

Sir Syed and Cultural Pluralism: Advocacy of Shared Legacy for Common Nationhood

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“Remember that the terms Hindu and Muslim should only be used for religious distinction; otherwise, all people who live in this country belong to the same nation.”

- Sir Syed

Abstract

Sir Syed is one among the luminaries of modern South Asia. His efforts were channelized to modernize religion and society for national development. He had strong conviction that all communities can prosper together for common nationhood like healthy organs make sound body. He saw the future of nation as an assimilative fruit salad bowl rather than integrative melting pot during the time of globalization. His firm belief in cultural pluralism and mutual co-existence spurred him to rework theological obscurantism, inter/intra cultural dialogues, civil movements for communal harmony and education as a tool for cultural pluralism. His ideals have greater salience in contemporary tumultuous South Asia.

Keywords: *Sir Syed, Cultural pluralism, Religion*

Introduction

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a versatile personality who contributed significantly to South Asia's metamorphosis from medievalism to modernity. He donned various onerous roles - a scholar, liberal democrat, prolific writer, educationist and harbinger of religious and communal fraternity. It is not a shallow hyperbole to argue that his legacy of religious reform, education and pluralism has attained universal potency, as corroborated from burgeoning number of studies across the world. The attempts to portray him as the messiah of Muslim community alone is gross travesty of history, as he propounded a concept of inclusive nation with thriving multiple identities. He is much adulated in the shared, corrugated history of South Asia, as is reviled by some sections. As history is misappropriated either to justify or villainize as per the political exigencies, the reality is shrouded in the haziness of myopic discourses.

This essay is an attempt to map Sir Syed's conceptualization and afterward implementation of cultural pluralism in the wake of emerging preponderance of new post-colonial studies on secularism and formation of independent states in the subcontinent.¹ It delves deeper into Sir Syed's understanding of cultural pluralism and the relevance of its praxis during freedom struggle and afterward in South Asia in general and in India in particular.

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¹ New post-colonial studies give new insights to freedom movement and Muslim identity. For example, see A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995 by Ranajit Guha, Governing Islam: Law, Empire, and Secularism in Modern South Asia by Julia Stephens, The Making of Indian Secularism: Empire, Law and Christianity, 1830-1960 by Nandini Chatterjee.

Sir Syed: A dedicated mission for constructive change

Sir Syed (1817-1898) born at a turbulent juncture of history when centralized rule of the Mughal was fragmented, lived through tumultuous episodes of First War of Indian Independence in 1857 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, left the mortal being when India started moderate phase of freedom struggle. He filled the intellectual and reformist vacuum among Muslims bequeathed by Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (1703-1762). He dedicated his life and assets for his cherished goal of national development and Muslim empowerment.

Born into lineage of Prophet as thirty sixth grandson, he was destined to blaze new trails for the Indians stuck in the abrupt warping of time and spellbound at the change of fortune. He had conviction in a nation where people with multiple identities and affiliations lived and prospered together.

Lack of formal education was compensated by sheer hard work and personal initiative. He had the baggage of condescending nostalgia as toddler born into nobles migrated from Heart to India. His maternal grandfather, Khwajah Farid al-din Ahmad Khan (1747-1828) served both Mughal and British East India Company in esteemed posts.

Sir Syed sanguinely chose the new masters and heirs of moribund Mughal and joined the Company in 1838, was promoted to Munshi in 1840, and was assigned to a high-ranking position at Muradabad's court in 1858 CE, where he began to work on his most notable projects. Save the titular post. Mughal was by then crumbling glory propped up by the jingling money sack of the Company.

His association with the British alerted him to the urgency of adapting to changing social and technical order. 1857 Rebellion was crude jolt to him. He assiduously supported British in suppressing the rebellion because according to him rebellious mob were the proponents of anachronistic feudal values. Ensuing sanguinary repression of Muslims prodded him to take reins of the community and lead into new political reality of modernity.

He started his activism by writing *Sarkashie-e-Zilla Bijjnoor* (History of the Bijjnor Rebellion, 1858) *Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind* (Reasons for the India Revolt of 1857) in 1859 and *An Account of the Loyal Mahomedans of India*. He tried to bridge the misunderstanding among Indians and British through courting pluralism. He wrote 'Mohomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible' (1862) for this cause. Next, he organized movements to popularize scientific temper among the community. Ghazipore Translation Society was the modest beginning and in 1862 transformed into Scientific Society of Aligarh in 1864.

His trip to England (1869-1872) was a 'voyage to modernity'. He was impressed by the tertiary educational system and came back India with consummate desire to establish 'Oxford of the East'. In 1875, Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was founded which later was upgraded to Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. He dreamed an enlighten nation and society through education and mutual cultural exchanges.

His life was passionate attempts to knit together various communities. He believed it

is possible to live in multiculturalism without compromising one's identity or religious avowal. His effort to reform Muslims and educate them was the extension of that belief.

His endeavors with literature cemented the intellectual background for this. Translation of Bible, refutations of William Muir and commentary on Quran were his manifestos of his activism affirming faith in cultural pluralism as the cog in national mobility.

Cultural pluralism and the idea of coexistence

The debates on pluralism are an emerging academic discipline. But as a political practice it started along with US experimentation with universal franchise.² Pluralism is vehemently critiqued these days due to its hegemonic notion of majoritarian culture. Pluralism as a way of life gives prominence to integration rather than assimilation.³ It assumed the 'State' as a melting pot in the cauldron of globalization. In contrast, cultural pluralism or multiculturalism⁴ assumes 'State' as fruit salad in an engulfing bowl. Presence of rich diversity in the South Asia makes cultural pluralism a fait accompli to grasp with. When we try to decipher Sir Syed's concepts through cultural pluralism it attains more coherence and clarity.

Cultural pluralism posits upon vibrant exchange among diverse cultures, not the diversity or tolerance per se. It demands conscious social and cultural engagements that facilitate meaningful co-existence and democratic polity and healthy economy.⁵ Cultural pluralism in extended meaning and practice includes religious pluralism, legal pluralism and political pluralism.

Intercultural dialogues and active participation in the pursuit of democratic ideal are the foundations of cultural pluralism. It means reciprocal engagements and acknowledging the 'Other' and differences without any attempt to impose hegemony or coercive cultural integration. According to Islam, cultural pluralism is based on two teachings of Quran, namely, oneness of creation and multiplicity of creation.⁶ The same is altruistic in Hindu tradition also.⁷

In Indian context it has more relevance due to the recurrent communal and religious flare-ups. It implies that nation can have secular national culture⁸, but at the same time the various

² UNESCO (1999). Towards a constructive pluralism. Available from: <http://bit.ly/1hsK3w1>

³ The coinage of the specific concept of cultural pluralism is attributed to Horace Kallen who proposed it as a transcendent solution to the problems of assimilation arising in the 1910-20s.

⁴ There is a minor difference between the two. According to scholars cultural pluralism is prevalent in countries with a dominant culture, while the latter is neutral. But researchers here use both words interchangeably.

⁵ Fishman, D. A. (2004). Mainstreaming ethnicity: Horace Kallen, the strategy of transcendence, and cultural pluralism. *Southern Communication Journal*, 69(2), 157-172.

⁶ Syed Farid Alatas, *An Islamic Perspective on the Commitment to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies, 2008), 14.

⁷ <https://www.iskconcommunications.org/iskcon-journal/vol-4/hinduism-in-interreligious-dialogue>, Accessed on 14/09/2022

⁸ Julia Stephens, *Governing Islam: Law, Empire, and Secularism in Modern South Asia*, OUP, 2018, p15-19

communities have the freedom to maintain and develop their own cultural and religious traditions, so long as they are not malignant to the unity and general welfare of the nation and no state patronage is endowed to any culture in discrimination of others.⁹ It is implicitly included in constitutional provisions of Articles 14, 29 and 30.

It includes:

1. Mutual understanding: the suspicions and fears of each other is substituted by love and knowledge
2. Inter/intra-cultural dialogues: the ideals of mutual existence are implemented into practical life
3. Respect of the 'Other' as how they are: it demands the sensibilities of all should be respected according to the adherents of respective cultures
4. To cultivate common ground for religious, social and cultural syncretism.
5. Separation of polity/State from cultural partisanship

Sir Syed and cultural pluralism

According to Sir Syed it meant that cementing mutual existence of diversity for a strong nation¹⁰ along with complete assimilation of all identities and secular citizenship and special protection to the marginalized and minority communities.¹¹ He thought Muslims could co-exist with Hindus and others without losing religious or cultural identity. He opposed vehemently the attempts for homogenization of 'Indianness' giving primacy to Hindu identity. He believed, as Ambedkar averred, nation thrives with the prosperity of each and every community.¹²

Looked through this prism, the allegations hurled against Sir Syed as the father of Muslim separatism and eventually 'Two Nation Theory' could be blunted out. He was the staunch proponent of cultural pluralism where the nation would benefit immensely from the fraternity of cultural brotherhood. And his thoughts have greater salience in contemporary period.

'Qaum' meaning cultural communities: theological re-interpretation of Sir Syed

As he had to stoically withstand the pauperization of Muslim power, he tried to

⁹ Constitutional Assembly Debate, Vol. 3, p 68-92

¹⁰ It is debatable whether during his period the concept of nation was extant. The term is here used to denote the political set-up prevalent at this time.

¹¹ Sayyid Ahmad, Majmua Lectures and Speeches, 140, Quoted by H. K. Sherwani, Studies in Muslim Political Thought and Administration (Kazi Publications, 1990), 318.

¹² "An ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words there should be social endosmosis. This is fraternity, which is only another name for democracy. Democracy is not merely a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen.", Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in 'Annihilation of Caste'

develop alternative Muslim theology that suited the changing sands. The expunction of cultural hegemony is essential for cultural pluralism to take root.

He smirked and shrugged off the Islamic theology of cultural hegemony and eschatological exclusivism.¹³ In this regard, he was fighting off radical and militant Muslim theology developed by Sha Walillah and Sayed Ahmed Bareilvi, exposed during the time 1857 Independence War.

He was eager to replace the word ‘Umma’, which expels non-Muslim identity from political thought to ‘Qaum’ which is all-encompassing and secular.¹⁴ The word ‘Qaum’ for him represented equal opportunity and protection for diverse cultural communities. In this sense, he counted India as an amalgamation of cultural communities rather than a majoritarian autocracy where minorities played second fiddle to majority. He was motivated by ‘hubb-e qaumi’, love of humanity.

He focused on Quranic concept of ‘love of humanity’.¹⁵ He highlighted the common grounds among Abrahamic religions and Indian religions to enable national integration through cultural and religious assimilation.¹⁶

Apologetic Sir Syed; the polemic of Islam-Christian debate

Sir Syed, an ardent believer in the Providence of British, was shuddered to see Muslims revolting against the Empire in 1857. While he wrote *Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind*, to clearly yawning misunderstanding British had against Muslims, his ‘*Tabyin-ul-Kalam*’¹⁷ (1862) was concerted effort for supporting pluralistic ways of co-existence. He employed the theology to address the suspicion Muslims had against the British and founded the academic beginning for intercultural/religious dialogues in South Asia.¹⁸

Using the reward money he got for saving few British lives during 1857, he bought a press and hired erudite Jewish and Christian scholars to translate the Old Testaments and New Testaments into Persian and Urdu. He tried to bring closer two estranged communities after the Agra controversy of 1850s.¹⁹ Muslims were peeved at the efforts of the missionary to denigrate Islam, while missionaries were brazenly supported by British hands-down.

¹³ Ramsey, Dr. Charles M. “God’s Word, Spoken and Otherwise,” in *Muslim-Christian Relations: In Historical Perspective*. The Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies Research Briefings: No. 4– Summer 2015. ISSN 2056-5003 (WEB).

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Bashir Ahmad Dar, *Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (Lahore: Institute for Islamic Culture, 1957), 91

¹⁶ Sayyid Ahmad, *Ahkam-i-Ta’am Ahl-i-Kitab* (Aligarh: Aligarh University Press, 2011, 48-73.

¹⁷ *Tabyin-ul-Kalam fi Tafsir-al-turat-wa ‘Injil al-Mullat-al-Islam* (The Mohamedan Commentary on the Holy Bible).

¹⁸ Troll, Christian W. *The Gospel According to Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898)*, an annotated translation of *Tabyin Al-Kalam: Sir Syed Academy*, Aligarh. 2020.

¹⁹ It is a prolonged encounter took place in the city of Agra between the Muslim scholar, Maulana Rafimat Allah Kairanawī, and a German evangelical missionary, the Reverend K. G.P fander.

He undertook tenuous task of mutual dialogue to know each other and decimate the lurking fears that inhibited full cooperation of all for country's growth. By appreciating the sanctity of Apostolic Letters, he drastically changed the interreligious dialogues in Islam.²⁰ Instead of discrediting 'Others' from one's own theology, he changed the discourse from 'you are as I say' to 'you are as you say'.²¹ The new scriptural hermeneutics of Sir Syed was accommodative like textual corruption was not akin to corruption of meaning and the writers of Bible were inspired by the Messiah, hence is reasoned to adhere to.

His theological engagement with Christianity proved that:

1. New religious pluralistic theology where the 'eternal truth' is fluid and should be viewed from the perspectives of the practitioners. He proved the internal coherence of Quran and Bible thus justifying multiculturalism.
2. Eternal salvation is possible through multiple ways if one spiritually followed his creed. The pluralistic aspect enabled common ground for mutual understanding.²²
3. Political power is secular and the followers of new hierarchy are not essentially subscribers of the leaders' theology. He was attempting to reconcile Muslims to new political realities.
4. The quest of Sir Syed was not primarily due to theological interest. But rather to promote political and cultural pluralism.²³
5. By 1863, he introduced the concept of 'Nature' into theological debates, thus enabling hassle-free religious accommodation.²⁴

Education for twin objectives: national development and Muslim empowerment

His tryst with education started in 1859 when he founded a school at Muradabad. He was engaged with literary activities until his voyage to Britain changed the fate of higher education in India (1869-1872). Aligarh Muslim University took laborious birth in 1875 when Anglo Muhammadan Oriental School was established by the Viceroy. The educational empire has contributed immensely to the nationalistic cause. Was he communal by advocating the advancement of Muslim community? Was he the votary of chauvinism by doing so?

The views of Sir Syed on cultural pluralism will rebuff the cynics. According to him nation is made by strong, independent identities of all. He shouldered nationalistic cause by helping the Muslim community empower educationally. To advocate the cause of one

²⁰ Troll, Christian W. The Gospel According to Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), an annotated translation of Tabyin Al-Kalam: Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh. 2020. P 81-96

²¹ ibid

²² Malik, Hafeez (1989) Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Educational Philosophy: A Documentary Record. (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research)

²³ Bashir Ahmad Dar, Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (Lahore: Institute for Islamic Culture, 1957), 91.

²⁴ ibid

community in harmony with nationalistic ethos is not communal. The Constitution of India in the articles 29 and 30 endorses this idea. His emphasis on Muslim education was guided by social urgencies where they lagged behind Hindus who cornered crumbs of colonialism and politically were repressed by the government.²⁵ To quote Sir Syed:

*"I am glad to say that in this institution both the brothers, Hindus and Muslims, get the same education in this college, there is no distinction and restriction between Hindus and Muslims in terms of privileges. Only that man can claim a prize who deserves it by virtue of his own labor. Both Hindus and Muslims are entitled to get scholarships and are accorded the same treatment. I consider Hindus and Muslims as my two eyes. I do not even like to say this, because people will generally differentiate the two as the right eye and the other as the left. I consider Hindus and Muslims both as one and the same eye."*²⁶

David Lelyveld, in his book 'Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India' argued that Sir Syed never entertained communal practices in the campus.²⁷ His approach was secular, non-sectarian and merit based. He instituted facilities for Sanskrit learning and arranged scholarships for deserving students from all communities. That the first graduate from the University was Iswari Prasad is a crowning example of his educational policies.²⁸

As a social reformer he supported Western education, and as a nationalist he supported education for all the while without compromising the religious values and Muslim national identity and special attention to deprived communities. For him education was a tool to prosper pluralism through the training of minds in the crucibles of tolerance and diversity.²⁹

Sir Syed's political activism: An idea of inclusiveness and common prosperity

The first question that springs to mind would be if he was truly plural why did he try to nix the idea of Indian National Congress? His political activism should be approached as an extension of his views of cultural pluralism. Politics according to him was the natural graduation of enlightened citizens and for that purpose to fructify educational and social reforms occupy more importance rather than political activism. More importantly, in the wake of Hindi-Urdu controversy he was indignantly anxious of Muslim community's power for bargain. He justifiably thought that any political reform would harm underprivileged sections.³⁰ He saw British Empire as a bulwark for Muslims and other minorities from the imposition of majoritarian concepts of nationhood.

²⁵ Mohammad Sajjad, Movement for Modern Education in the Nineteenth Century (Muzaffarpur, Bihar: Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University, 2006).

²⁶ Shan Muhammad, Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1972), 168.

²⁷ David Lelyveld, Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²⁸ Ibid p 103 - 146

²⁹ For a discussion of Syed Ahmad's educational approach to the shaping of the Indian Muslim identity, see Waseem Filza, "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Identity Formation of Indian Muslims through Education," Review of History and Political Science 2 (2014): 131-148.

³⁰ ibid

But he stood in the vanguard to ensure civil liberties and more rights for Indians within the Empire. As a member of Imperial Legislative Assembly (1878-1882) he advocated many reforms and brought into government's concern the plights of the citizens. He actively supported social justice in his capacity as a member. He demanded implementation of compulsory smallpox vaccination, increase of health allowance and protested against the lowering of age for Civil Service Examination. He supported the Ilbert Bill and demanded end to racism.³¹

The United Indian Patriotic Association (1888) he established was a common platform against the seemingly communal politics of Congress. He expressed his anguish for the growth of Hindu nationalism under the patronage of Congress.³² During the period 1877-1883, he joined hands with many organizations for the welfare of Indian people. Indian Association³³ and Muhammadan Educational Conference³⁴ were notable few. He believed national integration is congruent with internal political and social integration. At the same time, it could not be denied that his efforts to empower the Muslim community culminated in the partition because of the communal patronage of colonial government and ossification of communal divide in Indian body politic. A sour blot in history against the dreams of Sir Syed for common citizenship.

Urdu-Hindic controversy: shattered dreams of cultural pluralism

In 1837, Urdu became official language when Persian was scrapped. According to Sir Syed Urdu stood for common cultural heritage for all Indians. It was and is a secular language with generous adaptation from various Indian languages. It was the product of Hindu-Muslim association, concord, amity and social intercourse.³⁵ It was British who communalized the Urdu language.³⁶

According to him Urdu in Persian script was accessible and this natural choice for official language. For him Urdu represented the shared culture of all Indian communities but the opposition from supporters of Davnagari script was too ravenous and it foiled his efforts for organic mutual cohesion. Urdu had the complex agility to suit the court and daily chats. It had the all features to rival English in its usage and vocabulary, thus he preferred Urdu.³⁷ His preference for Urdu was solely because of it was the easiest language of instruction and transaction. According to him,

³¹ Sayyid Ahmad, *Majmua Lectures and Speeches*, 140, Quoted by H.K. Sherwani, *Studies in Muslim Political Thought and Administration* (Kazi Publications, 1990), 318.

³² For more details see

³³ The Indian Association was the first a voluntary educational organization founded in British India by Surendranath Banerjee and Ananda Mohan Bose in 1876.

³⁴ The All India Muhammadan Educational Conference was an organisation promoting modern, liberal education for the Muslim community in India. It was founded by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

³⁵ Annual Report, Scientific Society, 9 January 1864, in Asghar Abbas (comp.), *Sir Sayyid Ki Scientific Society (Urdu)* (Aligarh: Educational Book House, 2014), p.61.

³⁶ Tariq Rahman, "Urdu as an Islamic language", *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 21 (2006):101.

³⁷ *ibid*

“By living so long in India the blood of both has changed. Now the color of both has become similar. The Muslims have acquired hundreds of customs from the Hindus and the Hindus have also learned hundreds of things from the Muslims. We mixed with each other so much that we produced a new language— Urdu—which was neither our language nor of neither of us.”³⁸

The criticism of him choosing Urdu due to its Islamic nature is bile. It was purely with intention to promote common indigenous identity. He hoped to institutionalize the cultural linkages among Hindus and Muslims to be cemented through common language. The fiasco even further exhorted him to work for the mutual communal amity. He was alerted to the dangers of communalism and fiercely stood for syncretic culture and symbiosis.

Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Amity

As part of his advocacy of cultural pluralism, he demanded revering of customs and traditions of all. He bravely supported ban on cow slaughter to improve communal atmosphere.³⁹ Respecting others as how they are is seminal feature of cultural pluralism. He arranged Sanskrit classes in the University.

Through his activism and political initiatives he tried to bring the two communities together. He stood for universal humanity and the religious aspirations of people were indispensable ingredients in that. He tried to clear the clog of misunderstanding between the communities. He strived to forge common brotherhood through common heritage and pride in the ancient civilization. According to Mushirul Hasan:

“As a Muslim, he considered it his duty to help the Muslims; as an Indian, he made it a point to work for the good of the whole country. There was no ambiguity in his concept of nation.”⁴⁰

Through political activism he tried to eliminate the wedge between communities. Through his writings, especially Tahzeeb ul Akhlaq, he opened opportunities for Muslim community to study Hinduism from a vantage point of neutrality and objectivity. The communal unity was intrinsic to his educational concepts.⁴¹ Through multiple civil society organizations he forged bonds of cultural brotherhood and nursed visions for secular nation. He conferred patronage to syncretic culture while it was increasingly under attack from puritan reformers.

Blasphemy Debates: Beauty of Dialogue

As an ardent supporter of non-violence he was always inclined to employ tools of

³⁸ Sayyid Ahmad Khan, The Aligarh Institute Gazette, 12th June 1897, reprinted in M. S. Jain, The Aligarh Movement: Its Origin and Development 1858-1906, 138. For another translation of the quoted passage, see Limaye Madhu, Indian National Movement: Its Ideological and Socio-economic (Sangam Books, 1989), 127.

³⁹ Khaliq Ahmad Niazi, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adbiyat-i-Ilahi, 2009), 6.

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ In the words of G. F. I. Graham, a close friend of Syed Ahmad and his earliest biographer, his motto was “Educate, Educate, Educate.” He quoted Syed Ahmad as saying, “All the socio-political ills of India may be cured by this treatment. Cure the root and tree will flourish.” See Graham, The Life and Works of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, 70.

dialogue and debate for mutual understanding. He resorted to pen and intellectual transparency to debunk allegations. How he approached Jewish and Christian literature illustrates this point. His travel to understand British civilization also points to this accommodative attitude. For him only dialogue, not a crimonious discord, was the way out of imbroglia.

How he responded to William Muir is the case in point. In 1861 he published his biography on prophet titled 'A Life of Mahomet and History of Islam'. It was contemptuous to prophet and marred his reputation by raising many Orientalist allegations against the prophet.

Instead of resorting to violence Sir Syed engaged in intellectual duel. He published *Khutbat-e-ahmadiya* (1870) refuting the vile arguments of Muir.

This holds pedagogic value in contemporary South Asia as blasphemy protests turn into violent, wanton destructions. He showcased the path of dialogue which cemented his support to pluralistic ethos.

Conclusion

His legacy is still hold relevance in contemporary South Asia. His avowal of plural existence of multiple identities in a nation can serve as a solution to present day tensions in theregion. The vilification campaign against Sir Syed for supporting Muslims is totally erroneous. He stood for common identity without compromising individual identities. He was truly a frontrunner in advocating cultural pluralism. His pioneering works on intercultural dialogues should be continued. His ideas of cultural pluralism and mutual assimilation should be taken by the governments and civil society to enable a peaceful, coherent society and harmonious nationhood.

Finally, after a long and illustrious life, in 1898 the St. James Gazette in London published the following short notice:

"His long and honorable life came to an end in 1898. Throughout his life he worked for the greatest good of his fellow countrymen and co-religionists."

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