

Key Question 4: How important was the work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to the development of the Pakistan Movement during the nineteenth century?

Early Biography Details

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was born in 1817 in Delhi. He came from a wealthy family and his father gave him high quality education. When he was 18 Sir Syed was skilled in Arabic, Persian, Mathematics and Medicine. He was also introduced as Sub-continent most able writer. In 1838 his father died so he became a judge in Delhi in 1846. When the war of Independence broke out in 1857 he was working as Chief Judge in Bijnaur and had saved the life of British women and children during the fighting. In return for his loyalty the British gave him estate with large income but he refused. His Belief that armed uprising against the British was pointless made him unpopular to many Muslims. He was appointed Chief justice in Muradabad and was later transferred to Ghazipore. In 1864 he was transferred to Aligarh where he played an important part in establishing the college. In 1876 he retired from his work to concentrate on running the college and devoting himself to improve the position of Muslims through education. He died on 27 March 1898.

Beliefs

Sir Syed was extremely unhappy about the position of Muslims in the subcontinent. Since the days of the Mughal declined the social and economical status of Muslims had declined sharply and the role of Muslims in the war of Independence had left further decline as British took measures to ensure that their control was unchallenged. Sir Syed Ahmed felt that the poor status of Muslims was due to they were treated as second-class citizen by British and Hindus and they had to take some responsibilities themselves. Most Muslims thought that British were no more than just invaders and they had nothing to do with them. Sir Syed Ahmed believed that Muslims had to accept that the British were there rulers and could only improve if they have a positive approach towards them. They needed to accept the British idea and their education if they wanted to improve. Sir Syed wanted to see Muslims untied and prospering in their social, economical and religious fortune. He made this his Life's ambition and founded Aligarh movement.

Aligarh Movement

Sir Syed was interested in Muslims. He wanted to improve relations with British and the positions of Muslims.

The central aims of the Aligarh Movement were to:

- improve relations between the British and Muslims communities by removing British doubts about Muslim loyalty and Muslim doubts about the British intentions.
- improve the social and economic position of Muslims by encouraging them to receive Western education and take up posts in the civil service and army.
- increase their political awareness to make them aware of the threat to from the Hindu policy of cooperation with the British.

Work

1. Improving Relation between the British and Muslim Communities

Sir Syed believed that the position of the Muslims in the subcontinent could only be improved if relations with the British were improved by the Muslims gained higher-quality education. There were two major obstacles to good relations.

A. The British had put the entire responsibility for the War of Independence in 1857 on the Muslims.

Sir Syed wanted to ensure that this false view was corrected.

B. There was a deep-seated resentment of the British among many in the Muslim community.

Sir Syed wanted to ensure that the benefits and advantages of British rule, in particular in the areas of science and technology were embraced by the Muslim community to improve the lives of the masses.

Convincing the British

In 1860 Sir Syed wrote "The Loyal Mohammedans of India". In this work he defended Muslims and listed the name of those Muslims who remained Loyal to the British during the uprising. In order to convince that the British were wrong to fully blame the Muslims for the uprising so he wrote a pamphlet "Essay on the Causes of the Indian Revolt". In this he pointed the reasons for the uprising. He told that British were unable to understand the Indians. This Pamphlet was circulated freely among the British officials in India and the copies were also sent to England where it was studied carefully. Many British thought that he was blaming them for uprising but others sympathetic and accepted the truth in his words. He also cleared the misunderstanding that Muslim called the British "Nadarath", He told that this was no insult but the word came from Arabic word "Nasir" which means helpers.

Convincing the Muslims

Sir Syed was aware that the British knew very little about Islam. Indeed, on a visit to England he was so offended by an English book on the life of the Prophet (PBUH) that he immediately wrote his own work correcting the many errors. Sir Syed was aware that Muslim in India knew very little about Christianity. He tried to overcome this by writing "Tabyin-ul-Kalam" in which he pointed out the similarities between Islam and Christianity.

2. Encouraging the growth of Western education

- He also supported the idea of western education as he knew that Muslims could not succeed until they had high quality education which was received by the Hindus. He believed that the acceptance of Western scientific and technological ideas was necessary as this could only make Muslim advance in the world of science. He related this with Holy Quran that it was written in Quran that the study and that an understanding of modern scientific belief actually helped reveal the full majesty of God. He established scientific society at Ghazipore and its main purpose was making Scientific Writing available to more people. When he visited England he was impressed by the quality of education the student received there so in 1875 he founded Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College its main purpose was to provide the education to the Muslims like the people in England received. The subjects were Mathematics, Modern Science and Agricultural Science. (In 1920 the college became the University of Aligarh.

3. Increasing Political Awareness

Syed Ahmed also wanted Muslims to have a good relation with the Hindus but he found out that Hindus did not want good relations.

- In 1885 Indian Nation Congress was found which claimed to speak for Indians but later it was found out that it was a body dominated by Hindus.
- Sir Syed wanted Muslims to stay away from Democracy as the Muslims were in minorities in India and every election would be won by the Hindus.
- A further cause of concern to Syed Ahmed was the "Hindi-Urdu Controversy". In 1867 the Hindus demanded that Hindi should be the next official language. The Muslims were struck by this as Urdu had special place in their hearts. This was another factor guiding him towards his two nation theory.

Hindi-Urdu Controversy

Hindi-Urdu Controversy was started in 1867. Hindus demanded Hindi to be official language but Muslims wanted Urdu to be official language. Sir Syed supported Urdu in this thing. Due to this reason Sir Syed started “Two Nation Theory” telling that Muslims and Hindus were two separate kinds of people. Muslims opposed this and supported Urdu as it was the sign and united the Muslims of the India under one language.

Two-Nation Theory

Urdu was the national language for many years. But Hindus opposed it in Urdu Controversy. This provoked Sir Syed to make his Two Nation Theory to tell that Urdu had place in hearts of Muslims and was supported by them and can't be replaced by Hindu which was the language of the Hindus. It was important because Sir Syed had realized that Muslims and Hindu couldn't work together as the Hindus were not with the Muslims.

Another reason was that the parliamentary system was not supported by Sir Syed was Hindus were in more number so they always outnumbered the Muslims and due to this Sir Syed opposed it. Sir Syed realised that separate electorate was the possible solution to this so in view of his Two Nations Theory. He made this decision of separate electorate demand for elections for the good of the Muslims.

Another reason it was important was that congress spoke of competitive examinations for jobs and good posts while Muslims were always not given good education so they were also not able to take good posts as Hindu won all the seats and passed the examinations always. According to Two Nation Theory Sir Syed suggested it as two separate groups of Muslims and Hindus were not working for the Muslims at that time so Two Nation Theory was important here as well.

Importance

He worked tirelessly to improve the relation of British and Muslims and wrote several books and pamphlets so that British might be convinced and trust Muslims once again. He played a major role in educating Muslims so that they can take up good jobs and their condition was improved. He is known as “Father of the Pakistan Movement” As he was the first one to express the Idea of treating Muslims and Hindus separately.

Contribution of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (14Marks)

1. Attempts to achieve a better understanding between the British and the Muslims

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was one of the Muslim reformers. He carefully studied and analyzed the decline of Muslims in political power, social status and economic well-being. He came to the conclusion that Muslims were being handicapped because of the misunderstanding which had cropped up between the British and Muslim rulers, the Muslims opposed and hated the British and everything associated with the British. Muslims kept away from modern education and English language which the British were trying to enforce in India. On the other hand the British held the Muslims responsible for the revolt of 1857 and considered them (Muslims) to be their real enemies. The result of this mistrust was that Muslims were being crushed in every way.

Therefore, Sir Syed tried to remove this misunderstanding by addressing both the British and Muslims. Sir Syed wrote books and explained to the British that the real cause of 1857 uprising was the wrong policies and attitude of the British themselves. To Muslims Sir Syed explained that Christians and Christianity should not be hated. He specially stressed that Muslims should come towards modern education, the lack of which was causing continual set back to the Muslims of India.

2. Education

Sir Syed gave much importance to modern education and his efforts and contribution to Muslim education and his efforts and contribution to Muslim education is very important. He opened schools at several places where he was posted. He established Scientific Society and printed the Aligarh Institute Gazette. He was visited England in 1869 on his own expenses to observe the working of British Universities. Most important achievement in education sector was the founding of M.A.O College at Aligarh in 1877. Sir Syed founded the Mohammads Educational Conference whose objective was to discuss and solve the education problems of Muslims in the sub-continent. His efforts for Muslim education served double purpose. It helped the Muslims to get good jobs and raised their status in society. It also helped in removing the mistrust between the British and the Muslims. Therefore education was the most important aspect of Sir Syed's services in the Muslims of India.

3. Politics

Sir Syed's advice to Muslims in the political field is also important. He believed that under the European system or democratic government the Muslims of India would always be at the mercy of Hindu majority. He suggested separate electorate for Muslims. He advised the Muslims not to join Congress. He opposed the system of competitive examinations for government posts because Muslims were much behind the Hindus in education. Sir Syed strongly opposed the replacement of Urdu with Hindi as court and official language.

4. Religion

In Religion Sir Syed united the Muslims by supporting the "Two Nation Theory" and the Hindi-Urdu controversy of 1867 in which Hindus wanted Hindi to be the official language while the Muslims wanted Urdu. He realised the threat to Muslims so united them and gave them good education.