

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: Maker of Modern India

“Hindus and Muslims are like unto two eyes of a beautiful bride. Injure either of them, and you spoil the virginal beauty of the mother India”

.....Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

17th October is observed as Sir Syed Ahmad day. He was one of the influential personalities of nineteenth century, who played significant role in shaping the modern Indian history. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) was undoubtedly an important person in the modern Indian history. His Magnus opus *Asar-us-Sanadid* has described the history of monuments of Delhi in minutest detail is the first work of its nature. It was published in 1847 and reprinted in 1854. The National Archives of India has both the editions in its library. He was an eyewitness to the great uprising of 1857 and his works namely *Asbab-i-Baghwat-i Hind* (1858) and another detailed study of rebellion in Bijnor where he was posted as a judicial officer during the outbreak of the rebellion is titled as *Tarikh-isarkashi-i zila-e Bijnor* (1858) are perhaps the first studies on the nature of the great revolt in any Indian Language by any Indian personality. Though he was a loyalist, yet he provided the factual details and put them in a perspective where the blame for the uprising were shown to be responsibility of the English officials. He was also a strong advocate for Hindu-Muslim unity though he has advised the Muslims to acquire knowledge and respectability first and then join the National movement and strengthen the Hindu brethren shoulder to shoulder.

After the suppression of the revolt, Syed Ahmad became a champion for the cause of Mohammadan education and their upliftment under the changed circumstances. He passionately described the destruction of numerous Muslim families of Western Uttar Pradesh and he was of the firm view that unless the modern English education is acquired by the Indian Muslim they cannot grow with respect. To achieve this objective, Syed Ahmad tried to inculcate the spirit of scientific temper among the Muslim elites and in this sequence, he launched a journal known as *Tahzeeb ul Akhlaq* and established a scientific society and last but not the least, he founded the Anglo Oriental Mohammadan College (also called *Madarsat-ul ulumMusalmanan*) at Aligarh in 1875, an institution which finally became Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. It was his dream project which could educate thousands

of youths every year. The alumnus of Aligarh Muslim University extent in every wake of life and contributed immensely in the development of Indian state.

He was not only an antiquarian but has a very strong historical sense as he has edited the classical text like *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi* of Ziyauddin Barani and *Ain-i Akbari* of Abul Fazl which are the standard editions for the students of history. The National Archives of India houses almost all his publications and writings and there are numerous files in the Home-political, Education Department, President Secretariat, and Punjab State Agency-Residency, providing the detailed account of his mission for promoting the English education especially among the Muslim masses.

References: -

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