Belkacem Belmekki

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Muslim Cause in British India

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Cover shows Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan wearing
the Order of the Star of India

To my beloved mother Zoubida, *Allah yarhamha*,
whose untimely passing has left a deep void in me.

Contents

CHAPTER ONE

Prologue: Muslim Predicament under British Rule

The presence of the first Muslims on the Indian Subcontinent can be traced back to the early Arab merchants from the Arabian Peninsula, who conducted trade with Indians on the south-western coast of the Subcontinent, particularly on the Malabar Coast. That occurred during the seventh century, almost a century after the death of the Prophet Mohammed back in 632 A.D.[1] As a result of this contact, some Muslim trading communities were established, and these communities were to play a significant role in peacefully converting many native people, who were overwhelmingly of Hindu faith, to Islam later on.[2]

The first Muslim military action aimed at conquering the Indian Subcontinent took place around the eighth century, when Muhammed Bin Qasim (695-715), a young Arab general, entered the Subcontinent through the sands of Sind for the sake of proselytization and expansion of the Damascus-based Ommayad Empire.[3] Although his incursion was short-lived, Bin Qasim paved the way for successive Muslim incursions to occur afterwards.[4] Probably the most significant raids on the Indian Subcontinent were those conducted by the Turkish Dynasty, which took place between the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[5] However, despite their being successful in military terms, these irruptions did not last long as their primary aim was plunder rather than conquest.[6] Nevertheless, the first Muslim empire in the Indian Subcontinent, called the Slave Dy-

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1   P. Spear, *A History of India: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1990, p. 221.

2   P. B. Calkins and M. Alam, 'India: The Early Muslim Period', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.

3   A. Zahoor, 'Muslims in India : An Overview', in *History of Muslim India*, http://www.indianmuslims.info/?q=node/2

4   K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, Chattos & Windus, London, 1967, p. 17.

5   P. Spear, op. cit., p. 221.

6   P. B. Calkins and M. Alam, op. cit.

nasty, was established only till the end of the twelfth century, and that was by Qutb-ud-Din Aybak.[7] Thenceforward, several Muslim dynasties successively ruled the Subcontinent.[8] The last to come was the Mughal Empire.

The Mughals were a Muslim dynasty that lasted for more than two hundred years. They were originally nomad warriors from central Asia, descendants of the Turks and Mongols.[9] Many historians agree on the fact that the Mughal Empire was one of the greatest and the most brilliant empires that history has ever recorded.[10]

The Indian Subcontinent proved to be a very difficult land to rule because of the overwhelming Hindu culture of the local population, which contrasted sharply with the faith of the Mughals, namely Islam. Moreover, India was a country where the people of a village spoke a language or a dialect that was different from that spoken in another village that was only a couple of miles away. Traditions also differed from one village to another. Be that as it may, the Mughal emperors managed to rule with fairness and with as little misunderstanding as possible.

Hence, since the founding of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century, Muslims and Hindus have lived, though not in harmony due to their socio-cultural and religious divergences, peacefully and an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual understanding reigned. Few instances were known of conflicts between the Muslim rulers and their Hindu subjects. According to B. Prasad, this Muslim-Hindu peaceful co-existence had at its origin the military strength of the Mughal army as well as the religious toleration of the Mughal emperors.[11] Illustrating the latter statement, the same historian, speaking about Akbar,[12] stated that "religious toleration

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7   Qutb-ud-Din Aybak (?-1210) was the first founder of Muslim rule in the Indian Subcontinent. He was a former slave who turned into a military commander. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.

8   K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 17.

9   A. Read and D. Fisher, *The Proudest Day: India's Long Road to Independence,* Pimlico, London, 1998, p.11.

10   K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 17.

11   B. Prasad, *Bondage and Freedom: A History of Modern India (1707-1947): Volume I: Bondage, 1707-1858,* Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, 1981, p. 1.

12   Akbar's full name was Abu-ul-Fath Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad (1542-1605). He was the second ruler in the Mughal dynasty. He assumed power in 1556 until his death in 1605. Akbar is claimed by many historians as being the greatest

was the keynote of the Akbar's policy, and so long as his successors gave the appearance of impartiality in the matter of faith, the willing submission to the Mughal Emperor was a recognised fact."[13]

I.   The Fall of Muslim Hegemony and the Coming of the British

With the death of *Aurangzeb*[14] *Alamgir* (meaning World Conqueror) in 1707, the process of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire was set in motion.[15] This was an inevitable outcome resulting from Aurangzeb's policies. In fact, being a fanatic Sunnite Muslim, known for his abhorrence and intolerance of other religions, he ruled with an iron-fist policy and proceeded with anti-non-Muslim policies that alienated most of his subjects, who were overwhelmingly of Hindu faith.[16] In this respect, P. Spear stated that Aurangzeb's fanaticism led him to the extent of removing the Muslim confession of faith from all coins for fear of being defiled by non-believers. Also, courtiers were forbidden to salute in the Hindu fashion, and Hindu idols, temples and shrines were often destroyed.[17]

Besides, Aurangzeb is regarded by many historians as being a warlike emperor. It was under his rule that the Mughal Empire reached its widest extent. This was carried out by on-going and off-going wars, which culminated in the exhaustion of the imperial treasury, as L. James put it:

> *Aurangzeb overstepped himself by undertaking a series of campaigns to extend and consolidate his rule ... They became a war of attrition which stretched imperial resources beyond their breaking point, and by 1707,*

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ruler of the Mughal Empire, because under his rule, the Empire was expanded significantly to cover almost the whole Indian Subcontinent and the latter became united and prosperous. P. Spear, op. cit., pp. 30-39.

13   B. Prasad, op. cit., p. 1.

14   Aurangzeb's full name was Muhi-ud-Din Muhammad (1618-1707). He was the fifth Mughal emperor. He succeeded to the throne in 1658 and his rule lasted until his death in 1707. P. Spear, 'Aurangzeb', in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Volume II, England, 1973, pp. 372-373.

15   C. C. Hazewell, 'British India', in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Volume I, n° I, November 1857, p. 88.

16   A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p. 15.

17   P. Spear, 'Aurangzeb', op. cit., p. 373.

*after nearly twenty years of intermittent fighting, the empire was ex-
hausted.*[18]

As a result, in order to compensate for this financial shortage, Aurangzeb
resorted to the extortion of money by imposing heavy taxes on his sub-
jects, mainly non-Muslims. In fact, according to A. Read and D. Fisher,
Hindu merchants were charged more than double the excise duty paid by
their Muslim counterparts on the same goods.[19] Furthermore, Aurangzeb
went so far as to reintroduce the *Jizya*, or poll tax, on non-Muslims, after
it had already been abolished by the former Mughal Emperor, Akbar, by
the end of the sixteenth century.[20]

Aurangzeb's harsh and discriminatory attitudes and policies towards
his Hindu subjects had detrimental repercussions on the continuity of
the Mughal Empire. In fact, Aurangzeb's misbehaviour only incurred
hatred from his Hindu subjects, and in such circumstances, could he ex-
pect loyalty any further from the governed? Aurangzeb's blunders and
iron-fist policy were going to pay off only after his death.

It is historically admitted that the post-Aurangzeb era proved to be
the beginning of the end for the Muslim hegemony over the Indian Sub-
continent. Actually, the year 1707, when Aurangzeb passed away, the
Mughal Empire plunged into a state of chaos. Besides the conflict among
his 17 sons and daughters about the inheritance of the Empire, others,
mainly those who had been mistreated by the late Emperor (i.e. Aurang-
zeb), hence bore a grudge against the Mughal Court, found that time was
ripe to fulfil their plans. In fact, within the far-flung Empire, local chiefs
and kings, mostly Hindus, began carving out their little kingdoms with-
out even caring about Delhi's[21] reaction, as P. H. Plumb put it: "These
chiefs and kings paid only lip-service to the titular Emperor at Delhi."[22]

It was in such circumstances that the British, hitherto a group of mer-

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18 L. James, *Raj : The Making and Unmaking of British India*, Little, Brown and Com-
     pany, London, 1997, p. 6.
19 A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p. 15.
20 P. Spear, *A History of India*, op. cit., pp. 34-35.
21 Delhi became the capital of the Mughal Empire in 1658. Before that, Agra
     used to be the capital. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.
22 P. H. Plumb, *The Pelican History of England: England in the Eighteenth Century*,
     Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1990, p. 172.

chants conducting trade, got involved politically in the Indian Subcontinent. In fact, it is noteworthy to mention that the English East India Company had so far been carrying out trade under the protection of the Mughal Court.[23] Thus, the demise of the latter would naturally bring about the demise of the former. The state of anarchy and lawlessness that prevailed in the region on the heels of Aurangzeb's death cast the British in an atmosphere of vulnerability and insecurity and made them rethink their position there. This *status quo* was the driving force behind the change of mission that the East India Company was going to undergo in the eighteenth century, namely from a trading one to a ruling one.

In a little more than a half century, the British, by means of stratagems and complicity with local princes, managed to gradually fill the gap left by the Muslim rulers by imposing their hegemony over the Indian Subcontinent.[24]

II. The Impact of British Rule on Muslims

The coming of the British and their civilization that was at that time prevalent in the Western World had different repercussions among the various communities that made up the Indian Subcontinent, notably Hindus and Muslims. In fact, following the Battle of Plassey[25] (1757), which marked the beginning of the process of the British conquest of the Subcontinent, the imposition of British rule took place piecemeal. The first to come under it were the coastal areas, where three major port cities were set up, namely Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.[26]

The British impact was initially felt in such coastal areas, and it

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23 J. H. Parry, *Europe and a Wider World, 1415-1715*, Hutchinson University Press, London, 1966, p. 92.

24 According to J. Keay, as part of its plan to conquer the Indian Subcontinent, the English Company often bribed local chiefs. J. Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company*, Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1993, p. 9.

25 Plassey is a small town near Calcutta. It was in this place that the British under Clive (an outstanding soldier) defeated forces of Suraj-ud-Dowlah, nawab of Bengal. This decisive battle resulted in the establishment of British rule in India. J. Gardiner, *The Penguin Dictionary of British History*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, p. 538.

26 Before the British conquest, these port cities used to be called 'presidencies', because they used to be the Company's principal trading centres, or 'factor-

happened that the people inhabiting those areas were mostly Hindus. The latter proved to be very receptive to foreign cultures. In fact, for Hindus, it did not matter whoever ruled them, and the advent of the British did not make any difference. They had already been used to being ruled by foreigners. The coming of the British was only "one imperialist sitting in the seat of another."[27] Moreover, the Hindus took advantage of the education and liberal ideas brought by the British. According to S. Hay, the Hindus responded to the British presence on their soil with an eagerness to learn from them whatever would contribute to their advancement.[28]

This attitude on the part of the Hindus towards the British and their civilization brought them many advantages. The Hindus were, indeed, the main, if not the only, beneficiaries of British rule. They availed themselves of the many opportunities that the British offered in all spheres of life. By embracing western education and culture, they became trusted subjects in the eyes of the new rulers, and by learning the English language, they were offered services in the Government.[29]

Furthermore, it was thanks to Western education brought by the British that a Hindu intellectual class was born. The latter became imbibed with the main principles of liberalism and democratic ideas that were then prevalent in Western Europe and North America. They read about modernism and free-thinking in Western Europe and learnt about Nationalism. That helped them develop political consciousness among their community by organizing revivalist and reform movements.[30] As a matter of fact, the nineteenth century witnessed a significant wave of socio-religious reform movements that spread among the Hindus. Probably the

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ies'. This was due to the fact that their Chief Factors were designated 'Presidents'. J. Keay, op. cit., p. 111.

27   K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 18. To sum it up, K. K. Aziz wrote: "The Hindus had been a subject race for centuries. They were trained in the art of honouring the rulers. When a Muslim sat on the throne of Delhi they learned Persian and cultivated the graces of a Mughal court life. When a British Viceroy governed the country they learned English with equal diligence and entered Government service with alacrity." Ibid., pp. 76-77.

28   S. Hay (ed.), *Sources of Indian Tradition, Volume II: Modern India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1992, p. 173.

29   Ibid., pp. 84-85.

30   O. K. Ghosh, *How India Won Freedom*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1989, pp. 21-25.

best example illustrating this is the emergence, as early as 1828, of *Brahmo Samaj*[31] under the leadership of Rajaram Mohan Roy.[32] Having benefited from modern education provided by Westerners, Mohan Roy sought to reform and modernize his society, that is, his Hindu community. He launched a crusade against polytheistic aspects of medieval Hinduism which sanctioned superstitions and meaningless religious rites that kept his co-religionists at a degraded level. This move on the part of Mohan Roy helped enlighten many western-educated Hindus who were to follow his footsteps in improving the status of the Hindu community.[33]

All this was in favour of the Hindu community, which made great strides forward towards nationalism, unlike their Muslim counterparts in the Subcontinent, as will be discussed below. Corroborating this statement, the Indian sociologist A. R. Desai stated that "the pioneers of nationalism in all countries were always the modern intelligentsia ..." and in the case of India "it was predominantly from the Hindu community that the first sections of the Indian intelligentsia ... sprang," hence the latter became the "pioneers of Indian nationalism."[34]

On the other hand, the advent of the British on the Indian Subcontinent ushered in a new era, or rather a dark era, for Muslims. Whereas for Hindus it meant only a change of masters, for Muslims it meant the loss of power, position, wealth and dignity. Indeed, with the consolidation of British hegemony over the Indian Subcontinent, many profound transformations were effected, which disrupted the old order established by the former rulers, the Mughals, centuries back. Indians, and particularly Muslims, were to suffer the most, politically, economically, as well as psychologically. Depicting Muslims' predicament, J. Masselos wrote:

> It was argued that psychologically they (Muslims) had not recovered from their loss of power when they were supplanted as rulers of the subcontin-

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31 *Brahmo Samaj* means literally 'Sacred Society'. A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p. 32.

32 Rajaram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) is usually described as the Father of Modern India. S. Hay (ed.), op. cit., pp. 15-17.

33 A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism,* Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1959, pp. 264-265.

34 Ibid., pp. 276-277.

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ent by the British and that they lived in the past, in a nostalgic world of former glories.[35]

Muslims were, indeed, reduced to poverty and destitution as a result of British rule. As the East India Company took control over the Subcontinent, it approached Hindus for co-operation, and the latter proved to be, from the very start, staunch supporters and reliable partners of the new rulers.[36] In S. R. Wasti's opinion, by opting for Hindu partners and collaborators, the British were aiming to oppress Muslims as well as create an unbridgeable gap between both communities.[37]

For instance, to help with revenue-collection, the Company passed the Permanent Land Settlement Act (1793)[38] whereby it created a new class of Hindu collaborators, called *gomashtas,* or *zamindars.*[39] The latter, backed up and encouraged by the British, overcharged Muslim peasants, even during hard times, such as famines.[40] In this respect, S. R. Wasti stated:

> *The British gave their gomashtas Hindu full protection. So much so that Clive had to admit that the Company's servants "commited actions which make the name of the English stink in the nostrils."*[41]

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35 J. Masselos, *Indian Nationalism: A History*, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 1996, p. 119.

36 S. R. Wasti, 'Muslims in Bengal: An Historical Study up to 1905', in *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in India*, Renaissance Publishing House, Delhi, 1993, p. 60. According to S. R. Wasti, the growing feeling of antagonism towards Muslims amongst Hindus was coincident with the decline of the Mughal Empire. Ibid.

37 Ibid., p. 61.

38 It was Lord Cornwallis, Governor General of India from 1786 to 1793, who introduced the Permanent Land Settlement Act. By this Act, the British destroyed the old system of collective ownership of land in the Indian Subcontinent and replaced it with the system of individual proprietorship. B. Chandra, A. Tripathi and B. De, *Freedom Struggle,* National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1983, p. 17.

39 A 'zamindar' was an official person in pre-colonial India who had been assigned to collect the land taxes of his district. After the East India Company took over, this word was used to denote a landholder who was responsible for collecting and paying to the government the taxes on the land under his jurisdiction.

40 S. R. Wasti, 'Muslims in Bengal: An Historical Study up to 1905', op. cit., pp. 58-59.

41 Ibid., p. 59.

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To justify the passage of the Permanent Land Settlement Act the Company officials said that they found it easier and more practical to collect land revenue from a few thousands of loyal landlords than from hundreds of thousands of small peasant proprietors.[42] Yet, these few thousands of landlords were the *gomashtas*, or *zamindars,* namely Hindu revenue-collectors, who turned overnight into landowners. It is noteworthy to mention that the fact that the Permanent Land Settlement Act imposed the system of individual proprietorship, whereby land could be purchased and sold, proved to be a godsend for these *gomashtas.* Indeed, being the *protégés* of the British administration, these Hindu revenue-collectors, by means of swindle and oppressive conduct, managed to accumulate huge fortunes at the expense of the poor Muslim peasants.[43] Commenting on this, S. R. Wasti stated that the Permanent Settlement Act "elevated the Hindu collectors to the position of landholders, gave them a propriety right in the soil and allowed them to accumulate wealth." Meanwhile it "practically reduced the Muslim peasantry to serfdom."[44]

This degenerative process of the Muslim community in the Subcontinent was not only confined to the agricultural field. Even in the administrative government positions Muslims were being gradually replaced by Hindus. According to J. Masselos, this process of Muslims being replaced by Hindus was set off when the East India Company replaced Persian, or Urdu,[45] with the English language, and the latter became the official lan-

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42 A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 36. Some British officials confessed that the reason why they created this new class of landlords was that the British administration needed a social support in the country to maintain its rule. As a matter of fact, the Company officials expected full loyalty and support, when need be, from this new class of Indian landlords-cum-revenue collectors, which owed its existence to the British, and thus had much stake in their rule. As the Indian sociologist A. R Desai quoted Lord William Bentinck, Governor General of India between 1828 and 1835, saying that: "If security was wanting against extensive popular tumult or revolution, I should say that the Permanent Settlement ... has this great advantage ... of having created a vast body of rich landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuances of the British Dominion and having complete command over the mass of the people." Ibid.

43 S. R. Wasti, 'Muslims in Bengal: An Historical Study up to 1905', op. cit., p. 58.

44 Ibid., 58.

45 Urdu is a language that uses the Persian script, which is similar to Arabic script. It was the official language that was used during the Mughal administration.

guage of the bureaucracy.[46] As a matter of fact, it was in 1835, during Lord Bentinck's[47] general-governorship, that English was made the official language of governmental and legal business in the Indian Subcontinent.[48] Furthermore, even in law courts, the position of Muslim officials was steadily undermined as the British imposed their own procedures in the courts to supersede the ones already established by the Mughals.[49] Illustrating this situation in the Bengal region, T. R. Metcalf wrote:

> In Bengal, to be sure, the fall from power was complete and catastrophic. Corwallis and his successors swept away the whole structure of Muslim administration which they had inherited from the Mughal rulers of the province. The Muslim ... judges were discharged, the Islamic code was set aside in favour of the British Regulations, and under Bentinck Persian was abandoned as court language.[50]

Hence, the fact of refusing to learn the language of the new conquerors, as well as their education, served as an impediment for Muslims to get, or to continue to be in, the administrative posts under British rule, knowing that the English education was the only qualification that opened the door for government positions.[51] About this statement, K. K. Aziz wrote:

> The Muslims did not take to the English language, and thus denied themselves opportunities of material as well as intellectual progress. Material, because Government jobs were open only to English-knowing persons; intellectual, because the entire corpus of Western knowledge and learning was shut out from them.[52]

In a word, under British rule, Hindus fared better than their Muslim counterparts, and the latter lagged far behind. S. Hay attributes this Muslim degeneration partly to the fact that the areas where Muslims were present, namely the northern regions, were the last to come under

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46   J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 119.
47   Lord William Bentinck was Governor-General of India between 1828 and 1835.
48   P. Spear, *A History of India*, op. cit., p. 223.
49   Ibid.
50   T. R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1870*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1965, p. 300.
51   J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 119.
52   K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 130.

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British rule.[53] On the other hand, many other historians attribute this Muslim backwardness to the fact that Muslims were not pre-disposed to absorb "alien ideas, methods and language of the new rulers"; thus they failed "to grasp the opportunities available in the new structure of government."[54]

Muslims' rejection of Western education and culture and their attitude towards their successors in the seat of power had indeed many reasons. One of these reasons was imperial pride. In fact, whereas Hindus were, by nature, too willing to submit to the rulers, Muslims were too proud of their past glory to submit to the British. The takeover of the Indian Subcontinent by the East India Company proved to be a bitter pill for Muslims to swallow.[55] They had been dethroned and could not reconcile themselves with the current *status quo*, as K. K. Aziz put it: "When Muslim hegemony was gone and real power lay with the British, the Muslims would not, could not, forget that they had once ruled over the land. Their reaction was bitter and truculent."[56] As a result, they developed a hostile attitude towards the British whom they accused of expropriating their prestige. This made the Muslim community shy away from everything associated with the British, including their culture, language, and education.[57] Furthermore, this state of affairs of the Muslims led them to insularity, that is, only interested in their own culture, ideas and so on.[58] Naturally, to avoid coming under the influence of the new culture, they clung tenaciously to the fundamental teachings of Islam and most of them prevented their children from attending British-patronized

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53   S. Hay, op. cit., p. 173.
54   J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 119.
55   K. K. Aziz, op. cit., pp. 76-77.
56   Ibid., p. 76.
57   A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 276. This Muslim reluctance to take Western education was to have serious repercussions on the Muslim community by the second half of the nineteenth century. According to S. Tandon, Muslims were to trail far behind the Hindus in the field of modern education. Taking the case of the Bengal region, he stated that by 1875, Muslims made up only 5.4 per cent of the total college enrolment while the Hindus made up 93.9 per cent. He added that the same situation was witnessed at secondary schools and universities. (Further data see p 20) S. Tandon, 'Genesis of the *Wahabi* Movement', in *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, India, March 24, 2002.
58   K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 77.

educational institutions throughout the different Indian provinces,[59] as reflected in the data contained in the following chart:

Table 1: Muslim Students Enrolment at British-patronized Educational Institutions

Provinces	Classes of institution	Total N° of Students	Muslims	%
Madras	Colleges	1669	30	1.7
	High Schools	4836	117	2.4
	Middle	18553	723	3.8
	Total	25058	870	3.4
Bombay	Colleges	475	7	1.4
	High Schools	5731	118	2.0
	Middle	14257	781	5.4
	Total	20463	906	4.4
Bengal	Colleges	2738	106	3.8
	High Schools	43747	3831	8.7
	Middle	37959	5032	13.2
	Total	84444	8969	10.6
North-Western Provinces (United Provinces excluding Oudh)	Colleges	223	29	13.0
	High Schools & Middle	4273	697	16.3
	Total	4496	726	16.3
Oudh	Colleges	126	7	5.5
	High Schools & Middle	1081	195	18.0
	Total	1207	202	16.7
Punjab	Colleges	103	13	12.6
	High Schools	453	91	20.0
	Middle	2671	703	26.3
	Total	3227	807	25.0
All the above Provinces	Colleges	5334	192	3.6
	High Schools & Middle	133561	12228	9.2
	Total	138895	12480	8.9

Source: G. Ali Khan, 'Educational Conditions of Indian Muslims During the Nineteenth Century', in Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Ansar Zahid

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59   A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 276.

As can be inferred from the tabulated data above, a highly insignificant percentage of Muslims frequented educational institutions that provided English education, knowing that the Muslim community constituted, at least, one fourth of the total population inhabiting the Indian Subcontinent.

It is noteworthy that the type of education that the British introduced in the Subcontinent also played a significant role in incensing the Muslim community. In fact, in accordance with Lord William Bentinck's policy of religious neutrality, this new system of education did not make any concessions to religious instruction and Islamic cultural heritage.[60] According to K. K. Aziz, the aim behind the spreading of secular education was ostensibly to give full religious freedom to all creeds in the Indian Subcontinent.[61] Nevertheless, Muslims were convinced that the British intention was to forcibly Christianize the whole population of the Subcontinent, including the Muslim subjects.[62] Indeed, somehow one can admit that Muslims' apprehension was well founded. In fact, the foreign Christian missionaries, who were one of the main agencies responsible for spreading education in India,[63] went on openly and overzealously proselytizing in Mission schools, thinking that they were on a "civilizing mission" in the Indian Subcontinent. In this respect, Dr Ghazanfar Ali Khan argues that Muslims overwhelmingly objected to the Western education provided by the Christian missionaries because the purpose of the latter was "neither the education of the Indian natives nor the eradication of backwardness, but only the propagation of Christian ideas."[64] To back up his statement, he quoted a Western missionary saying openly:

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60   K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 132.

61   Ibid.

62   T. R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India: 1857-1870*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1965, pp. 122-123.

63   According to A. R. Desai, there were three main agencies responsible for the spread of education in the Indian Subcontinent. One was the foreign Christian missionaries; second, the British Government; and third, the progressive Indians who had received Western education from the two previous agencies. A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 127.

64   G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 45.

> *Our great object was to convey as largely as possible knowledge of our lit-*
> *erature and Science to the young persons; but another and more vital ob-*
> *ject was to convey a thourough knowledge of Christianity.*[65]

Again in this respect, C. Hibbert bears witness to the fact that copies of the New Testament were distributed to the learners at schools run by these missionaries.[66] On the other hand, G. Ali Khan stated that the Colonial Government of India was, in a way or another, involved in this scheme of converting native Indians to Christianity. He added that even Government's warning to the missionaries not to tamper with the people's faiths was but "an outward posture".[67]

Briefly speaking, with the consolidation of British rule in India, the Muslim community was badly affected, as well as faced serious setbacks in all spheres of life. They, Muslims, plunged into a sense of humiliation and grief at the loss of their power, and as a result, they developed bitter feelings towards the British. This bitterness was going to lead, by the mid-nineteenth century, to a major revolt that shook the Company's rule to its very foundations.

III.   The Impact of the Indian Great Revolt on Muslim Community

Anti-British and anti-western feelings that had long been building up amongst the Muslim community culminated in the Great Revolt of 1857.[68] This Revolt, which initially took the form of a mutiny amongst the Muslim as well as Hindu Sepoys[69] in the barracks and then later spread to the civilian population, is usually considered as a restorative revolt.[70] This is because the aim of the insurgents, Muslims as well as Hindus, was to restore the pre-British conditions in the Subcontinent. Muslim rebels,

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65   Ibid., p. 47.

66   C. Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857*, Allen Lane, London, 1978, p. 52.

67   G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 45.

68   The Great Revolt of 1857 is usually referred to as the "First War of Independence" by most historians from the Indian Subcontinent, and as the "Great Mutiny" by most of Western historians, particularly British.

69   "Sepoys" were Indians who served in the British army under the East India Company.

70   O. K. Ghosh, op. cit., pp. 7-16.

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for instance, aimed at restoring their past imperial glory. Indeed, in an attempt to restore the Mughal Empire, the Muslim Sepoys, shortly after the outbreak of the mutiny in the barracks, headed to Delhi, where they pledged allegiance to Bahadur Shah II,[71] the then titular Mughal Emperor.[72]

The Great Revolt was doomed to failure, and many historians attribute this failure to, among other things, the lack of unity among the insurgents. In spite of the fact that Muslims and Hindus joined hands in their effort to throw the yoke of foreign rule, differences related to religion as well as the diversity of interests served as a hamper for the cultivation of any feeling of national sentiment among them.[73]

Notwithstanding the fact that Muslims were not the only 'culprits' responsible for the outbreak of the Revolt, they were to bear the brunt of it. As the events of 1857 ended, the British chose to throw the cover of responsibility on the Muslim aristocracy alone.[74] As a matter of fact, the British had always regarded the Muslims as their archenemy in India due to the fact that they (the British) had unseated them from power, and the fact that the insurgents endeavoured to restore Bahadur Shah II to power convinced the British enough to assume that the Muslim leaders were behind the planning and leading of the uprising. Besides, the British officials in India admitted the fact that they had wreaked havoc on the Muslim community, particularly the upper class, and so it was no surprise that the latter would bear a grudge against the British. In this respect, T. R. Metcalf stated that:

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71   Bahadur Shah II was the last Mughal emperor of India. He reigned between 1837 and 1858.

72   R. A. Huttenback, *The British Imperial Experience*, Harper & Row Publishers, London, 1966, pp. 59-62. Some historians bear witness to the fact that Bahadur Shah II was forced by the rebellious sepoys into accepting leadership. According to S. David, when Bahadur Shah II was solicited by the rebellious sepoys to make him king, he told them: "I did not call for you; you have acted very wickedly." Then the sepoys replied: "Unless you, the King, join us, we are all dead men, and we must in that case just do what we can for ourselves." Soon after, the King seated himself in a chair, and the sepoys came forward one by one and bowed their heads before him. S. David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857*, Viking, London, 2002, p. 104.

73   L. James, op. cit., p. 273.

74   T. R. Metcalf, op. cit., p. 301.

As the British were well aware, the Muslim aristocracy could not but resent the complete revolution in their fortunes brought by the imposition of British rule. Once an imperial race, they were now ordinary subjects, on a par with the despised Hindus, and excluded them from all higher posts in the Government.[75]

Many historians who wrote about the events of 1857 bear witness to the fact that the dispossessed Muslim potentates were not the only ones to have taken part in and led the uprising. Actually, R. A. Huttenback confirms that even Hindu maharajas (i.e. princes) and landlords, who, under British rule, had suffered deprivation in terms of possessions, political rights and prestige, were the first to seize the opportunity of the Revolt when it broke out.[76] For the sake of illustration, it is worthwhile to set out a couple of examples. One was Nana Sahib (1820-1859). The latter had been deprived of his titles and rights that he inherited from his late father, Baji Rao II, the last Maratha Peshawar (Prince), as a result of Dalhousie's "Doctrine of Lapse".[77] As the Great Revolt broke out, Nana Sahib is said to have joined the rebellious native regiments without any hesitation. According to an American contemporary, Reverend Hollis Read, Nana Sahib ended up as a prominent leader in the course of the uprising and inflicted heavy losses, material as well as human, on British troops.[78]

Hindu active involvement in the Great Revolt can also be epitomized by the story of Lakshmi Bai, the Rani, or Queen, of Jhansi.[79] Based on Dal-

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75 Ibid., p. 300.

76 R. A. Huttenback, op. cit., p. 71.

77 Dalhousie's "Doctrine of Lapse" was a formula devised by Lord Dalhousie (General Governor of British India between 1848 and 1856) to deal with questions related to succession in Indian princely states as well as titles and pensions owed by the East India Company to former native rulers of territories that had previously been annexed. K. A. Ballhatchet, 'James Ramsay Dalhousie', in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* England, 1973, Volume: 5, p. 438. According to L. James, under this stratagem, five semi-autonomous states within the Indian Subcontinent fell to British rule. L. James, op. cit., 234.

78 H. Read, *India and its people: ancient and modern, with a view of the Sepoy mutiny: embracing an account of the conquests in India by the English, their policy and its results: the Moral, Religious, and Political Condition of the People: their Superstitions, rites, and customs,* J. & H. Miller, Columbus, 1858, p. 72.

79 'Jhansi' was a small Martha principality in central India. K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Asia,*

housie's Doctrine of Lapse, which stated that "a state whose ruler died without a direct male heir was forfeit to the company," Lakshmi Bai had her adoptive son denied the right to replace her late husband, Rajah, or King, of Jhansi following his passing away.[80] As the events of 1857 unfolded, the Rani led her troops and fought like a noble warrior. Many contemporaries were fascinated by her courage on the battlefield as she held her sword and reaffirmed her allegiance: "Nothing will give me greater happiness than to die on the battlefield."[81] K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac quote Antonia Fraser, a British historian, stating that "the Rani has her parallel in Queen Boadicca, the early-day Briton who with a spear in her fist vainly led an army against the Roman invaders who had wronged her family and people."[82] Nevertheless, the British would not hear of this and chose to make Muslims the first 'culprits' behind the outbreak of the 1857 events. As a result, they were going to make them pay for it.

Briefly speaking, both Muslims and freedom-loving Hindus did participate in the Great Revolt, and in spite of that, the British decided to revenge themselves on the Muslim community, as the latter were regarded as the *bona fide* fomenters and the most beneficiaries of the uprising. Commenting on this, T. R. Metcalf wrote:

> As the former rulers of Hindustan, the Muslims had, in British eyes, necessarily to place themselves at the head of a movement for the overthrow of the British Government.[83]

This anti-Muslim feeling was well reflected in the harshness of British reprisals towards the Muslim community immediately after the Revolt was put down. Besides the expropriation of Muslim landowners, some contemporaries bear witness to many instances of barbaric acts of ruthless vengeance being inflicted indiscriminately by British soldiers, with the connivance of their superior officers, on ordinary Muslims.[84] Describing

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Abacus, London, 2001, p. 138.

80   S. David, op. cit., p. 350.

81   Ibid., p. 362.

82   K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac, op. cit., p. 138.

83   T. R. Metcalf, op. cit., p. 301.

84   S. R. Wasti, 'British Policy towards the Indian Muslims Immediately after 1857', in *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in India*, Renaissance Publishing House, Delhi, 1993, p. 7.

this British heavy-handedness on the Muslim community, S. R. Wasti stated that "mass massacres, indiscriminate hangings, inhumane tortures and large scale confiscation of properties were some of the means adopted by the British for the purpose."[85] To add insult to injury, even Hindus, who had an active hand in the events of 1857, pointed an accusing finger at the Muslim community and joined hands with their new masters, the British, in their anti-Muslim campaign.[86]

Anti-Muslim sentiment can also be inferred from the British policy towards the Muslim community during the several decades that followed the Great Revolt. As a matter of fact, since the early days when the East India Company imposed its hegemony over the Subcontinent, the British had looked down on the Muslim community and saw Muslims as their bona fide adversaries.[87] The events of 1857 were but an opportunity that the British seized to get rid of the last vestiges of the Mughal Empire once and for all, as well as curb the Muslim influence in the Indian society. The first objective was, indeed, successfully fulfilled. In fact, shortly after Delhi was retaken, the British captured the ageing Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, with his three sons and tried them for complicity in murder. Found guilty, the sons were executed, and the old Mughal was sent into exile with his wives to Burma, where he died in 1862. Thus, with the departure of the last Mughal Emperor, Delhi, the last foothold that remained of the Mughal Empire, came under British suzerainty. [88]

With regard to the second objective, Muslims were to face terrible discrimination in all spheres of day-to-day life, and particularly in Government employment. This discriminatory policy was mainly carried out upon the advice of some high officials in the Government of India. Charles Raikes, for instance, who was a senior British official in India during the events of 1857, was of the opinion that Muslims had been trusted too much and thenceforward, they should be watched. He asked the Government of India to take drastic measures to prevent Muslims from "enjoy-

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85 S. R. Wasti, 'British Policy towards the Indian Muslims Immediately after 1857', Ibid.
86 Ibid., p. 8
87 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 53.
88 K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac, op. cit., pp. 146-147.

ing too large a share of the Government patronage."[89] Indeed, Raikes' and his colleagues' recommendations were well heeded by the Government of India. In fact, the number of Muslim appointments in Government posts decreased sharply during the couple of decades that followed the Great Revolt, and by the 1880's, the British managed to reduce Muslims to the position of 'hewers of woods and drawers of water.'[90] For instance, in the Bengal region, T. R. Metcalf stated that whereas on the eve of the Great Revolt the Muslim community used to monopolize the higher positions in the judicial service, by 1886 they could lay claim to only 9 posts out of a total of 284.[91] For the sake of further illustration, it is useful to report the figures advanced by Dr. Ghazanfar Ali Khan with regard to appointments in all Government positions during the early 1870's:

Table 2: Muslim and Hindu Appointments to Government Positions

Gazetted Posts	Europeans	Hindus	Muslims	Total
Covenanted Civil Services	260	0	0	260
Judicial officers in the Non-regulation Districts	47	0	0	47
Extra Assistant Commissioners	26	7	0	33
Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collectors	53	113	30	196
Income-Tax Assessors	11	43	6	60
Registration Department	33	25	2	60
Judges of Small Cause Court and Subordinate judges	14	25	8	47
Munsifs[92]	1	178	37	216
Police Department	106	3	0	109
Public Works Department (Engineer Establishment)	154	19	0	173
Public Works Department (Subordinate Establishment)	72	125	4	201
Public Works Department (Account Establishment)	22	54	0	76

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89   T. R. Metcalf, op. cit., p. 301.
90   R. Upadhyay, 'Aligarh Movement: Could it fulfil the dream of Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan?', in http://www.saag.org/papers7/paper611.html
91   T. R. Metcalf, op. cit., pp. 301-302.
92   A 'munsif' means a junior judge

Medical Department Offices attached to Medical Colleges, Jails, Charitable Dispensaries, Sanitation and Vaccination Establishments and Medical Officers in charge of Districts, etc.	89	65	4	158
Department of Public Instruction	38	14	1	53
Other Departments such as, Customs, Marine, Survey, opium, etc.	412	10	0	422
Total	1338	681	92	2111

Source: G. Ali Khan, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

As can be inferred from the table above, Muslims lost most of their positions in Government. According to G. Ali Khan, there was "scarcely any Government office ... in which a Muhammadan can hope for any post above the rank of poster, messenger, filler of ink-pots and menders of pens."[93]

It was the new *'protégés'* of the British, the Hindus, who were to benefit the most from this anti-Muslim discrimination. Even when meeting all the requirements for Government positions, Muslims were officially and publicly kept away by official decrees. This was confirmed by S. R. Wasti, who quoted an article from a Persian newspaper in Calcutta (14th July 1869) describing this anti-Muslim and pro-Hindu attitude on the part of the British authorities in India:

> *All sorts of employment, great and small, are being gradually snatched away from the Mohammedans, and bestowed on men of other races, particularly the Hindus. ...time has now come when it (the Government) publicly singles out the Mohammedans in its gazettes for exclusion from official posts. ...even when qualified for Government employ, they are seriously kept out of it by Government Notifications.*[94]

In a word, the post-Great Revolt period was probably the gloomiest period in the history of the Muslim community in the Indian Subcontinent. In the British eyes, Muslims had concocted and taken a prominent part in the events of 1857, whereas Hindus kept a low profile. As a result, the former were to shoulder, alone, the blame. Swift and merciless reprisals

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93　G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 56.
94　S. R. Wasti, 'British Policy towards the Indian Muslims Immediately after 1857', pp. 23-24.

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were to be inflicted by the British administration, which would result in a harsh reality to the Muslim community. Their pitiable conditions can be read from the following passage addressed by the Muslim community in Delhi to the Governor-General:

> *We the Muslim inhabitants of Delhi have since sustained the extreme losses of life, property and honour. At present we have absolutely nothing to feed our children and ourselves. There is no ceiling under which we could seek shelter against inclement weather, and no clothings to cover our bodies. Thousands of us not bearing the severities of climate perished last year and if nothing is done to protect us many more will die this season.*[95]

On the other hand, the Government of India embarked on a discriminatory policy that disfavoured Muslims in every walk of life. This wreaked havoc on Muslims who were reduced to a state of degradation and destitution. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Sir William Hunter (1840-1900), a contemporary member of the Indian Civil Service as well as an imperial historian, depicted Muslims in his book *The Indian Musalmans* (1871) as "a community in decay, economically backward and deprived of access to positions in government service by a rival Hindu community."[96]

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95 Punjab, *C.S. Records*, General Department of proceedings of the 1st January, 1859, F. N° 11-12. Quoted by Syed Razi Wasti, S. R. Wasti, 'British Policy towards the Indian Muslims Immediately after 1857', p. 22.

96 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 120.

CHAPTER TWO

The Emergence of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan:
A Nineteenth Century Indian Muslim Reformer

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the events of 1857 delivered a *coup de grâce* to the Muslim community in the South Asian Subcontinent, which had already been suffering under the East India Company's rule prior to the Revolt. Indeed, in every walk of life, Indian Muslims found themselves trailing far behind their Hindu fellow countrymen, who, for various reasons, had made steady progress under foreign colonial rule.

It was against this gloomy background unfavourable to the Muslim community that some Muslim figures in the Indian Subcontinent took the initiative to save Islam and Muslims from further disgrace and deterioration, and took upon themselves the task of shouldering the burden of modernization amongst their community. In this book, the main focus of attention will be given to the person of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan,[97] one of the greatest Muslim educationists, writers and reformers during British rule, considering his historically decisive role in shaping Muslims' destiny in the Subcontinent up to independence, namely the creation of an independent Muslim state, Pakistan.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was a witness to the happenings of 1857 and felt extremely distressed by the material and spiritual ruin that prevailed among his co-religionists shortly after the end of the hostilities; as confirmed by Shan Muhammed who stated that "he (Sir Sayyid Ahmad) felt agitated so much so that he passed numerous restless nights."[98]

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[97] Sir Sayyid (*also* Syed) Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), born of a well-off family, was a Muslim jurist, educator and author who entered the service of the East India Company as a clerk in the Judicial Department, and later rose to the position of sub-judge. S.M. Ikram, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.

[98] Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement : Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1978, pp. ix-x

As a matter of fact, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan regarded the Muslim debacle not only as a tragedy to his community, but also as a personal tragedy since he was personally embroiled in violence during the happenings of 1857, though unwillingly. According to Tariq Hasan, many members of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's extended family were put to death at the hands of British soldiery in their retaliatory action. Even his mother, who could not survive the tragedy, passed away shortly after.[99] This fact was corroborated by Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, who affirmed that Sir Sayyid Ahmad's:

> ... house was looted, his maternal uncle and a cousin were killed by the unruly soldiery, and his mother died of shock and sickness a few months later.[100]

Actually, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was very distressed by the fact that the British Colonial Government decided to point an accusing finger at the Muslim community as being the only "culprits" responsible for the planning of the uprising. This accusation was obvious in the writings of some contemporary British officials and intellectuals, which reflected the amount of hatred reserved to the Muslim community. Indeed, according to K. K. Aziz, many high-ranking British officials in India expressed straightforwardly their satisfaction by watching harsh and humiliating punishment being inflicted by the British troops on Indian Muslims.[101] For the sake of illustration, it is interesting to quote Sir Alfred Lyall, a distinguished British official in India and a historian, as gleefully saying in a letter to his father back in Britain:

> I am quite well now, and shall start for Delhi tomorrow morning at 4 a.m., in order to enjoy the pleasure of seeing the imperial city of the Mussalmans in ruin.[102]

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99 T. Hasan, *The Aligarh Movement and the Making of the Indian Muslim Mind: 1857-2002*, Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 2006, p. 11.
100 Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, *The Genesis of Muslim Fundamentalism in British India*, Eastern Book Corporation, New Delhi, 1987, 18.
101 K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Pakistan: A Study of British Attitude towards the East Pakistan Crisis of 1971*, University of Islamabad Press, Islamabad, 1974, p. 5.
102 Quoted in ibid., pp. 5-6.

Again in this respect, Lord Roberts, a British official in India known for his abhorrence of Indian Muslims, stated in a letter to his sister in Britain that the British should:

> ... work with their life's best blood ... and show these rascally Mussalmans that with God's help Englishmen will still be the masters of India.[103]

Another example depicting British disgust for the Muslim community can be reflected in the opinion openly expressed by Peter Hazlehurst, a British official in the Sub-continent:

> Our antagonism to the followers of Muhammad is far stronger than between us and the worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu[104]. They are unquestionably more dangerous to our rule ... If we could eradicate the traditions and destroy the temples (sic.) of Muhammad by one vigorous effort it would indeed be well for the Christian faith and for British rule.[105]

William Howard Russell, the India correspondent of The Times during the events of 1857, was one of those who were of first-hand experience. He bore witness to, as well as condemned, the atrocities that Indian Muslims were subjected to by the British soldiers.[106] He stated that he himself saw some instances where British troops resorted to spiritual and mental torture of Muslims, such as "sowing them in pig-skins, smearing them with pork fat before execution, then burning their bodies."[107]

Furthermore, some British administrators and intellectuals went even a step further in deprecating the Islamic religion and associating it with unjustified violence and extremism. In this respect, Francis Robinson stated that

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103 Quoted in ibid., p. 6. Lord Roberts (1832-1914), who spent his life in the service of the British army, distinguished himself during the suppression of the Great Revolt of 1857. 'Frederick Sleigh Roberts' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.
104 "Shiva" and "Vishnu" are two Hindu gods.
105 K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Pakistan : A Study of British Attitude towards the East Pakistan Crisis of 1971*, op. cit., p. 6.
106 S. R. Wasti, 'British Policy towards the Indian Muslims Immediately after 1857', op. cit., p. 13.
107 Ibid.

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'Fanatical' was the epithet most commonly applied to Muslims, and it was one which only gained force in the late nineteenth century.[108]

For instance, Professor Monier Williams, in obvious ignorance of Islam and oblivion of its teachings, commented on it by saying that it was "an illegitimate child of Judaism" and a "corruption of Judaism and Christianity."[109] Another British historian, Sir William Muir, who wrote a biography of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH)[110] stated that the sword of the Prophet Mohammed and the Holy Quran were "the most stubborn enemies of civilization, liberty and truth which the world has yet known."[111]

It was commonly thought among many officials and religious people in Britain that British imperialism in India was a convenient instrument for advancing Christian teachings in the region. According to K. K. Aziz, others were even of the opinion that the South Asian Subcontinent was a battleground for rivalry between Islam and Christianity, and so it was incumbent upon the British Colonial Government to work for the spread of the Christian faith among the native population.[112] Reflecting this prevalent evangelical tendency throughout Britain was the 2,049 petitions presented, shortly after the end of the hostilities in India, to Parliament in London which called for the admission of the Bible into all schools throughout India.[113]

Moreover, the enthusiasm of some evangelicals led them to the extent of interpreting the events of 1857 as a chastisement from God for not having done enough to free Indians from their "benightedness".[114] As a Scottish missionary in India, Alexander Duff, put it:

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108 F. Robinson, 'The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia', in *http://eprints.rhul.ac.uk/archive/00000336/*

109 K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Pakistan : A Study of British Attitude towards the East Pakistan Crisis of 1971*, op. cit., p. 8.

110 PBUH stands for "peace be upon Him". It is an expression of reverence used by Muslims whenever they mention the name of the Prophet Mohammed (or any other prophet).

111 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 119.

112 Ibid., p. 118.

113 Ibid.

114 T. R. Metcalf, op. cit., p99.

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> *God has, in a strange way, given us India in trust for the accomplishment of His grand evangelizing designs concerning it. In the discharge of this solemn trust, we, as a people and a nation, have been shamefully negligent. Hence it is ... that the Lord has admonished us in the way of sore judgements.*[115]

He, then, added that having weathered this ordeal safe and sound, thanks to the Lord's forgiveness, a heavy responsibility fell on the hands of the British Government in India to make a great deal of effort to realize the objective for which they had come to the Indian Subcontinent: "subversion of Satan's empire".[116]

In a word, it is self-evident that the Great Revolt of 1857 served as a godsend to all those who bore a grudge against Islam and the Muslim community in the South Asian Subcontinent. As a result of these events, Islam became, indeed, an easy target for those intellectuals who did not know much about it, and who were only driven by their blinkered attitude and hatred towards Indian Muslims, who they made pay for the uprising. Additionally, from Alexander Duff's words above, one can deduce the fact that the events of 1857 were also to serve as an incentive that would encourage the Christian missionaries to speed up their process of proselytizing at the expense of the local religions, notably Islam.

Those who were to take advantage of this Muslim debacle were the Hindus, who were erroneously thought to have sided with the British during the height of the hostilities. As confirmed in a statement made by a British writer in The Fortnightly Review of 1872, in which he attributed the British success in quelling the revolt to the anti-Muslim feeling among the non-Muslim Indians, particularly, Hindus.[117]

Hence, it was in such a blurry atmosphere, hostile to the Muslim community, that Sir Sayyid Ahmad made his appearance on the stage in British India. Initially, Sir Sayyid Ahmad refuted the fact that Indian Muslims were exclusively responsible for the Great Revolt, and emphatically af-

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115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Pakistan : A Study of British Attitude towards the East Pakistan Crisis of 1971*, op. cit., p. 7.

firmed the fact that the outbreak had essentially been Hindu-inspired.[118] Furthermore, in response to some allegations stating that the uprising was nothing short of a Muslim conspiracy where the insurgents received aid from Persia, he wrote: "As between Roman Catholics and Protestants, so between the Mussulman of Persia and of Hindustan, cordial co-operation is impossible."[119]

I. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's View of the Causes of the Great Revolt

The deteriorating state to which the Muslim community was rendered in the wake of the Great Revolt of 1857 prompted Sir Sayyid Ahmad to take the helm for the defence of his co-religionists. Thus, in an attempt to vindicate the Indian population in general, and the Muslim community in particular, in the eyes of the British Colonial Government, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wrote, in 1859, an Urdu pamphlet entitled Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind (Essay on the causes of the Indian Revolt).[120] As its name indicates, in this pamphlet, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's primary objective was to explain to the British authorities in London and Calcutta, in "true and manly words",[121] the root reasons that were responsible for the outbreak of the Revolt.

In Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opinion, the Revolt was the natural outcome of British colonial blinkered policies and high-handedness in dealing with matters related to the population of India. In other words, he implicated the British by asserting that the events of 1857 resulted from the disaffection of Muslim and Hindu soldiers with the Colonial Government's policies, as well as the failure of the latter to admit native Indians to the Legislative Council.[122] In truth, such was the case for the Muslim upper

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118 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 124.

119 Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Nachiketa Publications Limited, Bombay, 1972, p. 16.

120 According to S. Hay, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wrote this pamphlet in Urdu rather than in English due to the fact that he had never learnt enough English to write in it confidently. S. Hay (ed.), op. cit., p. 182.

121 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 18.

122 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xi.

classes, who did not stand the idea of seeing themselves excluded from the colonial administration, since, as Sir Sayyid Ahmad put it, only:

> ... a few years ago they filled the most honourable posts under their government, and the desire and hope for such is still in them.[123]

In Sir Sayyid Ahmad's view, had the British rulers made an effort to understand the Indian mind, there might have been no uprising.[124] As he put it in the following passage:

> The evils which resulted to India from the non-admission of natives into the Legislative Council of India were various. ... the greatest mischief lay in this, that the people misunderstood the views and the intentions of Government. They misapprehended every act and whatever law was passed was misconstrued by men who had no share in framing it and hence no means of judging its spirit. ... no one was at hand to correct the errors which they (the Colonial Government) had adopted. And why? Because there was not one of their own number among the members of the Legislative Council. Had it been so, these evils that have happened to us would have been averted ...[125]

Actually, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wondered why Indians were not included in the high administration and Legislative Council of the British Raj, knowing that their inclusion was a crucial key to the political stability of the Colonial Government in South Asia. Besides, Sir Sayyid Ahmad thought that had the British made the effort of admitting natives to high positions in the Government, they would have won the affection and loyalty of the Indian masses.[126]

Furthermore, according to H. Malik, the British Government applied a "subject political culture" in the Indian Subcontinent.[127] In other words, Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba talked of a "subject culture" whereby the individual is "a passive beneficiary or victim of routine govern-

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123 Quoted in H. Malik, op. cit., p. 120.
124 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 19.
125 Sir Sayyid Ahmah Khan, 'Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind', in *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Shun Mohammad (ed.), op. cit., p. 19.
126 Ibid., p. 120-121.
127 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 118.

mental actions."[128] This passivity leads to a situation whereby the individual, or subject, does not make any effort to influence the decision-making within their country, but only wishes that they be treated properly and fairly; contrarily to the citizen, who actively gets involved in the formation of political decisions of their respective government.[129]

H. Malik assumed that such was the view of Sir Sayyid Ahmad with regard to the kind of political culture imposed by the British administration in the South Asian Subcontinent. Indeed, since taking over the reins of power in the region, the East India Company officials had wanted the native population to be passively "docile" and "obedient" to the laws imposed by the Colonial Government, even if these laws were conflicting with their interests.[130]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad declared the fact that the native inhabitants of India were not the only ones to be affected by the "subject political culture"; in reality, the latter had been very detrimental to the political stability of the British Government there. In other words, the "subject political culture" served as an obstacle that kept the British Government isolated from the subjects.[131] This isolationism on the part of the Colonial Government vis-à-vis its Indian subjects was, as will be seen further down in this chapter, to contribute to the events of 1857, as the British, ignorant of the local public opinion, were completely taken aback and without advance notice. Commenting on the Colonial Government's lack of knowledge about the public opinion of its subjects, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stated that the "Government (British) could never know the inadvisability of the laws and regulations which it passed."[132]

With this view in mind, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan wanted the British Government in India to switch to the "mixed-participant culture".[133] Using Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba's phraseology, "in a 'mixed-participant culture', a substantial part of the population has acquired spe-

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128 Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture- Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963, p. 118.
129 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 118.
130 Ibid., p. 120.
131 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 118.
132 Quoted in ibid., p. 119.
133 Ibid., p. 118.

cialized input orientations and an active set of self-orientations ..."[134] To put it in plain words, the "mixed-participant culture" is a situation where a significant part of the population, notably intellectuals and elites, take part in the process of decision-making in their country.

Briefly speaking, Sir Sayyid Ahmad saw the exclusion of natives from the colonial administration as a contributory factor that led to the uprising of 1857. Consequently, he pleaded with the Government, "not in the name of democracy, but in terms of Christianity's ethos, and the historical insights derived from the eight centuries of Muslim rule in India", to change its policy.[135]

It should be noted that by setting out such drawbacks and weaknesses in the Government of India, Sir Sayyid Ahmad created an unfriendly atmosphere among some high circles in the British Government in London. According to S. Muhammad, some British politicians, such as Sale Beadon, the then foreign secretary, went so far as to urge the Government to imprison such a "revolutionary writer".[136] However, the British Parliament, which appreciated Sir Sayyid Ahmad's memorandum, vehemently opposed such a measure against him. In addition, the M.P.s advised the Government to take such "precious" recommendations into consideration.[137]

Indeed, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's recommendations received due attention from the India Office in London. In Hafeez Malik's view, this can be reflected in the passage of the Indian Council Act of 1861,[138] which made possible for the first time in the history of British India the inclusion of three Indians in the Legislative Council in Calcutta.[139] Lending support to

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134 Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, op. cit., p. 24.
135 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 120.
136 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xi.
137 Ibid.
138 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 123. About the Indian Council Act, Syed Razi Wasti stated that it "marked an important step towards representative institutions and legislative devolution ... the people got an opportunity to put their grievances before the Government." S. R. Wasti, 'Constitutional Development from 1858 to 1906', in *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in India*, Renaissance Publishing House, Delhi, 1993, p. 47.
139 These Indians were: Raja Narendra, Raja Devi Narain and Raja Dinkar Rao. Ibid. In this respect, H. Malik affirmed that the then first Secretary of State

Hafeez Malik's statement, Tariq Hasan asserted that the storm that was raised by Sir Sayyid Ahmad's analysis of the events of 1857 led to the British Government's adoption of most of the major reforms suggested by him.[140] Tariq Hasan commented:

> *Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind became a landmark in the historic process leading to the liberalisation of British rule in India, which culminated in the demand of self-rule by Indians.*[141]

However, Hafeez Malik's and Tariq Hasan's statements were firmly contested by Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, who declared that the Indian Council Act of 1861 was by no means the result of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind. To back up his statement, M. Y. Abbasi claimed that this Act was already implicit in Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858,[142] in which it was unequivocally declared that the native population of India should have the right to take part in the management of its country.[143] As the Queen stated:

> *... in so far as may be, Our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and partially admitted to office in our service, the duties of which may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge.*[144]

Apart from that, in Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind, Sir Sayyid Ahmad went thoroughly in analyzing elaborately the *bona fide* circumstances that led to the events of 1857. In his opinion, one of the most far-reaching reasons was people's misapprehension of the East India Company Government's intentions.[145] Indeed, by general consensus, many historians and contemporaries of British India agree on the fact that the inhabitants of the Indi-

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for India, the Duke of Argyll, showed Sir Sayyid in 1969, during the latter's stay in London, the original copy of *Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind* "heavily marked and annotated", "tacitly acknowledging his influence on the India Office's thinking." Ibid.

140 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 16.
141 Ibid.
142 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 70.
143 K. Feiling, *A History of England: From the coming of the English to 1918*, Book Club Associates, London, 1972, p. 929.
144 'Her Majesty's Proclamation (1858) India Office Records, Africa, Pacific and Asia Collections, British Library, London: L/P&S/6/463 file 36, folios 215-216.
145 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 111.

an Subcontinent, Muslims as well as Hindus alike, interpreted the English Company's actions and measures as part of a campaign to forcibly convert them to the Christian faith and impose foreign customs on them. To back up this statement, it is useful to quote Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who pointed out that:

> Both amongst Hindus and Muslims, the impression gained ground that the British were following a deliberate policy aimed at the systematic destruction of Sanskrit and Arabic, with the objective of destroying the roots of the religious beliefs of the native populace.[146]

Indeed, the East India Company's actions since they took up the reins of power in India aroused the susceptibilities of many Indians. This was mainly so since the Christian missionaries were allowed into the South Asian Subcontinent. In fact, the Evangelical movement in Britain, which became so powerful at the beginning of the nineteenth century, succeeded in persuading the British Government to force the Company to allow them into the Subcontinent.[147] The Charter Act of 1913, which called for the establishment of the Church of England in India, gave the evangelicals unrestricted access to the country.[148]

Hence, once they set foot in India, the Christian missionaries went openly proselytizing among the local population. In this respect, C. Hibbert bears witness to the fact that copies of the New Testament were distributed to learners of Hindi script upon completion of their course in missionary schools.[149] In some areas, the Christian gospel was preached

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146 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 18.
147 A. Wild, *The East India Company: Trade and Conquest from 1600,* Lyons Press, New York, 2000, p. 162.
148 A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p. 35. Before the Charter Act of 1813, the Christian missionaries were not allowed to exercise evangelism freely because of the Company's neutral policy. In this respect, Sanjay Seth declared that "until the 1813 missionaries could only operate on Company-controlled territory with Company permissions, and subject to many constraints." However, after 1813, the situation changed. Sanjay Seth, 'Which Good Book? Missionary Education and Conversion in Colonial India', in *Semeia* n° 88, 2001, p. 115.
149 C. Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857*, Allen Lane, London, 1978, p. 52. In this respect, H. Malik wrote: "In the missionary schools, the teaching of theology became mandatory; students were quizzed on "who is your Redeemer." H. Malik, op. cit., p. 111.

to prisoners in local jails.[150] Moreover, the missionaries' enthusiasm for Christianizing Indians led them so far as to put pressure on the Company to withdraw its patronage of certain Hindu temples and festivals.[151] Besides, in an attempt to enhance their achievements, the missionaries undertook to educate the younger Indian generation. According to B. Prasad, this "orientation of young minds was inevitably to lead to subversion of the indigenous faiths."[152] In this respect, Sir Sayyid Ahmad remarked:

> Most alarming was the way missionary schools had mushroomed all over India. It was a common practice in such schools to impose Christian teachings on children. For parents of such children this was the cruel dilemma. On the one hand they were aware that if they do not provide their children the advantages of western education, they would face bleak prospects for earning their bread and butter. On the other hand, if their children continued to get educated in these missionary schools, there was a very real danger that they would be brainwashed into abandoning the religious beliefs of their forefathers.[153]

In addition to proselytising, the missionaries set out to deplore Indian traditional practices and religious rituals and describe them as too cruel and primitive. Charles Grant, a contemporary missionary in India, stated that the Hindus exhibited "human nature in a very degraded, humiliating state," and that their religion was marked by "idolatry with its rabble of impure deities, its monsters of wood and stone, its false principles and corrupt practices, delusive hopes and fears, its ridiculous ceremonies and degrading superstitions, its lying legends and fraudulent impositions."[154] As a result, they put pressure on the administration of the East India Company to put an end to traditional practices of the local population in the Subcontinent.

It should be noted that these degrading remarks about the local reli-

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150 C. Hibbert, op. cit., p. 52.
151 P. Spear, *A History of India: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 130.
152 B. Prasad, op. cit., p. 517.
153 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 18.
154 Ibid., p. 431.

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gions caused a furore among the indigenous inhabitants of India. Commenting on this, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stated that:

> It ... became a practice of Christian priests to address sermons at various public gatherings, such as public exhibitions and fairs. But what was becoming increasingly difficult for Indians to digest was the fact that very frequently during their discourses the missionaries would embark upon frontal attacks and uncalled for criticism of other religions. This state of affairs ... left both Hindus and Muslims seething with anger.[155]

In the meantime, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan confirmed the fact that even in the barracks, Muslim and Hindu soldiers were being exhorted by their British superiors to embrace Christianity.[156] He maintained, however, that the 1837 famine was probably the most obvious circumstance that strengthened the conviction among the Indian population that the British were there to Christianize them. During this famine, Christian missionaries in India took the initiative to be in charge of the orphans in the drought-stricken areas. Yet, contrary to the Indians' expectations, these orphans were brought up into the Christian faith.[157] In this respect, it is worthwhile to quote in length Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's statement from his pamphlet:

> In the year 1837, the year of the great drought, the step which was taken of rearing orphans in the principles of the Christian faith, was looked upon throughout the North-West Provinces as an example of the schemes of Government. It was supposed that when Government had similarly brought all Hindustanees to a pitch of ignorance and poverty, it would convert them to its own creed. The Hindustanees used, as I have said, to feel an increasing dismay at the annexation of each successive country by the Honourable East India Company. But I assert without fear of contradiction that this feeling arose solely from the belief in their minds, that as the power of Government increased, and there no longer remained foreign enemies to fight against, or internal troubles to quell, it would turn its at-

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155 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 18.
156 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 111.
157 Ibid, p. 111.

tention inwards, and carry out a more systematic interference with their creed and religious observances.[158]

Another significant wrong action taken by the East India Company was the introduction of secularism, hitherto an unknown tendency in South Asia. According to M. A. Karandikar, between 1772 and 1850, that is, from the time the English Company imposed its rule until the eve of the Great Revolt, Indian masses were given "doses of secularism."[159] In fact, Shariʻa law (i.e. Islamic law) was gradually phased out while secular penal law was phased in. For instance, under Islamic law, an apostate, namely a person who has rejected their religious beliefs, would always be punished with the death penalty, or alternatively, they would forfeit their right to inheritance.[160] Nonetheless, this was discontinued as a result of a Bengal regulation in 1832. This regulation removed this legal disability that made the culprits lose their proprietary rights after conversion to another religion, obviously Christianity.[161]

It is important to refer to the fact that anti-apostasy practice existed as well among the Hindu community. Hindus who renounced their faith were to suffer the loss of inheritance rights, in addition to being excommunicated.[162] However, in 1850, the administration of the East India Company passed the Caste Disabilities Removal Act which declared that:

> *... any law or usage which inflicts on any person forfeiture of rights, or property, or may be held in any way to impair or affect any right of inheritance, by reason of his or her renouncing or having been excluded from the communion of any religion, or being deprived of caste, shall cease to be enforced in law...*[163]

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158 Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind', in *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Shun Muhammad (ed.), op. cit., p. 21. In this respect, H. Malik wrote: "When reduced to abject poverty, Indians believed that they would be given the final choice of Christianity or hunger." H. Malik, op. cit., p. 112.
159 M. A. Karandikar, *Islam in India's Transition to Modernity*, Eastern Publishers, Karachi, 1968, p. 137.
160 Ibid., p. 138.
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 Quoted in ibid.

It is crystal clear to any layman that by the above regulations, the East India Company officials aimed at providing protection to the inhabitants of India who wished to convert to the Christian faith. Furthermore, in the eyes of many Indians, mainly the most orthodox, these actions by the East India Company were part of a scheme to Christianize the population of South Asia. In the Muslim case, this British interference to put an end to these legal disabilities against apostasy were construed as a flagrant attempt at depriving the Muslim community of a vital weapon to keep its members in the right path. In this respect, M. A. Karandikar stated:

> *The abolition of disabilities concerning apostates meant the loss of an important weapon to keep the Muslim population intact. During the whole of the medieval period the punishment for apostasy had prevented any Muslim from changing his faith.*[164]

Secularism could also be reflected in the type of education that the East India Company imposed in its subsidized schools. In the case of Muslim schools, the curricula were reviewed, and to the Muslims' dismay, religious subjects, mainly Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and Hadith (the Prophet's traditions), were gradually done away with; meanwhile, other sciences and secular subjects were introduced.[165] This move aroused the suspicions and fears of the Muslim community.

In Sir Sayyid Ahmad's view, notwithstanding the fact that the East India Company officials were at times driven by humanistic ideals to issue laws and regulations to reform the Indian society, they were always regarded by Muslim and Hindu Indians with scepticism. As a matter of fact, it is worthwhile to recall the fact that the process of socio-cultural reform in the Indian Sub-continent was initiated by Lord Bentinck,[166] whom P. Spear described as a "convinced westerner and humanist, with little sympathy for Indian culture and institutions."[167] According to A. Read and D. Fisher, shortly before setting sail to India, Lord Bentinck, the liberal humanist with a strong evangelical tendency, was told by Lord El-

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164 Ibid., p. 139.
165 H. Malik, op. cit., pp. 111-112.
166 Lord William Bentinck was Governor-General of India between 1828 and 1835.
167 P. Spear, *A History of India: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 124.

lenborough, then president of the Board of Control of the East India Company in London: "We have a great moral duty to perform in India."[168]

Thus, upon entering the Indian scene, Lord Bentinck began carrying out his 'moral duty' by outlawing sati. The latter, meaning devotion, was a practice in which a Hindu widow showed her devotion to her dead husband by voluntarily burning herself on his funeral pyre. However, many widows sacrificed themselves unwillingly.[169] In fact, most Hindu widows committed sati out of desperation and fear of their families. This was due to the fact that in accordance with the Hindu tradition, widows were not allowed to remarry, and so became a burden on their families.[170] Beside that, as B. Prasad stated in this respect, some greedy relatives usually wanted to get rid of the widow by "appealing at a most distressing hour to her devotion to and love for her husband," in order to appropriate her inheritance.[171]

Lord Bentinck, who regarded sati as a serious crime against humanity, passed Regulation XVII in December 1829, whereby he declared the practice of sati, anywhere in the Indian Subcontinent, illegal and punishable by criminal courts.[172] Nevertheless, following the outlawing of this practice, the state of young widows was that of misery – to say the least – since they were not allowed to remarry. Furthermore, some of them resorted to prostitution and debauchery.[173] Being faced with such an unwelcome outcome, the Government of India was compelled in 1856 to pass the Widow's Remarriage Act, which made remarriage of Hindu widows legal. In Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opinion, this measure, though regarded by many Indian reformers as a positive action, aroused much disaffection among Hindus, mainly the most orthodox elements, who regarded it as a breach of their faith and customs.[174]

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168 A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p.35.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 B. Prasad, op. cit., p. 434.
172 Ibid., p. 439. According to P. Spear, between 500 and 850 *satis* took place annually in Bengal alone. P. Spear, *A History of India: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 125.
173 B. Prasad, op. cit., pp. 439-440.
174 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 112.

Next, Lord Bentinck turned his attention to thugi. The latter was practised by 'thugs', who were worshippers of 'Kali', the Hindu goddess of destruction. They carried out their ritual killings by befriending travellers and then strangling them with a piece of sacred scarf. What happened next was stripping them of their belongings.[175] A. Read and D. Fisher described the thugi practice as follows:

> The thugs would befriend groups of travellers, suggesting they join forces for safety on the road. For some days they would journey and camp together, until one night when sitting round the fire, joking and talking happily, the thug leader would clap his hands and shout 'Bring the tobacco!' At this signal, the thugs would leap into action, strangling their victims with special handkerchiefs, with a coin dedicated to the goddess bound into one corner to give extra grip for the left hand. It would all be over in minutes. The bodies would be stripped and bundled into graves ... and the thugs would be on their way, taking their victims' possessions as their earthly reward from Kali.[176]

Thugi had existed in India for centuries, but during the first half of the nineteenth century, namely when the Indian economy collapsed due to the Company exploitative tendencies, this practice increased significantly. As a matter of fact, A. Read and D. Fisher stated that there were about 10,000 thugs in 40 or 50 great gangs, claiming between 20,000 and 30,000 victims a year.[177] Yet, the same authors cast doubt on the exactitude of these figures and claim that no one can be sure due to the fact that this practice was surrounded by total secrecy. Moreover, there were no survivors to tell the tale.[178]

The British first learned about such a practice only when their sepoys, namely native regiments, going home on leave or returning to the barracks, began disappearing en route.[179] Actually, as B. Prasad put it, the disappearance of hundreds of natives could hardly be noted, or it created

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175 S. David, op. cit., p. 7.
176 A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p. 36.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.

no astonishment or alarm, since a journey in the Indian Subcontinent was a matter of months.[180]

Thus, the East India Company officials were determined to banish such a cruel custom. Their reaction, actually, was prompted more by self-defence than by humanity due to the fact that thugs were wreaking havoc on the Company's inland trade. In other words, thugi made travel within the South Asian Subcontinent very dangerous and insecure. In this respect, B. Prasad wrote that "only when in Bengal and elsewhere the interests of British commerce called for safer travel did the government wake up to the necessity of eradicating the evil."[181]

Consequently, as part of his campaign to reform the Indian society, Lord Bentinck set up the Thugi and Dakaiti[182] Department in 1829 under Captain William Sleeman's direction. Captain Sleeman, aided by 12 assistants, recruited hundreds of informers whose intelligence enabled his police to intercept parties of thugs and excavate their burial grounds.[183] According to A. Read and D. Fisher, in a six-year period, Sleeman's police got 3,000 thugs "convicted in the courts and sentenced either to hanging or transportation to a penal colony for life."[184] In 1843 and 1851, legislation was adopted to deprive the culprits of many formalities of law in the course of their prosecution.[185] By 1852, groups of thugs had been disbanded and their families settled under police vigilance.[186]

Yet, the cruellest social practice which had been dealt with even before the advent of Lord Bentinck was that of 'infanticide'. The latter meant the murder of the child by his parents and prevailed in some communities in India. The act was performed secretly by strangulating or starving the child to death, or in some cases, applying poison to the nipples of the suckling mother.[187] This sacrifice had two facets. One was

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180 B. Prasad, op. cit., p. 456.
181 Ibid.
182 'Dakaiti' means an armed robbery by gangs.
183 S. David, op. cit., p. 7.
184 A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., pp. 36-37. The same authors added that one of these thugs admitted having personally killed 719 people, and only regretted that he had not killed more. Ibid., p. 37.
185 B. Prasad, op. cit., p. 457.
186 Ibid., p. 457.
187 P. N. Chopra (Ed.), *The Gazetteer of India: History and Culture, Volume II*, Ministry

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the offer of a child in sacrifice to placate the river Ganga, which is a Hindu deity, and it was common in the Bengal areas that were close to this sacred river.[188] It was mainly carried out to fulfil a vow by a childless woman that in case she was blessed by the sacred river Ganga with children she would sacrifice her first born child to it.[189] Logically the child, whether male or female, was allowed to grow till such time that other children were born to the woman. Describing this practice, a contemporary said:

> *If after the vow they (women) have children, the eldest is nourished till a proper age, which may be three, four or nine years according to the circumstances, when on a particular day, appointed for bathing in a particular part of the river, they take the child with them and offer it to the Goddess. The child is encouraged to go further and further into the water till it is carried away by the stream, or is pushed off by inhuman parents.[190]*

The other type of infanticide, known as 'female infanticide', was the killing of a female infant soon after its birth. According to B. Prasad, this practice, which was mainly practised by high castes in central, northern and western India, had no religious observance and was prompted by "pride, poverty and avarice."[191] In other words, the presence of an unmarried girl in the family was regarded as a disgrace to it. Moreover, even if marriage were arranged, it would lead to financial burden as it was customary for the Indian bride to offer the dowry to the groom. Also others, mainly low-caste[192] Hindus, resorted to female infanticide be-

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of Education and Social Welfare, New Delhi, 1973, p. 639.
188　B. Prasad, op. cit., p. 441.
189　Ibid.
190　Ibid.
191　Ibid.
192　The social stratification in the South Asian Sub-continent, particularly among the Hindu community, is referred to as the "the caste system". According to the Shastra, a sacred scripture of Hinduism, the Hindu society is divided into four castes, or social classes: Brahmans (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (farmers and tradesmen) and Shudras (serfs and menials). People outside these groups were known as 'untouchables' and were regarded as the dregs of society. C. A. Galbraith and R. Mehta, *India: Now and through Time,* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1980, p. 51.

cause of the difficulty of finding a suitable husband caused by the custom of hypergamy, namely marrying a person of a superior caste.[193]

The British were disgusted by such a practice even before the Indian Subcontinent was opened to the Christian missionaries. It was during Lord Wellesley's general-governorship (1789-1805) that the English Company took legal measures to put an end to it by passing Regulation XXI of 1795 and Regulation III of 1804 which declared such infanticides as murders.[194]

Hence, the ending of these cruel traditional practices was in itself a progressive step aiming at freeing Indians of their harmful superstitions. Yet, it aroused much discontent among the local population, notably the orthodox Hindus and Muslims, who interpreted this interference in their religious and socio-cultural life as part of a scheme devised by the Company officials to violate their established customs and to forcibly convert them to Christianity.

This led Indians to impugn all innovations brought by the British to the Indian Sub-continent. Probably the best example illustrating such a situation was the Indian reaction to the introduction of modern means of communication, like the telegraph, which were interpreted by the native inhabitants as an attempt by 'white wizards' to work some kind of magic upon them. In this respect, Akshayakumar R. Desai stated that "even progressive measures such as the construction of railways and the establishment of the telegraph system were interpreted as acts of black magic by which the white wizards schemed to tie India in iron chains."[195]

In another sphere, Sir Sayyid Ahmad talked of another cause in Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind, which is the one related to the economic disaffection among the Indian population. Indeed, many historians agree on the fact that the greatest curse of British rule in the Indian Sub-continent was the reckless economic exploitation of the country by the East India Company and its servants. In fact, like the British, the Mughal emperors had also come to India from outside, and their religion, Islam, was different from that of the native population; but once they settled there, they adopted

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193 P. N. Chopra (Ed.), op. cit., p. 639.
194 B. Prasad, op. cit., p. 443.
195 A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 286.

the country as their own. They had never tried to plunder it in order to enrich another one. The case for the British was different. The latter had come to the Subcontinent only for its economic exploitation. In order to meet their objective, the British, upon holding the reins of power in the region, went ahead with a set of reforms that destabilized the local economic tissue. Probably the best example was the Permanent Land Settlement Act, which was introduced by Lord Cornwallis, Governor General of India from 1786 to 1793.[196]

This chapter is mainly concerned with the causes dealt with by Sir Sayyid Ahmad in his pamphlet mentioned above. For instance, he asserted that many elements of landed gentry had long been unhappy with the East India Company as a result of the passage of the Act VI of 1819. This Act authorized the Company's officials to take away la-kharaj lands from their owners. In Islam, la-kharaj is an appellation used to denote a rent-free land, that is, a land which is exempt from taxes due to the government. The word kharaj literally means a tax or tribute on land.[197]

In the Indian context, the term la-kharaj was used to refer to those lands, originally offered by the Mughal emperors, in which the rent was waived to show the state's ma'fiy (pardon) or inam (reward or benediction).[198] According to H. Malik, la-kharaj lands were of various kinds, and the two most important ones were: first, the milk lands, which were granted, on a permanent basis, in favour of intellectuals and religious people, or for the maintenance of schools, mosques, temples and shrines. Most of the milk lands were hereditary.[199]

With regard to the second type, the jagir lands, they were granted, on a temporary basis, to some Mughal officers for military or political services rendered to the State. Most of the jagir lands located close to the

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196 The Permanent Land Settlement Act of 1793 was a new land revenue system imposed by the administration of the East India Company to supersede the traditional one. This Act was to have serious repercussions on the Indian landed gentry. A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p. 25. (See the previous chapter where this Act is elaborately dealt with.)

197 This was originally applied to a land tribute from non-Muslim tribes located within the Islamic world. T. P. Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, W.H. Allen & Co., London, 1895, http://www.injil.de/Main/Books/Hughes/index.htm

198 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 113.

199 Ibid.

troublesome frontiers were granted to the strongest and most competent military chiefs. Hence, the aim was twofold: on the one hand, cultivating the land; on the other hand, maintaining the military forces in the area to ensure safety.[200]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad affirmed that following the passage of the Act VI of 1819, many la-kharaj lands were confiscated, and on the basis of weak pretexts; as confirmed by H. Malik who summarized Sir Sayyid Ahmad's statement by saying that on " 'the flimsiest pretexts' many lands, which had been held rent-free for centuries, were confiscated by the Company."[201]

Actually, since setting up their hegemony over the South Asian Sub-continent, the East India Company officials had cast doubt on the grants of la-kharaj lands. They regarded them as a subterfuge used by their Muslim predecessors in order to meet the increasing demands on the imperial treasuries in the declining years of the Mughal Empire.[202] According to H. Malik, the Company officials accused some "impecunious" Mughal emperors of having abused their power when they used such land grants in order to meet some claims, made by some "fraudulent" subordinate officers, on empty coffers.[203]

In Sir Sayyid Ahmad's view, the confiscation of la-kharaj lands alienated the local potentates a great deal. He further pointed out that besides religious interference, the Act VI of 1819 was on the top of the list of Indian grievances against the administration of the East India Company,[204] as confirmed in his statement:

The law pertaining to confiscation of property enacted in the year 1819, had led to a deep sense of insecurity amongst the landed gentry. ... (the) rights enjoyed by the Hindu and Muslim land owning classes from the days of the Mughals were withdrawn under the Company rule and this created a fertile ground for whipping up anti-British sentiment amongst this class.[205]

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200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.
204 Ibid, p. 114.
205 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 20.

Moreover, Sir Sayyid Ahmad also pointed the finger of blame to the Government of the East India Company for the decline of the Indian local industries. Indeed, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of modern industries, Britain sought very cheap raw materials as well as more overseas markets in order to get rid of its surplus mass-produced merchandize. Naturally, the easiest way for London to satisfy her needs was to turn to her colonies. This made the English Company pursue economic policies in India which would, on the one hand, encourage the exportation of raw materials, mainly cotton, to Britain as needed by the British textile industry,[206] and on the other hand, thwart Indian local industries in order to avoid competition within and outside India.

As a matter of fact, many historians bear witness to the fact that the traditional Indian industries were higher than any European industry before the Industrial Revolution.[207] Furthermore, during the eighteenth century, India maintained its position as the largest producer of industrial goods.[208] Illustrating this industrial superiority, Pyrard, an eighteenth-century Portuguese traveller to the South Asian Subcontinent, impressively stated that he "could never make an end of telling such a variety of manufactures as well in gold, silver, iron, steel, copper and other metals, as in precious stones, choice woods, and other valued and rare materials."[209] Then, he went on praising the genius of the Indians:

> For they are all cunning folk and owe nothing to the people of the West, themselves endowed with a keener intelligence than is usual with us and hands as subtle as ours ... And what is to be observed of all their manufactures is this, that they are both of good workmanship and cheap ...[210]

It is noteworthy to refer to the fact that these Indian-made goods were manufactured by skilled craftsmen in their homes, who pursued the same occupation for generations.

In the meantime, British businessmen, who became politically powerful during the first half of the nineteenth century, feared for their busi-

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206 B. Prasad, op. cit., pp. 504-505.
207 Ibid., p .476.
208 Ibid.
209 Quoted in ibid., p. 472.
210 Quoted in ibid., pp. 472-473.

nesses from Indian competition, as the latter made goods of higher quality. As a result, they lobbied Parliament to force the East India Company to take pre-emptive measures against Indian industries.[211]

Thus, as part of its efforts to thwart Indian industries in favour of British goods, the East India Company went on importing large-scale machine-made goods into India at a cheaper price in order to undersell the local ones.[212] Moreover, the situation was aggravated by the fact that Indian handicrafts had to push up prices due to inland duties that were imposed on Indian goods by the Company customs within India itself.[213]

Meanwhile, heavy duties were levied on Indian goods imported into Britain. This led to a sharp decline in Indian cotton exports. According to B. Prasad, Indian imports in London fell from 6,000,000 rupees in 1792 to 3,000,000 rupees in 1823.[214] It would be worthwhile quoting Akshayakumar R. Desai at length regarding this unfair trade:

> *Had no such prohibitory duties and decrees existed, the mills of Pailsey and Manchester would have been stopped at their outset, and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. Had India been independent, she would have retaliated... This act of self-defence was not permitted her; she was at the mercy of the stranger. British goods were forced upon her without paying any duty, and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could have contended on equal terms.[215]*

In addition to that, the introduction of the railways helped British manufactured goods penetrate the remotest areas of the Indian Subcontinent, hence establishing dominance over the Indian market.[216] This made India become a vital market for Britain's staple export, namely cotton goods.[217] In other words, India was flooded with mass-produced goods from Britain

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211 A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 77.
212 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 116.
213 A. R. Desai, op. cit., pp. 78-79.
214 B. Prasad, op. cit., p. 509.
215 A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 76.
216 Ibid, p. 80.
217 E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Economic History of Britain : Volume III : Industry and Empire : from 1750 to the Present*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1990, p. 149.

and was forced to produce and export raw materials needed by British machines.[218]

As a result, deprived of home and foreign markets because of the unfair competition from the British businessmen, that was condoned by London, the Indian handicraft industries collapsed by the mid-nineteenth century. In this respect, Akshayakumar R. Desai commented that:

> Such was the tragic fate of the highly organized handicraft industries of India which had existed and thrived for centuries, which had spread the fame of India throughout the world, which had evoked the admiration and jealousy of other peoples from ancient times, from the Egyptians, the Persians, the Chinese, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, and the Europeans which had made India known as 'Gorgeous Ind' for epochs.[219]

In a word, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the opinion that the British had pursued exploitative policies which aimed at profit-making at the expense of the native population. The fact that India was flooded with all kinds of cheap, mass-produced British goods culminated in gradually putting an end to traditional Indian industries. This threw many Indian craftsmen and artisans into a state of unemployment and hopelessness. Eventually, this category of the Indian society harboured a grudge against the East India Company and did not hesitate over the idea of rising up against it in 1857. In this regard, H. Malik stated that frustration and unemployment led thousands of Indians, particularly Muslims, to join the rebels "just as in a famine hungry men rush upon food."[220]

Another cause that Sir Sayyid Ahmad dealt with in his pamphlet was the lack of communication between the governors and the governed. In his opinion, the East India Company officials settled in India only on a temporary basis and lived separately from the native population.[221] Indeed, unlike the former Muslim rulers, the British were not keen on the idea of getting intermingled within the social tissue of the Indian Sub-

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218 B. Chandra et al, op. cit., p. 21.

219 A. R.Desai, op. cit., p. 80.

220 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 116. According to H. Malik, these rebels were paid four or six pennies on a daily basis, while many of them received three pounds of grain daily instead of cash. Ibid.

221 Ibid., p. 115.

continent. In reality, notwithstanding the fact of being alien to the natives in terms of religion and culture, the Muslim rulers did not bother about living alongside the Hindu population, and even sharing some aspects of their culture. According to H. Malik, the Delhi area was the best place to reflect Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis, where Mughal emperors and princes adopted in a liberal manner secular Hindu mores and folkways.[222] Even women were said to have sung the same songs sung by Hindu women on occasions of birth, circumcision, engagement, wedding, and death.[223]

Again in this respect, H. Malik bears witness to the fact that intermarriage between the princes of the Red Fort[224] and Hindu nobility were not uncommon. Here, it is noteworthy to mention the fact that it was the Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605) who had set a precedent in this direction by marrying a Hindu woman, the daughter of a local raja.[225] In a word, the relationship between the Muslim rulers and their subjects in pre-British India was, by and large, harmonious. However, the British gave the native inhabitants a wide berth that made it impossible to establish any sort of social intercourse between the former and the latter.

Nevertheless, some historians believe that the situation in the eighteenth century, namely when the East India Company officials were fresh in the Subcontinent, was different. For instance, J. H. Plumb thinks that

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222 Ibid., p. 25.

223 Ibid. According to Syed M. Taha and Nasreen Afzal, Muslims in South Asia allowed themselves, to a certain extent, to be influenced by Hindu culture due to the fact that they realized that they were a microscopic minority compared to the Hindus, and so, in order to make their rule acceptable, they felt the obligation to make some sort of concessions in order to placate the majority. As an illustration, the authors mentioned that some previous Mughal emperors, such as Babur and Akbar, went to the extent of forbidding cow slaughter in order to avoid offending the Hindus. Syed M. Taha and Nasreen Afzal, 'Separation or Separate Nations: Two-NationTheory Reconsidered', in *Historicus: Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Ansar Zahid Khan (ed.), Bait al-Hikmah at Madinat al-Hikmah, Karachi, Jan.-June 2002, Vol. L, n° 1 & 2, p. 99.

224 The "Red Fort" is an appellation used to refer to the Mughal court. It is usually called "Lal Qila" in Hindu and Urdu, and was the official residence of the Mughal emperors. It was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the mid-seventeenth century and was called the "Red Fort" due to its red sandstone walls. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.

225 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 25.

in the eighteenth century, there were many instances of mutual respect and warm intercourse between the British officials and the native population. As he pointed out in the following statement:

> ... they (the British) adopted Indian habits in food and dress, and frequently married Indian women, ... They showed deep respect for Indian authority, and an intelligent curiosity about the customs and habits so alien to their own.[226]

Lending support to this statement, J. Morris referred, in his Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire, to the existence of easy and respectful social intercourse between the "white man" and the "brown" in the early days of the East India Company.[227]

But this positive attitude would not outlive the early nineteenth century. In fact, many contemporary accounts attest to the fact that a metamorphosis occurred in the relationship between the East India Company officials and the natives whereby the former's attitude, characterized by aloofness, triggered coldness and distance between the two sides.

This British aloofness could be reflected, in the main, in the military stations where it grew more flagrant. Some historians and contemporaries attributed this situation to the invention of the steamship.[228] Actually the latter, which could go to and from India much faster than before, relieved the British officers from their boredom of being in a far country by making it possible for them to go home on leave during their tour of duty in India without being away for too long. It also made it possible for the officers' families to come and stay with them on visits or live in India permanently.[229] Thus, with the invention of the steamship, there was no need to socialize with the natives for the purpose of evading boredom.

Again in this regard, some historians bear witness to the fact that before the invention of the steamship, the officers, by default, used to spend most of their time with the sepoys, i.e. native regiments, or their mistresses. J. Morris stated that "in those days, most of Englishmen in In-

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226 J. H. Plumb, op. cit., p. 171.
227 J. Morris, *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1979, p. 134.
228 Ibid., p. 135.
229 Ibid.

dia took mistresses, and thus got close to the life and feelings of the Indian people in a way that their successors seldom could."[230] Now, with the arrival of the British wives made possible by the recent invention, the Company officers and the natives grew apart, and consequently, there was less trust and more tension between them. In fact, British women would not allow such Anglo-Indian socialisation to take place. After all, women represented home, and so there was no reason for the European officers to socialize with Indians, because their wives and relatives were there and there was no room for boredom as before.[231] Backing up this statement, S. David stated that "women were sent out as portable little packets of morality, to comfort their men, keep the blood-line clean, and remind them of their mothers."[232]

With Europeans becoming increasingly more preoccupied with their own society within a far land, contact between the native regiments and their officials was reduced to a minimum. In this regard, Subedar Sita Ram Pande, an Indian soldier in the Company's service prior to 1857, recalled:

> In those days the sahibs (Europeans) used to give nautches[233] to the regiment, and they attended all men's games. They also took us with them when they went out hunting ... Nowadays they seldom attend nautches because their padre sahibs (wives) have told them it is wrong. These padre sahibs have done, and are still doing, many things to estrange the British officers from the sepoys. When I was a sepoy the captain of my company would have some men at his house all day long and he talked with them ... I know that many officers nowadays only speak to their men when obliged to do so ...[234]

In such an atmosphere, the native soldier became subject to insult and maltreatment by his superior. In this regard, a contemporary stated that the sepoy was regarded as an inferior creature. He was sworn at and

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230 Ibid., p. 134.
231 Ibid.
232 S. David, op. cit., p. 39.
233 A 'nautch' is a traditional dance performed by professional dancing girls in the Indian Subcontinent. C. Hibbert, op. cit., p. 397.
234 Ibid., pp. 55-56.

spoken of as a 'nigger'. He was also addressed as a 'suar' or pig, an appellation hated by a respectable native, especially a Muslim.[235]

Hence, in such an unpleasant ruler-ruled relationship, overshadowed by remoteness-cum-haughtiness on the part of the ruler, was there any room left for the existence of any form of communication between the two parties? In Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's opinion, this lack of communication between the governor and the governed was equally an important factor that wreaked havoc on the British Government in India, which was shaken to its very foundations in 1857.[236]

Actually, in expounding Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's views of the causes of the Great Revolt, Hafeez Malik asserted that the adoption of a "no-communication" policy with the Indian population made the British Government form false conceptions about its subjects. In other words, the Colonial Government misunderstood the opinions of its subjects, the result of which was seen in the happenings of 1857.[237] In this respect, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan pointed out that:

> ... the British rulers were aliens, who had no idea of the history, culture, religion and traditions of the native people. For any ruler to be effective, it is important to understand the psyche of its subjects.[238]

Furthermore, according to Hafeez Malik, the reports on the local population submitted by the British subordinate district officials, which were the one and only source of information for the Colonial Government, were "highly superficial and unreliable". This was due to the fact that the informants, who used to be "wealthy native gentlemen" once upon a time and were reduced to a state of hopelessness, were merely a bunch of sycophants who praised the governor in an insincere way in order to gain some favours.[239]

Apart from that, in addition to its main objective, the delineation of the most important reasons behind the outbreak of the happenings of 1857, Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind was equally to serve as an apologia for

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235 S. David, op. cit., p. 40.
236 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 115.
237 Ibid.
238 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 17.
239 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 115.

those "few" Muslims who had committed a "serious" blunder by rebelling against the Colonial Government.[240] Commenting on this, T. Hasan wrote:

> The tone and tenor with which Sayyid Ahmad Khan began Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind was almost apologetic if not downright obsequious towards the British rulers.[241]

Nonetheless, Sir Sayyid Ahmad also argued that "the whole community should not be made to pay for the actions of some misguided individuals."[242] At the same time, Sir Sayyid Ahmad pleaded with the British to reconsider their assessment of the Muslim community. In this respect, M. A. Karandikar stated that this Muslim reformer was of the view that despite the fact that the Muslims had committed a mistake, "all hope was not lost and the Muslims could even now be won back with the help of a prudent policy."[243]

It is important to mention the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad did not take any active part in the events of 1857. This was notwithstanding the many incentives that some rebellious leaders offered him. For the sake of illustration, it is interesting to quote a revelation made by Sir Sayyid Ahmad himself about Nana Sahib, an Indian leader during the Rebellion of 1857, as well as other local leaders, who tried to persuade him to join their cause:

> Mahmud Khan and Ahmad Allah Khan ... told me the following in confidence: 'We want you to join us and to take an oath to confirm your acceptance. Regard the estate of your choice as your property for generations to come. Take our oath, and we will establish this estate for you forever.' At first I was very frightened about what to say in reply. After an interval of thought, I became convinced that a straightforward and honest statement was always for the best. I stated humbly: 'Nawab Sahib! I can certainly take an oath that will be your well-wisher and that I will not be ill-disposed toward you. However, I cannot join with you if you aim to seize more land and fight against the English.'[244]

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240 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 18.
241 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 16.
242 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 19.
243 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., pp. 139-140.
244 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 15.

Furthermore, not only did Sir Sayyid Ahmad refuse to join the insurgents, but he also provided shelter for European families in the region of Bijnore. As he recalled:

> *I was in Bijnore in those days. A great misfortune befell the English officials and Christian men, women and children. Motivated exclusively by humanitarianism I helped them in their affliction.*[245]

Lending support to this statement, G. Ali Khan stated that Sir Sayyid Ahmad saved the life of twenty European families at Bijnore and assured Mr Shakespeare, the local British magistrate, and his wife, by saying: "As long as I am alive, you have no cause to worry."[246]

The fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's faithfulness to the British at the height of the hostilities stood firm and unshaken did not go unnoticed. Indeed, the British in India were thankful and decided to reward him for having stood as a staunch loyal friend on their side. In this regard, H. Malik affirmed that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was offered a khilat (robe of honour) of "five pieces with three gems and a cash prize of one thousand rupees to compensate for the loss of his property in Delhi, which was estimated at Rs. 30,384."[247] In addition to that, Hafeez Malik further affirmed that Mr Shakespeare, just mentioned above, recommended in 1858 in a confidential report to R. Alexander, the local Commissioner, that Sir Sayyid Ahmad should benefit from a pension of 200 rupees on a monthly basis in perpetuity, or for his own life and that of his eldest son.[248] However, according to M. Y. Abbasi, Sir Sayyid Ahmad refused to accept such rewards and declared that the services he rendered were a matter of duty.[249]

Meanwhile, T. Hasan bears witness to the fact that the British Government offered Sir Sayyid Ahmad the state of Jahanabad. Nevertheless, he also politely declined this offer and said: "Our nation has suffered like

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245 Ibid., p. 10.
246 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 62.
247 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 82.
248 Ibid.
249 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 61.

this. There will be no one more wretched than me if I become a Talu-qedar[250] at the expense of my nation".[251]

Later on, by the same token, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was to be invited to Britain in 1869 where he received a hero's welcome and had his pamphlet Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind translated into English and published there.[252]

II. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Defence of Islam and the Muslim Community in the Indian Sub-continent

Before broaching the subject of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's efforts to defend Is-lam and the Muslim community in South Asia, it is worthwhile to men-tion the fact that this reform-minded Muslim modernist was an ardent champion of his faith. This was probably due to the fact that he came from a religious family who claimed to have direct blood relationship with the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) through his daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali.[253]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad's devotion to his religion and co-religionists could be reflected in the first and foremost objective that he set in the wake of the Great Revolt and the wave of "Islamo-phobia" that ensued, which was, putting an end to the avalanche of attacks of the critics on the Is-lamic faith. In this regard, he wrote a series of articles that served as re-joinders to the slanderous works presented by some "Islamo-phobic" Westerners, whose sole aim was to tarnish the image of the Islamic reli-gion and Muslims.

The best example was probably Khutbat-i-Ahmadiya (A Series of Es-says on the Life of Mohammad) which he wrote in response to Sir William Muir's Life of the Prophet, a biography that was fraught with defamatory statements and false accusations of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).[254] According to M. Y. Abbasi, in Khutbat-i-Ahmadiya, Sir Sayyid Ahmad

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250 A 'taluqedar' was a person who was a member of the traditional landed aris-tocracy.
251 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 10.
252 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 141.
253 Muzaffar Iqbal, 'Syed Ahmad Khan: Family and Social Milieu', in *http://www.cis-ca.org/voices/k/syydkhn-mn.htm*
254 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 61.

based his argument on research material that he collected in order to refute Muir's false statements.[255]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad's strong determination to defend Islam against William Muir's false statements could be mirrored in the fact that in spite of the huge shortage of his financial resources, especially during his stay in London, he was by no means deterred from publishing Khutbat-i-Ahmadiya, which cost him a fortune.[256] In this regard, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stated in a letter that he sent, on August 20, 1869, to a friend of his back in India:

> *I am reading William Muir's book, but it has burnt my heart; his injustice and bigotry has cut my heart to pieces. I am determined to write a full length study in refutation even if its preparation (in London) turns me into a pauper and a beggar.*[257]

Another example illustrating Sir Sayyid Ahmad's determination to defend his religion and co-religionists was his pamphlet Review on Hunter's Indian Musalmans.[258] As its title indicates, this work was a review that Sir Sayyid Ahmad wrote in reaction to Sir William Wilson Hunter's historic book, The Indian Musalmans (1871). In this book, Sir W. W. Hunter, who, according to K. K. Aziz, "offered himself as a sincere friend of the Indian Muslims,"[259] severely castigated the Muslim community for their "fanaticism and religious bigotry."[260] Indeed, The Indian Musalmans was per se a tirade against Indian Muslims in which the author made many unfounded allegations and unfair value judgements.[261]

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255 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 21.

256 H. Malik, op. cit., p. 100. H. Malik stated that the publication of *Khutbat-i-Ahmadiya* cost Sir Sayyid Ahmad about Rs. 3,948. Ibid.

257 Ibid.

258 This pamphlet appeared in a series of articles in a local newspaper. Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. 65.

259 K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Pakistan : A Study of British Attitude towards the East Pakistan Crisis of 1971*, op. cit., p. 8. Sir Sayyid Ahmad described Sir W. W. Hunter as a "warm friend of Mohammedans." Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'Review on Hunter's Indian Musalmans', in *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Shun Mohammed (ed.), op. cit., p. 65. In this regard, one may feel a note of irony when Sir Sayyid referred to Sir W. W. Hunter as a "warm friend".

260 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 142.

261 K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Pakistan : A Study of British Attitude towards the East Pakistan Crisis of 1971*, op. cit., p. 8.

To be more precise, Sir W. W. Hunter's condemnation was directed particularly against the Muslim population in those areas that witnessed a strong anti-British stance during the bloody happenings of 1857, who he referred to as the "Wahhabis". In his opinion, the Wahhabis represented a permanent threat to the British raj in the South Asian Subcontinent.[262] As can be inferred from the following passage from The Indian Musalmans in which Sir W. W. Hunter warned his fellow-countrymen against the Muslim danger:

> There is no use shutting our ears to the fact that the Indian Mohamme-dans arraign us on a list of charges as serious as have ever been brought against a government. … They accuse us of having closed every honourable walk of life to the professors of their creed. They accuse us of having introduced a system of education which leaves their whole community un-provided for, and which landed it in contempt and beggary. They accuse us of having brought misery into thousands of families by abolishing their law officers, who gave the sanction of religion to marriage, and who from time immemorial have been the depositories and administrators of the Do-mestic Law of Islam. They accuse us of imperilling their souls by denying them the means of performing the duties of their faith. Above all, they charge us with deliberate malversation of their religious foundations, and with misappropriation on the largest scale of their educational funds.[263]

In fact, by The Indian Musalmans, Sir W. W. Hunter reopened the issue of Muslim loyalty to the British Government in India, a controversy that added further damage to the already blackened reputation of the Muslim community in the region as well as in Britain.[264] However, Sir Sayyid Ahmad felt duty bound and had a firm resolution to disprove such anti-Muslim allegations, as reflected in his statement: "As a cosmopolitan Mohammedan of India, I must raise my voice in opposition to Dr Hunter in defence of my fellow-countrymen."[265]

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262 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 142.
263 Quoted in R. Symonds, *The Making of Pakistan,* Faber and Faber, London, 1949, pp. 26-27.
264 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 21.
265 Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'Review on Hunter's "Indian Musalmans', in Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. 67.

Accordingly, in his Review on Hunter's Indian Musalmans, Sir Sayyid Ahmad criticized Sir W. W. Hunter as having misunderstood the significance of the creed of "Wahhabism".[266] For instance, one of Sir W. W. Hunter's allegations was that one of the main doctrines on which the Wahhabi creed stood was "jihad", or rebellion, against the "infidel rulers"; hence, in his opinion, "jihad" against British rule in India was sanctioned by this creed.[267] Yet, in reply to such an allegation, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stated that Sir W. W. Hunter had made a serious mistake by missing out, deliberately, the conditions in which "jihad" is called for.[268] In other words, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was convinced that Sir W. W. Hunter's distortion of the true statement of the "jihad" doctrine in the Wahhabi creed was done on purpose since an English version of an accurate work on this creed and its doctrines was available.[269]

Indeed, Sir Sayyid Ahmad believed that Sir W. W. Hunter had subjectively remodelled, or rather reduced, the full statement of the doctrine that dealt with "jihad", in a way that made this creed look frightening and anti-British.[270] As he put it in a comment in his review:

> The sixth doctrine (i.e. the "jihad" doctrine) has ... suffered at the author's hands. Had he added the words—'provided that the Musalmans leading the jihad be not the subjects of those infidels, living under them in peace, and without any oppression being exercised towards them—provided that they have not left their property and families under the protection of such infidels —provided that there exists no treaty between them and the infidels—and provided that the Musalmans be powerful enough to be certain of success,'—had, I say, all these provisions been added by our author, his rendering of this doctrine would have been correct. His object, however, being to present the (sic.) Wahabi doctrines in their most terrifying form, he wisely omitted all these provisions.[271]

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266 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 21.
267 Ibid.
268 Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. 68.
269 This English version was published in Britain in the 'Royal Asiatic Journal' in 1852. Ibid.
270 Ibid., p. 69.
271 Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'Review on Hunter's Indian Musalmans', in ibid.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan added that Wahhabism was a sect in Islam as Catholicism and Protestantism were sects in Christianity.[272] As confirmed in the following statement: "In my opinion, what the Protestant is to Roman Catholic, so is the Wahabi to the other Mohammedan creeds."[273]

Meanwhile, the English press, both in Britain and India, was fraught with defamatory articles which referred to the atrocities committed against the British during the happenings of 1857 as being sanctioned by the Islamic faith. In response to these erroneous statements, Sir Sayyid Ahmad sent a letter to The Pioneer, a local paper, in which he commented:

> *Another charge levelled against the Mohammedans during the Mutiny, causing much hatred and suspicion, was that of slaying women, children and the aged – acts which were said to be in conformity with the Islamic law. It is a strict and sacred command of our Prophet to his followers that when they wage war against their enemies they are not to slay women or children or the aged. ... Even if they be Kafirs.[274]*

Apart from that, after the Great Revolt, the first idea that struck Sir Sayyid Ahmad was that the South Asian Subcontinent was undergoing a multi-dimensional change in all spheres of life, and unless the Muslim Indians made an effort to accommodate to the new status quo, they would never be able to survive. This new status quo, in his opinion, required the individual to be broad-minded and forward-looking.

Indeed, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wanted to open the eyes and minds of his co-religionists to the new ideas, characterized by the modern scientific knowledge that would lead to progress. This, he assumed, could only be

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272 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

273 Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'Review on Hunter's Indian Musalmans', in *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Shun Muhammad (ed.), op. cit., p. 68.

274 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 54. This was corroborated by Amir Ali who reported on the Prophet Mohammed, PBUH, as having warned his soldiers against killing women, children and the elderly, or cut a palm tree, and urged them, "... do not be excessive, do not kill a newborn child." The Prophet went further in pointing out that "the first cases to be adjudicated between people on the Day of Judgment will be those of bloodshed." Then, He mentioned the fact that "there is a reward for kindness shown to every living animal or human." Amir Ali, 'Jihad: One of the Most Misunderstood Concepts in Islam', in *http://www.iiie.net/index.php?q=node/43*.

done if the Muslim community got rid of their outdated customs.[275] In other words, according to Sir Sayyid Ahmad, "blind emulation of custom-ridden practices would do no good to society as it would kill the very initiative."[276] Here, it is worth quoting K. K. Aziz who shared the same opinion as Sir Sayyid Ahmad with regard to the origin of Indian Muslims' tardiness: "Conservatism … and attachment to traditional and partly outmoded values slowed down the tempo of advance."[277]

To put it in a nutshell, in Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opinion, the rejection of those practices and customs, which had so far served as a serious impediment to any attempt at Muslim improvement, and the adoption of a forward-looking attitude was a sine qua non for the progress of the moribund Muslim community in South Asia. This would lead him, as will be seen in the following chapter, to make an elaborate plan in order to help his co-religionists out of their predicament.

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275 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. x.
276 Ibid.
277 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 132.

CHAPTER THREE

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Framework for Muslim Modernization

After gauging the circumstances in the South Asian Subcontinent, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan realized the urgent need to come up with a plan to modernize, as well as energize, the hitherto comatose Muslim community. Towards that end, he launched a vigorous reformist movement, referred to as the Aligarh[278] Movement, which affected every aspect of Muslim life, namely social, economic, political, cultural and religious.[279] In reality, through this movement, Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers aimed to help the then downtrodden and deprived Muslim community to catch up with the Hindu community which, for various reasons, was well ahead.

In this regard, many historians and contemporaries of British India agree on the fact that in order to fulfil this aim, Sir Sayyid Ahmad adopted a new approach, modernist and liberal in its character, that was different from the one previously pursued by some Muslim reformists, such as Shah Walyi Allah Dehlavi. This new approach was based on the following major themes: first, loyalty to the British; second, devotion to education; and third, socio-religious reform.[280]

I. Loyalty to the British

In accordance with the programme of the Aligarh movement, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's immediate objective was to defuse the state of tension and misunderstanding that characterized Muslim-British relationship, following the downfall of the Mughal Empire as well as the happenings of 1857, and to establish, instead, a good rapport between the two.[281] Towards this

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278 'Aligarh' is a town in India which served as a centre for Sir Sayyid Ahmad's revivalist movement.
279 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 61.
280 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 19.
281 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 61.

end, he strongly advised Muslims to adopt a loyal attitude towards the British Colonial Government.

In reality, the happenings of 1857 and their negative impact on the Indian Muslim community established the absolute superiority of the British in the South Asian Subcontinent. This was a significant factor that convinced Sir Sayyid Ahmad of the fact that the British might was invincible,[282] and that its confrontation would not be a sane endeavour.[283] Consequently, he urged his co-religionists to wake up to this reality and make some sacrifices in order to adjust to the new situation.

This adjustment, according to this Muslim reformist, was to accept the British as their masters, given the fact that, as he realized, all current circumstances indicated that they, the British, would not cease to be so, at least, in the foreseeable future.[284] In this respect, Aziz Ahmad stated that:

> ... an adjustment of some sort with Western civilization in general and with the British Government in India in particular became a condition for survival.[285]

To put it differently, Sir Sayyid Ahmad thought that it would be a wise decision and in the interest of the Muslim community to be on good terms with the British Government.[286] Besides, in his opinion, the adoption of a pro-British attitude was a sine qua non for any betterment of the Muslim community since the latter were "the patrons par excellence" and "were responsible for distributing the limited quantity of 'loaves and fishes' available."[287]

In attempting to read Sir Sayyid Ahmad's mind through his writings and speeches, K. K. Aziz affirmed that the pro-British attitude of this Muslim reformist was by no means the result of a thoughtless sentiment; on the contrary, it was based on three main convincing reasons.

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282 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xii.
283 Syed M. Taha and Nasreen Afzal, , op. cit., p. 101.
284 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 19.
285 A. Ahmad, 'Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Jamal al-din al-Afghani and Muslim India', in *Studia Islamica*, Maisonneuve & Larose, Paris, 1960, N° 13, p. 55.
286 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 19.
287 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 120.

In the first place, he believed that loyalty to the rulers was the one and only remedy currently available to the Muslim community in order to remove the enmity and hatred that featured their relationship with the British Government as well as to "wipe off the stigma of Muslim instigation of the mutiny".[288] For that reason, he published, in 1860, a book entitled The Loyal Muhammedans of India, in which he highlighted the services that many Muslims had rendered to the British at the height of the Great Revolt.[289] In addition to that, this Muslim reformer even declared the fact that the Muslim community was worthy of praise for its support to the British, as he put it in the following sentence:

> It is to the Mohammedans alone that the credit belongs of having stood staunch and unshaken friends of the Government amidst that fearful tornado that devastated the country and shook the Empire to its core.[290]

By the same token, Sir Sayyid Ahmad also attempted to convince the British officials of the Muslims' firm loyalty, and hence, no need to look at them with suspicious eyes.[291]

Nevertheless, according to M. A. Karandikar, the British idea of the Muslim community as being a "bunch" of disloyal elements still lingered among some high officials in London. For instance, in a speech given in the House of Commons on June 6th, 1861, Charles Wood, the then First Secretary of State for India, referred to the Muslim subject as "the bigoted Muhammadan, who considers that we have usurped his legitimate position as the ruler of India."[292]

On the other hand, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's idea of adopting a loyal attitude also resulted from his examining the current affairs in the Indian Subcontinent, which were characterized by the introduction of parliamentary institutions in the second half of the nineteenth century as well as the increase in the employment of natives in the Civil Service by

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288 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 19.
289 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xi.
290 Ibid.
291 Ibid.
292 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 140.

means of open competition.[293] For him, this situation represented a serious threat to the Muslim community since the latter were but a minority in India and that they would remain so for a long time.

In other words, the Muslim community was, numerically speaking, smaller than the Hindu majority; as corroborated by the historian S. R. Mehrotra,[294] who asserted that the Hindus were four times more numerous than the Muslims. Therefore, in Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opinion, every advance towards democracy in the Indian Subcontinent was tantamount to the oppression of the Muslim minority under the rule of the Hindu majority, since, as he put it, "we can prove by mathematics that there will be four votes for the Hindu to every one vote for the Mohamedan."[295] In addition, he further wondered how Muslims could guard their interests since "it would be like a game of dice in which one man had four dice and the other only one."[296]

Again in this regard, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the opinion that "such political principles could only be applied to a country inhabited by one nation. In India every step towards a representative goal would be one more rivet in Muslim chains."[297] Indeed, this Muslim reformer placed too much stress on the fact that Muslims and Hindus constituted two different and unequal nations, being diametrically opposed in terms of interests, culture and religion.[298] Consequently, for the sake of their salvation and survival, Indian Muslims had to be loyal to the British who had the upper hand in the region.

Briefly speaking, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the opinion that the Muslim community, being outnumbered and powerless, had only one option left open to them, namely siding with the British, or else, they would live un-

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293 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 20. The process of introducing native Indians to the parliamentary institutions began shortly after the Great Revolt, following the passage of the Indian Council Act of 1861. S. R. Wasti, 'Constitutional Development: From 1858 to 1906', op. cit., p. 47.

294 S. R. Mehrotra was a lecturer in South Asian politics at the School of Oriental and Afircan Studies, University of London.

295 S. R. Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth: 1885-1929*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1965, p. 179.

296 Ibid.

297 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 20.

298 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 124.

der the mercy of the Hindu majority.[299] As summed up by P. Spear, who wrote: "A democratic regime means majority rule, and majority rule in India would mean Hindu rule. Therefore the British cannot be dispensed with ..."[300]

Indeed, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was very convinced of the fact that peaceful co-existence between the Muslim and Hindu communities was only made possible so long as the British remained the rulers there.[301] In fact, he believed that if the British were to withdraw from the South Asian Subcontinent, the Muslim minority would be swept off by the Hindu majority.[302] Here, it is worth recalling the fact that Indian Muslims were no match for the Hindus, as the latter had remarkably been progressing by leaps and bounds while Muslims were mourning the loss of their power and prestige. Commenting on this, K. K. Aziz stated that:

> *Sayyid Ahmad Khan foresaw that the Muslim minority was no match for the progressive Hindus and that if it also alienated the sympathies of the rulers its ruin would be complete.*[303]

Hence, Sir Sayyid Ahmad came up with the conclusion that the adoption of a loyal attitude towards the British was not a mere policy of opportunism, but also the dictate of political realism.[304]

Furthermore, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's loyalist disposition to the British equally sprang from his conviction of the superiority of the Western civilization to the Oriental one.[305] This conviction was further enhanced following his trip to Britain in 1869, where he was impressed by the Brit-

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299 In this respect, A. Demangeon wrote : « La communauté musulmane de l'Inde avait interet de soutenir la domination britannique; elle craignait, pour sa foi et sa civilisation, la tyrannie fanatique des Hindous. » A. Demangeon, 'Problèmes Britanniques', in *Annales de Géographie*, France, 1922, Volume 31, Numéro 169, (pp. 15-36), pp. 31-32.
300 P. Spear, *A History of India: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 226.
301 S. Hay (ed.), op. cit., p. 191.
302 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 70.
303 Ibid.
304 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 14.
305 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 20.

ish culture and way of life;[306] as corroborated by Shun Muhammad who wrote:

> The English civilization and culture had impressed Sir Syed much earlier and a visit to England dazzled his eyes all the more.[307]

Besides, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's fascination with Britain and her civilization, which he attributed to, as will be elaborately dealt with further down in this chapter, western education, made him castigate his countrymen back home, Muslims and Hindus alike, for their benightedness and ignorance. This could be reflected in the strong language that he employed in a letter that he sent home while he was in London in which he wrote:

> Without flattering the English, I can truly say that the natives of India, high and low, merchants and petty shopkeepers, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, manners and uprightness, are as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and upright man. The English have every reason to believe us in India to be imbecile brutes.[308]

Apart from that, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wanted to prove to those who raised their eyebrows over his loyalism, mainly the most orthodox elements of the Muslim community, the fact that loyalty to the British Government did not contradict with the Islamic faith. In order to back up his statement, he asserted that "God has made them (the British) rulers over us," and that the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said that if "God place over you a black negro slave as a ruler you must obey him," hence, the Indian Muslims should be pleased with the will of God.[309]

In addition to that, he put stress on the premise that both religions, namely Islam and Christianity, were monotheistic creeds which had originated from the same source and had more convergences that united them than divergences. In this regard, Percival Spear reported on the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad had always stressed the resemblance of "fun-

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306 S. Hay (Ed.), op. cit., p. 186.
307 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xviii.
308 Quoted in R. Symonds, op. cit., p. 28.
309 S. R. Mehrotra, op. cit., p. 180.

damental Islamic and Christian ideas with their common Judaic heritage."[310]

Thus, as part of his efforts to delineate the similarities between Islam and Christianity, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wrote a book entitled Tabyin al-Kalam Fi Tafsir al-Tawrat wa al-Injil Ala Millat al-Islam (The Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible), which he published in 1862 at his own expense.[311] By this work, Sir Sayyid Ahmad blazed a trail in undertaking such a venture since, according to H. Malik, no Muslim scholar had previously dared to write a commentary on the Old and New Testaments.[312] Yet, his sole objective was to explore areas of harmony and to foster sympathetic understanding of Christianity among the Muslims,[313] and to prove that these two monotheistic religions, Islam and Christianity, had never been opposed to each other.[314] In this respect, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan observed:

> No religion upon earth was more friendly to Christianity than Islam; and the latter had been more beneficial and advantageous to Christianity ... Islam fought against Judaism in favour of Christianity, and openly and manly did it declare that the mission of ... Jesus Christ was unquestionably 'the Word of God' and 'the Spirit of God'.[315]

Then, he added that his co-religionists, like all people guided by a sacred Book, believe in "the necessity of the coming of Prophets to save mankind and have faith in these books", as well as have "full faith in the divine nature of the Christian Gospels."[316]

Furthermore, according to M. A. Karandikar, Sir Sayyid Ahmad argued in his book that the message received from God by the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was the same message received previously by Jesus

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310 P. Spear, *A History of India: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 225.
311 H. Malik, op. cit., pp. 83-84.
312 Ibid., p. 84.
313 Ibid.
314 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xi.
315 Quoted in ibid., pp. xi-xii.
316 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 54.

Christ, and that the latter was not corrupted, as many orthodox ulama[317] alleged.[318]

Many Western intellectuals, past and present, have lent support to Sir Sayyid Ahmad's idea of Muslim-Christian resemblances, by laying emphasis on the fact that both Islam and Christianity represent two creeds that share almost identical characteristics and principles. One of these was Sir William Baker, a British writer, who insisted on the close affinity between both religions where worshippers believe in the same God.[319] The same author went further in stating that "the Muslim among all oriental races is the nearest to what a Protestant terms Christianity."[320] Again in this regard, Richard Fletcher, a twentieth-century British historian and Islamologist, stated that:

> There was so much that Muslims believed, or did, that was familiar to Christians. They believed in one God. They revered patriarchs, prophets and kings of the Old Testament – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, David, Solomon. They venerated the Virgin Mary, to whom indeed one of the chapters or suras of the Koran is devoted (Sura 19). Respectful references to Jesus and his teachings occur repeatedly in the Koran. Like Christians they prayed and fasted, gave alms and went on pilgrimage.[321]

Again in the same line of thought, C. Horrie and P. Chippindale, who were so convinced of the close affinities between Islam and Christianity, claimed that in spite of their errors, Christians are believed to be closer to Islam than any other religion in the world. To substantiate their claim, they quoted a passage from the Holy Quran, the Sura 5 (al-Ma'ida), in which the Almighty, addressing the Muslims, stated:

> And you will certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe to be those who say: We are Christians ... And when they hear what has

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317 'Ulama' is a term used by Muslims to refer to a group of learned people in religious affairs.
318 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 140.
319 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 71.
320 Quoted in ibid.
321 R. Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent: Christianity and Islam from Muhammad to the Reformation*, Viking, London, 2003, p. 18.

been revealed to the apostle (Muhammad), you will see their eyes over-
flowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognise; they say:
Our Lord! We believe, so write us down with the witnesses.[322]

(The Holy Quran, Sura 5 (al-Ma'ida), verse 83)

On the other hand, Sir Sayyid Ahmad urged his co-religionists to refrain from regarding the British as their enemies, but rather, as friends. In doing so, he brought forth many arguments from his religious study and social experiences.[323] According to K. K. Aziz, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wanted to convince the Muslim community of the fact that Islam was nearer to Christianity than any other religion in the world, and that it had more in common with the monotheism of Christianity than the polytheism of Hinduism.[324]

Meanwhile, with regard to Hinduism, Syed M. Taha and Nasreen Afzal stated that its relationship with Islam was characterized by marked differences in the belief-system. As an example, both authors mentioned the fact that whereas Islam, as a monotheistic and iconoclastic religion, believes in conversion through preaching, Hinduism does not, as it may adversely affect the caste-based society nurtured on inequality.[325]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan further added that Christians and Jews were referred to in the Holy Quran as the Ahl al-Kitab, that is, 'People of the Book', and that Muslims should respect them.[326] In this respect, Richard Fletcher confirmed the fact that the Holy Quran makes it explicit that it is incumbent upon every Muslim to respect the Ahl al-Kitab, or the 'People of the Book'.[327] To back up his statement, R. Fletcher quoted the following passage from Sura 29 (al-'Ankabut) of the Holy Quran:

Dispute not with the People of the Book save in the fairer manner, except
for those of them that do wrong; and say, 'We believe in what has been

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322 Quoted in C. Horrie and P. Chippindale, *What is Islam?: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Virgin Books, London, 2003, p. 11.
323 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 70.
324 Ibid.
325 Syed M. Taha and Nasreen Afzal, op. cit., pp. 100-101.
326 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 70.
327 R. Fletcher, op. cit., p. 20.

*sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your
God is One, and to Him we have surrendered.[328]*

(The Holy Quran, Sura 29 (al-'Ankabut), verse 46)

Moreover, Sir Sayyid Ahmad drew an analogy between both faiths in the social sphere to show to the Muslim community the fact that they shared many common ideals and practices with Christians, unlike the Hindu community.[329] For that purpose, he wrote another pamphlet, entitled Tu-aam Ahl-e-Kitab, in which he urged his co-religionists to get rid of their prejudices that prevented them from socializing with Christians.[330] In his opinion, socializing with the British was an essential ingredient that would create friendly feelings with them, whereas aloofness would only lead to more misunderstanding.[331] Thus, for that reason, he encouraged his community to dine with Christians "at the same table with spoon, knife and fork."[332]

As a matter of fact, Masood A. Raja asserted that eating with foreigners, or non-Muslims, was often considered as an un-Islamic behaviour in the Muslim community. This, he believed, could be attributed to the strong influence of the Hindu community on Indian Muslims.[333] Furthermore, Masood A. Raja confirmed the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad wanted to free his co-religionists from this prejudice by arguing that:

*... as British were people of the book, breaking bread with them could not
be considered a contaminating experience. ... this practice of not sharing
food with non-Muslims was strictly un-Islamic and was caused by Hin-
duization of Indian Islam.[334]*

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328 Quoted in Ibid.
329 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 70.
330 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xii.
331 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 74.
332 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xii.
333 Masood A. Raja, *Texts of a Nation: The Cultural, Political, and Religious Imaginary of Pakistan*, Florida State University, unpublished PhD thesis, Florida, 2006, p. 163.
334 Ibid.

In other words, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the view that in day-to-day life Indian Muslims were closer to the Christian rulers than to the idol-worshipping Hindus; as K. K. Aziz put it:

> In social matters ... the Muslim found himself in more congenial company among the British. The two could, and did, intermarry and intermix in society without disagreeable taboos. With the Hindu one was always on one's guard against breaking some caste restriction or polluting a Brahmin household.[335]

It should be noted that Sir Sayyid Ahmad's statement regarding intermixing with the British in social matters, such as dining and marriage, brought him a lot of anger and criticism from the orthodox ulama. Yet, in facing such opposition, he often quoted the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) and took support from some learned Muslim scholars like Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmizi, and many others, in order to prove that there was no restriction in Islam on such social intermixing with Christians.[336]

On the other hand, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's determination to give a religious sanction to the concept of loyalism among his co-religionists led him to the extent of renouncing "jihad" against the British Colonial Government.[337] In fact, in clear defiance of those radical elements of the Muslim community that called for a holy war against the non-Muslim rulers, he advised the Muslims of India to shy away from any such attempt.

Actually, for Sir Sayyid Ahmad, "jihad", as a religious obligation, was not incumbent on Muslims in a country where they were offered protection.[338] In the case of Colonial India, he assumed, the call for "jihad" against the British rulers had no validity due to the fact that the latter were not directly interfering with the religious affairs of the Muslim community.[339] This statement was backed up by K. K. Aziz, who stated that in the Islamic tradition, "disobedience to those in authority is not

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335 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 74.
336 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xii.
337 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p.23.
338 Ibid., p. 14.
339 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 50.

permitted unless the ruler interferes with the religious rites of the Muslims."[340] Thus, for Sir Sayyid Ahmad, the Indian Subcontinent under British rule was not fit for a holy war since the Muslim community there "enjoyed all protection – religious and otherwise."[341]

Indeed, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wanted to clarify the meaning of "jihad", a hitherto very controversial subject, which was often referred to in the Anglo-Indian press as a serious threat emanating from the Muslim community in South Asia.[342] In reality, the aim behind Sir Sayyid Ahmad's attempt to elucidate the concept of "jihad" was twofold: on the one hand, he wanted to clear the minds of the British officials in Calcutta and London as well as the public opinion in Britain of the false assumption that "jihad" was "a duty of the Muslims against the Christians",[343] and on the other hand, he wanted to explain to his co-religionists the circumstances in which Muslims could have recourse to "jihad".[344]

In order to substantiate his claims, Sir Sayyid Ahmad made use of many fatwas, that is legal pronouncements or clerical verdicts, issued by the Hanafi, Shafi'i and Maliki muftis (i.e. religious scholars) based in Mecca,[345] in response to a question regarding the legitimacy of "jihad" in

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340 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 75.
341 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xii.
342 Ibid.
343 Sir Sayyid Ahmad sent a letter on 31 March 1971 to the editor of the *Pioneer*, an English local newspaper, in which he wrote: "Those who are guilty of conspiring against Government are not acting up to the principles of their religious tenets." Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'On Wahabism', in Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. 237. In this regard, C. Horrie and P. Chippindale claimed that it is an obligation for every Muslim to fight to death in defence of their religion and that this was following the declaration by the Prophet Mohammed, PBUH, of "jihad" against the idol-worshippers of Arabia who represented a serious threat to Him and His followers. Nevertheless, waging wars whose purpose is to gain worldly power or wealth or to forcibly convert unbelievers is forbidden in the Islamic faith; as confirmed in the following verse from the Holy Quran: "There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error." Sura 2 (al-Baqara), verse 256. C. Horrie and P. Chippindale, op. cit., p. 5.
344 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xii.
345 These were three of the four classical schools of Islamic law (the fourth be-

the Indian Subcontinent under British rule. According to Muhammad Y. Abbasi, these muftis clearly declared the fact that India could not be regarded as Dar-ul-Harb, or country of war, in the case of which "jihad" is a duty for every Muslim. Rather, it should be considered as Dar-ul-Islam, or country of Islam or safety, and that the ruler should be obeyed.[346]

By the same token, Sir Sayyid Ahmad equally sought support from some moderate local muftis, or maulvis, as usually referred to in the South Asian Subcontinent, with regard to the question of "jihad". Like the muftis of Mecca, these Indian ulama or maulvis also repudiated the idea of a holy war against British rule in India due to the fact that the conditions which were said to transform a country into a Dar-ul-Harb were not present there.

Moreover, these local maulvis went so far to as to interpret the resort to "jihad" in India as a "rebellion".[347] As an example, M. A. Karandikar cited the case of Moulavi Karamat Ali, who not so long time ago used to be a strong opponent of the British Government. This religious leader in the region of Bihar issued a fatwa declaring that India under British rule should not be viewed as a Dar-ul-Harb and that it was "not permissible to fight a religious war against the British Government."[348]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad did not consider the Great Revolt of 1857 as a holy war, or a "jihad".[349] Commenting on this fact, H. Malik stated that this Muslim reformist:

> did not "consider the revolt as a war of independence planned in advance by patriots. In his eyes it was an insurrection triggered off by dissatisfied Hindu and Muslim soldiers.[350]

This stance was backed up by a local cleric, Maulvi Qutb-ud-Din, who is-

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ing the *Hanbali* school), named after the four learned religious men who were commissioned by the early Abbasid emperors to elucidate and write down the Islamic law. C. Horrie and P. Chippindale, op. cit., p. 130.

346 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 22.
347 Ibid., p. 14.
348 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 141.
349 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 61.
350 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Doctrine of Muslim Nationalism and National Progress', in *Modern Asian Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 3., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, (pp. 221-244), pp. 222-223.

sued a fatwa stating that "the joint Muslim-Hindu struggle against the British in 1857 was not a "jihad" but a rebellion."[351]

On the other hand, according to M. Y. Abbasi, some other Indian maulvis came up with different arguments to back up their view of India as being Dar-ul-Islam instead of Dar-ul-Harb. For instance, Maulvi Fazli Ali contended that so long as the British maintained a good rapport, based on "friendship and cordiality", with the Sultan of Turkey, the Custodian of the Holy Places, it would be unjustified for the Muslims of India to wage a holy war against the "Ally of the Sultan".[352]

Again, in the same line of thought, Nawab Abdul Latif (1828-1895), who was an important pro-British Muslim figure in the South Asian Subcontinent, went to the extent of branding that faction of Muslims who entertained the idea of a holy war against the British Government as "injudicious and ungrateful" since they, the British, had stood by the Sultan of Turkey during the Crimean War.[353] Besides, Nawab Abdul Latif also argued that the British government was on friendly terms with many Muslim leaders throughout the world, like the Amir of Afghanistan, who owed his existence to the subsidies offered by the British, and the Khedive (or Ottoman Viceroy) of Egypt. Thus, Nawab Abdul Latif concluded:

It was ... proper that the Indian Muslims should not wage a war against a 'Nation ever ready to help the Mahomedan, whenever and wherever there should be occasion of it.'[354]

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad's philosophy of loyalism to the British Government went beyond the geographical borders of the Indian Subcontinent. In other words, not only did he want his co-religionists to be loyal to the British Government in India, but also urged them to support the British imperial interests throughout

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351 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 15.

352 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

353 Ibid., p. 15. The Crimean War (1854-1856) was fought mainly on the Crimean Peninsular (currently part of Ukraine in Asia Minor) between the Russians and the British, French, and Ottoman Turkish. It was the fear of Russian expansion to the Mediterranean during the decline of the Ottoman Empire that prompted Britain to take part in it. D. Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century: 1815-1914*, Penguin Books, London, 1991, p. 157.

354 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 15.

the world.[355] However, this tendency had an immediate negative reaction among the Muslim community in India since many Muslim nations in the world had conflicting interests with the British imperial designs.[356]

Actually, notwithstanding the fact that Muslim Indians had adopted the Indian Subcontinent as their home for good, they still entertained the idea that they formed a part of the larger Muslim world.[357] Thus, whatever affected Muslims anywhere in the world would automatically be felt among the Muslim community in India.

To sum it up, as a Muslim person, Sir Sayyid Ahmad defended his loyalist policy on religious grounds, and in so doing, he resorted to several fatwas made by many moderate religious clerics, both inside and outside India. As an Indian Muslim, he advocated this loyalism as a political necessity,[358] or, using M. Y. Abbasi's phraseology, a "necessary phase of historical process."[359] Nevertheless, it should be noted that Sir Sayyid Ahmad had by no means wanted his community to be subservient to the British, but he only advised them to co-operate with them for their own good.[360]

II. Devotion to Education

The adoption of a loyal attitude towards the British rulers, in Sir Sayyid Ahmad's view, was not enough to bring about a genuine rehabilitation of the hitherto downtrodden Muslim community in South Asia. In fact, he realized the fact that the major stumbling block facing the Muslim community was the total absence of modern education. Hence, the next significant point in his programme, and on which he placed a high premium,

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355 Ibid., p. 64. This could be seen by the turn of the century, during the Boers War, when some Indian Muslims prayed for the success of the British army. In this regard, A. Demangeon quoted a contemporary as saying: "C'est bien la première fois que des Musulmans avaient prié pour les armes des infidèles. » A. Demangeon, op. cit., p. 32.

356 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 64.

357 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 78. With regard to this extraterritorial attachment of the Muslims of India, K. K. Aziz stated that they (Indian Muslims) "looked out of India to recover their Arab, Turkish or Persian roots and retain their pride as former conquerors." Ibid.

358 Ibid., pp. 70-71.

359 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 62.

360 Ibid., p. 63.

was education. According to K. K. Aziz, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's slogan was "devote yourselves to education; this is your only salvation".[361]

Actually, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was well aware of the fact that the post-Great Revolt era was perhaps the darkest one, culturally as well as politically, in the history of the Muslim community in India. He attributed this situation primarily to the fact that Indian Muslims, unlike their Hindu counterparts, had shied away from Western education. In his opinion, had his co-religionists imbibed the progressive new ideas and culture vehicled through the education that the British had introduced in the Subcontinent, they would have been much better off now.[362]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad regretted the fact that his co-religionists did not take advantage of Western education the way the Hindu community did in the past under the leadership of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.[363] In fact, by being apathetic, and in some instances hateful, towards the language and literature of the British rulers, Sir Sayyid Ahmad opined, the Indian Muslims only hurt themselves.[364] As K. K. Aziz commented:

> The Muslims did not take to the English language, and thus denied themselves opportunities of material as well as intellectual progress. Material, because Government jobs were open only to English-knowing persons; intellectual, because the entire corpus of Western knowledge and learning was shut out from them.[365]

In addition to that, Sir Sayyid Ahmad declared that this anti-Western education attitude on the part of his co-religionists contributed to their being in total ignorance of the British way of life and their principles of administration.[366]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad went a step further in attributing the happenings of 1857 to the ignorance of Indians of the British might. He believed that

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361 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 20.
362 A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 365.
363 Raja Ram Mohan Roy's revivalist movement has already been dealt with in the first chapter.
364 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xii.
365 K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 130.
366 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xii.

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had the native regiments of the Bengal army learnt about such a "power-
ful empire" and what it stood for they would not have thought of rising
against their masters and would have averted that catastrophe;[367] as cor-
roborated in the following passage by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan:

> *If in 1856, the natives of India had known anything of the mighty power*
> *which England possessed, a power which would have impressed the mis-*
> *guided men of the Bengal army with the knowledge how futile their efforts*
> *to subvert the Empire of Her Majesty in the East would be – there is little*
> *doubt that the unhappy events of 1857 would never have occurred.[368]*

Meanwhile, Sir Sayyid Ahmad urged his co-religionists to learn the lan-
guage of the rulers. He believed that by failing to learn the English lan-
guage, the Indian Muslims "self-excluded" themselves from the main-
stream society in the Subcontinent. According to G. Ali Khan, Sir Sayyid
Ahmad warned his co-religionists of the worsening conditions that would
result if they continued to keep aloof from the English language and told
them that "there was no option for the subject nations but to learn the
language of their rulers."[369] In this regard, Sir Sayyid Ahmad addressed
the following speech to his co-religionists:

> *Today there are no Muslim rulers to patronize those who are well versed*
> *in the old Arabic and Persian learning. The new rulers insist upon a know-*
> *ledge of their language for all advancement in their services and in some*
> *of the independent professions like practising law as well. If Muslims do*
> *not take to the system of education introduced by the British, they will not*
> *only remain a backward community but will sink lower and lower until*
> *there will be no hope of recovery left to them.[370]*

Then, he asked himself: "Is this at all a pleasing prospect? Can we serve
the cause of Islam in this way? Shall we then be able to ward off the oblit-
eration of all that we hold dear for any length of time?"[371] As an illustra-
tion, Sir Sayyid Ahmad gave the example of the Hindu community who

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367 Ibid.
368 Quoted in ibid., pp. xii-xiii.
369 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 63.
370 Quoted in, S. Hay, op. cit., p. 188.
371 Quoted in, ibid., pp. 188-189.

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were in a relatively good condition under the previous rulers, the Mughals, as well as the current rulers, the British, and that was because they were wise enough to learn the "language of the rulers of the day".[372] Then, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wondered why Muslims should not learn the English language since nothing in the Islamic religion objected to that. As confirmed in the following statement made by him:

> *No religious prejudices interfere with our learning any language spoken by any of the many nations of the world. From remote antiquity have we studied Persian, and no prejudice has ever interfered with the study of that language. How, then can any religious objection be raised against our learning and perfecting ourselves in English?*[373]

Hence, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the opinion that if Indian Muslims got familiarized with the Western arts and sciences, they would perhaps be able to improve their social and political conditions.[374] This led him to cast doubt on the quality of knowledge imparted to the Muslim learners in the traditional schools supervised by the ulama, namely the madrasas and maktabs. In his opinion, these educational institutions offered courses which were "hopelessly inadequate for the scientific age."[375] On these traditional schools, he commented:

> *All of them are in a bad condition because they are no longer in demand; they are declining rapidly and will no doubt destroy their progeny by ill-equipping them for the modern technical age.*[376]

For Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Western education was the only key to future prosperity.[377] This, he thought, could be efficiently done through the

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372 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 63.
373 Quoted in Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xiii. A. Demangeon quoted Sir Sayyid Ahmad as telling his co-religionists: "Il faut imiter les Arabes des anciens temps qui ne craignaient pas de perdre leur foi parcequ'ils étudiaient Pythagoras." A. Demangeon, op. cit., p. 32.
374 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 63.
375 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Doctrine of Muslim Nationalism and National Progress', op. cit., p. 244.
376 Ibid.
377 Hamza, Alavi, 'On Religion and Secularism in the making of Pakistan', in *http://www.sacw.net/2002/HamzaAlaviNov02.html*

translation of some of the most important books from English into Urdu.[378] Nonetheless, this project was by no means intended to serve as a way to discourage the Muslim community from learning the English language, but only to, as Shun Muhammad put it, "bring western knowledge within the reach of the people of India."[379]

Thus, to concretize this objective, Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers founded the Scientific Society on July 9th, 1864 at Ghazipur, a town in northern India. According to G. Ali Khan, in addition to the translation of English works into Urdu, the Scientific Society was also intended as a means to "provide a basis for mutual understanding and friendship between the British and the Muslims."[380]

Besides that, Sir Sayyid Ahmad also wanted this Society to serve as a channel through which the much-needed historical knowledge and learning could be disseminated, and that would equip the Muslim community in India with the necessary tools that could enable them to compete with other communities. This was clearly reflected in the following passage excerpted from his inaugural address to the Scientific Society:

Looking at the state of my fellow countrymen's minds, I find that, from their ignorance of the past history of the world at large, they have nothing to guide them in their future career. From their ignorance of the events of the past, and also of the events of the present – from their not being acquainted with the manner and means by which infant nations have grown into powerful and flourishing ones, and by which the present most advanced ones have beaten their competitors in the race for position among the magnates of the world – they are unable to take lessons and profit by their experience. Through this ignorance, also, they are not aware of the causes which have undermined the foundations of those nations once the most wealthy, the most civilized, and the most powerful in the history of their time, and which have since gradually gone to decay or remained stationary instead of advancing with the age .... For the above reasons, I am

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378 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xiii.
379 Ibid.
380 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 63.

strongly in favour of disseminating knowledge of history, ancient and
modern, for the improvement of my fellow countrymen.[381]

From the above quotation, one can deduce the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad gave great importance to the history subject which he believed was a "must-know" subject that would save nations a lot of trouble. In other words, by learning history, nations would, on the one hand, get familiarized with their past mistakes, and hence avoid repeating them; and on the other hand, they would acquaint themselves with the means and methods that they should adopt in order to flourish.[382]

In the same respect, according to H. Malik, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was very concerned with the mystery of the rise and fall of civilizations. He regretted the fact that Asian scholars never illuminated the birth and development of world civilizations in their works on history, but they merely "chronicled the kings' ascension to power and their deaths."[383] What he really wanted was a work that would analyze in detail the national character of nations as well as their virtues and vices.[384]

With this opinion in mind, Sir Sayyid Ahmad advised the members of the Scientific Society, in a meeting held on March 12th, 1864, to undertake the task of translating into Urdu some of the most outstanding works on the history of India. In this regard, Sir Sayyid Ahmad recommended James Mill's[385] History of India, which he described as an "excellent work":

No good comprehensive History of India has yet been published in Oordoo.
Those hitherto published have not had the details well arranged, have
been too brief and their style has not been good. In my opinion Mill's His-

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381 'Sir Syed's Speech at Scientific Society', quoted in Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. 14.

382 Ibid.

383 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 86.

384 Ibid.

385 James Mill was a British historian who undertook the task of writing the history of British India by the end of 1806. This he completed in 1818 and his work was published in three volumes. According to Shun Muhammad, James Mill was very critical to British rule in India. Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. 29.

tory of India is an excellent work. It is in several volumes and if not too expensive ought to be gradually published by our Society.[386]

Two years after its foundation, the Scientific Society launched a journal called The Scientific Society Paper, which later became known as the Aligarh Institute Gazette. This journal's primary objective was to familiarize the British Colonial Government with the thoughts and points of view of the inhabitants of India, regardless of their creed,[387] as well as keep the latter informed about the methods and policies of British rule.[388] This was done by publishing the contents of the journal in Urdu as well as in English, that is, on each page one could find an Urdu text immediately followed by its English version.[389]

It should be noted that the Scientific Society as well as its journal were non-communal in their character.[390] Commenting on this fact, Atlaf Husain Hali, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's biographer, wrote:

What made the 'Gazette' unique was the fact that, unlike other Indian newspapers, it never rejoiced in the misfortunes of any community, sect or individual. Never for one moment did it forsake its policy of frankness and sincerity, merely to please the kind of people who look for backbiting and scandal. Never was one word written attacking the loyalty of any Indian community, nor did it contain articles criticizing or remonstrating against the promotion of a non-Muslim. It did not indulge in slandering other Muslim or Hindu states, but remained impartial to the religious strife between Hindus and Muslims ...[391]

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386 'Proceedings of the Scientific Society', quoted in ibid. (17-31)

387 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 19.

388 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 63. Describing this journal, Ghulam Shabir and Baber Khakan stated that it was not "a newspaper for bringing news of everyday occurrences to its readers," but rather, it "reflected Muslim sentiments and point of view on religious, social and political aspects of their lives." Ghulam Shabir and Baber Khakan, 'Growth and Development of the Muslim Press in the Sub-Continent', in *Journal of Research*, Faculty of Languages & Islamic Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan, Volume 7, 2005, pp. 69-76 , p. 70.

389 Ibid.

390 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 19.

391 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 36.

Within a short period of time after its foundation, the fruits of the efforts of the Scientific Society members could be seen on the ground. According to M. Y. Abbasi, about 25 books, from various subjects ranging from electricity to agriculture, were translated into Urdu.[392] Furthermore, membership to the Society, which initially did not exceed 227 members, passed on to 433 by 1866.[393]

With this increase in activity and staff, Sir Sayyid Ahmad thought it unwise to confine the work of the Scientific Society to the diffusion of modern knowledge by means of translation. Thus, a new objective was to be adopted by the members of the Society which included, among others, the improvement of agriculture in the South Asian Sub-continent. This, Sir Sayyid Ahmad thought, could be done by introducing the recently invented agricultural tools and instruments used in Europe.[394]

Indeed, in Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's opinion, Indian farmers had to acquaint themselves with the new methods and modern innovations in agronomy, and hence, towards this end, by September 1866, he asked the Colonial Government for a grant of land that the Society could use as an experimental farm.[395] In this respect, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stated that the Scientific Society would use the land in order:

> ... to improve the operations of husbandry and to introduce the European agricultural implements and machinery into India ... to set up and arrange those implements so as publicly to show their working to the people.[396]

These achievements were going to have a positive return on the Society.

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392 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 19.
393 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xiv. In this respect, some historians provided conflicting data as to the actual number of membership of the Scientific Society at the time of its foundation. For instance, whereas Shun Muhammad stated that there were about 227 members, T. Hasan mentioned that there were about 196 members, of which 107 were Muslims, 85 Hindus and 4 British. T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 33.
394 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xiv.
395 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 88.
396 Quoted in ibid.

Indeed, to Sir Sayyid Ahmad's satisfaction, the Scientific Society received a very positive welcome from the British authorities as well as from some local magnates, Muslims and Hindus alike.[397] For instance, as a token of recognition, the Colonial Government offered a piece of land to the Scientific Society so that the latter could set up its premises.[398] Moreover, even the Duke of Argyll, the then first Secretary of State for India, extended his patronage to the Society.[399]

With regard to local support, probably the most distinguished contribution came from Raja Jeykishen Dass, a local Hindu of high standing and influence who shared the same views with Sir Sayyid Ahmad. About Raja Jeykishen Dass, Shun Muhammad stated that "it would be no exaggeration to say that much of the success of the movement (i.e. the Scientific Society) was due to his indefatigable efforts."[400] Raja Jeykishen Dass and Sir Sayyid Ahmad were very close friends. This friendship was strengthened by the fact that Raja Jeykishen Dass really admired Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's liberal and humane approach on Hindu-Muslim interrelations.[401] He once wrote about this Muslim reformist:

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397 In this regard, H. Malik claimed that the Hindus made "sizable contributions to the construction fund of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh". H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Cambridge University Press, 1970, (pp. 129-147), p. 139. In a speech given on 4 February 1884, Sir Sayyid Ahmad appreciated the contribution of some Hindu magnates to the establishment of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College. He declared: "I am pleased to mention that the Hindu brethren have also assisted in our college and have met the requirements of their needy brethren as God-fearing men." Quoted in Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxvii.

398 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 19.

399 Ibid. According to M. Asadun, the reason why the British Colonial Government offered support to the Scientific Society was that the main task of the latter, namely the translation of Western texts, would facilitate the process of acculturation. M. Asaduddin, 'The West in the Nineteenth-Century Imagination: Some Reflections on the Transition from a Persianate Knowledge System to the Template of Urdu and English', in *www.urdustudies.com/pdf/18/08AsaduddinPersianate.pdf*, p. 53.

400 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xiv.

401 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 35.

*... when I saw him working with the poor and helpless, regardless of reli-
gion and race, treating everyone with the greatest sympathy, I was aston-
ished at the sincerity of this man. ... from that day my love and admira-
tion for him has never ceased.*[402]

Meanwhile, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's positive opinion about Western educa-
tion was further reinforced following the trip that he made to Britain in
1869, which had a great impact on him.[403] During his stay in London, Sir
Sayyid Ahmad was fascinated by the greatness and considerable refine-
ment of the British social life which, he believed, was as a result of the edu-
cation of both men and women.[404] In this regard, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wrote:

*All good things, spiritual and worldly, which should be found in man, have
been bestowed by the Almighty on Europe, and especially on England...
This is entirely due to the education of the men and women ...*[405]

He, then, added that "unless the education of the masses is pushed on as it
is here, it is impossible for a native to become civilized and honoured."[406]

Thus, upon his return to the South Asian Subcontinent in 1870, Sir
Sayyid Ahmad wanted to determine the root reasons behind the dispro-
portionately small number of Indian Muslims in Government schools and
colleges, compared to their Hindu fellow countrymen. Towards this end,
he organized a committee whose task was to find out, objectively, why his
co-religionists adopted a negative attitude towards the Government spon-
sored system of education and to put forward ways and means to pop-
ularize the study of Western sciences among the Muslim community.[407]

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402 Quoted in ibid. In this respect, M. Y. Abbasi asserted that in the beginning,
   Raja Jeykishen Dass was of the opinion that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was a bigoted
   Muslim; nevertheless, when he saw the selfless service rendered by him to
   the famine stricken people without any discrimination regarding their reli-
   gion, Raja Jeykishen Dass became convinced of his humanity. M. Y. Abbasi,
   op. cit., p. 65.
403 Commenting on Sir Sayyid Ahmad's trip to Britain, T. Hasan stated that it
   "would change his life forever." Ibid., p. 40.
404 S. Hay (Ed.), op. cit., p. 186.
405 Ibid., p. 187.
406 Ibid.
407 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op.
   cit., p. xix.

According to Dr Sanjay Seth, this committee, whose name was the 'Committee for the Better Diffusion and Advancement of Learning among Muhammadans of India' (in Urdu Khwastgaran-i-Talim-i-Musalman), invited essayists throughout the South Asian Subcontinent to write investigative reports about the just mentioned points;[408] in return, the three best reports would be honoured by awards.[409]

H. Malik asserted that 32 essays in total were submitted to the Select Committee, which was composed of 19 members, with Sir Sayyid Ahmad as its secretary.[410] After carefully scrutinizing the submissions, the Select Committee ended up with a set of findings that were very similar to Sir Sayyid Ahmad's views.[411]

To begin with, most of the essayists agreed on the fact that the Indian Muslims objected to sending their sons to British sponsored schools due to the failure of the latter to dispense religious instructions, particularly in the elementary education.[412] As a matter of fact, in pre-British India, Muslim children always started their learning process with the Holy Quran and some other rituals for prayers.[413] Nevertheless, under British rule, this was discontinued in public schools in favour of the introduction of Christian scriptures, a move that worried Indian Muslims a great deal.[414]

Meanwhile, the majority of the essayists were against the idea of introducing religious instruction in Government maintained schools lest it be distorted and "false notions" of Islam be produced.[415] However, they deemed it necessary to make private arrangements for the study of Islam,

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408 Sanjay Seth, 'Constituting the 'Backward but Proud Muslim': Pedagogy, Governmentality and Identity in Colonial India', in *Beyond Representation: Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Indian Identity*, Crispin Bates (ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p. 58.

409 The committee offered cash prizes of Rs.500, Rs.300 and Rs.150 for the three best essays. H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op.cit., p. 126.

410 Ibid.

411 Ibid.

412 Ibid., p. 128.

413 Ibid.

414 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xix.

415 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 128.

given the fact that the English education could eventuate disbelief in this religion among the young Muslim boys.[416] Commenting on this point, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stated that "he had never yet met a man who knew English and who had still full respect for all the religious beliefs and venerations."[417] To back up his statement, Sir Sayyid Ahmad quoted Sir William Wilson Hunter as saying: "The luxurious religions of Asia shrivel into dry sticks when brought into contact with the icy realities of Western sciences."[418]

Furthermore, it was commonly assumed among the majority of those who had submitted their essays to the Select Committee that the kind of education brought by the British would corrupt the morals and behaviour of the young Muslim students as well as bring about the absence of traditional politeness and courtesy among them.[419] In this respect, H. Malik remarked that "humility, good breeding, and respect for the elders and superiors were replaced by pride, haughtiness, and impudence."[420] The essayists attributed this change in the comportment of the Indian Muslim students to the fact that teachers could hardly manage to have enough time to inculcate in their students good manners and moral principles.[421] As a remedial action to this situation, the essayists suggested the appointment of good-mannered teachers.[422]

Some of the essayists attributed the almost total absence of the Muslim students from the Government maintained schools to the economic backwardness and widespread poverty among the Muslim community.[423] However, the Select Committee cast doubt on this idea and commented that " 'if Muslims could lavish large sums in the celebration of absurd and unreasonable ceremonies connected with their children,'

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416 Sanjay Seth, 'Constituting the 'Backward but Proud Muslim': Pedagogy, Governmentality and Identity in Colonial India', op. cit., p. 59.
417 Quoted in H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 128.
418 Ibid.
419 Ibid., p. 128.
420 Ibid., p. 129.
421 Ibid.
422 Ibid.
423 Sanjay Seth, 'Constituting the 'Backward but Proud Muslim': Pedagogy, Governmentality and Identity in Colonial India', op. cit., pp. 59-60.

then why could they not 'lay aside only one half of such sums for the education of their children?' "[424]

Actually, this opinion of the Select Committee was backed up by other essayists who assumed that Muslim aloofness from Government educational institutions was a matter of mentality. In other words, some Muslim parents, particularly the rich ones, were too reluctant to send their sons to schools as they could afford their schooling at home. Others believed that Muslim upper-classes were generally inclined to luxury and regarded it as a degrading behaviour to send their sons to schools. Still others believed that the excessive love of Muslim parents to their sons made them too reluctant to send them to school. [425]

Apart from that, it is interesting to note the fact that a very few essayists, apparently applying the norm of population ratio, denied the assumption that the Indian Muslims were at all underrepresented in Government schools,[426] given the fact that the Muslim community constituted only a quarter of the inhabitants of the South Asian Subcontinent. As a matter of fact, this statement was supported in some quarters in the Colonial Government. For instance, Kempson, the then Director of Public Instruction in colonial India, considered it to be normal to have a paucity of Muslim attendance in Government maintained schools when compared to the Hindu attendance because of the fact that the Muslim community was largely outnumbered by the Hindus.[427]

According to H. Malik, in order to substantiate his opinion, Kempson based his argument on the data provided by the 1870 census. Referring to the Northwest Provinces as an illustration, Kempson stated that the proportion of Muslims to Hindus in this region was 14 percent, whereas in Government schools they made up between 15 and 16 percent of the total number. Moreover, at other unaided schools, Muslims represented 32

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424 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 130.
425 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xix.
426 Sanjay Seth, 'Constituting the 'Backward but Proud Muslim': Pedagogy, Governmentality and Identity in Colonial India', op. cit., p. 58.
427 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 138.

percent of the total number of students.[428] Nonetheless, the Select Committee was swift in discarding these essayists' views based on Muslim-Hindu ratio, and revealed that "Government itself admits the fact and is in search of a remedy."[429]

Thus, having recognized the main reasons behind the Muslims' objection to the Western educational system, Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers, determined more than ever to reconcile their co-religionists with the modern education, came up with a programme whereby Muslim students could learn Western education without affecting Islamic teachings.[430] This led them, initially, to embark on a nationwide campaign to collect funds in order to set up a modern educational institution,[431] where, in the words of G. Ali Khan, "Muslims might acquire an English education without prejudice to their religion."[432]

To Sir Sayyid Ahmad's satisfaction, this could be fulfilled by 1875 in Aligarh, where a Muslim college, known as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College,[433] was founded. In this college, both Islamic and Western studies were to be offered.[434] About this institution, Sharif al Mujahid wrote:

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428 Ibid.
429 'Report of the Members of the Select Committee for the Better Diffusion and Advancement of Learning Among the Muhammadans of India', in Shan Muhammad (ed), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents, 1864-1898*, vol. II, Meerut and New Delhi: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1978, p. 339. In this respect, Sanjay Seth affirmed that there was, indeed, an official endorsement by the Colonial Government as to Muslim backwardness in education. To back up his statement, he quoted Lord Mayo (Vice Roy of India 1869-1872) who stated in a Viceregal Note : "There is no doubt that as regards the Muhammadan population, our present system of education is, to a great extent, a failure." Sanjay Seth, 'Constituting the 'Backward but Proud Muslim': Pedagogy, Governmentality and Identity in Colonial India', op. cit., pp. 58-59.
430 R. Symonds, op. cit., p. 29.
431 Sir Sayyid Ahmad's fund-raising campaign was very fruitful. According to M. A. Karandikar, besides the Muslim and Hindu upper-classes, the British as well as the local princes also contributed to the funds. M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 143.
432 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 64.
433 By the first quarter of the twentieth century, this College became known as the Aligarh University. R. Symonds, op. cit., p. 29.
434 S. Hay (Ed.), op. cit., p. 182.

The College was designed to give the Muslim youth the benefits of modern education without impairing their faith, to meet their prejudice against missionary schools, and to redress their complaint of the absence of a steadying moral code in the universities.[435]

According to Ruswan, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was made up of two departments: English and Oriental. In the first department all subjects were taught in the English language, whereas Arabic and Persian were taught as a second language. On the other hand, in the second department, some subjects like literature and history were taught in Arabic and Persian, whereas other subjects, like geography, mathematics, arts and sciences, were taught in Urdu. In this department, English was only taught as a second language.[436]

Meanwhile, in the religious sphere, Muslim students in this new college were required to perform the five prayers on a daily basis and to fast the whole month of Ramadan. In addition, they were also involved in Islamic festivities such as the celebration of the Prophet Mohammed's birthday and both holy feasts, namely Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha.[437] Thus, it is obvious that Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers, while conceiving the blueprint for this college, had in mind the idea of re-inculcating Islamic fundamentals into the Muslim students. Commenting on this statement, Ruswan stated that:

All of the academic and religious instruction was geared to providing students with a sense of Muslim identity, something which had deteriorated under British rule.[438]

By the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, which received the "blessings" of the Colonial Government,[439] Sir Sayyid Ahmad's objectives were

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435 Sharif al Mujahid, 'Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Muslim renaissance', in *http://www.dawn.com/events/pml/review39.htm*

436 Ruswan, *Colonial Experience and Muslim Educational Reforms: A Comparison of the Aligarh and the Muhammadiya Movements*, McGill University, unpublished MA thesis, Montreal, 1997, pp. 35-36.

437 Ibid., pp. 36-37.

438 Ibid., p. 37.

439 As a token of recognition and appreciation of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's achievement, Lord Lytton, the then Viceroy of British India, laid the foundation stone of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1877. S. Hay (ed.), op. cit., p. 182.

twofold: on the one hand, he wanted this college to produce candidates who would be able to compete with the rest of the communities in South Asia for higher positions in the Government service;[440] and on the other hand, he wanted to see future Muslim leaders who would be as capable as the Hindu majority and take the defence of the Muslim community.[441] Sir Sayyid Ahmad's ultimate ideal was to see in his community young people imbibed with European ideas and principles and fervent believers in Islam at the same time. As reflected in his words:

> The aim of the [Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental] college was "to form a class of persons, Muhammadan in religion, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, and in intellect.[442]

Meanwhile, this college was to be a true replica of Oxford and Cambridge Colleges. In other words, as he had seen in Britain, Sir Sayyid Ahmad intended this college to be residential, on the Oxford and Cambridge model, where students could study and live at the same time.[443] In this regard, Ruswan wrote:

> ... the college was equipped with dormitory-style accommodations, where hostel authorities provided all furniture, even bedding and servants, so that students did not need to bring anything from home.[444]

Actually, Sir Sayyid Ahmad insisted on the fact that students should remain on campus, away from their homes, during the whole academic term. In reality, according to Shun Muhammad, the reason behind the imposition of this system was that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was convinced of the fact that "parental affection generally marred the progress of these boys."[445] In the meantime, G. Ali Khan affirmed that Sir Sayyid Ahmad set

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440 Regarding this objective Sir Sayyid Ahmad was reassured. In his opinion, the graduates of this college would be welcomed in Government positions because of the presence of the Viceroy and the Governor of the province at the college's annual ceremonies. R. Symonds, op. cit., p. 29.

441 Ibid., pp. 29-30.

442 Quoted in M. Asaduddin, op. cit., p. 45.

443 R. Symonds, op. cit., p. 29.

444 Ruswan, op. cit., p. 37.

445 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xix.

up a boarding house on the premises of the college so that parents could be reassured that their children's conduct would be carefully supervised.[446] Lending support to this statement, Ruswan stated that:

> This residential system enabled authorities to monitor and isolate the students' daily activities from outside influences which might impede their studies.[447]

Here, it is interesting to note that in spite of the fact that this College was initially conceived to help the Indian Muslims to acquire modern education in order to overtake the other Indian communities, notably the Hindus, Sir Sayyid Ahmad by no means intended it to be communal in character, that is, only exclusively catering for the Muslim community.[448] This could be seen in the first chapter of the laws of this college, which made it clear that:

> The object of the college shall be primarily the education of the Mohammedans, and so far as may be consistent, therewith, of Hindus and other persons.[449]

Indeed, according to S. Hay, the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College was open to all Indian communities, including Hindus, whose caste-related dietary customs were duly respected.[450] Commenting on the non-communal character of this College, T. Hasan stated that it was "marked by remarkable bonhomie and fraternal feelings." Then he added: "Relations between Hindus and Muslims were excellent. ... This spirit of goodwill between Hindu and Muslim students was a natural outcome of the liberal spirit of the founding fathers of this institution."[451]

With regard to the rationale behind this openness, Ruswan asserted that Sir Sayyid Ahmad could not refuse admission to non-Muslims, par-

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446 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 64.
447 Ruswan, op. cit., p. 37.
448 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 59.
449 Quoted in ibid.
450 S. Hay (Ed.), op. cit., p. 182.
451 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 59.

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ticularly Hindus, since the latter had significantly contributed, financially as well as materially, to the founding of this College.[452]

Apart from that, it is worth noting the fact that not everybody could afford to enter this College due to the high registration fees that students were required to pay upon entrance. Indeed, only students from higher classes and nobility in society could set foot there.[453] According to Ruswan, this elitist approach was adopted by the College administration on purpose in order to, on the one hand, make education more valuable, and on the other hand, to create a Muslim elite.[454] In Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opinion, the aim of this institution was the creation of future leaders of the Muslim community, and this could only be achieved "if the Muslim aristocracy sent their sons to the college."[455] Corroborating this statement, H. Malik wrote:

> Sir Sayyid abandoned the Mughal India's concept of egalitarian mass education, and adopted instead Britain's pragmatic but aristocratic policy of advanced and elitist education.[456]

In a word, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was a monument that embodied Sir Sayyid Ahmad's ideas with regard to Western education. In fact, he was wise enough to see through the danger that threatened the Muslim community unless the latter took to education. For him, the only way to bridge the wide gap and thaw the icy relations that existed between his co-religionists and the colonizers was to take to Western education. In his view, the latter would equip them with the necessary tools to communicate efficiently with the British as well as to make progress; as confirmed in the speech that he delivered on the occasion of the founding of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College:

> 1 have invariably come to the conclusion that the absence of the community of feeling between the two races, was due to the absence of the community of ideas and the community of interests. And, gentlemen, I felt

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452 Ruswan, op. cit., p. 39.
453 Ibid., p. 38.
454 Ibid.
455 Ibid.
456 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 101.

equally certain that so long as this state of things continued, the Mussal-
mans of India could make no progress under the English rule. It then ap-
peared to me that nothing could remove these obstacles to progress but
education.[457]

III. Socio-religious Reform

Meanwhile, it was during his seventeen-month stay in Britain, where he was deeply perplexed by the striking contrast between the British and Indian societies, that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was drawn to social and religious reform among his community. According to G. Ali Khan, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's trip to Britain made him come to the conclusion that the only panacea for the ills and sufferings of the Muslim community in South Asia was to help them overcome their religious prejudice which, in his view, had so far served as a barrier that hindered their progress.[458]

This prompted him to embark on a large-scale reformist campaign among the Muslims of India, which was characterized, in the main, by the launching of a journal entitled Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq, that is, 'Refinement of Morals or Social Reformer', shortly after his return from Britain.[459] According to M. Y. Abbasi, Sir Sayyid Ahmad set up this journal, which was published in Urdu, with the intention to develop the moral standards of his co-religionists to the "highest degree of civilization," and to effect a "fundamental religious, moral and social reform."[460]

In reality, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's idea of launching Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq was prompted by the fact that he was influenced to a great extent by two British magazines, the Tadler and the Spectator, which had previously played a significant role in refining the morals of the British society in the eighteenth century.[461] According to Shun Muhammad, both the Tadler and the Spectator had been edited by the reform-minded Addison

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457 Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'Speech at the Founding of the Anglo-Oriental College', in Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. 129.
458 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 63.
459 Sharif al Mujahid, op. cit.
460 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 21.
461 Sharif al Mujahid, op. cit.

and Steel, who had previously been confronted with the same conditions in their society as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan.[462]

Hence, in order to carry through the objective to which he pledged himself, namely the elevation of the Indian Muslims' morals and manners to the apogee of refinement, Sir Sayyid Ahmad filled the pages of the Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq with articles in which he levelled heavy criticisms at some "old-fashioned" and "disgusting" customs, which were, at that time, rampant among the Muslim community.[463] Indeed, he wanted to purify his co-religionists from the many un-Islamic folkways and mores as well as the religious superstitions which emanated from the Hindu community.[464]

Probably the most notable among these customs was the practice of Purdah.[465] The latter, literally meaning "curtain" or "screen", was the practice of secluding women from the rest of society by means of making them wear long clothing, from head to toe, and by keeping them within high walls or curtains set up in the house.[466] In this regard, Sir Sayyid Ahmad pleaded with the Muslims of India to do away with this practice. In his view, like men, women should also take part in the development of their society and should receive education.[467]

Besides, Sir Sayyid Ahmad went to the extent of appealing to the Muslim community to adopt Western culture, while remaining truly faithful to the fundamentals of Islam, and to imitate the British in their lifestyles.[468] According to M. Y. Abbasi, as a token of his admiration for West-

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462 Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. xviii.

463 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 32.

464 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Doctrine of Muslim Nationalism and National Progress', op. cit., p. 226.

465 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 143.

466 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition. The purdah practice was very important in the Muslim community in the Subcontinent. As confirmed by Masood A. Raja, who quoted Nazeer Ahmad, an Indian Muslim novelist, stating in a letter to his son: "The entire edifice of our (social) character depends upon the purdah. The day women lose this emphasis on purdah, the entire building will collapse." Masood A. Raja, op. cit., p. 103.

467 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 143.

468 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 262.

ern culture, Sir Sayyid Ahmad himself began wearing a "modified version of the tailcoat worn by the English aristocracy and the red fez which he adopted from the Turks."[469]

This Muslim reformist made it obligatory for students at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College to wear English trousers, a Turkish long-fitting coat, and a fez.[470] In this respect, H. Malik stated that Sir Sayyid Ahmad believed that:

> Between the East and West the Turkish dress was a happy compromise, since he saw the Turks as the most Westernized and advanced of all Muslim nations.[471]

Indeed, for Sir Sayyid Ahmad, Turkey was the best model that embodied the ideals of the kind of Muslim nation that he, and his followers, aspired to found in the South Asian Sub-continent.

In the same regard, H. Malik asserted that Sir Sayyid Ahmad went so far as to urge his co-religionists to adopt "European table manners."[472] Actually, Sir Sayyid Ahmad asserted that the current eating habits of the Muslims of India would make any civilized person feel like vomiting.[473] Furthermore, he believed that these eating habits were not Islamic in character and suggested that his co-religionists should learn how to eat using knives and forks. In his view, this "amounted to emulating the prophetic sunna, since the Prophet Muhammad was known to have cut meat with a knife."[474]

In addition to that, according to H. Malik, for Sir Sayyid Ahmad, sitting at the dinner table was an "acceptable innovation" which could by no means be considered as a bida'a, or an impious innovation. This, Sir Sayyid Ahmad believed, was because Muslims had previously been used to eating using pottery and china dishes, "a possibility unknown to the Prophet."[475]

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469 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 32.
470 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 265.
471 Ibid.
472 Ibid., p. 262.
473 Ibid., p. 264.
474 Ibid.
475 Ibid.

Meanwhile, Sir Sayyid Ahmad castigated his co-religionists for the practice of squandering uselessly and foolishly their meagre income on occasions of happiness. He suggested that this extravagant spending to demonstrate family prestige could be "converted to national uplift."[476] By the latter, he was alluding to the funding of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College.

In a few words, in the Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq, Sir Sayyid Ahmad touched upon all social aspects of the Muslim day-to-day life. Sharif al Mujahid described this journal in the following words:

> In the Tehzib, Sir Syed donned the role of "a born moralist" who would never tire of expatiating on what people should do and shouldn't. His writings included a delineation and advocacy of such basic things as civilization, education and training, women's status and rights, female and child education. He raised his voice against anti-social customs and corrupt practices, the prevalent treatment of the womenfolk, prejudice and reactionism, flattery and hero-worship, superstition and legendary beliefs. He described in detail the standard behaviour pattern in a civilized society: how to eat, dress, and behave, what to borrow creatively and eclectically from the civilized nations and what not, the values and social mindset that characterize a civilized people.[477]

In the religious sphere, Sir Sayyid Ahmad used Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq in order to popularize his new outlook regarding the Islamic faith. He was of the opinion that Islam would be completely obliterated from the South Asian Subcontinent if nothing is done to reform the obsolete religious ideas and practices of the Muslim community.[478] In a letter to a friend of his, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stated point-blank:

> I state it unambiguously: if people do not break with 'taqlid' and do not seek (especially) that light which is gained from Quran and Hadith and if

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476 Ibid.
477 Sharif al Mujahid, op. cit.
478 Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. xviii.

they are going to prove unable to confront religion with present-day scholarship and science, then Islam will disappear from India.[479]

Furthermore, according to Shun Mohammad, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the opinion that Islam in India was "too traditional", and this could lead the new generations to take to heresy.[480]

With this view in mind, Sir Sayyid Ahmad urged the Muslim community to adopt a rational approach towards their religion. In his opinion, the Islamic faith, when looked at objectively, was definitely compatible with Victorian values and ideals.[481]

In the meantime, Sir Sayyid Ahmad undertook the task of reinterpreting the Holy Quran by writing Tafseer-e-Quran (Commentary on the Quran). The rationale behind this endeavour was to prove to the Muslims of India the fact that, contrary to what some conservative Muslims asserted, Islam had never been opposed to reason and modern sciences.[482] Commenting on this statement, M. A. Karandikar stated that Sir Sayyid Ahmad "started writing a new commentary on the Koran for a fresh understanding of the Word of God in the light of the requirements of the modern society."[483]

Indeed, Sir Sayyid Ahmad had firmly held the idea that the essence of the Islamic faith was nothing but reason. To corroborate this view, it is useful to quote this Muslim reformer, who declared that:

All these thoughts have taught me that the generally held doctrine that reason has nothing to do with faith and religion is certainly mistaken and when I found Islam to be in full correspondence with reason I became even more convinced and certain that Islam is true and this doctrine wrong.[484]

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479 Quoted in Tariq Hasan, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
480 Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. xviii.
481 R. Symonds, op. cit., p. 29.
482 Shun Mohammed (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, op. cit., p. xviii. In this respect, H. Malik stated that "science and technology strengthened Islamic convictions since Islam was not dialectically opposed to reason." H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 266.
483 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 143.
484 T. Hasan, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

It should be noted that by adopting a rationalistic approach to the Islamic teachings, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was one of those who championed, among the Muslim community, the idea of liberal ijtihad, that is, the process of making legal decisions by independent interpretation of the religious sources, namely the Holy Quran and the sunna of the Prophet Mohammed, (PBUH).[485] To put it in different words, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wanted his co-religionists to exercise liberal ijtihad by interpreting and forming new opinions about these religious sources by applying analogy.[486] On the other hand, he urged his co-religionists to reject the taqlid, that is, submission to traditional authority by blindly imitating or relying on old interpretations.[487]

Agreeing with Sir Sayyid Ahmad, the twentieth-century French scholar, Fernand Braudel, asserted that the Holy Quran itself opens the door for ijtihad and, above all, allows people to make personal effort of interpretation. To back up his statement, Fernand Braudel referred in his work to another modern French scholar, Pierre Rondot, who wrote:

> The Prophet is deemed to have foreseen cases where the Koran or the 'sounna' (tradition) give no guidance: in which instances he recommended reasoning by analogy or 'qiyas'; and if that could not be done, then one should submit all possible precedents to one's judgement and vision or 'ray'.[488]

Indeed, for Sir Sayyid Ahmad, the door of ijtihad, which he believed was very important for the progress of the Muslim society, was not closed as some orthodox ulama would say.[489] Simultaneously, he admitted its (ijtihad) decline, which he attributed to the founding of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the Hanbali, Hanafi, Shafi'i and Maliki.[490] Commenting on this statement, H. Malik affirmed that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was

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485 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 62.
486 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., pp. 6-7.
487 Ibid., p. 7.
488 F. Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1995, p. 99.
489 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 62.
490 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Doctrine of Muslim Nationalism and National Progress', op. cit., pp. 243-244.

of the view that "people began to follow the four Imams blindly and became lost in the labyrinth of taqlid (imitation)."[491]

On the other hand, by reinterpreting the Holy Quran, Sir Sayyid Ahmad embarked on a process of reforming some irrational dogmas belonging to the Muslim community. In doing so, he pleaded with his co-religionists to discard certain religious rituals and practices which used to be sanctioned in the Islamic tradition.[492]

Polygamy, for instance, or the custom of having more than one wife at the same time, was subject to deploration from this Muslim reformer. According to H. Malik, he assumed that the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) had every intention of progressively getting rid of this matrimonial phenomenon.[493] In other words, Sir Sayyid Ahmad believed that the Prophet Mohammed's real and ultimate objective was to establish a monogamous Muslim society.[494] In forming this opinion, Sir Sayyid Ahmad drew his conclusions from the third verse of the Sura 4 (an-Nisa') in the Holy Quran which states:

> If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.[495]
>
> (The Holy Quran, Sura 4 (an-Nisa'), verse 3

In this respect, C. Horrie and P. Chippindale, in an obvious agreement with Sir Sayyid Ahmad, assumed that the practice of polygamy in Islam was a matter of expediency at the time of the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) as large numbers of Muslim men were killed in the battlefield while defending their faith. Hence, C. Horrie and P. Chippindale concluded, poly-

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491 Ibid., p. 244.
492 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 263.
493 Ibid.
494 Ibid., pp. 263-264.
495 Quoted in ibid., p. 264.

gamy was "legalized specifically to take care of the large number of widows likely to be left behind."[496]

Aside from that, according to H. Malik, Sir Sayyid Ahmad assumed that Islam ought to be reinterpreted and renovated in order to free it from those irrational accretions that had previously been added by some Muslim theologians.[497] This made him confront some local clergy, mainly those who were at loggerheads with him over his reformist tendencies. For instance, he once wrote Maulvi Sahab, a famous local Maulvi, a letter in which he castigated him for not presenting Islam in its true picture:

> We take refuge in God from such futilities. If this truly is Islam then the tales of demons and fairies are better a thousand times. My Reverend Maulvi Sahab, by reaffirming such absurdities you are not at all a well-wisher of Islam but quite clearly harm it and denigrate its name by (attributing to it) things which do not correspond to the truth. … many wrong traditions and opinions have been mixed up with Islam which in truth are not Islam, remove them from Islam as you remove the fly from the milk.[498]

Hence, in Sir Sayyid Ahmad's view, some religious practices should be discontinued as they could no longer be applied to the nineteenth century circumstances.[499] This standpoint led him, strange as it seemed, to the extent of rejecting the Hadith (sayings or traditions) of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and the Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), which in his view, using M. A. Karandikar's phraseology, were "relevant to the society a thousand years ago and were no longer valid."[500]

To put it differently, Tariq Hasan assumed the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad, without any disrespect or challenge to the fundamental principles of the Islamic faith, wanted his co-religionists to re-interpret some of their religious instructions according to the demands of the time.[501] In-

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496 C. Horrie and P. Chippindale, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
497 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 266.
498 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 52.
499 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 144.
500 Ibid.
501 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 49.

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deed, such was the objective behind Sir Sayyid Ahmad's writing of Khutbat-i-Ahmadiya (already referred to in the previous chapter), in which he made "an impassioned plea for taking a fresh look at the 'Hadith' to check their authenticity."[502]

With regard to the authenticity of the 'Hadiths', Sir Sayyid Ahmad believed that most of them remained unwritten during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and the Khulafa-i-Rashidin, the early four Caliphs.[503] However, in his opinion, when an attempt was made to write down these traditions by the second century, different political and social circumstances prevailed which contributed to the distortion, in the name of the Holy Prophet, of many of these traditions.[504] Consequently, this led Sir Sayyid Ahmad to impugn the origin of these Prophetic traditions and put into question their authenticity.[505] Corroborating this statement, Francis Robinson asserted that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the view that the reliability of the Hadiths must be judged "in the light of reason and their relationship to Quranic injunctions rather than in that of the soundness of their chain of narrators."[506]

According to H. Malik, Sir Sayyid Ahmad believed that about 14,000 traditions were invented by the Zindiqs, those who had strayed so far from mainstream Islamic beliefs. Moreover, Sir Sayyid Ahmad also contended that these irrational and fabricated traditions attributed to the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) were deliberately spread by infidels with the intention of ridiculing Islam.[507]

According to Tariq Hasan, Sir Sayyid Ahmad decided not to trust any hadith which "did not accord with the letter and spirit of the Quran and satisfy rational standards."[508] Commenting on this statement, S. Hay wrote:

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502 Ibid.
503 The appellation 'Caliph' (or Khalifa) literally means the deputy of Allah or commander of the faithful (i.e. the Muslims). A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p. xii. The early four Caliphs were Abu Bakr Seddik, Omar Ibn Khattab, Othman Ibn Affan and Ali Ibn Abi Taleb.
504 Ibid., p. 56.
505 Ibid.
506 Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p. 89.
507 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 270.
508 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 56.

Rejecting the authority of the traditional scholars, and of the sayings (hadith) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, Syed Ahmed relied on his own judgement as he examined and compared the actual words in the Qur'an itself.[509]

In this regards, basing his arguments on the works of his predecessor Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlavi,[510] Sir Sayyid Ahmad pointed out that unsound and fabricated Hadith could be detected if tested by the following standard:

A tradition is, no doubt, false if it is contrary to established historical facts, or narrated by an enemy (of the Prophet Muhammad of Islam), or deals with such religious obligations which should be known ... or contravenes the Shari'a, defies human intelligence and is contrary to a contemporary standard of comprehension. A tradition is false if it describes an event which in the case of its occurrence should have been witnessed by thousands of persons, but is narrated by only one individual.[511]

Meanwhile, in an attempt to make the Muslim community of India aware of these false Prophetic traditions, Sir Sayyid Ahmad published some of them in one of the issues of Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq.[512] For the sake of illustration, it is worthwhile to mention a few examples: the Hadith contending that the naming of children after the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), that is, Mohammed or Ahmed, was a meritorious and a pious act was by no means an authentic one; the Hadith that placed a higher premium on some Suras of the Holy Quran over others was baseless; the Hadith stating that the cutting of meat for eating with a knife was prohibited by Islamic law was untrue; lastly, the Hadith stating that a Muslim who could afford to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca and refused to do so would die the death of a non-Muslim was an unsound statement.[513]

To sum it up, Sir Sayyid Ahmad evolved a mélange of the moral ideas

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509 S. Hay (Ed.), op. cit., pp. 182-183.
510 Shah Abdul Aziz Delhavi was the eldest son of Shah Walyi Allah Delhavi (already mentioned in the previous chapter). He was a great scholar of *Hadith* in India.
511 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan,* op. cit., pp. 269-270.
512 Ibid., p. 270.
513 Ibid., pp. 271-272.

and attitudes that belong to the Western world with his Islamic heritage. He used his works and writings as a means to inculcate into the Muslim community the desire to embrace a new approach to life, "Islamic in roots, but adjustable to modern requirements."[514] In addition to that, he strongly believed that the Islamic religion and Western liberalism could go hand in hand since the Word of Allah, characterized by the Holy Qur-an, was in perfect conformity with the natural laws that were being discovered by modern sciences.[515] In a word, Sir Mohammad Iqbal, a twentieth-century Urdu poet and philosopher, described Sir Sayyid Ahmad as "the first Indian Muslim who felt the need of a fresh orientation of Islam and worked for it."[516]

IV. Reaction to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Reform Movement

It was not an easy task for the followers of the Aligarh Movement to preach their modernist ideas and tendencies amongst the Muslims of the Subcontinent. In fact, they faced strong opposition, notably from the most influential sections of the Muslim community. In addition to that, their educational and socio-religious reformist policies raised strong controversies and, in some instances, received acrimonious remarks and vehement criticism, mainly from the traditionalist ulama and the most conservative elements of the society.[517]

For instance, one of those major themes championed by this reformist movement, which was subject to scathing attack from different angles, was the philosophy of loyalism to the British rulers. Indeed, notwithstanding the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad's pro-British attitude was rationally justified, he was often dubbed as a "sycophant" or a "toady", who sought to ingratiate himself with the colonizers in order to gain some favours.[518]

With regard to his liberal views on education, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was

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514 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 63.
515 K. Armstrong, op. cit., p. 128.
516 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 45.
517 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., pp. xviii-xix.
518 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 21.

severely criticized by some orthodox Muslims, and sometimes even threatened,[519] for having gone too far in accepting Western ideas and ways of living.[520] Commenting on this, M. Asaduddin stated that

> Syed Ahmad Khan often carried his enthusiasm for Western manners and morals to a fine excess for which he was severely criticized.[521]

In addition to that, some of his critics used to believe that the trip that he made to Britain in 1869 made him completely overwhelmed by what he saw there.[522] This eventually made him in their eyes, as Tariq Hasan put it, go "overboard in his admiration for the West."[523] This admiration for the Western values and traits could be reflected in the fact that he adopted moderate views on Muslim-Christian socializing, such as inter-dining, which was one of the thorniest issues among the Muslims of India at the time.[524]

Indeed, some of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's critics believed that his trip to Britain rendered him "obsessed with the desire to recreate all he had seen in Europe."[525] This widespread assumption among some conservative elements in the Muslim community was to lead, as affirmed by Tariq Hasan, to the spreading of a rumour throughout the Sub-continent, while he was in Britain, stating that this Muslim reformist would return from there as an "actual convert to Christianity."[526]

Consequently, this weighed heavily on the minds of many upper class Muslim families who showed some reluctance to send their sons to study at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, lest their sons be indoctrinated with Sir Sayyid Ahmad's corrupt ideas. Nevertheless, according to Tariq Hasan, these Muslim families did accept to send their sons to this college but only after being reassured that they would not interact with

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519 G. Ali Khan, op. cit., p. 63.
520 S. Hay (Ed.), op. cit., p. 182.
521 M. Asaduddin, op. cit., p. 51.
522 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 43.
523 Ibid.
524 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xx.
525 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 43.
526 Ibid.

this Muslim reformist, namely Sir Sayyid Ahmad.[527] Meanwhile, by the same token, Francis Robinson asserted that the Indian Muslims went to the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College "in spite of rather than because of Sayyid Ahmad's views."[528]

H. Malik bears witness to the fact that the opponents of the Aligarh movement did not oppose modern education per se, but what they opposed was Sir Sayyid Ahmad's innovative doctrines in their faith, which they vehemently disapproved of.[529] In fact, this modern reformist's liberal interpretation of the Holy Quran and his frontal attack on the "traditionalist" aspect of Islam in South Asia incurred him the wrath of the most conservative clergy. Moreover, his criticism of some religious rituals and practices pertaining to the Muslims of India triggered off a wave of opprobrium.[530] According to T. Hasan, some of his opponents went to the extent of describing him as the 'devil's representative',[531] and in some instances he was referred to as a 'kafir', meaning unbeliever.[532]

Added to that, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's pioneering commentary on the Bible (Tabyin al-Kalam Fi Tafsir al-Tawrat wa al-Injil Ala Millat al-Islam), in which he laid emphasis on the similarities and closeness between both monotheistic religions, Islam and Christianity, was equally subject to bitter opposition from a group of the ulama and maulvis. This was even exacerbated following his rejection of the idea that the original text of the Bible had been tampered with.[533] According to Shun Muhammad, this made this section of disaffected ulama and maulvis refer to him as an aide to Christian missionaries.[534] In this respect, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's contemporary and biographer, Atlaf Hussain Hali, said:

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527 Ibid., p. 48.

528 F. Robinson, 'The Muslim world and the British Empire', in W.R. Louis and J.M. Brown (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, (pp. 398-420), p. 414.

529 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 200.

530 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xx.

531 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 47.

532 Ibid., p. 30.

533 Ibid., p. 30.

534 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xx.

This commentary went against the grain of the 'ulama' of Islam for the reason that it denied interpolation or interference with the original text, and also because no Muslim before Sir Sayyid had considered writing such a work.[535]

The reaction to Sir Sayyid Ahmad's movement was swift and strong. Some furious ulama and maulvis, mainly those who would not "budge an inch from their traditionalism",[536] issued fatwas, or religious doctrinal decisions, in order to discredit his reformist movement in the eyes of the Muslims of India, as well as declare that its innovations were corrupting the Muslim youth.[537]

According to Shun Muhammad, while Sir Sayyid Ahmad was raising funds for the founding of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, one of the infuriated maulvis went to the extent of travelling to the Arabian Peninsular in order to have a fatwa against this movement and this educational institution signed by the head-priest of Mecca.[538] In this respect, Atlaf Hussain Hali reported verbatim the contents of this fatwa as saying:

In this case no assistance is allowable to the institution. May God destroy it and its Founder. No Mohammedan is allowed to give assistance to or countenance the establishment of such an institution. It is, moreover, the duty of the faithful to destroy it if it is established and to chastise to the utmost those who are friendly to it.[539]

In the meantime, in an attempt to thwart Sir Sayyid Ahmad's influence among the Muslim community, two local clerics, Maulvi Imdad Ali and Ali Buksh, resorted to the launching of new papers in opposition to Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq.[540] Through these papers these two maulvis, on behalf of the

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535 Quoted in A. Ahmad, op. cit., p. 57.

536 Ibid., p. xxi.

537 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 21.

538 Shun Muhammad stated that this 'fatwa' was distributed among the Muslims of India free of charge. Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxi.

539 Quoted in, T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 31. According to H. Malik, a similar *fatwa* was obtained from the jurists of Medina. H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 202.

540 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xx.

traditionalists ulama, brought into question, among others, the legitimacy of supporting a college whose founder, namely Sir Sayyid Ahmad, was:

> a 'deviant' Muslim educator, who would not create 'true' Muslim students, and the latter could not possibly escape exposure to Sir Sayyid's 'un-Islamic' ideas.[541]

In addition to all that, opposition to Sir Sayyid Ahmad knew no boundaries. His works and statements, particularly religious, drew fierce criticism even from outside the South Asian Subcontinent. For instance, his attempt to establish an identical unity between Islam and Christianity drew a great deal of criticism from many Western Christian clergymen, who, besides opposing this idea of religious unity, were also incensed by this reformist's statements that modern Christian belief in the Trinity, the Atonement and the denial of the last of the Prophets, namely the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), was erroneous.[542]

Another example depicting foreign opposition to Sir Sayyid Ahmad was the one coming from the nineteenth century Muslim progressive reformist, Sayyid Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1838-1897), an Arab born in Afghanistan.[543] The latter wrote a series of articles in which he launched an attack on the approach that Sir Sayyid Ahmad adopted in his reformist movement. In fact, being anti-British, Sayyid Jamal al-din al-Afghani regarded Sir Sayyid Ahmad's educational and religious reform scheme as "ancillary to his political servitude to British interest in India."[544] Hence, this obviously reflects the fact that al-Afghani was bitterly opposed to the idea of loyalism to the British rulers that was preached by Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers.

On the other hand, Sayyid Jamal al-din al-Afghani was at loggerheads with some of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's religious ideas. In his view, Sir Sayyid Ahmad went to the extremes in his rationalism.[545] Furthermore, he poin-

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541 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 201.
542 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 30.
543 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 144.
544 A. Ahmad, op. cit., p. 56.
545 Ibid.

ted out that this extremist rationalism was nothing but a new heresy, that was "inspired and encouraged by a foreign Government in India."[546] The best article reflecting Jamal al-din al-Afghani's stance was the one that he published on 28 August 1884 in his journal al-Urwal al-Wuthqa (Paris), in which he wrote:

> Ahmad Khan écrivit un commentaire du Coran ; il intervertit les mots et falsifia ce que Dieu avait révélé.[547]

Nevertheless, in spite of such a vociferous and multi-faceted protest against his reformist movement, Sir Sayyid Ahmad, so convinced and confident of his new approach, continued preaching until the last days of his life. Besides, while facing this avalanche of tirades from the die-hards of his community, he kept reminding them that unless they kept pace with the time, their preaching would be to no avail.[548]

Before ending this chapter, it is important to note that notwithstanding the fact of being acutely conscious of the existence of more divergences than convergences that characterized the interrelationship between the Muslim and Hindu communities in South Asia, Sir Sayyid Ahmad had always been a champion of their unity, and in all walks of life.[549] Confirming this statement, Madhu Limaye asserted that this Muslim reformist was in favour of the integration of the Hindus and Muslims of India into one entity.[550]

Indeed, many contemporaries of Sir Sayyid Ahmad attested to the fact that he was an advocate of a composite Indian nation. He was in favour of fraternal relations between the Hindus and Muslims, 'the children of the same land'.[551] Moreover, he was of the opinion that India would make no progress if these two communities did not strengthen their cultural bonds. Hence, it was incumbent upon both of them to unite and live as

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546 Ibid.
547 Quoted in ibid.
548 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxi.
549 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 64.
550 M. Limaye, *Indian National Movement: Its Ideological and Socio-economic Dimensions*, Sangam Books, 1989, p. 127.
551 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 65.

one people.[552] The following lines, said by him, reflect how committed he was to Hindu-Muslim unity:

> *India is the motherland ... for both of us (that is the Hindus and the Muslims) who breathe in the same air, drink the water of the holy ... rivers of Ganges and Jumna and consume the product of the same soil. Together we face life and death. After dwelling long in India our blood has changed its original colour. Now the colour of our skins is the same; our features are alike. We, the Muslims and the Hindus, have exchanged many of our social customs. We have merged so much into each other that we have produced a new language – Urdu – which was the language of neither of us.[553]*

Furthermore, while his blueprint for modernization was primarily aimed to uplift the Muslim community in South Asia, Sir Sayyid Ahmad had occasionally spoken on behalf of all the inhabitants of India, regardless of the community which they belonged to. In his pamphlet Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind (see second chapter) he attempted to vindicate the Indian population, Muslims and Hindus alike, in the eyes of the British rulers, and attributed the happenings of 1857 to, among other things, the latter's blinkered policies and high-handedness in dealing with matters related to the native population. Depicting Sir Sayyid Ahmad's willingness to defend the Hindu community, M. Y. Abbasi commented:

> *In the Asbab, he (Sir Sayyid Ahmad) raised his voice against the Christian missionaries preaching against Hindu religious beliefs and deprecated the fact that certain jails had no arrangements to observe the dietary taboos of different Hindu castes.[554]*

Again in the same respect, probably the best proof substantiating Sir Sayyid Ahmad's non-communal tendency was, as seen previously, the opening of the Anglo-Oriental College to all communities of India, including the Hindus. In this respect, Shun Muhammad asserted that for Sir

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552 Ibid.
553 Quoted in M. Limaye, op. cit., p. 127.
554 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 65.

Sayyid Ahmad, this College "was not to be sectarian but to unite the communities."[555]

According to M. Y. Abbasi, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's tolerance towards the other communities of India was the result of his being brought up in a social environment in the city of Delhi where Hindus and Muslims had "learnt to live as neighbours and friends" and where "religious differences were respected rather than disputed."[556]

Yet, all this was going to change. Actually, as will be seen in the following chapter, new circumstances in the South Asian Subcontinent would make Sir Sayyid Ahmad rethink his policies vis-à-vis the Hindu community.

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555 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxii.
556 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 65.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Deterioration of Hindu-Muslim Interrelations and Muslim Breakaway

As mentioned in the previous chapter, despite being well aware of the fact that there was a huge conflict of interests between the Muslims of India and the Hindu community, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan had never been opposed to the idea of having both communities living alongside each other, sharing the same land and a common destiny. In this respect, M. Y. Abbasi bears witness to the fact that although the first and foremost objective of this Muslim reformist was to defend and promote Muslim interests in South Asia, he did by no means intend to antagonize the Hindus or oppose their interests.[557] Indeed, many scholars and contemporaries agree on the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad rose above Hindu-Muslim differences and appealed to both communities to live like brothers and work collaboratively for the common good. This could be reflected in the following excerpt from a lecture that he gave on 4 February 1884 in which he stated:

> ... it appears to be the will of God that both these groups (i.e. Muslims and Hindus) may live together in India as friends but more particularly as brothers. They may form two eyes on the beautiful face of India. These two nations (communities) which have mixed like rice and pulse may live in cooperation. [558]

Moreover, with regard to Sir Sayyid Ahmad's recurrent use of the word 'qawm', or 'nation', he affirmed that he did not mean his co-religionists only, but also the other communities inhabiting the Indian Subcontinent, including the Hindus.[559] As he put it:

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557 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 67.
558 Quoted in Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxvii.
559 M. Limaye, op. cit., p. 125.

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I have often used the word nation several times ... In my opinion all men are one and I do not like religion, community or group to be identified with a nation... I wish all men irrespective of their religion and community may unite together for commonwealth.[560]

Furthermore, Sir Sayyid Ahmad pointed out that the word 'qawm' should be distinguished from the word "community", which denotes a religious group.[561] For him, religion was a strictly personal affair between an individual and his Creator, and besides, it should not be mixed with the secular concept of "nation" or "nationality".[562] In other words, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stood for territorial nationhood, where people, regardless of what beliefs they held, could form a nation so long as they shared the same territory. Thus, the fact that Muslims and Hindus shared the same land made them a single "qawm".[563] The following passage confirms this view:

For ages the word qawm has been applied to the inhabitants of a country. The people of Afghanistan are a qawm. The Indians are a qawm. The Europeans, in spite of their religious and ideological differences are considered one qawm... In short the word qawm refers to the inhabitants of a country. O Hindus and Muslims! Are you the residents of any other country than India? ... remember that the words "Hindu" and "Muslim" are used in the religious sense, and that otherwise the Hindus and the Muslims and the Christians who live in this country are one qawm.[564]

Yet, according to M. Limaye, Sir Sayyid Ahmad often used the word 'qawm' to mean different things and at times quite contradictory meanings. For instance, during one of his speeches and lectures, he was quoted as saying: "... I should faithfully serve my country and my qawm. By the word qawm, I mean both Hindus and Muslims."[565] On other occasions, he used the term 'qawm' as an equivalent of a religious community. In this regard, he observed: "Prophet Muhammad gave a new meaning to this

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560 Quoted in Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxvii.
561 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 67.
562 M. Limaye, op. cit., p. 125.
563 Ibid., pp. 125-126.
564 Quoted in ibid., p. 126.
565 Quoted in ibid.

word (i.e. 'qawm'). Since then all the Muslims, regardless of their origin became the members of one qawm."[566] However, Shun Muhammad played down the multiple use of this term and opined that for Sir Sayyid Ahmad, the word 'qawm', or 'nation', and 'community' meant the same. In other words, he expressed the word 'qawm', or 'nation' where he should have expressed the word 'community', and vice versa.[567]

Be that as it may, many scholars and contemporaries attested to the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad stood for strong Hindu-Muslim unity in the Subcontinent. Yet, this unifying stance would not last longer as a storm was looming in the offing that would bring about a parting of the ways between the two communities. In fact, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, two major events happened that were going to make the Muslim community claim its separate identity and grow more communal than before. They were the Urdu-Hindi language controversy and the foundation of the Indian National Congress.

I. The Urdu-Hindi Language Controversy

Before tackling the subject of the Muslim-Hindu issue over the language, it is important to refer to the fact that Urdu was not originally the language of the Hindus, though most of the Hindu elite spoke this language.[568] The latter had their own language, which was Hindi. Urdu, on the other hand, was a mixture of the Persian language and some indigenous Hindu dialects. Describing the Urdu language, K. K. Aziz asserted that it "borrowed more freely from Persian and Arabic, though some of its sweetest phrases came from Hindi."[569] As a result, it was always seen as the language of the Muslims of India since, besides being born and used by the Mughals, it used Persian script that was very similar to Arabic script. In this respect, Tariq Rahman stated that Urdu:

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566 Quoted in ibid., p. 124.
567 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxvi.
568 T. Hasan affirmed that 'as late as the 1860's, a strong bond of kinship and commonality of interest had existed between a section of Hindus and Muslims who formed the 'Urdu speaking elite'." T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 23.
569 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 126.

... is written in the Persian nasta'līq script which, ... is based on the Arabic calligraphic style called naskh. It also has a number of Arabic loan-words ...[570]

The origin of the issue of the Urdu language can be traced back to the end of the 1860's when some prominent Hindus, from the northern city of Benaras,[571] founded a movement whose main objective was to replace Urdu by Hindi (written in the Nagiri script) as the court language as well as the language of instruction.[572] In the opinion of this group of Hindus, Urdu was the language of Muslims and hence, it only represented Muslim culture rather than Hindu culture.[573] This led, later on, to the emergence of other similar sabhas, or associations, which sprang up all over the country, particularly in the North-Western Provinces, with a central organization at Allahabad,[574] which called for the rejection of Urdu and its substitution with Hindi as the "national language of a united India."[575]

This instigated a sharp controversy and cultural rivalry between the Hindus, who wanted to gain a national status for the Hindi language, and the Muslims, who opposed the national character of Hindi and defended the Urdu language.[576] In a meeting organized by anti-Urdu Hindu activists on 27 September 1868, one prominent leader, Babu Madhuk Bhattacharjee, argued that Hindi should be the language of the country since "of all the languages spoken in India, Hindi occupied the first place."[577]

About the place that the Hindi language occupied in the South Asian Subcontinent at that time, Shun Muhammad reported some data based on post office statistics in two major provinces, United Provinces and

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570 T. Rahman, 'Urdu as an Islamic Language', in *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol 21, Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia, Wisconsin-Madison (USA), 2006, p. 102.

571 'Benaras' is a city on the river Ganges, in Uttar Pradesh, northern India. Hindus usually go to this holy city on pilgrimage in order to undergo ritual purification in the river.

572 Shameem. H. Kadri, *Creation of Pakistan*, Wajidalis, Lahore, 1982, p. 6.

573 Ibid.

574 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., pp. 245-246.

575 M. Limaye, op. cit., p. 141.

576 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 126.

577 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxii.

Oudh, in order to check how widely Hindi was used. These data concern official correspondence:

Provinces	North-Western Provinces	Oudh
English	43%	59%
Urdu	50%	41%
Hindi	7%	0%

Source: Shun Muhammad (ed.), The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898, op. cit., p. xvii.

The tabulated data above, though geographically confined to two provinces only, show the fact that Babu Madhuk Bhattacharjee's statement that Hindi was the first language in the country was definitely untrue. In this regard, Shun Muhammad declared that "to say that the Persian script was not in vogue is a sheer travesty of fact."[578]

Meanwhile, as a result of such Hindi-Urdu conflict, each faction wanted to "purify" its language from the influence of the other. K. K. Aziz pointed out that the supporters of Hindi, who "lost no opportunity to denounce Urdu",[579] started progressively incorporating more Sanskrit words, whereas pro-Urdu enthusiasts went to Persian or Arabic for vocabulary as well as syntax.[580] Moreover, each community tended to cling tenaciously to its language. In fact, the more the Hindus laid emphasis on the Hindi language the more attached the Muslims became to Urdu.[581] In the case of the Muslims, K. K. Aziz remarked: "Though Urdu was in its origin neither the language of the Muslims nor a Muslim language, it gradually became so."[582]

It should be noted that behind such anti-Urdu activism, there obviously lay a tone of hatred towards Islam and the Muslim community in South Asia. This could be inferred from the speeches that were given during public meetings organized by the pro-Hindi Hindus. In this respect, a contemporary anti-Urdu Hindu activist stated that:

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578 Ibid., p. xvii.
579 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 24.
580 K. K. Aziz, The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism, op. cit., p. 126.
581 Ibid.
582 Ibid.

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The Persian character has no significance except to remind us of the asso-
ciation of a not always high past, or rather middle age, it is the worn out
badge of slavery left after the freedom has been achieved.[583]

As conflict over the language gained momentum, tension between the Muslim and Hindu communities became more apparent. This anti-Urdu and pro-Hindi movement incensed, as well as disappointed, many Muslim intellectuals such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who had, until then, belie-ved in and championed the idea of unity between the Hindus and Mus-lims of the Subcontinent. Thenceforth, their attitude was going to change for good.

Indeed, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was one of those who were flabbergasted, as well as disillusioned, by such intransigent anti-Urdu, or rather anti-Muslim, movement conducted by the Hindu zealots. Shun Muhammad stated that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was shocked by such Hindu behaviour, and in a conversation with Mr Shakespeare, the then local British magistrate at Bijnore, he "expressed his suspicion and anxiety."[584] What made mat-ters worse for this Muslim reformist was the fact that even those liberal Hindus who had previously supported him in setting up schools made a volte-face in their attitude towards the Muslim community. For the sake of illustration, it is worth mentioning Raja Jeykishen Dass[585], a local Hindu land-owner of high standing and influence, who used to be a "spe-cial" close friend of Sir Sayyid Ahmad, and with whom he had shared the same views. In fact, according to T. Hasan, Raja Jeykishen Dass publicly supported the demand for the abolition of Urdu in Government offices.[586]

Raja Jeykishen Dass, who was a founding member of the Scientific So-ciety,[587] went to the extent of calling for the publications of the Society, that is, the journal[588] and the translated works, to be made in Nagiri script (i.e. Hindi) instead of Persian (i.e. Urdu). Commenting on this, Sir Sayyid Ahmad stated in the following excerpt taken from a letter that he

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583 Quoted in Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents:*
     1864-1898, op. cit., p. xxii.
584 Ibid., p. xvii.
585 See the previous chapter.
586 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 23.
587 See the previous chapter.
588 The *Aligarh Institute Gazette.*

wrote from London on 29 April 1870 to Mahdi Ali Khan, a close friend of his:

> *I understand ... Hindus are roused to destroy the Muslims' (cultural) symbol ... embodied in the Urdu language and the Persian script. I have heard that they have made representation through the Hindu members of the Scientific Society that the Society's 'Akhbar' (journal) should be published in the Devnagri (or Nagiri) rather than in the Persian script, and that all translations of (foreign language) books should likewise be in Hindi. This proposal would destroy cooperation between the Hindus and Muslims.[589]*

Thus, as came in the message above, Urdu embodied a cultural symbol of the Muslims of the South Asian Subcontinent. This was a significant step, among other steps, that would lead the Muslims of India to claim a separate identity as well as a separate nation from the rest of the communities in the region. In this respect, Reece Jones pointed out that besides traditions, symbols could also be used as unifying factors among the members of a given community that distinguish them from other communities.[590] He wrote:

> *Symbols and traditions are effective tools for organizing populations because they demonstrate who is and is not a member of the group by establishing boundaries that differentiate those populations that relate to the symbols from others who do not.[591]*

Along the same line of thought, Syed M. Taha and Nasreen Afzal, while elaborating on Paul Brass's works on the theme of Muslim separatism in South Asia,[592] talked of cultural symbols as playing an important role in the process of nation-making. They stated that one of the major factors

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589 Quoted in H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', op. cit., p. 139.

590 Reece Jones, 'Whose Homeland? Territoriality and Religious Nationalism in Pre-Partition Bengal' in *South Asia Research*, Vol. 26: 2, (115-131), Sage Publications, London, 2006, p. 117.

591 Ibid.

592 Paul Brass is an American scholar whose work is centred on the subject of the "two-nation theory" in the Indian Subcontinent. One of his major works is *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge University Press, London, 1974). Syed M. Taha and Nasreen Afzal, op. cit., p. 95.

that Paul Brass identified as central in the process of nation-making was the transformation of "an objectively different" group of people into "a subjectively conscious" community.[593] To put it differently, Paul Brass pointed out that the process of nation-making is set in motion once "objective differences" become "subjective consciousness". In the case of the Indian environment, "objective differences", meaning differences that had existed between the Hindus and Muslims from the beginning, were transformed into "subjective consciousness", meaning the period when the Muslims started to think about these differences consciously.[594]

Furthermore, Syed M. Taha and Nasreen Afzal stated that in Paul Brass's view, in the process of this transformation, the elite, which he referred to as the "myth maker", starts accentuating the existing differences between the different groups by selecting symbols of differences and transmitting them to the masses.[595] Lending support to this statement, Christophe Jaffrelot indicated that: "l'élite ... façonne la conscience de groupe en manipulant les symboles de l'identité de groupe."[596]

Thus, in British India, the Urdu-Hindi language controversy was to be used as an element of divisiveness by the elite of both communities, Muslim and Hindu. Indeed, in the case of the Muslims, Urdu became a tool that was used as a symbol of difference pertaining exclusively to the Muslims of the Sub-continent. In this respect, Christophe Jaffrelot stated that: "L'élite musulmane chercha à mobiliser des soutiens en faisant de l'ourdou un critère de l'identité musulmane."[597] In other words, Sir Sayyid Ahmad, being a member of the Muslim elite, was accused by his critics of being the "spiritual father of 'Muslim Separatism'" in the Indian Sub-continent.[598]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad was well aware of the fact that the repudiation of Urdu by the Hindu community would create, in the words of Paul Brass, a "subjectively conscious" Muslim community in India. For that reason, he

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593 Ibid.
594 Ibid.
595 Ibid.
596 Christophe Jaffrelot, 'L'émergence des nationalismes en Inde : Perspectives théoriques', in *Revue française de science politique*, Année 1988, Volume 38, Numéro 4, (555-575), p. 558.
597 Ibid.
598 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 24.

had constantly warned the Hindus against their anti-Urdu activism, and accused them of sowing the seeds of partition in the country. Yet, his "warnings fell on deaf ears."[599]

In addition to that, despite being faced with such Hindu intransigence over the question of Urdu, Sir Sayyid Ahmad tried every way possible to defuse the situation. For instance, he set up an organization named 'The Central Committee, Allahabad', whose objective was to make the Hindus aware of the fact that Urdu was not an alien language, but a local product, born of a combination between Persian and Sanskrit.[600] In this respect, Sir Sayyid Ahmad appealed to the Hindu community:

> For over a thousand years, Hindus and Muslims have lived in this land and have shared a common cultural heritage. So close have the two been to each other, that they now share common physical features and a common spoken language. Urdu is a living testimony to this composite Hindu-Muslim culture. It belongs to India. I firmly believe that barring one difference – that which pertains to their perception of the creator – both Hindus and Muslims are one race and share a common heritage. Let us live like one nation.[601]

Furthermore, M. Y. Abbasi asserted that Sir Sayyid Ahmad kept reminding the Hindus of the fact that Urdu was a common legacy of Hindus and Muslims, which was a bridge rather than a barrier between them. Hence, in his view, by "disowning Urdu, the Hindus were rejecting their cultural rapport with the Muslims."[602] Yet, to his disappointment, all his efforts were unsuccessful. This was because, to use T. Hasan's phraseology, the "genie was out of the bottle."[603]

In a word, the repudiation of Urdu by the Hindu zealots paved the way for the birth of a "subjectively conscious" Muslim community in India. For Sir Sayyid Ahmad, the Urdu-Hindi language controversy played, in-

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599 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 24.
600 Ibid.
601 Quoted in ibid., p. 39.
602 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 66.
603 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 24. M. Y. Abbasi affirmed that the Hindus were the first to display separatist tendencies, and by opening the first front, they set in motion what became a long-lasting Hindu-Muslim conflict. M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p. 66.

deed, a crucial role in making him reconsider his outlook on Hindu-Muslim unity in South Asia. In fact, though he did not call for an immediate rupture in the relations between the Muslim and Hindu communities,[604] he occasionally alluded to the idea that if his co-religionists were to separate from the Hindus, they (the Muslim Community) would be the first beneficiaries.[605] This could be reflected in the same letter (mentioned above) that he addressed to Mahdi Ali Khan in 1870 while in London, in which he stated:

> If after separating from the Hindus, the Muslims were to establish their own businesses ... Muslims would benefit more than the Hindus. The Hindus would be the losers.[606]

II.   The Foundation of the Indian National Congress

In addition to the Urdu-Hindi controversy, the foundation of the Indian National Congress by the Hindu majority was also a significant catalyst, if not the most significant one, that contributed to Muslim alienation, and eventually, breakaway. But, before dealing with this point, it is useful to set out the background and circumstances which led to the formation of this political movement as well as the ideology on which it stood.

The post-1857 era, up to the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885, is seen by many scholars as one of the darkest phases in the history of South Asia under colonial rule. Commenting on this period, the Indian historian, Niranjan M. Khilnani, pointed out: "The more carefully we study the historical records, the more clearly we find out that this period between 1858 and 1885 was one of stress and strain."[607]

Indeed, the foundation of the Indian National Congress came as a culmination of a series of unfortunate events going back to the 1860's. In

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604 M. Y. Abbasi claimed that notwithstanding his disillusionment, Sir Sayyid Ahmad "did in fact continue to explore new avenues to promote Hindu-Muslim cultural cooperation." Ibid., p. 66.

605 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', op. cit., p. 139.

606 Quoted in ibid., pp. 139-140.

607 Niranjan M. Khilnani, *India's Road to Independence 1857 to 1947: Panorama of India's Struggle for Freedom*, Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., New Delhi, 1987, p. 35.

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other words, in the couple of decades that preceded the birth of this first Indian political movement on Western model, British India was shrouded in a socio-economic and political malaise, which caused widespread disaffection among the local population and in particular, the Western-educated elite. This malaise was brought about by a number of factors ranging from disastrous famines to colonial legislation.

According to many contemporaries, the Indian Subcontinent was subject to recurrent famines during the 1860's and 1870's, which brought about large scale deaths caused by starvation as well as wreaked havoc on the purchasing power of the local population, who were already finding it too hard to make both ends meet. In this respect, M. A. Karandikar affirmed that the famine of the late 1860's, which was followed by the outbreak of cholera and smallpox, caused the death of 25 per cent of the population inhabiting the famine affected areas in the region of Orissa, and the price of wheat skyrocketed by more than 300 per cent.[608] Meanwhile, Akshayakumar R. Desai claimed that the most severe famine was that of 1877, which affected an area of 200,000 square miles and a population of thirty-six millions.[609]

Famine was not the only factor responsible for the Indian impoverishment. In fact, Akshayakumar R. Desai attributed such a condition to the increasing burden of land revenue and rent, which led to indebtedness among many farmers who could no longer cope with the situation.[610] Corroborating this fact, Wilfrid Scawen, a British official, who visited the Indian Subcontinent in the early 1880's, was said to have ascribed the existing situation to the following factors:

> ... the excessive land assessment which had impoverished the people and had thrown the farmers in indebtedness; taxes on new wells discouraged sinking of wells; the exorbitant salt tax robbed the very poor; agriculture became an unprofitable business and large areas of land were left barren ...[611]

To add insult to injury, at the time when the Indian population was experiencing such a plight, the British held, in 1877, a spectacular and ex-

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608 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 151.
609 Akshayakumar R. Desai, op. cit., p. 291.
610 Ibid.
611 Quoted in M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 151.

travagant official ceremony, or Durbar, in Delhi in honour of Queen Victoria in order to proclaim her as the Empress of India. According to Akshayakumar R. Desai, this act of carelessness intensified to a great extent the resentment of the native people.[612]

Meanwhile, colonial legislation contributed to the highest degree to the widening gulf between the inhabitants of India and the British Colonial Government in post-Revolt era. The passage of the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, for instance, which restricted the freedom of the Indian press, was one of the many measures that alienated the Indian intelligentsia, particularly the Hindus. This Act, which was passed during the viceroyalty of Lord Lytton, came as a fulfilment to a claim, made several years before by Sir George Campell, a Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in the early 1870's, that the local vernacular press was becoming a serious threat to the continuity of British rule in India, and hence, "a special legislation was required" to deal with it.[613] Commenting on the threat represented by the local vernacular press, a member of the British Government in India was said to have claimed that:

> ... there is a large and increasing class of native newspapers which would seem to exist only for the sake of spreading seditious principles, of bringing the Government and its European officers into contempt, and of exciting antagonism between the governing race and the people of the country.[614]

Another example could be seen in the defeat of the Ilbert Bill of 1883. This Bill, which was presented by Sir Courtenay Ilbert, a law member of Viceroy Lord Ripon's (1827-1909) Council and backed up by the latter, aimed at "rectifying an anomaly in the Criminal Procedure Code"[615] by providing for an equal treatment of Indians and Europeans in the sphere of criminal jurisdiction. In other words, this Bill, if passed, would allow Indian judges to try Europeans for their offences in the country on the same footing as their Indian counterparts.[616]

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612 Akshayakumar R. Desai, op. cit., p. 291.
613 V. Lovett, *Nationalist Movement in India*, Akashdeep Publishing House, India, 1988, pp. 21-22.
614 Quoted in ibid., p. 22.
615 Niranjan M. Khilnani, op. cit., p. 46.
616 Shameem. H. Kadri, op. cit., p. 11.

This Bill was vehemently opposed by the white community in India, especially the British, who regarded such a proposal as an element that would "imperil the liberties of British non-officials."[617] Consequently, they organized a Defence Association as well as fierce and vigorous demonstrations throughout the whole Subcontinent, which were often violent.[618] In addition to that, Akshayakumar R. Desai stated that a faction of the European agitators was hatching a plot to "put the Viceroy on board a steamer ... and send him to England via the Cape."[619]

In the meantime, it should be noted that the European agitators were driven by their sense of belonging to a race that was superior to that of the Indians and could not imagine themselves being tried by judges who belonged to an inferior race, i.e. the Indians. The following passage, said by a British contemporary of high standing in the Indian Subcontinent, reflects the assumption that was widespread among the European community there:

> It is this consciousness of inherent superiority of the European which has won for us India. However well educated and clever a native be, and however brave he may have proved himself, I believe that no rank which we can bestow upon him would cue him to be considered as an equal by the British officer.[620]

Faced with such a situation, the Indians tried to conduct a counter-agitation in support of the Ilbert Bill. However, they were asked to "mind their own business" and that they should not interfere in a controversy that was "intimately" between the Viceroy, namely Lord Ripon, and the European settlers. In a speech given during a public meeting in Bombay, Sir Pherozeshah M. Mehta (1845-1915), regretfully stated:

> We were told that we have no concern with this bill at all and that it is only a little matter between Lord Ripon and the Europeans in India, in

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617 V. Lovett, op. cit., p. 26.
618 H. D. Sharma (ed.), *100 Best Pre-Independence Speeches: 1870-1947*, Harper Collins Publishers India, New Delhi, 1998, p. 7.
619 Akshayakumar R. Desai, op. cit., p. 292.
620 Quoted in ibid.

which the parties have got rather hot with each other, and that in fact we
have no locus standi at all to take part in the argument.[621]

Another cause for the failure of the Indians in facing such anti-Ilbert Bill campaign could be attributed to the absence of any form of organization among them, which rendered their efforts useless.[622] As a result, the British Colonial Government was, ultimately, in the obligation of reformulating the Bill, and hence, the whole project was nipped in the bud. Commenting on the Bill, H. D. Sharma stated that "though the bill was not withdrawn, it was changed beyond recognition and served no useful purpose when passed into law."[623]

This move aroused a great deal of anger among the Indians, who became utterly disillusioned about the impartiality of the Colonial Government. In fact, in their eyes, the fact that the British authorities in India bowed to the demands of the European agitators was tantamount to racial discrimination.[624]

According to Akshayakumar R. Desai, this racial discrimination could be seen in the fact that most of the higher positions in the colonial administration were reserved for the Europeans; and that was despite Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858, in which she vowed to allow native Indians with appropriate qualifications to hold higher posts and to take part in the administrative management of their country alongside the British.[625] This was because the latter were implicitly determined, out of caution, to keep the upper hand in all matters. In fact, it was a sina qua non for the maintenance of their Empire in India to retain power in their hands, as T. R Metcalf put it: "No matter how far Indian employment might be extended, the ultimate controlling power had always to remain in British hands."[626]

Thus, by the early 1880's, the situation in the Indian society was on

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621 Sir Pherozeshah M. Mehta , 'The Ilbert Bill Awakens India', in H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 8.
622 Ibid., p. 7.
623 Ibid.
624 Akshayakumar R. Desai, op. cit., p. 292.
625 K. Feiling, op. cit., p. 929.
626 T. R. Metcalf, op. cit., pp. 287-288.

the brink of exploding.[627] Moreover, the circumstances in the Sub-continent in the wake of the happenings of 1857, up to the early 1880's, taught the Indians, and particularly the Hindu intelligentsia, the fact that nothing could be achieved without an organized effort. Indeed, the defeat of the Ilbert Bill, among other reasons, made the Indians realize, for the first time, the fact that sporadic efforts of individuals were useless as well as fruitless; hence, they learnt the importance and value of organization.[628] This was an important factor that led to the establishment of the first organized nationwide political party speaking one voice, and representing all the inhabitants of India except, as will be seen further down, the Muslim community.

The genesis of the Indian National Congress was shrouded in mystery, and it has been subject to controversy among many scholars, particularly with regard to who was behind the emergence of this first Indian political party on an All-India basis. In fact, many historians believe that the Indian National Congress was a British creation, and that the reason behind it was the fact that the Colonial Government in India was aware of the smouldering discontent among the native population and feared the consequences. In other words, it is often said that the British officials in South Asia had the premonition that some sort of a rebellion on the pattern of the Great Revolt of 1857 was rumbling in the distance as a result of the growing discontent in the Subcontinent, hence the raison d'être for a national party as a move to forestall such an apocalypse. Palme Dutt asserted that:

> La formation du Congrès national représentait dans l'esprit du gouvernement un effort pour faire échec à une révolution menaçante ou plutôt pour la devancer.[629]

To back up their standpoint, the protagonists of this opinion keep alluding to the fact that the founder of this organization was a British resident

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627 In this respect, Akshayakumar R. Desai affirmed that "the political and economic discontent of the Indian people which had been gathering steadily ... almost threatened to reach an explosive point by 1883." Akshayakumar R. Desai, op. cit., p. 293.
628 H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.
629 Palme Dutt, *L'Inde: Aujourd'hui et Demain*, Editions Sociales, Paris, 1957, p. 125.

in India and a former officer in the Indian Civil Servant, Allen Octave Hume (1829-1912), who was thought to be the de facto originator of the idea of establishing the Indian National Congress,[630] and who, as confirmed by Judith M. Brown, "gave generous support from his own pocket" to make it real.[631]

According to Akshayakumar R. Desai, Allen Octave Hume, who served in the Indian Civil Service up to 1882, was said to have got hold of the very voluminous secret police reports which acquainted him with the growing of popular disaffection and the spreading of underground conspiratorial organization.[632] In this respect, Palme Dutt affirmed that most of these police documents reported conversations heard between people from lower classes which reflected that, to quote Allen Octave Hume, these people:

> ... ressentaient le caractère désespéré de la situation existante, qu'ils étaient convaincus qu'ils allaient mourir de faim et qu'ils voulaient faire quelque chose. Ils allaient faire quelque chose, au coude à coude, et ce quelque chose signifiait la violence.[633]

Based on these secret police reports, Allen Octave Hume sensed the imminence of a huge uprising in the making. Describing Hume's and other Englishmen's anxiety, Oroon K. Ghosh wrote:

> Hume, like other British people in India, was in constant fear of uprisings ... There might be civil commotion and civil disturbances in the bazaars and in the native areas of towns where the British resided. And the contagion might spread to the police and even the army, leading possibly, not only to the 1857-59 of India, but to a repetition of the 1776-1783 of North America.[634]

This prompted him to get in touch with the then Viceroy, Lord Dufferin (1826-1902), at Simla,[635] and to advise him of the necessity to find a way

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630 Oroon K. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 40.
631 Judith M. Brown, op. cit., p. 176.
632 Akshayakumar R. Desai, op. cit., p. 294.
633 Quoted in Palme Dutt, op. cit., p. 127.
634 Oroon K. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 40.
635 'Simla' was India's summer capital during British rule from 1865 to 1939.

to weather this crisis safe and sound. One of the solutions that Allen Octave Hume proposed to Lord Dufferin was to set up a political party on an all-India basis which could serve as a safe outlet, or a "safety-valve".[636] In other words, Allen Octave Hume felt the need for the setting up of a political party that would serve as a forum where the educated Indians could voice out their pent-up grievances without resorting to violence or anarchical means; hence, in the opinion of Hume, it was a good idea to have such a forum where, as M. A. Karandikar put it, the attention of the educated Indians would be diverted from secret conspiracies as a result of the "great and growing forces generated by our own action".[637] In this respect, drawing on the private papers and correspondence of Allen Octave Hume, Akshayakumar R. Desai pointed out that this British resident in India believed that:

> The ferment ... was at work with a radically increasing intensity, and it became of paramount importance to find for its products an overt and constitutional channel for discharge, instead of leaving them fester as they had already commenced to do, under the surface.[638]

Furthermore, Akshayakumar R. Desai claimed that in addition to its role as a "safety-valve", Allen Octave Hume believed, this forum could be used by the Colonial Government as a means through which it could collect information about the views and reactions of the educated Indians with regard to the British policies in India.[639]

In the meantime, in an attempt to further substantiate their point of view, the "pro-safety-valve" explanation scholars argued that the best indication confirming the "Britishness" of the origin of the Indian National Congress is the fact that the founders of this political party did not demand self-government for India; hence, they were, as referred to by some Indian extremists, "anti-nationalist" as well as "compromising, if not loy-

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This was due to its cool climate and beautiful landscape. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.

636 Akshayakumar R. Desai, op. cit., p. 294.

637 M. A. Karandikar, op. cit., p. 153.

638 Quoted in Akshayakumar R. Desai, op. cit., p. 294.

639 Ibid.

alist, vis-à-vis imperialism."[640] For instance, Bipan Chandra et al., who vehemently opposed the "safety-valve" theory, regretfully reported on Lala Lajpat Rai, a Hindu extremist leader in early twentieth century, as saying in his Young India, published in 1916, that the Indian National Congress was a "product of Lord Dufferin's brain" and that it was founded more with the object of safeguarding the very foundations of the British Empire against any potential threat to its stability than with that of winning political liberty for India. Hence, Lala Lajpat Rai concludes, the interests of the British were primary and those of the Indians came only second.[641]

In fact, it should be noted that the main objectives of this political party at the time of its foundation were by no means anti-imperialist and were characterized by the demand for isolated reforms, which can be summarized into the following points: the enlargement of the Legislative Councils, the inclusion of more educated Indians in the public services, the separation between the executive and judicial functions, the reduction in military expenditure, commissions for Indians in the army, and so on.[642] In this respect, Sanjay Seth stated that in the Congress:

> resolutions opposing government action or inaction would not 'condemn' but rather 'regret'; and resolutions proposing some course of action or remedy to the government would not 'demand' but rather 'suggest' or, at the most, 'urge'. [643]

Then, the same scholar quoted a Hindu extremist as referring to "the general timidity of the Congress" and "its fear of too deeply displeasing our masters."[644]

On the other hand, the opponents of the "safety-valve" theory, mostly Hindu scholars, rejected all of the arguments mentioned above, which

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640 B. Chandra, M. Mukherjee, A. Mukherjee, K. N. Panikkar and S. Mahajan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989, p. 61.

641 Ibid., p. 62.

642 S. R. Mehrotra, op. cit., p. 31.

643 Sanjay Seth, 'Rewriting Histories of Nationalism: The Politics of "Moderate Nationalism" in India: 1870-1905', in *The American Historical Review*, Volume 104, N° 1, February 1999, (95-116) p. 102.

644 Ibid.

they labelled as "totally inadequate and misleading".[645] Prominent among them was the distinguished Indian historian Bipan Chandra, who took the lead in denying the assumption that the Indian National Congress was nothing more than a "safety-valve" designed by the British administration in order to absorb the seething discontent among the native population. He further stated that this political organization was a creation by the Indians who were opposed to the exploitation of their country in favour of British interests, and who felt the need for an organization whereby they could fight for their country's political and economic progress.[646]

In response to those who claimed that Allen Octave Hume was using the Indian intelligentsia to avert an imminent social explosion, Bipan Chandra et al. stated that it was the Indian founders who were using him as a "lightening conductor".[647] Agreeing with Bipan Chandra, Oroon K. Ghosh described the function of the "lightening conductor" as being a metal rod or wire fixed to an exposed part of a mast to divert electricity into the earth or sea, then said: "Hume was used by the Congress in that way."[648] In addition to that, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, an early twentieth-century Hindu nationalist leader, was reported as saying in retrospect:

> No Indian could have started the Indian National Congress ... If an Indian had ... come forward to start such a movement, the officials would not have allowed it to come into existence. If the founder of the Congress had not been a distinguished ex-official, such was the distrust of political agitation in those days that the authorities would have at once found some way or other of suppressing the movement.[649]

On the other hand, Bipan Chandra went on defending those Indians who took part in the founding of the Congress, who were referred to by the "pro-safety-valve" scholars as "anti-nationalists". He said:

> They were patriotic men of high character and were in no way stooges of the foreign government. They co-operated with Hume because they did

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645 B. Chandra, A. Tripathi and B. De, op. cit., p. 57.
646 Ibid.
647 Ibid.
648 Oroon K. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 41.
649 Quoted in ibid.

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not want to arouse official hostility to their early political efforts and they
hoped that a retired Civil Servant's active presence would allay official
suspicions.[650]

In a word, whether a "safety-valve" or a "lightening conductor", the Indian National Congress was there and its founders claimed that it represented, and spoke on behalf of all Indians, irrespective of creed and caste. Yet, did the Muslim community have a voice in that organization? Or, were the Indian Muslims represented in such an organization in the first place?

III. Muslim Reaction to the Founding of the Indian National Congress

In the wake of the establishment of the Indian National Congress, the Indian Muslim community, broadly speaking, preferred to keep aloof from it, and that was following the advice of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his followers. Actually, notwithstanding the fact that the Indian National Congress was in itself a loyal organization whose objectives were by no means revolutionary,[651] and which received the blessings of the British Government, both in London and Calcutta,[652] this Muslim leader vehemently opposed it, and dubbed it as the "Bengali Assembly",[653] or the "Bengalis' Congress",[654] and warned his co-religionists from joining it; as Shameem. H. Kadri put it:

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650 B. Chandra, A. Tripathi and B. De, op. cit., p. 57.

651 S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964, p. 7. Talking about the non-revolutionary character of the Indian National Congress, Judith M. Brown stated that its founders had all "benefited from the presence of the British, and as a body, it was studiously loyal to the raj." Then, Judith M. Brown added: "These were the least likely people to have revolutionary attitudes or want to destroy the regime which had given them professional opportunity and political space." Judith M. Brown, *Nehro: A Political Life*, Yale University Press, London, 2003, p. 29.

652 K. K. Aziz asserted that "official blessings were being generously given to the Congress." K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Pakistan : A Study of British Attitude towards the East Pakistan Crisis of 1971*, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

653 H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 14.

654 M. Limaye, op. cit., p. 141. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan referred to the Indian National Congress as the 'Bengalee Assembly' due to the fact that most of its members were from the *bhadralok*, meaning the Hindu intellectuals of Bengal. A. Read and D. Fisher, op. cit., p. xii.

> *He (Sir Sayyid Ahmad) never wavered in his opposition to the Congress and declared that even if he was told that the Viceroy, the Secretary of State and the whole House of Commons had openly supported the Congress, he would still remain firmly opposed to it, and he earnestly begged all Muslims to remain away from it.[655]*

The rationale behind such a firm opposition to the Indian National Congress was threefold. On the one hand, Sir Sayyid Ahmad could see through the real danger behind the creation of such a political party, whose demands related to the enlargement of the Legislative Council based on the system of representation by election, or the principle of one man one vote, if acceded to, would jeopardize the interests of the Muslims of India, who were numerically smaller than the Hindu majority. As he set it out in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1883, that is, on the eve of the establishment of the Indian National Congress:

> *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, my Lord, in a country like India ... I am convinced that the introduction of the Principle of election ... for representation of various interests ... would be attended with evils of greater significance than purely economic considerations. So long as differences of race and creed ... 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 ... the system of election ... cannot be safely adopted. The larger community would totally override the interests of the smaller community ...[656]*

Besides, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opposition to the introduction of the principle of election and universal suffrage was based on the premise that the majority of the inhabitants of India were illiterate and lacked the required education to exercise such a principle. In his view, the successful adoption of democratic principles and the implementation of a meaning-

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655 Shameem. H. Kadri, op. cit., p. 12.
656 Quoted in R. Coupland, *The Indian Problem: Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1944, p. 155.

ful and genuine form of democracy become feasible only when India becomes a fertile land, where the native population attains a certain level of education required for that purpose. This made Sir Sayyid Ahmad label the leaders of the Indian National Congress as "daydreamers".[657]

Moreover, according to Syed Razi Wasti, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was convinced that India was not yet fit for Western political institutions which required thorough grounding in Western education that even the most advanced Hindus had not reached yet. In this regard, S. R. Wasti commented:

> For centuries ... India had been without politics or at least without any party politics, and a thorough grounding in western education was indispensable for any political understanding.[658]

Consequently, according to Muhammad Y. Abbasi, this made Sir Sayyid Ahmad reject the idea of setting up a Parliament in India. Thus, he stated: "This is not the time for the grant of rights, and the idea of the establishment of a Parliament for India is absurd."[659]

With regard to the Congress' demand for the Indianization of Services and recruitment by competitive examination, Sir Sayyid Ahmad believed that it would by no means benefit his co-religionists since they were still backward in education, [660] contrary to their Hindu counterparts who had already made steady progress in this sense. In this respect, many scholars claimed that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was driven to react by his fears for his community in case these demands were met.[661] To back up this statement, Richard Symonds said that this Muslim reformer wondered wheth-

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657 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 110.
658 S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910*, op. cit., p. 6.
659 Quoted in M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit., p.72.
660 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxiv.
661 Sir Sayyid Ahmad's fears where shared by many members of his community, and this could be seen in the 1890 petition presented to the House of Commons in London, which was signed by almost 40,000 Muslims from seventy different cities and towns in the Subcontinent, in which they pleaded with the Colonial authorities to not introduce the principle of election into the constitution of the Indian Councils as requested by the Indian National Congress. K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Pakistan : A Study of British Attitude towards the East Pakistan Crisis of 1971*, op. cit., p. 10.

er the Muslims of India had "attained to such a position as regards higher English education which is necessary for higher appointments as to put them on a level with Hindus or not?" Then he concluded: "Most certainly not."[662]

On the other hand, the second reason for anti-Congress attitude was the Hindu character of this political organization and anti-Muslim activities of some Congress leaders by the last decades of the nineteenth century.[663] This was characterized by, among other things, the stimulation of Hindu enthusiasm by some orthodox Hindus, who wished to widen the breach between the Muslim and Hindu communities through the reviving of anti-Muslim Hindu festivals.[664]

As an example, it is useful to mention the public festivals in honour of Shivaji, the famous Maratha Hindu hero, who had at a certain time in the past successfully fought against Muslim domination in the Subcontinent.[665] In this regard, Vinod Kumar Saxena observed that Shivaji was to many Hindus a hero who struggled for freedom in the past; yet, to many Indian Muslims he was the "political opponent of the Muslim rule in India."[666] Actually, during such festivals, which aroused a great deal of anger among the Muslim community, Hindu enthusiasts would chant the following verses:

> ... it is necessary to be prompt in engaging in desperate enterprises like Sivaji ...; knowing, you good people should take up swords and shields at all events now; we shall cut off countless heads of enemies. Listen! We shall shed upon the earth the life-blood of the enemies who destroy our religion; we shall die only, while you will hear the story ...[667]

Other anti-Muslim activities could be seen in the emergence of associ-

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662 R. Symonds, op. cit., p. 31.

663 M. Rahman, *From Consultation to Confrontation: A Study of the Muslim League in British Indian Politics: 1906-1912*, Luzac & Company Ltd., London, p.5

664 V. Lovett, op. cit., p. 47.

665 Ibid. According to V. Lovett, Sivaji was said to have killed a Muslim general named Afzal Khan, during a bloody confrontation between their respective troops. Ibid.

666 Vinod Kumar Saxena, *Muslims and the Indian National Congress: 1885-1924*, Discovery Publishing House, Delhi, 1985, p. 104.

667 Quoted in V. Lovett, op. cit., p. 48.

ations that called for the abolition of cow slaughtering – the cow was Hinduism's sacred animal. According to Peter van der Veer, the protection of gau mata, mother cow, was one of the most serious issues broached among the Hindu community by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[668] Hindu nationalists were said to have demanded the British Colonial Government to put an end to such a practice, yet their demands were never satisfied. Consequently, this created a serious disagreement with the British authorities as well as the Muslim community. In fact, the latter were regarded by the Hindu community as "butchers" since they sacrificed the cow on the festival of Eid Al Adha, to celebrate Abraham's offering of his son Ishmael.[669]

Probably the best known anti-cow slaughtering association was the Cow Protection Society, an open anti-Muslim association, which was founded in 1882 by a Hindu enthusiast called Swami Dayananda (1824-1883).[670] He published a treatise entitled Gokarunanidhi (Ocean mercy to the cow), in which he vehemently opposed the slaughter of the mother cow and considered it as an anti-Hindu act; hence, Dyananda made cow protection a Hindu cause.[671]

Meanwhile, according to Jim Masselos, this Hindu militancy, characterized by the emergence of cow protection movements, which gained momentum during the mid-nineties, led to intermittent outbreak of Muslim-Hindu sectarian riots throughout the Subcontinent.[672]

It should be noted that the growing Hindu militancy in India was nurtured by the works of some "extremist" Hindu activists, and the most notable among these were Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) Lajpat Lala Rai (1865-1928), who, being impatient to throw off the foreign yoke, wanted to build up mass support for the nationalist movement.[673]

According to Mushirul Hasan, these Hindu activists were of the view

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668 Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, University of California Press, Berkeley (California), 1994, p. 86.
669 Ibid.
670 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 80.
671 Peter van der Veer, op. cit., p. 91.
672 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 131.
673 S. Hay (ed.), op. cit., p. 128.

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that the Hindu masses could only be aroused through revivalism as well as the use of religious symbols and national historical myths, such as the celebration of Hindu festivals.[674] Christophe Jaffrelot stated that Bal Gangadhar Tilak was of the opinion that: "la fierté et l'admiration pour nos héros nationaux sont un élément majeur du sentiment national..."[675] Sharing the same premise with Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose sought to forge an Indian nationalism that was largely Hindu, spiritually as well as traditionally, because he believed that the Hindu had created this country – India – and this people and perpetuated the grandeur of its past civilization and culture.[676]

This conviction led them to fall into the trap of mixing religion with politics, a thing that gave a religious – i.e. a Hindu –, hence a communal, character to the Indian National Congress. For instance, about Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mushirul Hasan stated that while recognizing his vital contribution to the anti-colonial struggle,[677] it was hard to ignore his role in heightening communal consciousness in the Subcontinent.[678] Meanwhile, K. K. Aziz claimed that Tilak felt that nationalism required a "spiritual base" which he provided from the "Hindu dogma".[679]

In a few words, Stephen Hay depicted the political philosophy of these Hindi nationalists in the following words:

> This group ... drew on the newly formulated ideals of renascent Hinduism and created a potent ideology out of the marriage between these ideals and the imported concepts of patriotism and national unity.[680]

Anti-Muslim activism among the Hindu community could also be reflec-

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674 Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India: 1885-1930*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 22-23.
675 Christophe Jaffrelot, op. cit., p. 570.
676 Ibid.
677 Bal Gangadhar Tilak was known as the 'Father of the Indian unrest.' He was one of the most proponents of the idea of complete independence from British rule. His inflammatory writings enticed Indians to resort to violence in the fight against the oppressors, namely the British. His famous slogan was: "Freedom is my birth right and I will have it." S. Hay (ed.), op. cit., pp. 140-148.
678 Mushirul Hasan, op. cit., p. 23.
679 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 102.
680 S. Hay (ed.), op. cit., p. 128.

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ted in literature. For instance, the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, one of the greatest Hindu novelists during the second half of the nineteenth century, were fraught with anti-Muslim ideas. According to K. K. Aziz, this Hindu novelist would always use the term "Hindu" as a synonym to the term "Indian", and used to depict the Indian Muslims as aliens, who had played the role of "oppressors and tyrants" in the Subcontinent. Moreover, the references made by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to the Muslim community were "frequently sneers of contempt."[681]

Consequently, these attitudes among the Hindus towards their Muslim fellow countrymen made Sir Sayyid Ahmad and many of his co-religionists impugn the real intentions of the Congress leaders, and convinced most of them of the fact that their interests would be compromised in the hands of this overwhelmingly Hindu political organization.

Meanwhile, the third reason for Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opposition to the Indian National Congress, which was no less significant than the previous ones, was his staunch loyalty to the British Colonial Government. In fact, as will be discussed in the following section of this chapter, this reform-minded Muslim activist adopted an "apolitical" approach in tackling the issues of his community. This made him tirelessly exhort his co-religionists to give politics a wide berth, as well as redouble their efforts to prove their unwavering loyalty to the British, lest their good rapport with the British administration be jeopardized – a thing he had struggled a great deal to achieve.[682]

IV. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Doctrine of "Aloofness from Politics"

One of the central cornerstones of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's reformist movement was "aloofness from politics".[683] For him, politics was, for the time being, an unnecessary and an undesirable burden for the Muslims of India. In his view, the current conditions under which his co-religionists were living, which were characterized by their intellectual, material, edu-

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681 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 80.
682 S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910*, op. cit., p. 7.
683 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 19.

cational and economic backwardness, made them inadequately equipped for political adventure.[684] As K. K. Aziz put it:

> The Muslims were under a cloud. The British frowned upon them. The Hindus were fast inheriting the intellectual and material superiority which not so long ago belonged to the Muslims. They were poorly equipped for political adventure. Educationally and economically they had reached their nadir. With such crippling handicaps how could they dream of political agitation?[685]

Indeed, in the view of this Muslim reformist, it was in the interest of the Muslim community, at least for the time being, to keep away from politics. In fact, even before the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, Sir Sayyid Ahmad had advised his co-religionists to avoid politics as much as possible. As confirmed by Tariq Hasan, who stated that the bedrock of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's policy was: "acquire modern education before confronting the British in any field."[686]

To put it in different words, in the mind of Sir Sayyid Ahmad, the Indian Muslims were not yet ready to engage in politics. Vinod Kumar Saxena claimed that this Muslim reformist was definitely conscious of the conditions of his community as being "weak, defeated, disheartened and disorganized.", and that they would stand little chance of surviving had the British decided to be "bent upon their humiliation, or possibly, even destruction."[687] Hence, in the opinion of Sir Sayyid Ahmad, reconciliation with the British through loyalty was a matter of survival.[688]

Again in the same regard, according to Richard Symonds, Sir Sayyid Ahmad informed his community that, given the fact of their being "behindhand in education and deficient in wealth", the wisest course for them was to resort to education and assert themselves in commerce alongside their Hindu counterparts.[689] Addressing his co-religionists, Sir Sayyid Ahmad said: "When you have fully acquired education, then you

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684 Vinod Kumar Saxena, op. cit., p. 82.
685 K. K. Aziz, op. cit., pp. 20-21.
686 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 15.
687 Vinod Kumar Saxena, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
688 Ibid., p. 83.
689 R. Symonds, op. cit., p. 32.

will know what rights you can legitimately demand of the British Government."[690]

Towards that end, Sir Sayyid Ahmad used all means within his reach and in every occasion to persuade his co-religionists to keep away from the predominantly Hindu organization.[691] During public speeches, he lashed out at the "Bengali Assembly". The first time he openly attacked the Indian National Congress was on 28 December 1887 in a speech that he delivered to a huge public meeting in the city of Lucknow.[692]

According to Syed Razi Wasti, during this gathering, he implicitly invoked, among other things, the fact that the Indian Muslims constituted a 'different nation.'[693]

> When our Hindu brethren or Bengali friends wish to make a move which involves a loss to us and humiliation to our nation we cannot remain friendly, and undoubtedly it is our duty to protect our nation from those attacks of the Hindus and Bengalis, which, we are sure, are going to harm our nation.[694]

Parenthetically, from this speech, one can notice the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad kept referring to the word 'nation'. The recurrent use of this term could, probably, be interpreted as a way to insinuate the existence of two separate nations in the South Asian Subcontinent, with conflicting interests. Indeed, it is noteworthy to mention the fact that the use of "our nation" by this Muslim activist in such a meeting led many of his critics, past and present, to accuse him of being at the origin of the "two-nation theory", which would culminate, a half century later, in the partition of the South Asian Subcontinent and the emergence of the first independent Muslim state there, namely, Pakistan.[695]

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690 Ibid.

691 According to Shameem. H. Kadri, the Muslim press in India sided with Sir Sayyid Ahmad and unanimously voiced against the Indian National Congress. Shameem. H. Kadri, op. cit., p. 13.

692 S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910*, op. cit., p. 7.

693 Ibid.

694 Quoted in G. Allana (ed.), *Pakistan Movement: Historic Documents*, Paradise Subscription Agency, Karachi, 1967, p. 2.

695 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxv.

Meanwhile, in another meeting in Meerut on 16 March 1888, Sir Sayyid Ahmad urged the Muslim community, or rather, as he put it, "my own nation", to ignore the newly formed organization and to be faithful to the British rulers since they were the "People of the Book".[696] Besides, he pointed out that the Muslims of India should depend on the British to safeguard their interests and that in the absence of the latter, the Hindus would conquer them.[697] As confirmed in the following excerpt from his speech:

> Now suppose that all the English ... were to leave India ... then who would be the rulers of India? Is it possible that under these circumstances two nations – the Mohammedans and the Hindus – could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down.[698]

On the same point, Hafeez Malik pointed out that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the opinion that even though solidarity and entente could be established between the Muslim and Hindu communities in the educational and cultural spheres, it would be impossible to think of a context where both communities would share equally the sovereignty of India after the hypothetical withdrawal of the British. In fact, the withdrawal of the British rulers, in the mind of Sir Sayyid Ahmad, would only create a "vacuum of power", which would eventually culminate in a "struggle for hegemony between the two contenders, Hindus and Muslims."[699]

Here, it is worth noting the fact that many contemporaries, and particularly, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opponents, regarded the above public speeches, at Lucknow and Meerut, as the ones that featured this Muslim reformist's role as the founder of Muslim nationalism in the Indian Subcontinent, and hence, an opponent of Indian nationalism. In addition, these critics also believed that these two speeches revealed his political orientation, characterized by his separatist tendency for the Muslim

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696 H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 19.

697 M. Limaye, op. cit., p. 142.

698 Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'One Country, Two Nations', in H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 20.

699 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', op. cit., p. 144.

community.[700] Nevertheless, this criticism was contested by many Muslim scholars, and prominent among whom was Professor Hafeez Malik and Professor Tariq Hasan, who took the defence of this Muslim reformist. For instance, Tariq Hasan wrote:

> To project Sir Sayyid as an opponent of Indian nationalism is not just a travesty of truth. It is a sinister and crafty move to attack the very roots of Muslim nationalism in India.[701]

Hafeez Malik, on the other hand, after drawing upon some of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's personal manuscripts, came up with an updated article belonging to this Muslim leader, in which he addressed his opponents, mainly Hindus, and expressed his disappointment with regard to the latter criticism. Sir Sayyid Ahmad wrote:

> ... to deduce from that lecture the conclusion that I have changed my former opinions and abandoned my desire for agreement and friendship between Hindus and Mahomedans, is wrong. There is no person who desires more than I that friendship and union should exist between the two peoples of India ... I have often said that India is like a bride whose two eyes are the Hindus and Mahomedans.[702]

In the meantime, Sir Sayyid Ahmad established various associations in order to, on the one hand, serve the interests of the Muslim community, and on the other hand, to keep the attention of his co-religionists away from the newly formed Congress and to counteract the influence of the latter among them as a whole.[703] For the sake of illustration, it is useful to mention the Muhammadan Educational Congress, being the most prominent among these associations, which was founded in 1886.[704]

About this organization, Shun Muhammad affirmed that it was created to serve as an auxiliary agency, or, to use Tariq Hasan's appellation,

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700 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 105.

701 Ibid., p. 111.

702 H. Malik, *Political Profile of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Documentary Record,* National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Quaid-I-Azam University Press, Islamabad, 1982, p. 394.

703 Shameem. H. Kadri, op. cit., p. 14.

704 S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910*, op. cit., p. 7.

the "organizational wing",[705] of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's movement, namely the Aligarh Movement, in order to help him popularize his ideas and bring together the members of the Muslim community from the distant areas in the Subcontinent.[706]

With regard to the last point, Shun Muhammad stated that Sir Sayyid Ahmad felt that the Muslims inhabiting one part of India knew very little about the educational backwardness of their brothers inhabiting other parts of the country. Hence, he wanted the Muhammadan Educational Congress to be an occasion, as there was not any, when the Muslim intellectuals of the whole India would sit together in order to discuss matters affecting the education of the Muslim community and suggest means and ways to improve it.[707]

In other words, during the meetings of the Muhammadan Educational Congress, which took place on a yearly basis, Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers would gauge the educational problems of the Indian Muslims throughout the Subcontinent and urge them to take to education and, above all, abstain from politics.[708]

Actually, this insistence on the apolitical character of his movement led this reform-minded activist to the extent of changing the original name of the Muhammadan Educational Congress to become, by 1890, the Muhammadan Educational Conference.[709] In this respect, Hafeez Malik stated that the intention behind Sir Sayyid Ahmad's decision to replace the word 'Congress' by the word 'Conference' was to avoid any political implication of this association as well as to "lessen the impression of rivalry between the two organizations", namely, the Muhammedan Educational Congress and the Indian National Congress.[710]

Nevertheless, many scholars and contemporaries cast doubt on the apolitical character and role of the Muhammadan Educational Confer-

705 T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 96.
706 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxii.
707 Ibid., p. xxiii.
708 S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910*, op. cit., p. 7.
709 Ibid.
710 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 248.

ence and claimed that Sir Sayyid Ahmad, while struggling to keep the members of his community away from the Indian National Congress, fell into the trap of practising politics. In this respect, Hafeez Malik pointed out that Sir Sayyid Ahmad had, in a way or another, "renounced his apolitical role" by recognizing as well as criticizing the demands of the Indian National Congress, mainly those related to representation through the principle of election and recruitment through competitive examination.[711]

Apart from that, it is significant to point out the fact that in spite of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's advice and efforts to keep his co-religionists away from politics and from the "Hindu" Congress, there were few Muslims who joined it. Prominent among whom was a barrister from Bombay, Badruddin Tyabji (1844-1906), who was made the president of the Third Session of the Congress which met in Madras in 1887.[712] Commenting on his appointment to the Congress Presidentship, Badruddin Tyabji stated:

> I have always regarded it as the highest honour, higher than being on this bench ... let me tell the Council that in my court no contemptuous reference to that body (i.e. Congress) will be permitted.[713]

Actually, the Congress founders, overwhelmingly Hindus, did much to woo Muslim membership. According to S. N. Banerjea, as a way to attract Indian Muslims to join the Congress, the founders of this organization went to the extent of offering return fares.[714]

Muslim membership in the Indian National Congress remained very limited and at times fluctuated; as can be seen in the following table where Muslim attendance between 1885 and 1910 was registered:

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711 Ibid., p. 218.

712 H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 14.

713 Quoted in Vinod Kumar Saxena, op. cit., p. 65.

714 S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910*, op. cit., p. 7.

Table 3: Muslim Representation in the Congress: 1885-1910

Congress Session	Place	Total Delegates	Muslim Delegates
1885	Bombay	72	2
1886	Calcutta	440	33
1887	Madras	607	79
1888	Allahabad	1,248	219
1889	Bombay	1,889	248
1890	Calcutta	677	116
1891	Nagpur	list not available	list not available
1892	Allahabad	625	91
1893	Lahore	867	65
1894	Madras	1,163	23
1895	Poona	1,584	25
1896	Calcutta	784	54
1897	Amraoti	692	57
1898	Madras	614	10
1899	Lucknow	789	313
1900	Lahore	567	56
1901	Calcutta	896	74
1902	Ahmedabad	417	20
1903	Madras	538	9
1904	Bombay	1,010	35
1905	Benares	756	20
1906	Calcutta	1,663	45
1907	Surat	adjourned *sine die*	adjourned *sine die*
1908	Madras	626	10
1909	Lahore	234	5
1910	Allahabad	636	19

Source: S. R. Wasti, Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910, op. cit., p. 221.

Hence, when looked at objectively, this survey of the number of the Muslim delegates to the sessions of the Indian National Congress reflects the attitude of indifference, or rather, disinterest, among the Muslim community towards such a newly formed political organization. How-

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ever, in the eyes of many contemporaries in the Indian Subcontinent, this Muslim attitude meant that Sir Sayyid Ahmad's co-religionists had heeded his advice and had taken it in earnest.

Nonetheless, according to Syed Razi Wasti, to play down the poor, as well as irregular, Muslim attendance in the Congress' sessions, the pro-Congress scholars keep evoking the fact that the convenience of the place where the sessions were held was the decisive factor.[715]

Meanwhile, while Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers were campaigning against the Indian National Congress, Badruddin Tyabji, who preferred to join this political organization, was simultaneously conducting a counter-campaign to counter-act Sir Sayyid Ahmad's 'fatwa' and incite his co-religionists to rally around the Congress.[716] Actually, according to Madhu Limaye, Badruddin Tyabji had previously tried to persuade Sir Sayyid Ahmad to change his attitude towards the Indian National Congress. However, he received a swift and definite reply: 'no way!'[717]

It should be pointed out that while rejecting Badruddin Tyabji's proposal, Sir Sayyid Ahmad explained to this pro-Congress Muslim activist the fact that had the Indian National Congress been founded to deal with "social questions", he would himself "have been its President".[718] He further stated that the questions on which the two nations, Hindus and Muslims, could unite were only social questions. Then, he regretted the fact that this Congress was in fact a political organization.[719]

Moreover, Sir Sayyid Ahmad argued that there was no fundamental principle of the Indian National Congress to which the Muslims of India were not opposed. Then he declared:

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715 Ibid.
716 H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 14. The following is an excerpt from a letter Badruddin Tyabji wrote to a group of Muslim intellectuals in which he endeavoured to persuade them to join the Congress: "As to the advantages the Mahomedans will gain by joining the Congress, they will gain the same advantages as the Hindus, ... and that it is the duty of all people who call India their motherland, to unite together for the purpose of promoting the common good of all, irrespective of the distinction of caste, colour or creed." Quoted in, Amber Habib, 'Badruddin Tyabji's Response to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan', in *http://www.geocities.com/a_habib/Tyabji/sak.html*
717 M. Limaye, op. cit., p. 143.
718 Ibid.
719 Ibid.

... whatever system of election be adopted, there will be four times as many Hindus as Mohammedans, and all their demands will be gratified and the power of legislation will be in the hands of Bengalis or of Hindus of the Bengali type and the Mohammedans will fall into a condition of utmost degradation.[720]

In the meantime, during his presidentship of the Madras session of the Congress in December 1887, Badruddin Tyabji delivered a carefully worded speech where he, among other things, tried hard to persuade the Muslim community to disregard Sir Sayyid Ahmad's advice and follow his example. In the following passage, which is an excerpt from that speech, he wondered why the Indian Muslims should keep aloof from the Indian National Congress and claimed that the wished-for reforms could only be granted if all Indians, including Muslims, joined hands:

It has been urged in derogation of our character, as a representative national gathering, that one great and important community – the Mussalman community – has kept aloof from the proceedings of the last two Congresses. ... I ... do not consider that there is anything whatever in the position or relations of the different communities in India – be they Hindus, Mussalmans, ... – which should induce the leaders of anyone community to stand aloof from the others in their efforts to obtain those great general reforms which are for the common benefit of us all and which ... have only to be earnestly and unanimously pressed upon government to be granted to us.[721]

The above speech found an echo in the hearts of many of the audience. In retrospect, an article in a local newspaper, the Times of India of 29 August 1906, described that historic speech:

Few Presidential Addresses have equalled the one which Mr. Tyabji delivered on that occasion, in the lucid arrangement of facts and cogent reasoning, and it was acknowledged on all hands to be an oratorical effort of high order in the history of the movement.[722]

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720 Quoted in ibid.
721 Badruddin Tyabji, 'The Congress and the Muslims', in H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 14.
722 Vinod Kumar Saxena, op. cit., p. 66.

However, to Badruddin Tyabji's dismay, in the Muslim community, this speech fell on deaf ears. Moreover, following that speech, Sir Sayyid Ahmad wrote Badruddin Tyabji a letter on 24 January 1888, in which he reprimanded him for presiding over the Congress' session. The first paragraph of the letter read as follows:

> The fact that you took a leading part in the Congress at Madras has pleased our Hindu fellow subjects no doubt but as to ourselves it has grieved us much.[723]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad continued his letter by saying that he could never understand the words "National Congress", whereas the Indian Subcontinent is full of creeds whose aims and aspirations could by no means be the same. According to Madhu Limaye, this was seen by Sir Sayyid Ahmad as an "unfair and unwarrantable interference with his nation."[724] Then, in a reproachful tone, he castigated Badruddin Tyabji for regarding the "misnamed National Congress" as beneficial to India whereas, he continued, it is only injurious to "our own community."[725]

Indeed, Badruddin Tyabji and those who followed him invited the wrath of many Indian Muslims who were engaged in anti-Congress campaigning. Sir Sayyid Ahmad went even to the extent of putting into question the use of the word "delegates" for those Muslims who attended the Congress' sessions. Actually, he objected to the use of the word "delegate" to denote someone who was not designated by members of their community to represent them. In this respect, he pointed out:

> ... I object to the word 'delegate'. ... I assure my friend that the Muslims who went from our province ... to attend the Congress at Madras do not deserve the appellation 'delegate' ... The Muslims who went there were not elected even by ten Muslims.[726]

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723 Letter from Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan to Badruddin Tyabji. Quoted in ibid., (appendix vi)
724 M. Limaye, op. cit., p. 141.
725 Letter from Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan to Badruddin Tyabji. Quoted in Vinod Kumar Saxena, op. cit., (appendix vi)
726 Quoted in, G. Allana, op. cit., p. 2

Then, Sir Sayyid Ahmad concluded: "The unanimous passing of any resolution in the Congress does not make it a national Congress."[727]

Angered by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's criticism – and particularly the recent letter, as well as the fierce opposition among the Muslim community which grew very intense by the end of the 1880's[728] – Badruddin Tyabji, more restive than ever, wrote a letter to Allen Octave Hume in which he declared that:

> The main object of the Congress to unite different communities and provinces had miserably failed and the Mohammedans were divided from the Hindus in a manner as never before; that the gulf was becoming wider day by day.[729]

In addition to that, Badruddin Tyabji further suggested to Allen Octave Hume that the Indian National Congress be prorogued, that is, discontinued without dissolving, for a period of five years.[730] Besides that, Badruddin Tyabji said point-blank:

> The fact exists and whether we like it or not, we must base our proceedings upon the fact that an overwhelming majority of Mahomedans are against the movement... If then the Mussalman community as a whole is against the Congress ... it follows that the movement ipso facto ceases to be general, or National Congress.[731]

According to Matiur Rahman, Badruddin Tyabji's above recommendations were completely disregarded by the Congress leaders, who went on adamantly trying, in vain though, to rally support from Sir Sayyid Ahmad's co-religionists.[732] Nonetheless, Shun Muhammad bore witness to the

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727 Ibid.

728 M. Rahman, op. cit., p. 5.

729 Quoted in, H. D. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 14.

730 Ibid.

731 M. Rahman, op. cit., p. 5. Hafeez Malik reported on Badruddin Tyabji as having told Hume in the same letter that if the Muslims did not join the Indian National Congress, it would be better to "drop it with dignity", being conscious of the fact that they had done their best for the sake of their country. H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 284.

732 M. Rahman, op. cit., p. 5. According to Vinod Kumar Saxena, the Congress leaders resorted to the press to persuade Muslim youth to join the Congress.

fact that the anti-Congress Muslim campaigning was so strong that Allen Hume, himself, once thought of suspending it. Yet, though this did not occur, Shun Muhammad claimed that its activities were "slackened".[733]

From another standpoint, Hafeez Malik affirmed that, notwithstanding the fact that no official reaction was registered from Allen Hume with regard to Badruddin Tyabji's suggestions, Sir William Wedderburn, who used to be Allen Hume's lifelong colleague, reported that he, Hume, was by no means pessimistic as to the future of the Indian National Congress and that he was of the opinion that the anti-Congress movement would die down within three years.[734]

Simultaneously, Shameem. H. Kadri stated that Sir Sayyid Ahmad's denunciation of the Indian National Congress represented a "bombshell" to Allen Hume, who, growing outrageous, and in an insulting tone, labelled this Muslim leader and his followers as:

> 'fossils, wanting in understanding', men who in their hearts hate British rule or are secretly in the employ of England's enemies, and 'time-servers' who hoped to be paid for their opposition to the congress.[735]

In other words, Sir Sayyid Ahmad came under heavy fire from different angles because of his opposition to the Indian National Congress. In addition to Hume's derogatory statement mentioned above, the Indian

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For instance, editor Munshi Ganga Prasad, an important Congress leader as well as one of the founders of the *Advocate* of Lucknow published in English, addressed a letter to the students of the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, in which he pleaded with the Muslim students to join the Indian National Congress. The following is an excerpt from that letter: "Born in India, living in India, for whom else you will work but for India? ... Why should not the Hindus and Musulmans clap hands in brotherly affection and work harmoniously together for the common salvation." Vinod Kumar Saxena, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

733 Shun Muhammad (ed.), *The Aligarh Movement: Basic Documents: 1864-1898*, op. cit., p. xxv. It should be mentioned that among those Indian Muslims who joined the Indian National Congress, there were some who were bent on serving the interests of their community. For instance, one of these was Hidayet Rasul who, during the 1889 Congress session at Allahabad, demanded that the number of Muslims in the Legislative Councils should always be equal to that of the Hindus. M. Rahman, op. cit., p. 5.

734 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., pp. 284-285.

735 Shameem. H. Kadri, op. cit., p. 13.

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leaders of the Congress, besides projecting him as the 'father of the two-nation theory' as seen previously, attempted to turn his co-religionists against him, even after his passing away by the turn of the century. Probably the best example to illustrate this was the second letter that the edtor of the Advocate of Lucknow addressed to the students of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College on 27 May 1906, in which he stated:

> ... one who separates brother from brother is not only the enemy of one but of two. You and we are the children of the same soil and those who try to disunite us are our common enemies.[736]

Besides all that, there was an argument, backed by the Congress leaders, which stated that this Muslim leader was influenced to a great extent by Theodore Beck, a British resident in India, in formulating his position vis-à-vis the Indian National Congress. According to Tariq Hasan, there were many leading Muslim scholars, including Shun Muhammad, often quoted in this work, who, concurring with this thesis, believed that Sir Sayyid Ahmad's opposition to the Indian National Congress came as a result of his coming under the spell of Theodore Beck, the appointed Principal of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh and for which he made a great sacrifice.[737]

As a matter of fact, Theodore Beck was said to have been a strong supporter of British rule in India. In this respect, a contemporary bore witness to the fact that Theodore Beck was opposed to everything that could weaken British hegemony over the South Asian Subcontinent, or "had even the remote chance of adversely affecting the imperial interests of the British Government."[738] Hence, this made him adopt a hostile attitude towards the leaders of the Indian National Congress whom he saw as 'political agitators', and particularly the Bengali intellectuals, who constituted the majority in this political organization.[739]

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736 Vinod Kumar Saxena, op. cit., p. 93.
737 Talking of the untimely death of Theodore Beck, at the age of 40, Tariq Hasan stated that it was the warm climate of India and his overzealousness for the cause of the college that had shattered his health. T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 66.
738 Quoted in ibid., p. 68.
739 Ibid., p. 69.

Thus, harbouring such a grudge against the Congress people, Theodore Beck, some historians asserted, used his close relationship with Sir Sayyid Ahmad to win him over to his side, together with his followers, and to make him adopt the same hostile attitude towards the "political agitators". In this respect, Tariq Hasan claimed that Shun Muhammad, and the like-minded Muslim scholars, revealed how "Beck's backroom manipulations led to Sir Sayyid's break-up with the Indian National Congress and his estrangement from Bengali intellectuals."[740]

Sayyid Tufayl Ahmad Manglori, a twentieth-century Muslim scholar, but apparently with Congress leanings, reported on one of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's close associates, Mir Waliyat Hussain, as having stated that Theodore Beck had in mind a set of objectives that he wanted to achieve at any price. Among these objectives was the estrangement of Sir Sayyid Ahmad from the Bengali elite as well as his isolation from the national political movement.[741] Here, it is worth noting the fact that Hafeez Malik made it clear that Sayyid Tufayl Ahmad Manglori relied exclusively on undocumented testimony when reporting Mir Waliyat Hussain's statements.[742]

Besides, Sayyid Tufayl Ahmad Manglori claimed that in order to achieve his aims, Theodore Beck resorted to The Aligarh Institute Gazette, a paper published by the Scientific Society,[743] on which he managed to gain control. In such a paper, Manglori further claimed, Theodore Beck started writing editorials that were fraught with anti-Congress statements; and the latter were often attributed to Sir Sayyid Ahmad.[744] Eventually, the "Bengalis" had to riposte by publishing insulting statements of Sir Sayyid Ahmad.[745]

Reflecting Theodore Beck's attempts at turning Sir Sayyid Ahmad's co-religionists away from the Hindu political agitation, and hence, driving a wedge between the Muslim and Hindu communities, the pro-Con-

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740 Ibid., p. 68.
741 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', op. cit., p. 141.
742 Ibid.
743 See the previous chapter.
744 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', op. cit., pp. 141-142.
745 Ibid., p. 142.

gress Muslim scholar, Sayyid Tufayl Ahmad Manglori, stated that this Britisher used to tell the Indian Muslims:

> *Your ancestors were ruined because they opposed the government during the mutiny. ... you are still suspect. Therefore adopt loyalty ... You are in a weak position like a pumpkin. You should therefore be aware of the government's knife. Your life depends on the special concessions granted by the authorities. Therefore you should always request them to safeguard your rights.*[746]

This Congress-backed thesis, aiming at belittling Sir Sayyid Ahmad in the eyes of his co-religionists, even after he left this world, was firmly rejected by other Muslim scholars in the Indian Subcontinent. Muhammad Y. Abbasi can be a good example. In fact, this Muslim scholar argued that it is implausible to believe the idea that Sir Sayyid Ahmad's political orientation underwent a somersault as a result of being influenced by Theodore Beck because the latter was "neither his superior in intellect nor in position.[747]

Besides, Muhammad Y. Abbasi further wondered how a person like Sir Sayyid Ahmad, who had courageously and efficiently held his own against Sir William W. Hunter over the question of Muslim loyalty to the British and who could stand up to rebut Sir William Muir's defamatory book on the life of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) could have been "beguiled by a newly appointed subordinate."[748] Then, the same scholar pointed out that "so far was Beck from holding a position of influence over Sir Syed that his relation to him was that of a son to a father."[749]

On the other hand, Hafeez Malik, obviously in a disappointed mood, pointed out that some late nineteenth and early twentieth century pro-Congress Muslim scholars, who represented the vocal section of the Indian National Congress, had cast doubt on the independent judgment of Sir Sayyid Ahmad with regard to his stance on the Congress.[750] In this re-

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746 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 71.
747 M. Y. Abbasi, op. cit. p. 82.
748 Ibid.
749 Ibid.
750 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', op. cit., p. 142.

spect, Hafeez Malik declared that to accuse Sir Sayyid Ahmad of being a "satellite thinker is the acme of partisan injustice.[751]"

To put it all in a nutshell, Sir Sayyid Ahmad's political orientations underwent a volte-face by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In fact, in the period immediately following the bloody happenings of 1857, he was an ardent champion of the Hindu-Muslim unity, and struggled, peacefully, for the welfare of the two communities – though the Muslim community constituted a priority – which he considered as the two eyes of beautiful India. However, the behaviour of some Hindu leaders, deemed by Sir Sayyid Ahmad as threatening, characterized in the main by the Urdu-Hindi language controversy and the establishment of the Indian National Congress, coupled with the growing Hindu militancy and revivalism, brought about a radical change in his outlook on the political future of South Asia under colonial rule.

Before ending this chapter, it is significant to shed some light on the fact that Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's philosophy of loyalty to the British and aloofness from politics that he was preaching among the Muslim community in India not only led him to oppose the Indian National Congress, but also made him struggle to reduce the bonds that linked the Muslims of India with the other Muslim communities throughout the world, and particularly in the Middle East.[752] Jim Masselos stated that Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the opinion that such a pan-Islamic bond predisposed his co-religionists against developing any strong identification with any specific territory or with one another as a community within a country.[753]

Meanwhile, according to Hafeez Malik, Sir Sayyid Ahmad admitted the fact that all Muslims of the world constituted one nation because of their adherence to the Shahada, that is, the confession of the Islamic faith – no God whatsoever but Allah; Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.[754] Besides, as a religious thinker, he claimed that the Islamic religion does not set any racial barriers among the believers. In this respect, he stated that it was "irrelevant whether a believer was a white or black, Turkish or

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751 Ibid.
752 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 125.
753 Ibid.
754 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', op. cit., p. 131.

Tadhjik, an Arab or a Chinese, a Punjabi or a Hindustani."[755] As stated in the following verse from the Holy Quran:

> *The believers are but a single brotherhood; so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear God, that ye may receive Mercy.*[756]
>
> *The Holy Quran, Sura 49 (al-Hujurat), verse 10*

Hence, this reflects a new type of nationalism that is "un-Western" in character. In other words, whereas Western nationalism aims at the creation of national units, based on a set of essential factors, including territory and language, Islam calls for the creation of a universal unity. Furthermore, Islam calls for a worldwide Muslim nation called "Ummah" that includes all Muslims from the four corners of the globe.[757] To sum it up, the Indian sociologist Akshayakumar R. Desai described the ideology of Islamic nationalism in the following paragraph:

> *Islam emphasizes more than any other religion the unity of its followers. It is a cosmopolitan union of the Muslims all over the world. It offers greater resistance to the growth of nationalism which has a limited territorial basis. It gives rise either to pan-Islamism or humanism.*[758]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad emphatically argued that notwithstanding their being part of the same faith, Muslims throughout the world differed in their geographic locations and historical experiences. This made him stress the fact that the "Muslims' historical encounter with the Indian environment" had moulded Indian Muslims into a distinct entity, that he referred to as "nationality".[759]

Being convinced of such a view, Sir Sayyid Ahmad went to the extent of renouncing the Caliphate, or Khilafat, and putting into question its le-

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755 Ibid.
756 Quoted in ibid.
757 Ali Mohammed Naqvi, *Islam and Nationalism*, http://www.al-islam.org/islamandnationalism/
758 A. R. Desai, op. cit., p. 277
759 H. Malik, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Contribution to the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India', op. cit., p. 131.

gitimacy.[760] Indeed, according to Hafeez Malik, Sir Sayyid Ahmad was of the opinion that the institution of the Caliphate had weakened to a great extent Muslim nationalism in India,[761] and made the Indian Muslims unable to concentrate on their own national problems.[762]

Here it is worth recalling the fact that since the advent of the Arabs in the Indian Subcontinent around the eighth century up to the nineteenth century, Muslim Indians, including Mughal emperors, had always regarded the Sunni Caliphs, i.e. the Umayyads (661-750), 'Abbasids (750-1258) as well as the Ottoman Turks (1517-1924) as the de jure spiritual and temporal rulers of the Sunni Muslim community throughout the world.[763] Thus, the then Turkish Sultan, Abdul Hamid was seen by the Sunni Muslims of India as the temporal and spiritual successor to the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), and this could be reflected in the rising pan-Islamic sentiment among the Muslim community in India following the Greco-Turkish war by the last decade of the nineteenth century.[764]

With regard to Sultan Abdul Hamid, K. K. Aziz stated that he placed a premium on the institution of the Caliphate and did his utmost to propagate it among the Muslim faithful worldwide. Besides, K. K. Aziz pointed out that this Turkish "so-called" Caliph endorsed such an institution "partly out of conviction, but largely out of the necessity of bolstering up his position as the Khalifa of the Islamic world."[765]

For his part, Sir Sayyid Ahmad, who firmly opposed such an institution, denied the pretensions of the Turkish Sultans of being the suc-

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760 The Caliphate institution is based on the premise that since there is one God and one law (i.e. Islamic law), there should be only one sovereign. Nevertheless, some Islamic scholars, such as Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Rushd and al-Baqillani, stressed the fact that since the Islamic land became very extensive and widely separated, there should be more than one Caliph, and that the latter should rule according to the word of God. H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 236.

761 Ibid., p. 235.

762 Ibid., p. 237.

763 Ibid., p. 237.

764 V. Lovett, op. cit., p. 73. According to S. R. Mehrotra, the fact that the Indian Muslims showed full enthusisasm for the Sultan of Turkey and their severe condemnation of Britain's pro-Greek policy in the Greco-Turkish war of 1897 gave the British authorities in India a cause for worry. S. R. Mehrotra, op. cit., p. 182.

765 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 116.

cessors of the Prophet. At the same time, to counteract the pan-Islamic tendency that was prevalent among his co-religionists, he wrote articles in the Aligarh Institute Gazette, where he endeavoured to divert the attention of the Muslim youth from Turkey and preach loyalty to the British Colonial Government even if they were "compelled to pursue an unfriendly policy toward Turkey."[766] Here, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan stated that even if the British Government decided upon pursuing a policy hostile to the Turks, the Muslims of the Subcontinent were enjoined by their religion to obey their rulers, i.e. the British, loyally.[767]

Besides, to further back up his statement, Sir Sayyid Ahmad resorted to the principles of the Islamic law. In this respect, Tariq Hasan quoted a passage from a letter that this Muslim reformist wrote to a local paper, The Pioneer, in which he declared:

> The true and sound principle of Islam is that those Mohammedans who live under the protection of a non-Mohammedan sovereign as his subjects are not allowed by their religion to intrigue against him, and in case of a war between a Mohammedan and a non-Mohammedan sovereign, the Mohammedan subjects living under the protection of the latter are strictly prohibited from assisting the former.[768]

Furthermore, Sir Sayyid Ahmad, to use Hafeez Malik's expression, "struck at the roots" of the institution of the Caliphate by stating that the last bona fide Caliph passed away thirty years after the death of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).[769] In order to support this claim, this Muslim leader sought assistance from a contemporary Muslim scholar and a friend of his, Shibly Nomani (1857-1914). Sir Sayyid Ahmad asked the latter to contribute an article in which he would expound the fact that the institution of the Caliphate had ended with the Khulafa-i-Rashidin, namely the early

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766 V. Lovett, op. cit., pp. 73-74.

767 Aziz Ahmad, op. cit., p. 72.

768 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 67.

769 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 125. Here Sir Sayyid Ahmad was referring to the last of the four legitimate *Khulafa-i-Rashidin, namely* Ali Ibn Abi Taleb who served as a Caliph between 656 and 661. H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 236.

four Caliphs, and hence, discredit the then Turkish-backed Caliphate myth.[770]

Besides that, Sir Sayyid Ahmad pointed out that even if the institution of the Caliphate survived till the nineteenth century, the Caliph should only be a sovereign over the subjects living within the country that he ruled. In this respect, this Muslim reformer stated (in reply to Sir William Hunter's question about the genuineness of the Indian Muslims' loyalty to the British Crown):

> *We are devoted and loyal subjects of the British Government... We are not the Subjects of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, ... He neither has, nor can have any spiritual jurisdiction over us as Khalifa. His title is effective only in his own land and only over the Muslims under his sway.[771]*

In addition to that, Sir Sayyid Ahmad discussed this point elaborately in a pamphlet entitled The Views of Sir Syed on the Caliphate:

> *It is possible from this point of view that Mohammedan sovereigns of a country may regard themselves as Caliphs: but they are Caliphs or Sultans of that country alone which they rule and of those Moslems only who are their subjects.[772]*

Briefly speaking, Hafeez Malik summed up Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's political orientation by stating that notwithstanding his intention of protecting the Muslims' integrity by emphasizing their distinction vis-à-vis the Hindu Community as well as their separate interests, this Muslim leader also wanted to cut the silver cord which tied them to the international fraternity of 'all believers', personified in the caliphate.[773]

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770 Aziz Ahmad, op. cit., p. 72.
771 Quoted in ibid.
772 Sir Sayyid Ahmah Khan, '*The Views of Sir Syed on the Caliphate*', in *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Shun Mohammad (ed.), op. cit., p. 256.
773 H. Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 235.

EPILOGUE

Post-Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Era: A New Context

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan passed away on 27 March 1898, and his death caused a lot of grief among those who saw him as a great personality. Shamsur Rahman Faruq described him as being a "saviour, a sage, a political-social leader of tremendous credibility."[774] In The Pioneer of Lucknow of 29 March 1898, an obituary column wrote in a sorrowful tone:

> With his death, there dies the most salutary and fruitful as well as the most powerful political force that has moved the Mahomedan world of India during the last quarter of a century.[775]

Sir Sayyid Ahmad left behind him a community of 62,000,000[776] Indian Muslims in an atmosphere of insecurity. Now, will the former companions and followers of this Muslim leader continue abiding by his advice, mainly with regard to the non-involvement in politics?

Actually, events in the South Asian Sub-continent were to change around the turn of the century and Sir Sayyid Ahmad's co-religionists were going to be faced with new problems and challenges that would serve as a serious threat to their very existence as a separate community. Hence, how were they going to tackle such an ordeal?

In fact, in spite of his advice to the Muslim community not to take part in politics, new circumstances were to create a special context whereby Sir Sayyid Ahmad's co-religionists could no longer afford to follow in the footsteps of this Muslim reformer. One of the most important of the challenges facing the Muslims of India was the victory of the Liberal Party in the general elections in Britain in December 1905, which aroused "great hopes among the Congress Nationalists." This event was

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774 Shamsur Rahman Faruq, 'From Antiquary to Social Revolutionary: Syed Ahmad Khan and the Colonial Experience', *www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00fwp/srf/srf_sirsayyid.pdf*

775 Quoted in T. Hasan, op. cit., p. 116.

776 V. Lovett, op. cit., p. 74.

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seen by many Indian Muslims as a trouble looming on the horizon.[777] Indeed, as the Liberal Party acceded to power in Britain, rumours spread that further instalment of reforms for India were under consideration.[778] This new tendency of the Government in London was confirmed by Lord Morley (1838-1923),[779] the then new Secretary of State for India, well-known for his anti-imperialist views,[780] who declared in Parliament that he was prepared, in accordance with his party line, to introduce some constitutional changes in the Colonial Government of India by extending representation in the legislative councils to a greater number.[781] This system of representation by election, or – as referred to by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan – the principle of one man one vote, would put in danger the interests of the Muslim community, given the fact that numerically they were much smaller than the Hindu majority.

In the meantime, probably the most significant catalyst that led the Indian Muslims to enter politics was the "anti-partition" agitation, or rather, "overreaction", that was conducted by the Hindus: The partition of Bengal,[782] which was decided by the Viceroy Lord Curzon in 1905, and

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777 Madhu Limaye, op. cit., p. 194.

778 S. R. Mehrotra, op. cit., p. 180. It should be noted that this leniency on the part of the Liberals in Britain *vis-à-vis* the rights of the natives of India was partly eventuated by the pressure of the Congress leaders on the Government of India, which appeared to be in the mood of conceding to some of their demands. In this regard, Vinod Kumar Saxena commented that the Indian National Congress "had slowly but surely become a big political party" and "had been able to build pressure on the government." Vinod Kumar Saxena, op. cit., p. 87.

779 The appointment of Lord Morley as the new Secretary of State for India was received with relief among the Congressmen, given his moderate views and past record. Upon his coming, one Congress leader declared that it was "the return of hope and joy." S. R. Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement: 1905-1910*, op. cit., p. 9.

780 Lord Morley had once stood out for Irish Home Rule, a thing that raised so much hope in the minds of the Congress leaders. Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, Harcourt Brace & Co., London, 1929, p. 379.

781 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 133.

782 The Government of India, under the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon (1859-1925), decided in 1905 to partition the largest province in British India, Bengal, into two manageable provinces: Eastern Bengal and Assam on the one hand, and Western Bengal on the other hand. The latter province had a population of 54 million, of which 42 million were Hindus and only 9 million Muslims, hence a Hindu majority population. Regarding the other province, that is,

the vigour with which the Hindus sought its reversal had indeed surprised the Muslim community of India. In the eyes of the latter, it was a clear proof that the Indian National Congress' alleged claim that it stood for the Hindu-Muslim unity was but a set of demagogic words used by the leaders of this political party to win over Muslim support. In fact, the anti-partition agitation exposed to the Indian Muslims the real intentions of the Hindu politicians and, in addition, the fact that the latter opposed the establishment of a Muslim majority province showed every indication that the Muslim interests could by no means be protected at the hands of the Hindus. Hence, in such an atmosphere, could the Muslim community expect any fair-play from the Hindu majority?

There is general consensus among scholars of British India that this vigorous anti-partition Hindu agitation was the last straw that broke the camel's back, as it helped the Indian Muslims reach the final decision, that of entering politics on a de jure basis. Commenting on this, Jim Masselos stated that "partition had the ultimate effect of alienating many Muslims from the Congress."[783] Hence, it was against this backdrop that the Indian Muslims decided to found a Muslim political party on an all-India basis in order to safeguard their interests. As Khursheed K. Aziz observed:

> The era of politics had set in and it was no longer possible to shut one's eyes to political changes and keep travelling on the apolitical path mapped out by Sayyid Ahmad Khan.[784]

Eastern Bengal and Assam, it had a population of 31 million, of which eighteen million were Muslims and twelve million Hindus. Therefore, a new Muslim majority province was born. Shameem. H. Kadri, op. cit., p. 14.

783 J. Masselos, op. cit., p. 132.
784 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 28.

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Glossary

Ahl al-Kitab: People of the Book

Alagmir: World conqueror

Bida'a: An impious innovation

Dar-ul-Harb: A country of war

Dar-ul-Islam: A country of Islam or safety

Fatwas: Legal pronouncements or clerical verdicts

Fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence

Gau mata: Mother cow

Hadith: Prophet's traditions or sayings

Ijtihad: The process of making legal decisions by independent interpretation of the religious sources

Inam: A reward or benediction

Jihad: A holy war

Jizya: poll tax

Khulafa-i-Rashidin: The rightly-guided Caliphs

Ma'fiy: pardon

Maktabs: Traditional schools

Muftis: religious scholars

Purdah: The system of screening women from view by means of a veil or curtain. It is a common practice in the Indian Sub-continent among Orthodox Muslims and some Hindu castes

Qawm: A nation

Sabha: An association

Sati: The self-immolation of a Hindu widow on her husband's funeral pyre

Shahada: The confession of the Islamic faith

Shari'a: Islamic law

Sunna: The normative conduct of the Prophet

Taluqedar: A landed baron

Taqlid: The submission to traditional authority by blindly imitating or relying on old interpretations

Thugi: A ritual murder by strangulation in the cause of the mother goddess

Ulama: A group of Muslim learned men

Ummah: Muslim nation

Zamindars: A revenue-collecting landlord

Zindiq: One who strays so far from mainstream Islamic beliefs

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Islamkundliche Untersuchungen

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This book seeks to outline Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's approach to the Muslim cause in British India. Hailed by his supporters – mainly Muslim nationalists in South Asia – as a great leader, and criticized scathingly by his opponents and dubbed as a 'toady' or 'sycophant' of the British, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan remains, hitherto, a very controversial personality.

Be that as it may, no one can deny his decisive role in shaping his co-religionists' destiny in the Indian Subcontinent up to independence, namely the creation of Pakistan. He was, indeed, one of those who took the initiative to save Islam and Muslims from further disgrace and deterioration, at a time when the process of the disintegration of the Muslim world was set in motion and the fate of the Indian Muslims had already begun following a downward trajectory. This book also explores his socio-religious reforms, and particularly his fresh orientation over the issue of Muslim-Christian relationship in the light of modern times, a subject deemed very sensitive in the Indian context at the time.

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