

An Evaluative Study of the Educational Philosophy and Contribution of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

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Abstract

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was one of the most resplendent personalities of the 19th century. Altogether a theologian, scholar, social reformer, educationist he was a rare combination of Muslim talents in India. He was an intellectual giant who stood for dynamic movements of society. He molded the destiny of the nation and established the supremacy of India in many matters - worldly and spiritual, liberty of conscience and freedom of expression, hard work and struggle to make up the way. He had his own educational philosophy and a dream to establish an institution which could impart western education on oriental lines. This dream was actualized by establishing the Aligarh Muslim University.

Keywords: Education, Philosophy, Liberty of Conscience, Western and Oriental Philosophy, Assimilation of Culture.

Objectives of the Research:

1. Studying life and works of Sir Syed.
2. Tracing the events that influenced his thinking.
3. Understanding his contribution in the field of education.
4. To analyze his thought process for the upliftment of society.

Method of the Study:

Research method of the present paper is Historical. Sir Syed's life events and thoughts were gone through, collected, classified and analyzed and then their evaluation was undertaken.

Introduction:

Born in 1817 he lived an age of 80 years Sir Syed was purely an Educationist who had adopted and assimilated western ideas fully to his personality. He was inspired by ARNOLD THOMAS WALKER, JOHN LOCKE, and THOMAS PAINE etc and had his main interest in PRAGMATISM, METAPHYSICS, LANGUAGE, AESTHETICS, ISLAM and CHRISTIANITY. He is said to be the one who brought reforms to Islam. He was the one who named the term "TWO NATION THEORY" although theory was given by M.A.JINNAH.

His Philosophy:

His views and philosophy remained critical and influential in the national political scenario of Pakistan. He knew that the rigid orthodox approach of Muslims was definitely harmful for them. Therefore he began promoting western style, rational and scientific education and laid the foundation of modern schools and journals and promoted as well as encouraged Muslim industrialism. Global Islamic reformation was his main objective.

Institutions Founded by him:

He founded the SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY of Aligarh, the first scientific association of its own type in India. This society held annual conferences, disbursed funds for educational causes and regularly published a journal on scientific streams in English and Urdu. Here again he felt that the socio economic future of Muslims was threatened by their orthodox approach. His main educational objectives were channelized by the ALL INDIA MUHAMMADAN EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

In 1859 he established GULSHAN SCHOOL at MORADABAD, VICTORA SCHOOL at GHAJIPUR in 1863; in 1864 the SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY for Muslims and in 1875 he laid his milestone ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY.

He said “Do not show the face of ISLAM to others; rather show your face as the follower of true Islam representing character, knowledge, tolerance, and piety.

Influencing Factors on Sir Syed:

He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. His family had deep bonds with Mughal court. He had studied QURAN and science within the court. He had been in government service for nearly 38 years and besides performing professional duties sincerely and wholeheartedly he was able to devote considerable time and attention to literary and social work. In fact many of his books were prepared during this period and the nucleus of his social and educational reform movements was formed this time.

He was a voluminous writer who wrote a number of books dealing with historical and political issues and continued contributing hundreds of articles in the TAHZEEB UL AKHLAQ and the Aligarh Institute gazette and frequently delivered public speeches in which he dealt with topical problems. His political ideas have been culled from these scattered writings. He was not only an academic thinker but also an educationist and a reformer. In him we do not find a discussion of abstract political concepts but a treatment of only those political problems which had relevance with the Indian political and social situation of that period. It is not possible to place him in any particular school.

Political events of ENGLAND that were taking place those days when England was emerging the greatest world power in the second half of 19th century also laid a major influence on him. Also he had a great faith in the supreme greatness of political ideals of Lord Gladstone and liberal ideals of Lord Rippon.

Islamic and western were the two streams which influenced his whole ideology. He became familiar with the ideas of the western thinkers, especially the Utilitarians through the English translation of their work. These included POLITICAL ECONOMY, ESSAYS ON LIBERTY, REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT and SUBJECTING TO WOMEN. The essays of ADDISON AND STEELE on social problems also indirectly supplied Syed's political ideas and outlook. His essays were mostly based on these ideas.

His Faith in Religion:

Like BURKE he had full faith in God and was mainly and deeply religious in nature. He believed that man has been created by God to fulfill his noble projects. If he does not try to seek this end; he is acting contrary to the plans of his creator. According to him social and political movements are temporal and historical in nature. They cannot be understood except in relation to the time and circumstances in which they take place. To study a political problem in isolation or without looking into its genesis is bound to lead to wrong results.

His ideas on the sphere of state action were very similar to those of J.S.MILL. To him the main function of state is to maintain its authority in the country and save it from internal disorders and foreign invasion. After achieving this purpose, the state should maintain peace and protect the lives, property and rights of the people providing them with all sorts of freedom. The establishment of the civil and criminal courts is also one of the functions of the state.

In an article entitled SELF HELP he says that no law however good it may be, can make an idler laborious and a drunkard repentant since these results are to be achieved by the individual himself without the interference of government.

He believed that the zeal of an individual for self help is the real foundation of his progress. And when this is found in many individuals, then this is the actual root of national

development, national strength and national prosperity. But when the individuals go on depending on others, even if it be for the good of others, they cannot progress.

Conclusion

So this study is an attempt to unravel the different threads in the life and work of Sir Syed as judiciously and impartially as possible. However we can say that such people like Sir Syed are of rare existence. We have to give credit to him for original thinking and sincerity

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