

held that Muslims and Hindus were two separate nations with distinct cultures, religions, and interests. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the All-India Muslim League and founding father of Pakistan, was influenced by Sir Syed's political philosophy, having been educated at Aligarh Muslim University.

The Two-Nation Theory eventually became the bedrock of the 1940 Lahore Resolution, which was presented by A. K. Fazlul Huq, the then Chief Minister of Undivided Bengal. Professor Ayesha Jalal has noted that, over time, the Lahore Resolution emerged as a significant milestone in the political history of British India (Jalal, 1985).

Sir Syed maintained that Muslims should collaborate with the British government. He viewed the British as protectors of Muslim interests and encouraged Muslims to refrain from participating in the Indian National Congress, fearing it would align with Hindu interests at the expense of Muslim political representation. He believed that the Muslim community should remain aloof from political agitation, as their active participation in the anti-colonial Mutiny of 1857 had already endangered them by provoking British antagonism.

In his 1858 monograph, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, Sir Syed identified five major reasons for the 1857 rebellion: the lack of Indian representation in legislative councils, forced religious conversions to Christianity, poor management of the Indian Army, British neglect of Muslim interests, and various other misguided policies that led to widespread dissatisfaction across society. He was deeply impressed by Western rationalism and sought to demonstrate that every doctrine of Islam could stand up to the principles of science, reason, and common sense (Sayeed, 1960: 13). At the same time, he believed that Islam is compatible with liberal secular values and religious tolerance.

Sir Syed Ahmad established the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875. The foundation of the college at Aligarh served as tangible evidence that Sir Syed's ideas had been embraced by the Muslim community, as the institution was largely funded by their donations. The college was later transformed into Aligarh Muslim University, which became the primary vehicle for Muslim education.

Sir Syed also emphasised the importance of individual well-being. As he stated, "The government must provide all sorts of rights related to property, employment, freedom of religion, speech, and life. It must protect them, and unequal powers should not be allowed to harm anyone. The government must shield the weak and deserving from the undeserving

mighty. Everyone should be allowed to get the full benefit from his property and skill" (cited in Kidwai, 2021: 6).

The impact of the Aligarh Movement (AM) on Bengali Muslims could hardly be underestimated. Sir Syed's overall influence upon Bengal was part of his broader attempt to promote the upliftment of Muslims across India, although his direct

Lord Curzon executed the partition of Bengal in 1905. Dacca became the capital city of the newly created 'Eastern Bengal and Assam'. The Partition of Bengal was a momentous phase in the development of Muslim nationalism in Bengal. Muslim leaders became very optimistic after the partition scheme in 1905. As a result, in 1906, Muslim leaders formed a new political party, namely the All-India Muslim League, to safeguard the political interests of the Muslim

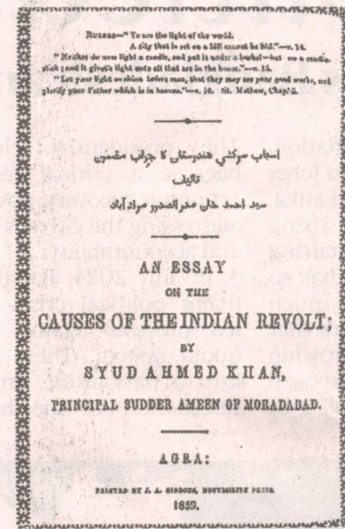
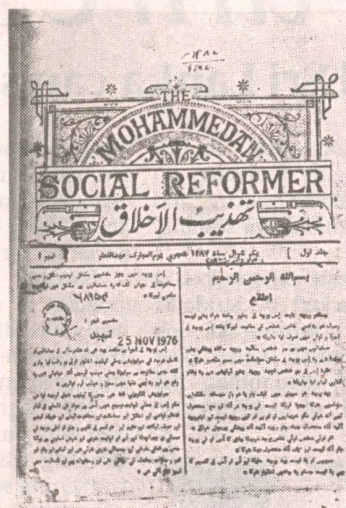


Tomb of Syed Ahmad Khan

involvement with Bengal was more limited compared to his impact in North India, particularly in Aligarh. Before the AM, very few Bengali Muslims had access to an English education. It was the AM which introduced some Muslims to Western education and science. It became a source of pride for those Muslims who had been able to attend Aligarh for higher education in modern Western disciplines.

community in Bengal.

The Simla Deputation, led by Aga Khan, met with Governor General and Viceroy Lord Minto in Simla in October 1906. This deputation marked the first organised effort by the Muslim community to present their demands to the British government in India. Muslim leaders put forth two primary demands: first, the allocation of a fixed number of seats for Muslims in municipal and district boards,



(L) First issue of the journal Muhammadan Social Reformer dated 24 December 1870, it was a pioneering publication initiated by Sir Syed Ahmad to promote liberal ideas in Muslim society. (R) Syed Ahmad Khan's famous pamphlet 'The Causes of the Indian Revolt'



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