceedings started with the recitation of the Holy Quran. Although the English courses at M.A.O. College included the usual heavy dose of classical works of English literature, which are also part of the English courses in the elite schools today. This emphasis on traditional education sustained and kept alive the ethno-linguistic vitality of the learners. The education thus did not cause a disjuncture between the basic philosophy of their socio-cultural reality and the school's ethos, although it was closer to Macaulay's dictum of creating an anglicized elite, in time, space and political sphere.

The university's ethos created a new value system and instilled a consciousness of Muslim solidarity, national identity and social obligation.

If this is compared with the elite system of education currently prevalent in Pakistan, as in most post colonies, we find that the immersion pedagogies of teaching English and ideological texts interpellate students to forgo their identities and subscribe to the texts underlying messages. In elitist schooling in Pakistan, English teaching includes cultural teaching through the overt and covert curriculum. Language *per se* cannot affect the identity of foreign language learners, but ideological and cultural content influence subjectivity of learners (Waseem 2009). The M.A.O. College offers a perfect paradigm of how a prestigious foreign language can be used effectively for practical purposes and yet ethnic identity can be maintained and culture kept intact. But one has to keep in mind that Sir Sayyid had emphasized the teaching the local languages and religious education in the curriculum and had always heeded the socio-cultural realities of the Indian society. He had decided to keep a fine balance between Western education and oriental learning.

The greatest allegation against Sir Sayyid is that he had ignored the education of women. But his reason for this again establishes him as a pragmatist of the highest order. He held a strong view that given the state of Indian society, which was extremely decadent and conservative, educated women would only cause a breakdown in the traditional power dynamics of the family structure. The uneducated male head would never accept the educated female and this would cause a rift in the family structure, disrupting the whole fabric of society. Only after two generations of males have been educated, would they become liberal enough to accept an educated female.

7. Conclusion

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was a pivotal figure in the Indian Muslim renaissance. His life shows how the dedication, hard work and clear vision of a single man can change the destiny of a whole nation. It can be said that it was due to his extraordinary vision that the Muslims of India could regenerate after lapsing into moral despondency, cultural lethargy and educational backwardness. Without him, it might have taken another few centuries for the Indian Muslims to come out of their medievalism to modernism. He sought to reconcile modern scientific thought with religion sensibility and rationalistic interpretations.

His educational reforms addressed the problem of the illiteracy of the Muslims creating in them a sense of national pride and identity as well as creating a society in which the masses were given some degree of equal educational opportunities. Although he wanted Muslims to adopt western education and scientific outlook, but he was never ready to compromise with the high ideals and values of Islam and on their Muslims national identity. Thus, he elaborated his educational philosophy in the following words, "Philosophy will be in our right hand and natural science in our left. And the crown of, 'There is no God but Allah' will adorn our head". Today the whole educational structure of Pakistan owes its beginning to the foundation laid by Sir Sayyid who had envisaged the need for scientific and technological education for the progress of the Indian Muslims. The study is useful in situations where teaching of a foreign language causes concerns about the subject formation of learners. It also points directions for curriculum designers to include local knowledges and perspectives in curriculums designs to counter the emphasis on English, so that learning foreign languages and concepts does not compromise local knowledges and identity construction of learners.

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