SIR SAYYID AHMAD KHAN'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM NATIONALISM IN THE INDO-PAKISTAN SUBCONTINENT

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I
INTRODUCTION

In the hundred years before 1857, the last vestiges of the crumbling Moghul power slowly vanished. When forceful resistance to the British was no longer expedient or possible, the Muslims, who had been the rulers, withdrew into a purposive cultural isolation. Under the leadership of the 'ulamā' contacts with the British were discouraged and the introduction of new cultural elements into Muslim life was severely eschewed. The result was that while the British were introducing a new administrative system, a new language and a new technology into the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, and the Hindus, finally released from Muslim rule, were rapidly adopting the British offerings, the Muslims chose not to participate in the professional, governmental or educational life of the country.

While English was the official language of government, the Muslims refused to learn it; while science and technology held promises of great rewards, Muslim fathers preferred to have their sons study Arabic and Persian in the traditional schools. As the gulf widened, the social status and material well-being of the Muslims in the subcontinent steadily declined.

The reversal of this policy of Muslim isolation was largely brought about by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898). Sir Sayyid founded the Aligarh Muslim University which became the most important source of diffusion of Western traits and ideas among the Muslims.

Sir Sayyid's ideas, which were taken over without much change by his followers, are still influential in Pakistan; a study of their genesis and development will illuminate past history as well as current happenings. This analysis of his ideas falls into two parts: The Theory of Nationalism and The Theory of Progress.
EARLY LIFE

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was born into the decadent Muslim bourgeoisie, which was breathing its last during the twilight of the Mughal Empire. At the age of twenty-two he secured (1838) a minor position in the Judicial Department of the British administration and diligently set himself to mastering the newly established civil procedure. In accepting British employment he followed in the footsteps of his maternal grandfather, Khwaja Farid-ud-Din Ahmad (d. 1828), who had represented Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of India, at the Court of the Shah of Iran, Fatih 'Alif Shâh Qâşâr, and was later made the Prime Minister of Akbar Shâh II in 1815. Although during this period he wrote twelve books including trivia on Sufism, Namîqah (1864) and Kalimât al-Haqq (1850), he shows no particular concern for the national aspirations of Muslims in India. The only work of this period which demonstrated his historical acumen and depth of scholarship is Āthar al-Ṣanadîd (1847), an archeological survey of old Delhi including the description of Muslim monuments. It was translated into French in 1861 by a well-known orientalist, M. Garcin de Tassy and the Royal Asiatic Society of London honoured the author, making him an honorary fellow of the Society. Another work of considerable historical value was the editing and annotating of Abu'l-Fadl's A'in-i-Akbari (Institutes of Akbar). If the 1857 wars against the British had not broken out Sir Sayyid probably would have ended his life as a minor state official with a dozen books to his name.

II

THE THEORY OF NATIONALISM

The revolt of 1857 washed away the last vestiges of Mughal rule, forcing Muslims to delude themselves no more with the symbols of vanished greatness; they were brought face to face with the changed realities of social and political life in the subcontinent. Sir Sayyid, who was a sub-judge in Bijnore (Bijnawr) in 1857, emerged from the ordeal not only as a loyal employee of the British Government, but traumatized into a staunch Muslim nationalist.

He did not consider the revolt a war of independence planned in advance by patriots. In his eyes it was an insurrection triggered off by dissatisfied Hindu and Muslim soldiers. The British Government and Christian missionaries by their own shortsightedness, added to the grievances of the Indians, particularly regarding
religious interference and the imposition of laws contrary to the mores of the people. He spelled out the grievances in a memorandum (Ashāb-i-Baghāwat-i-Hind) to the British Government and recommended the appointment of Indians to the Governor-General's legislative council so that the gap between the government and the governed might be eliminated.5

1857 also convinced Sir Sayyid that although the British Raj maintained peace between Hindus and Muslims, it did not blend them into a single nationality, aspiring for a common political end. In fact he saw Hindus and Muslims living in the dread of each other during the interruption of British rule.6 It was obvious to him that if Hindus and Muslims could not close their ranks even in an emergency they were less likely to attempt it in peaceful times. Two other issues further confirmed his separatist Muslim nationalism: the mode of representation in the Viceroy's legislative council, which since the constitutional reforms of 1861 provided seats for Indians; and the policies of the All-India National Congress.

In his study of the British Parliament, Sir Sayyid had come to believe that only culturally homogeneous nationalities, though they may be divided on political and economic issues, are capable of administering parliamentary democratic institutions. Cultural heterogeneity, he believed, would only choke democratic processes. Therefore, he insisted that Muslims represent Muslim interests in the Viceroy's legislative council. The All-India National Congress (founded 1885), being committed to territorial nationalism, emphatically demanded representation without regard to cultural or religious affiliation. In a speech on December 28, 1887 in the second session of the Muhammedan Educational Conference at Lucknow, Sir Sayyid elaborated on the theme.

"The demand of the National Congress is that the people should elect a section of the Viceroy's Council. They want to copy the English House of Lords and House of Commons. Now let us suppose that we have universal suffrage, as in America, and that all have votes. And let us first suppose that all Muslim electors vote for a Muslim member and that all Hindu electors for a Hindu member and now count how many votes the Muslim member will have and how many the Hindu. We can prove by simple arithmetic that there will be four votes for the Hindu to every one vote for the Muslim. Now how can the Muslim guard his interests? It will be
like a game of dice in which one man had four dice and the other only one."7

To counteract the territorial and secular nationalism of the Congress, Sir Sayyid established the Patriotic Association in August, 1888. Under its influence regional Islamic Associations protested against the political programme of the Congress throughout India. The Patriotic Association made it clear to the British that more than one nationality with fundamental cultural and religious differences existed in India and that the yoking of Hindus and Muslims under a parliamentary system would work only to the detriment of the minority.8

After Sir Sayyid’s death Muslim leaders succeeded in obtaining a guarantee from the British of separate or national representation, which is generally known as communal representation.

In 1869 and 1870 Sir Sayyid travelled in Europe. Here he synthesized his observations on British democracy and Hindu-Muslim-British politics in India to provide a theoretical frame of reference in which he could simultaneously justify his loyalty to the British Government and his devotion to Muslim national aspirations in the subcontinent. The following analysis of Sir Sayyid’s theory of nationalism is to be understood in this context.

**LOVE OF NATION OR LOVE OF LAND**

In 1872 Sir Sayyid was invited by the Honourable Mawlavi Muḥammad ʿAbul Laṭīf, the founder of the Muslim Literary Society, to deliver a lecture in Calcutta on patriotism. Speaking in Persian he defined instead his view of nationalism—the love for one’s own nation. “Love” asserted Sir Sayyid, “is like a pyramid”. On the top of the pyramid is the noblest form of love—love for the universe, implying a tender concern for even leaves of grass. “This kind of love is unattainable, unless God of the universe opens the portals of his blessings”.

The second kind of love is for those who “share human qualities with us”—the love of mankind so beautifully described by the famous Persian poet Shaykh Sa’dī Shīrāzī:

\[
\text{بی ن آدم عضوی بک دیگرند که در آفرینش زیک جهان دیگر عضوی بدرد آورد روزگار دیگر عضوی را تنادی قرار}
\]

People are organically related to each other,
Since their creation is from the same soul.
When a limb throbs with pain,
All other organs share this pain.
"Lofty though this sentiment is," Sir Sayyid maintained, "it is less noble than the first kind of love, and far too elusive a quality to be comprehended".

"At the bottom of the pyramid", said Sir Sayyid, "is placed a sentiment which I call love of nation, which I understand and am capable of". It was the love of the Muslim nation, he stated that had motivated him to undertake an extensive programme of educational, cultural and political reform among the Muslims.

To this end he had decided while still in London to establish a monthly journal. He had the title block made in London, giving the journal the hybrid name of *The Tahdhib al-Akhlaq; Muslim National Reformer*. The first issue of the Tahdhib was published on December 24, 1870. It discussed Tunisian-Arab nationalism which was deeply influenced by western thought. One of the Tunisian newspapers *al-Ra'id al-Tunisi*, which was read by Sir Sayyid quite regularly carried the following motto on its front page:

Love of the native land is a part of Faith.
Whosoever strives for the progress of his country really endeavours to raise the honour of his religion.

Sir Sayyid commented that the motto was suitable for Tunisia, where one nation occupied the native land but that it had to be modified for application to Hindustan, where the native land and the nation were not synonymous. Accordingly he adopted the motto with suitable revision:

Love of the nation is a part of Faith.
Whosoever strives for the progress of his nation really endeavours to raise the honour of his religion.

"Man is not only a social animal", declared Sir Sayyid, "he is essentially a national animal. Animals when they flock together indicate a preference for their kind but are incapable of mutual help and consideration. On the contrary, man is capable of co-operative endeavour, but if he does not partake in the solution of national problems and demonstrate national love he is lower than the dumb animals".

Sir Sayyid described the charitable activities of pious Muslims, inspired largely by the hope of salvation in the next life instead of the desire to help the fellow-man in this life, as blatant selfish-
ness. "Virtuous deeds are only those", declared Sir Sayyid, "which meet the problems of the Muslim nation and are motivated by the love of nation". The grand mosques and monuments and religious madrasahs and maktabs which were supported by charitable endowments from the Muslim nobility were to Sir Sayyid, symbols of their greed masked with a facade of piety, betraying only the builders' lack of concern for the collective well-being of the Muslims. He exhorted Muslim intellectuals to lead the cultural revolution, stressing the Muslims' social solidarity and accepting such innovations as would place the nation again in step with the modern world.

As a guide to the Muslims, Sir Sayyid offered the following scheme of culture change, indicating the areas where customs needed to be modified. He recommended that certain folk-ways which had been influenced by contact with the Hindus be replaced by Middle Eastern Islamic customs, and that the modern western orientation stressing technology and secular education be adopted.

Outline for Social and Cultural Change

1. Religion
   (a) Reformation of rituals;
   (b) Irrational dogmas to be discarded;
   (c) Codification of definitive beliefs.

2. Education
   (a) Harmonization of religious and secular training;
   (b) Propagation of western sciences and technology;
   (c) Traditional education in home economics for women.

3. Family and Social Customs
   (a) Elimination of polygamy;
   (b) Removal of Hindu influences from funeral and marriage ceremonies;
   (c) Emancipation of women;
   (d) Adoption of European table manners;
   (e) Cultivation of polite manners—in the western sense.

4. Property
   (a) Introduction of modern techniques of cultivation among Muslim peasants;
   (b) Promotion of trade among Muslims;
   (c) Utilization of western technology.

5. Improving the image of the Muslim Nation
   (a) Efficient utilization of time;
(b) Elimination of lavish, conspicuous consumption on social occasions;
(c) Promotion of a national instead of an individual and selfish outlook among the people.\(^{13}\)

**MUSLIM NATIONALISM AND THE CALIPHATE**

Although Sir Sayyid wanted to protect the cultural integrity of Muslims by emphasizing their distinction *vis-à-vis* the Hindus, he also wanted to cut the silver cord which tied them to the international fraternity of "all believers", personified in the religic-legal institution—the Caliphate. From the advent of the Arabs in Sindh (711) to that of the British, 'Muslim citizens and kings of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent considered the Sunni Caliphs i.e. the Umayyads (661-750), 'Abbāsids (750-1258) and 'Uthmānli Turks (1517-1924), as the *de jure* sovereigns of the Sunni Muslim world.\(^{14}\) The depth of the Indo-Pakistani Muslims' attachment to the Caliphate can be illustrated by the following incident which took place during the reign of Sultan Rukn-ud-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh (1235-1236).

Taj Rezah, a poet of considerable merit\(^ {15}\) was waylaid and robbed in one of the parks of Old Delhi. He petitioned the Sultan for redress like a good poet, in elegant Persian verse. Echoing contemporary Muslim sentiment he threatened to go over the head of the Sultan and take his case to the Caliph at Baghdad if he failed to obtain justice and appropriate compensation at the Delhi Court.\(^ {16}\)

I come to seek redress for the injustice done to me

I implore the Sultan to compensate me.

If, however, I fail to obtain justice,
Then I will leave this God-forsaken land.
I will repair to Baghdad and petition the Leader of the Faithful, the Caliph.
And with the flood of my tears will inundate another Tigris.
But I know such an occasion will not arise,
Because our Sultan is a just monarch;
He is Rukn-ud-Din [Firuz Shâh], the axis of justice,
From him these dominions derive stability and order.

The institution of the Caliphate emphasized the ties binding all Muslims regardless of ethnic and territorial diversity. Religious and political allegiance was pledged to the "Community of Believers", thereby weakening regional loyalties and retarding the incipient development of nationalities in the modern sense. The effect of the Indo-Pakistani Muslims' attachment to the Caliphate was twofold. It precluded any significant Hindu-Muslim cooperation (a prerequisite for the development of a joint Hindu-Muslim nationality), and at the same time impeded the development of a true nationalism among the Muslims of the subcontinent. Sir Sayyid endeavoured to strengthen the social solidarity among the Muslims by emphasizing their differences with the Hindus, and at the same time to shift the focus of political allegiance from the Caliphate to the Muslim nation in the subcontinent. This process ultimately led to the development of Pakistani nationalism, championed by Dr. Muhammed Iqbal and Chaudhari Rahmat Ali, and widely propagated by the All-India Muslim League.

The classical theory of the Caliphate stressed that since there was one God and one law there must be only one ruler. Some jurists, including al-Baqillâni, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldûn believed that two or more Caliphs might legitimately rule since the regions of Dâr al-Islâm had become very extensive and widely separated. According to this view each Caliph would enforce the law in his dominions according to the ultimate objective of Islam. Sir Sayyid's interpretation struck at the roots of the institution of the Caliphate; he asserted that the true Caliphate had ended thirty years after the death of the Prophet Muhammed and that no Muslim sovereign after the Caliphate of 'Ali b. Abi Talib (656-661) could legitimately be regarded as his successor (Khalîfah, i.e. Caliph). "The Prophet of God performed three functions: Nabuwâh, receiving revelation for the Shari'âh from God; propagating them among the people, and exercising political authority for the defence of the Muslim Community and to defeat its enemies." Sir Sayyid reasoned that Muslim jurists, traditionists and 'ulamâ' could perform the second function of the Prophet. It is for this reason that some commentators of the Qur'ân while explaining the significance of the Qur'ânic injunction—"Obey
God and His Prophet and those who are charged with authority among you—have included the 'ulama' in the category of uli 'l-amr, people in position of authority. Muslim sovereigns enjoying independence in their dominions can perform the third function of the Prophet, provided they demonstrate the "overt and covert piety" of the Prophet and also comply with the dictates of the Shari'ah. However, even then their sovereignty would extend only over those Muslims who lived within their jurisdiction, and could enjoy their protection. The effective exercise of authority was the quintessence of sovereignty with Sir Sayyid. The citizens of the Umayyad Caliphate in Spain during the tenth century owed no allegiance to the Caliphs of Baghdad and the citizens of the Fatimid Caliphate of Cairo (909-1171) of course openly spurned the Caliphal claims of Qurtubah and Baghdad.22

Sir Sayyid’s theory of Caliphate suited the political situation of the Indo-Pakistani Muslims. Discouraging their exuberant loyalty to Sultan ‘Abdul Majid (1839-1861) of Turkey would dilute the influence of the Turkish Foreign Office among the Muslims of the subcontinent and at the same time would enable them to concentrate their attention on their own national problems. “We cannot possibly be considered subjects of the Turkish Caliph”, declared Sir Sayyid,

“His sovereignty does not extend over us. We are residents of India and subjects of the British Government, which has guaranteed us religious freedom. Our life and property is protected and our personal affairs—marriage, divorce, inheritance, endowments and wills—are administered according to the Shari‘ah. In such matters even Christian judges are forced to apply the Islamic laws to Muslim litigants.”23

His endeavours to sever the Muslim attachment to the Turkish Caliphate were greeted with suspicion and distrust. The pan-Islamic movement led by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and the Turkish Sultan countered Sir Sayyid’s efforts at every turn. For the majority of the Muslims of the subcontinent the final break with the Caliphate did not take place until the 1920’s when the Caliphate ceased to exist.

Abolition of the Caliphate by the Turkish Republic left the Muslims of the subcontinent without a generally accepted focus of orientation. Some joined a general hijrah (migration) in the direction of Afghanistan, eventually drifting into the Soviet Union.
and adopting Communism. A sizeable number joined the All-India National Congress, putting their hopes in the development of a strictly territorial nationalism. The majority identified with the All-India Muslim League, which was the spiritual progeny of the Aligarh Movement. Sixteen years after the official termination of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the All-India Muslim League passed the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore, demanding the partition of the subcontinent.

SIR SAYYID'S IMAGE OF DEMOCRACY

Sir Sayyid was an enthusiastic admirer of western civilization as represented by Britain. His exuberant language often misleads scholars into thinking that he was slavish in his adulation. A critical analysis of his works shows that his political thought includes a blend of the west with traditional Islam. During his stay in London Sir Sayyid corresponded with a noted Briton, freely expressing his views on constitutional matters.

"A popularly elected President", declared Sir Sayyid, "is preferred by Islam. A degree of radicalism is preached by my religion, and it does not tolerate personal rule, not even the limited monarchy is acceptable; hereditary monarchy is altogether rejected". Sir Sayyid also expressed egalitarian views regarding the ownership of the means of production, saying that

"The founder of Islam did not favour the concentration of wealth in a few hands. For this reason the Prophet enacted the law of inheritance which emphasizes the equal distribution of the real estate among heirs. Because no matter how large an estate it would dwindle to smaller fragments in one or two generations, thus effectively preventing the accumulation of wealth in a few families."26

It should not be understood that his egalitarian views were in any way influenced by Marxism. Although Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto was published in 1848 and Das Kapital had appeared shortly before Sir Sayyid's arrival in Britain (1867), his thinking is strikingly uncoloured by socialist ideology. In fact the economic conditions of Europe against which the socialists were protesting, were lauded by him in his travelogue.27

(a) Supremacy of Law: Sir Sayyid's belief in the necessity of an impartial and supreme law is the key to his image of democracy. He rejected the British monarchy but looked upon the
British regard for the impartiality and supremacy of law as the acme of civilized administration. "Queen Empress Victoria of Great Britain, Ireland and India", asserted Sir Sayyid, "is the sovereign of law; her will does not constitute law and she is helpless to do anything at her personal discretion. The Viceroy of India is responsible more to the Queen’s ministers and the British Parliament and the people than to Queen Victoria herself." Sir Sayyid pointed out that the Viceroy of India was likewise bound by law in his position, and was subject to recall by the British Cabinet and Parliament. If he is guilty of malfeasance, the way Warren Hastings was, British people are "louder in raising their critical voice" than the indigenous people. Hastings was impeached in the British Parliament and his services were not appreciated until the clouds of doubt regarding his integrity were removed. He then compared the British regard for law with that of the Mughals. "The Mughal king was an autocrat", he said, "his will commanded the statutes of law and he was responsible to no one. There was no parliament in Mughal India, although court was held daily where the ministers and nobles outdid each other in tailoring their opinions to suit the will of the sovereign."28

From the reign of Akbar (1556-1605) to that of Awrangzib (1659-1707) the prerogatives of the ‘ulama’ were withdrawn, although in pre-Mughal times the Şari‘ah was respected. In theory and practice the Mughal king could disregard law and justice. Capital punishment could be executed at his will and the offenders’ wives and children could be sold into slavery. A hereditary nobility which might have protested against the excesses of the sovereign did not exist. "The British Government was also despotic", commented Sir Sayyid, "but the rule of law was its ideal, both for the people of Europe and Asia". He congratulated his countrymen for having acquired the privilege of being ruled by a responsible government of law.29

(b) Separation of Religious and Secular Affairs: Although Sir Sayyid never openly questioned the supremacy of the Şari‘ah he, nevertheless, advocated separation between matters religious and political. "It is the duty of a government", he declared, "to protect the rights of the citizens pertaining to their private ownership, professions, and ways of earning a livelihood and freedom of religion and opinion, nor should it weaken any of them with
state powers. It must shield the deserving weak against the undeserving powerful citizens. All citizens must enjoy the fruits of their talents". In a civilized state, he reasoned, "the Government itself like her citizens, both high and low, should be equally subject to the laws, and the laws should protect with equal impartiality the rights of all citizens [regardless of their race, colour or creed]". He indicted the contemporary Muslim states, "because they do not distinguish between religious and secular affairs and find themselves helpless vis-à-vis the so-called religious injunctions. They believe that secular affairs cannot be settled unless religion sanctions them, and even secular problems cannot be solved in new ways."30

Sir Sayyid believed that "religion" intruded to a ludicrous extent in the administration of Muslim states. Can Muslim soldiers, from the religious standpoint, wear tight fitted uniforms and use a certain type of bazooka; would the use of railroads be allowed by religion? He pointed out that such questions plague the Muslim mind. The enmeshing of religion and state, in his view, was mainly responsible for the political unrest and insurrection of non-Muslim nationalities in the contemporary Ottoman Empire. "Spiritual or religious matters", he asserted, "cannot have any connection with worldly affairs. A true religion only states cardinal principles comprising ethical values and only incidentally deals with the problems of the world. Islam, as a true religion, is based upon this dichotomy and the Prophet upheld this distinction in his well-known statement:

ما أتاكم من أمر دينكم فخدوه وما لها كلام عنه فاترهوا

[In all religious matters accept divine injunctions and refrain from those actions which are forbidden.]" He believed that the principle of separation of state and church was followed by the four orthodox Caliphs but was gradually abandoned by Muslims to their own detriment. He criticised the religious zealots who interpreted all aspects of life in the light of religion. This enveloping tendency led the 'ulama' to formulate four schools of Fiqh which have become the infallible dogma of Islam in the eyes of the common man. To him this development was not an unmixed blessing because it gave rise to four serious problems within the body-politic of Islam: (1) Islam was accepted as relating to all secular problems; (2) the 'ulama's personal ijtihad and qiyas was elevated to the status of dogma; (3) in modern times criticism
of the four schools of Fiqh is tantamount to opposition to Islam; and (4) the 'ulama' deny the need for new legislation to cope with contemporary conditions. Sir Sayyid believed that since the Caliphate degenerated into a hereditary monarchy Muslim governments ceased to be subject to the sovereignty of Islamic law. He considered the extreme intrusion of religion into secular affairs as the overriding factor in the lack of national progress among the Muslims. Sir Sayyid analyzed the history of other civilizations in order to uncover the factors which are associated with progress. His studies led him to believe that progress had many dimensions: the most important of these were individual striving, inspired by love of nation and unhampered by governmental intervention and exposure to other civilizations and the diffusion of new elements of culture.

III

THE THEORY OF PROGRESS

Since Sir Sayyid's visit to Europe came only a few years after the publication of Darwin's Descent of Man, he must have come into contact with the view that isolated forms of life are relatively backward and that intercourse between species makes for progress. He adopted this idea and applied it to cultural development, stating that the march of civilization is essentially the result of intercultural contact. This became the cornerstone of his theory of progress, and made it logically possible for him to convince the Muslims to adopt such western traits as would further their own national development. He believed that it was the function of private associations as opposed to government, to make certain that borrowed material traits and political and social values were properly integrated in the culture. Sir Sayyid does not feel that scientific inventions, dynamic organizations and inspirations flow automatically or spontaneously out of the human mind. "The blind prejudice of Muslims", he declared,

"is preventing them from emulating (western) education, sciences and technology; Muslim society erroneously admires the blindness of those who are stubborn and haughty and considers all nations except its own inferior. There is not a single nation in the world which acquired excellence, material
progress and spiritual happiness entirely by virtue of its own efforts. Nations always benefit from each other; only bigots deny themselves the fruits of their fellow men’s labour. They are like wild animals, happy in (the narrow life of) their flock, and are deaf to the sweet melody of the nightingale and the chirping of little sparrows, and know not how the garden (i.e. world) was laid out and what makes the flowers bloom. Prejudice and progress will never mix.”

“Civilization is an English word”, said Sir Sayyid, “which is derived from the Latin civis (citizen) or civitas (city). The reason for this derivation was the desire of citizens in antiquity to enter into a social contract for corporate living and to protect their lives, property and personal freedom. Civilization in common parlance, however, connotes the advanced, cultured and humanized form of Europeans who stand in glaring contrast to the wild and barbarized peoples of North America [Red Indians], aborigines of Australia, Tartars and inhabitants of East Africa.” After defining civilization he discussed five of “those natural, political and religious factors” which played a decisive role in the march of civilization:

1. **Natural Factors**: “The fertile areas, abounding in food and water attract settlers, and should per se”, asserted Sayyid, “be conducive to the development of civilization; the contrary, however, is the situation in some places. Look at the islands of East Asia, endowed with productive lands and hot climate. The inhabitants are lazy, ignorant and brutish; similar is the case of the aborigines of South America and Africa”. Why did civilization not develop among them? They found abundant material goods but adopted themselves to them “as if they were animals or plants vegetating in natural and pastoral surroundings”. On the contrary, he observed, the fertility of the Nile Delta and the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates gave birth to magnificent civilizations. Similarly the plains of Syria, watered by the Tigris and Euphrates, nurtured the very impressive civilizations of Babylon and Assyria. The Gangetic Valley in India produced arts and sciences giving everlasting fame to the Indian civilization. These examples led him to believe that natural factors though basically necessary for the rise of civilization, are not sufficient in themselves.

2. **Intercourse between Nations**: Nations when separated by natural barriers fail to establish contacts with others and like the
inhabitants of Africa they are forced to forgo the benefits of traveling. They are denied the light of intelligence and they learn no new techniques. "They reach a level of development", asserted Sir Sayyid, "and then stagnate. Living examples are the inhabitants of Tibet, Bhutan and Atlas Mountains and the aborigines of Africa and America. For improvement in culture diffusion of material and spiritual values is needed". He pointed out that the spread of civilization around the Mediterranean, the Greek islands and Constantinople, was due to the intermingling of peoples. Similarly the expansion of civilization in Europe, Asia and Africa could be attributed to the mutual intercourse of different nations. The high level of civilization in Europe, he concluded, was caused by navigation in European rivers, including particularly the Rhine, and the Elbe. Europeans traded frequently not only material goods but ideas, technical know-how, inventions and even mores. This exchange kindled new wants and desires for further development.

Sir Sayyid believed that maritime nations are temperamentally more suited to the diffusion and spread of civilization than the land-locked communities. The Phoenicians, Carthagians and ancient Greeks, in the eyes of Sir Sayyid, performed a civilizing role in their times by providing stimuli for social change to relatively static cultures. "In modern times", he believed, "the British, the Dutch, the French and the Americans are performing a similar humanizing role."37

Pointing to the various stages of the development of Islamic civilization, Sir Sayyid highlighted the role of diffusion. "The first base of learning was established by Caliph Abi Bakr (March 29, 632—March 18, 633) who appointed Zayd Ibn Thabit to compile the Qur‘an". The second stage of development, according to him was reached when Muslim scholars started to collect the Hadith during the second century (9th c.) of the Islamic era. Researchers, however, disagree as to who rightly deserves the credit of compiling the first collection of Hadith, although Muslim scholars including Sufyân b. ‘Uyaynah and Mâlik b. Anas in Medina, ‘Abd Allâh b. Wahab in Egypt and ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣan‘âni in Yemen, Sufyân al-Thawrî, and Muḥammad b. Fuḍayl b. Ghazwân in Kûfah, Ḥammâd b. Salamah, and Rawḥ b. Ubâdah in Basra and Abu‘l-Nâdîr Ḥâshîm al-Baghdâdî and ‘Abd Allâh b. Mubârak in Khurasân published their treatises during this period.38 Needless to say, towards the end of
the second Islamic century Muslim rule had spread to all the Fertile Crescent areas, the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and Spain, providing intellectual stimulation and an exchange of ideas.

“The third stage of Islamic intellectual efflorescence”, declared Sir Sayyid, “took place when the Greek arts, philosophy, and sciences were introduced to Muslims”. This momentous intellectual awakening in the history of Islam really got underway during the reigns of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs Hārūn al-Rašīd (786-808) and Al-Ma’mūn (813-833). This awakening was due in a large measure to foreign influences, partly Indo-Persian and Syrian, but mainly Hellenic, and was marked by translations into Arabic from Persian, Sanskrit, Syriac and Greek. A sizeable number of the translators were no doubt Christians, Jews, Iranians and a few Indo-Pakistanis. The best of these translators, Ḥunayn b. Ishāq (809-73), the Nestorian Christian from al-Ḥīrah, was paid in gold the weight of the books he translated.

At the time (7th c.) of the Muslim conquest of the Fertile Crescent the intellectual legacy of Greece was located in Edessa (al-Ruḥā‘), the principle centre of Christian Syrians; Ḥarrān, the headquarters of the heathen Syrians; Antioch, one of the ancient Greek colonies and Alexandria, the meeting place of occidental and oriental philosophy. These cities served as intellectual centres radiating Hellenistic stimuli within the Muslim cultural complex. The apogee of Greek influence was reached under al-Ma’mūn. The philosophic tendency of this Caliph led to the establishment (830) of the famous Bayt al-Ḥikmah in Baghdād, which was a combination of a library, an academy and a translation bureau.

In absorbing the main features of both Hellenic and Persian cultures, Islam, in the eyes of recognized historians, occupied a significant place in the cultural unit which linked southern Europe with the Middle East. This culture was fed by a single stream—a stream with sources in ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Phoenicia and Judaea, all flowing to Greece and now returning to the East in the form of Hellenism. Later the Arabs in Spain (9th c.) and Sicily (10th c.) redverted this cultural stream into Europe, helping to create the European Renaissance.

Making an oblique reference to the personal insults he suffered at the hands of the orthodox ‘ulamā’, Sir Sayyid pointed out that at the initial stages students of Greek philosophy and sciences were declared heretics, “but gradually reactionary forces gave in and
the masters of Greek sciences were elevated to an honourable status". The next higher level of intellectual development according to Sir Sayyid, was obtained when Muslim scholars made a successful endeavour to integrate "philosophic rationality with matters of faith, because they realized that without their compatibility ʾīmān could not achieve perfection". He credited al-Ghazzālī (1058-1111) with this successful harmonizing attempt; his celebrated work, ʾIḥyāʾ ʾUlūm al- Din has achieved immortality. "He was also maligned and his book suffered vilification," Sir Sayyid mentioned with deep pathos, "but at last he was honoured with the title of the Ḥujjat al-Islām and his work was acknowledged as the standard text of Islamic philosophy". After al-Ghazzālī very few works of this calibre were produced. Sir Sayyid maintained that the only outstanding contribution in modern times was made by Shāh Waliy Allāh (1703-1762) of Delhi who wrote Ḥujjat Allāh al-Balāghah, which is truly a unique contribution to Islamic interpretative thought. Against this background of Islam's relations with the West Sir Sayyid made a forceful case for a renewed contact between the Muslims of the subcontinent and Britons.

3. Ability of Races for Refinement and Progress: Not all nations are equally capable of benefiting from natural and social factors of progress. Some nations are intrinsically superior to others. Sir Sayyid does not support his assertion with any scientific data; he merely bases his judgement on empirical observation of the cultural conditions of contemporary nations. He believes that the world is settled only by three main races: white, Mongolid and Negro, and that they are superior to each other in that descending order. "Humanity owes its progress to the white race, which in times immemorial radiated from central Asia to Europe and India," he maintained. For the spread of civilization Hindu India, he believed, played a valuable role. "Civilization reached ancient Iran, Syria, Chaldea, Phoneacia, Greece and Italy from the heart of central India". His definition of the white race includes peoples of Europe, Ethiopia, North Africa and all varieties of Semites.

"Modern historians have tried to demonstrate that Negro is capable of progress and a civilized mode of living", maintained Sir Sayyid, "but they failed to explain why the black man made no significant contribution to civilization. In the dark areas of Africa there are no traces of bygone civilizations." There are plenty of
fruit trees and natural resources including several lakes, which could facilitate navigation; nevertheless the people of Africa have remained wild and have never tasted the fruit of knowledge. The modern advancement of the African Negro he attributed to the efforts of Europeans. Comparing the Mongoloid races with the Negro and the white he concluded that their intrinsic capacity was greater than the former, though less than that of the white, the Chinese being the most advanced segment of the Mongoloid race. He thought that Chinese were justifiably proud of their scientific inventions of gun powder, paper and printing devices and of spreading the material and spiritual traits of their culture to the whole of South Asia and even to the ancient civilizations of Peru and Mexico. Sir Sayyid attributed the decline of the Chinese to the rigidity of their culture and the script of their language. He saw their renaissance only through elaborate contact with the modern West.

4. The Impact of Religion: Sir Sayyid considers religion an essential prerequisite to progress. The monotheistic system of belief appears to be his ideal. It is for this reason that he is partial towards Islam, considering other monotheistic religions based upon divine revelation (i.e. Judaism and Christianity) as bridges of progress. Monotheism, however, in his eyes does not have to be institutionalized, the way it is in Judaism and Islam—Allah and Jehovah being the Almighty. It means a unique, timeless and merciful transcendental Creator of all the universe. To him the effective acknowledgment of Providence is religion. Idolatry in this context, being an artistic attempt to recognize the Lord of the universe, appears to be a facet of monotheism.

To Sir Sayyid idol-worship indicates the romance in man's quest for religion, "raising idols to manifestations of nature, inspiring poets to compose lofty poems and spurring artists to creative endeavour". This urge, he believed, impelled man to adorn Egypt, Chaldea, Greece and Italy; art was the indicator of the excellence of their refinement.

If an organized religion like Buddhism, although well equipped with an elaborate code of ethics, does not affirm a positive belief in the Creator, it merely leaves the human soul drifting in the eternal darkness. For this reason Sir Sayyid believed that the devotees of Buddhism made no significant contribution to the march of civilization. It is the faith in God, he believes, that lights up the
"Christianity preaches simplicity and humility, but after its inception", Sir Sayyid believed, "[its devotees] aspired to worldly glory, ostentation, and prestige. So much so that even the simple mode of worship was made ornamental, involving exorbitant expenditure. This was a worldly accretion to an other-worldly religion, although Christianity's overall impact on the decayed Roman world was therapeutic. "Islam has been maligned", he believed "quite erroneously as an impediment to progress and refinement". He conceded that the Prophet did not encourage the cultivation of fine arts, i.e., sculpture and figure-painting, because he feared that the Arabs would revert to traditional idolatrous worship. However, in the eyes of Sir Sayyid, his injunctions against gambling, alcoholism and other vices compensated for the loss of the fine arts. With this minor exception he considered the principles of Islam to be conducive to the march of civilization.48

5. The Role of Government: Sir Sayyid visualized a limited role for government in the advancement of progress. Essentially it is the individual progress, the sum total of which constitutes national progress. Even a benevolent despot is an unhealthy political institution, "because citizens' creative spirit is stifled; totalitarian governments are worse since they misappropriate the fruits of poets' imagination and the artifacts of craftsmen with no distinction".

In England Sir Sayyid was imbued with classical economic and political laissez-faire doctrines which had been enunciated by Adam Smith in The Wealth of Nations. The way economic determinism provides a key to the philosophy of Karl Marx is similar to the manner in which Adam Smith's doctrine gives a clue to the political reorientation of Sir Sayyid. For him England, France and the United States were civilized, because their citizens neutralized their governments in economic and political affairs. Limited and neutralized governments, bound by law, was the guarantee of personal liberty. "Modern European sovereigns dare not imprison their citizens' intellect and creative faculties", declared Sir Sayyid.47 In view of this it is obvious that he quite consciously became an apostle of laissez-faire philosophy among the Muslims of the subcontinent.

The economic philosophy of Adam Smith is based upon three assumptions. First, he assumes that the prime psychological drive
in man as an economic being is self-interest. Secondly, he assumes the existence of a natural order in the universe which makes all individual strivings for self-interest add up to the social good. Finally, he deduces from these postulates that the best programme is non-intervention of government in the interplay of economic forces. Two of the most crucial questions in Adam Smith's philosophy are concerned with determination of the supply of labour and capital. The rising demand for labour, expressed in a rising rate of wages, increases the exertions of the workers in the short run and the number of the labouring population in the long run. This leads to Smith's theory of population: rising demand—rising price—rising supply.

Adam Smith's principle of supply and demand added a new dimension to the outlook of Sir Sayyid, providing him with a key to unlock the mysteries of history. If nations progress due to the diffusion of material and spiritual traits freely borrowed and integrated within their cultural complex, individuals and groups make their significant contributions to their national progress impelled by the laws of supply and demand. With this orientation he attempted an interpretation of Muslim cultural and religious history. He believed that the development of Islamic theology, philosophy and literature was conditioned by the laws of supply and demand. Since, in modern times there is hardly any demand for those traditional avenues of learning, he advised Muslims to abandon them and apply themselves to Western sciences and technology. He denounced 'ulama' who exhorted Muslims to shun Western education, advising them "to retreat to bygone ages to such an extent that [at least in their material aspect of life] they would live in the age of the Prophet Muḥammad, and his Companions".

"It is an absolute principle of history applicable to all nations and epochs, admitting no exceptions", declared Sir Sayyid, "that when a commodity has value, it has demand. This principle is as relevant for material goods as it is for non-material things".

Thus, recognizing the universality of the laws of supply and demand, Sir Sayyid also accepts the nature of Smith's "economic man" (as distinguished from the tradition-bound man) as one who strives for maximum satisfaction with minimum sacrifice. What is really presupposed in his economic system is a man motivated by the desire for a maximum quantitative return for his investment.
For Smith's "economic man" quantitative considerations must prevail over traditional values or political passions.52

Following this image of the "economic man", Sir Sayyid stated emphatically that "whatever is done in this world is done for some ulterior motive. Sometimes an individual is motivated by the reward of his labours, sometimes the desire to excel in a profession [galvanizes him]. Another time he strives after piety, very much valued by people. He may even try to benefit mankind without any desire for personal return, desiring in all sincerity closer relations with [and blessings of] God. Whatever is valued and consequently is in demand will be most sought after by people".

Applying this postulate Sir Sayyid interpreted the rise and decline of literature, jurisprudence, theology and philosophy in the history of Islam. "For example, [let us take the case of poetry] in the Jāhilīyah period. With the advent of Islam falsehood and idolatry were condemned; eulogies of the divine attributes of the idols, a notorious habit of the Jāhilīyah poets, were also forbidden. And God said:

Shall I inform you,
(O people !) on whom it is
That the evil ones descend?
They descend on every
Lying, wicked person,
(Into whose ears) they pour
Hearsay vanities, and most
Of them are liars.
And the Poets,
It is those straying in Evil
Who follow them:
Seest thou not that they
Wander distracted in every Valley?
And that they say
What they practise not?53

"This caused the downfall of poetry", contended Sir Sayyid, adding, "what Imām Fākhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī has said in his Tafsīr Kabīr is noteworthy—'After Islam all poets gave up lies and became truthful'."54

The case of Ḥadīths is similar. "It is the most sacred of all Islamic lore", asserted Sir Sayyid; "yet Caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar had forbidden people to narrate a Ḥadīth. The latter even
whipped offenders and imprisoned Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Darda' and Abū Mas'ūd Anṣāri for narrating Ḥadīth. In fact Abū Bakr put to flame all those Ḥadīths which he had collected. Evidently the collection of Ḥadīth started in earnest only after the death of Caliph 'Umar (644). Naturally those Companions of the Prophet who could narrate the largest number of traditions became most venerable; the same was the case of the Companions of the Companions”. In order to gain public esteem people fell to the temptation of contriving false Ḥadīths. The narrators of Ḥadīths enjoyed their pre-eminence until scholars and specialists compiled all sound Ḥadīths with utmost care. In this gradual process the “six sound works” of Ḥadīth were put together. “Then the narrators lost their value and their demand. A new era was ushered in when the compilers and their works gained importance. Then their students and disciples were valued, but in modern times commentaries on the books of Ḥadīth are available, freeing the people from Ḥadīth teachers”.

Sir Sayyid believed that this proved the validity of the laws of supply and demand.

In a similar manner Sir Sayyid analyses the rise and decline of Fiqh. The founding of four schools of jurisprudence started the decline of ijtiḥād. People began to follow the four Imāms blindly and became lost in the labyrinth of taqlīd. The philosophy of Islam, which, Sir Sayyid contends, “was largely borrowed from the idolatrous Greeks”, rose in demand when it was valued, but lost its importance when the 'ulamā' deposed Fiqh and Greek dialectic from the commanding positions they had usurped. The 'ulamā' developed 'Ilm al-Kalām to replace the Greek influence; when 'Ilm al-Kalām had fulfilled its function it too lost its value and consequently there was no more demand for it.

He deplored the fact that numerous madrasahs and maktabs still offered courses which were hopelessly inadequate for the needs of the scientific age. “All of them are in a bad condition”, Sir Sayyid pointed out, “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]. The small group of Muslims who are dedicated to acquiring modern scientific education through the English language are maligned. They nevertheless very patiently reason with them, saying that in the former times our forefathers acquired those things which were in demand, now we strive after those which are in demand now—our outlook is not
different from that of our forefathers".56

True to his laissez-faire philosophy Sir Sayyid desired only a neutral British Government in India, treating Hindus and Muslims with impartiality. He solicited private British help and understanding, but never the Government's active support for the Muslims' educational, cultural and economic progress. The only exception was the issue of separate Muslim representation in the Viceroy's Legislative Council, where he asked for the Government's guarantee to assure Muslim interests.

NOTES

1. The article is based on the paper entitled "The impact of the West on the development of Muslim Nationalism in India 1857-1900" presented by this writer at the International Conference on Asian History, the University of Hong Kong, on September 3, 1964.

2. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Sirat-i-Faridiyah, Delhi, 1864, 25.

3. The titles of these books are Jām-i-Jam (History of the Mughal Emperors of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, in Persian language) 1840; Intikhāb al-Akhāwayn, (Civil Law Digest) 1841; Jalā' al-Quṭūb Bi-Ẕkr al-Muḥbūb (Mawlid of the Prophet), 1843; Tuhfah-i-Ḥasan (Urdu trans. of Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz's treatise on Shi'ah-Sunnī polemic in Persian: Tuhfah Ithnā 'Asharīyah), 1844; Tashīr fi 'Jarr al-Thaqīl, (Urdu trans. of a Persian treatise on Mechanics) 1844; Tarjamah Faysalajāt Ṣadr-i-Sharqī wa Ṣadr-i-Maghribī (trans. of the judgements of the Civil Courts of the eastern and western provinces), 1849; Risālah Rāḥ-i-Sunnat wa Radd-i-Bid'at (a polemic supporting the Wahhābī doctrines), 1850; Silsilat al-Muḥāb (Chronology of the Delhi Rajahs and Kings), 1852; Tarjamah-i-Kimyā-i-Saʿdat. (Urdu trans. of Imām al-Ghazzālī's Persian work on ethics), 1853; and Tārīkh-i- Dil' Bijnawr (History of the Bijnore district), 1857.


7. Ḥālī, op. cit., 316; see also A. H. Albiruni, Makers of Pakistan and Muslim India, Lahore, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1950, 41.


15. For a brief biographical sketch of Tāj Rezā see the scholarly article of Ṭāhir ‘Abdūs Sattār Ḥan, ‘Ṭāj Rēzā’ in The Islamic Culture, Hyderabad—Deccan, July, 1940, 359-66.


17. For the development of secular Muslim nationalism, as the aftermath of the Caliphate, see also Hafeez Malik, Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan, Washington, D.C., Public Affairs Press, 1963, Chap. 9.


23. Ibid., 161.


25. Abul Kalām Āzād (1888-1958), who was the leader of the Nationalist Muslims, had accepted the political philosophy of the Congress. For his role in the Khilaṣī Movement see Hafeez Malik, ‘Abul Kalām Āzād’s Theory of Nationalism’ in Muslim World, Hartford, January, 1963.
29. Ibid., 1-2.
31. Ibid., 10 ff.
35. Ibid., 347.
36. Ibid., 348.
37. Ibid., 350.
38. Sir Sayyid mentions the following first contenders: (1) ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. Jurayj (d. 150 A.H.); (2) Abū Sa‘īd b. ‘Urwa (d. 156 A.H.); (3) Rabi’ b. Ṣabīh (d. 160 A.H.).
40. Ibid., 214.
42. Hitti, op. cit., 310.
43a. Sir Sayyid’s statements on races appear quite naïve to-day, but it may be noted that he wrote at a time when European Imperialism was at the peak of its power, China had been semi-colonialized, Japan had not yet risen, and there was a scramble among the European powers for the division of the African continent.
It is difficult to understand what he meant when he stated that in the dark areas of Africa there were no traces of bygone civilizations; probably, he did not include Egypt, Nubia, Axum (Ethiopia) and Zimbabwe among the dark areas of Africa, but for that matter there are no traces of bygone civilizations in the "dark areas" of any continent.—Editor.

44. Hitti, op. cit., 358-59.
45. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 'Ilmi wa Taḥqiqi Maḏāmin, op. cit., 350.
46. Ibid., 351-52.
47. Ibid., 356.
50. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Maḏḥabi wa Islāmi Maḏāmin, op. cit., 277-78.
51. Ibid., 260.
54. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Maḏḥabi wa Islāmi Maḏāmin, op. cit., 262.
55. Ibid., 269.
56. Ibid., 273-74.