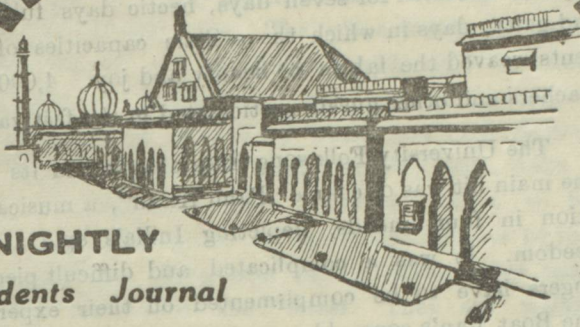


# THE VARSITY TIMES A DEBATE



FORTNIGHTLY

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## IN HEAVEN

By

Ahmad Mustafa

### PARTICIPANTS

Syed Ahmad Khan

Shibli Nomani

Altaf Husain Hali

Surender Nath Banerji

Badrudin Tayabji

Akbar Allahabadi

and others



The opinions expressed

by the characters

in this discussion are

their own. The author

is responsible for the

language.

## PROLOGUE

The lives of public men are never entirely their's. What they do or what they aim to do sets up trends which influence and continue to influence the lives of millions. For them we cannot say "bury the past with the dead"; the past is not dead—it has become history. We can distort history, that is to say, write history to suit our own whims and fancies, to console our vain and sentimental souls. In doing so we shall have missed the lessons of history.

We propose to write about a man who, for forty long years, fought an unbroken battle against ignorance and prejudice; he struck at the roots of traditionalism; he challenged the learned and the wise and brought down tall icons to ground. He pricked the public conscience at its most sensitive spots. In religion he was called both truthful and faithless, in politics both liberal and progressive as well as reactionary and time-server. How can the life of such a man be free from controversy. His metal will have to be tested on the bar of public criticism "he was among the first to set the tradition of criticism in religious literature. It is but appropriate that we follow his lead in evaluating his own life". (Hali). *(See Page 3)*

*Editorial*

## YOUTH

### The Festival of University Youth

These days, the youth of the country, from 33 Indian universities have assembled in Delhi's Talkatora Garden, the venue of the 4th Inter-University youth Festival. Since the last four years the Government of India, under auspices of the Ministry of Education, has been inviting young men and women of the Universities, to know each other, to understand each other and to revive the rich heritage of Indian art music and drama. It is very encouraging to note that the inception of youth festival has focused the attention of the youth of the country to the proud tradition of music, dance and drama in their own country. Every year the Universities are presenting the life and culture of the people of their own region in group dances, group singing and in other items of the festival. In our country, unfortunately, music and dance is mainly indebted to personal initiative and individual performance: the mass or group participation has always been lacking. It will be a great contribution to Indian art if these youth festivals develop the tradition of group dancing or other forms of mass participation.

As in previous years, our University is participating in the present youth festival in Delhi. We are quite conscious of the fact that the general standard of the cultural performance of our team can hardly be compared to that of our sister Universities. But it must be realized that in spite of so many limitations and obstacles, what has been done so far in this novel feature of our University life is remarkable and no doubt creditable. However, we are quite confident that in the near future our University will distinguish itself even in this field of activity.

The solo kathak recital by Miss Tahira Chughtai was technically correct but lacked finesse. She has shown creditable progress in much a short time and we are sure she will develop into a good exponent of the Kathak style.

The classical music section was dominated by the Tabla recital by Dinesh Bannerji. Even such a hard judge as Prof. D. P. Mukerji was seen nodding his head in approval when Dinesh was playing the "Trital" in the Kashi Baj style. This young Engineering student has a great musical future before him.

Trinidad's Anwar gave a pleasant surprise to all when he sang the Italian serenades. What a voice!

The university festival is over. Our boys and girls have packed off to Delhi to take part in the Inter University Youth Festival. We say to them, "Wish you best of Luck. Keep the university flag flying".

*(Continued from Page 14)*

Though short, his stay was worth going a long way. Ibrahim gave a masterly demonstration of cautious and aggressive batting. Playing with an injured left foot, he slashed at everything loose and mustered a valuable 57 not-out. Set to score 155 to win, the St. Stephens' failed against the accurate bowling of Saghir Ahmad, Shabid and Husain. The last wicket fell exactly one minute before the close.

Thus ended the nice holiday cricket in a gay abandon mood.

### Prof. A. Bose for U.K.

On the invitation of the British Council, Prof. A. Bose, the Chairman, department of English, left for U. K. on the 28th of October. He will visit the Varsity of Edinburgh and hold Seminar on Victorian Poetry. His stay will last for eight weeks.

## They Sang and Danced

### A Review of University Youth Festival

Marris Hall was ablaze with lights. The students were pouring in—the bearded and the unbearded, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians; girls with their pigtailed and boys in their sherwanis. The Third University Youth Festival had begun. It lasted for seven days, hectic days full of colour and gaiety, days in which the artistic capacities of our students weaved the fabric of beauty and joy. 4,000 students, teachers and other guests participated in the festival.

The University Folk song Ensemble was in its elements. The main hit was of course "Pahli Kiran", a musical composition in four moods, depicting India's epic struggle for freedom. It was a complicated and difficult piece and the singers have to be complimented on their expert recital. The Boat Man's song ably caught the spirit of the theme and the combination of voices made it doubly effective. The Oudhi Rasia could have been better. The stony faces of the girls did not go well with the spirit of the song, which is one of gay abandon. The evergreen "Holi", as usual, stole the show. One missed Mushir and Khalid of the old guards but the golden voice of Ganguli and the melody of Baqar, Mahesh, Rashid Alya, Bilquis and Krishna is a sign of hope for the future. Mr. Ishtiaq Mohammad Khan deserves our compliments for presenting such beautiful items.

The Drama Club had chosen Schnitzler's "Last Mask" for presentation. It was very competently adapted by Dr. Munibur Rahman as "Naqli Chehre" in Urdu. The play was not in the tradition of light comedies to which we have been used in the past. It was a play of moods—a difficult play; and if the students laughed at the wrong places, the fault was not entirely theirs. The standard of acting was above the average. Gulzar as Abbas was superb. His deep voice ably depicted the subtleties of the feelings of a patient in his last hours. Iftikhar as Niaz was good in his own way. He ably caught the spirit of the care free actor of humorous parts. Mohboob, as Jawed, could have been better provided he had given more attention to his voice. However, he portrayed his role competently. Sani, for a change, played a serious role. Narjis every inch looked a nurse but if she did not seem to take care of the patients at all, that is Schnitzler's fault, not hers. The settings were on the whole satisfactory. Lighting arrangements, could have been better if spot lights had been used. The weird effect of a hospital ward could not be created due to too much of light. Dr. Munibur Rahman should be heartily congratulated on this successful performance.

The ballet "Nai Lahren" was very ambitious. The theme—peasant struggles against floods—was topical. The execution was certainly an improvement on last year's "Origin of the Planets." Technical faults were many, but what more could be expected from students who were ignorant of even the elementary steps only two months back. Rajendra as Siva, though lacking the majestic grandeur of the Nataraja, was certainly good from amateur standards. Nasreen and Mahpara, as Ganga and Jamuna, should have given more attention to coordination of their movements. The peasants on the whole gave satisfactory portrayal. Costumes were of a high order. Musical accompaniment was sketchy and crude. Lighting arrangements needed much improvement. The group dancing team, deserves credit for presenting "Nai Lahren."

"I was called athiest and faithless"

"But I never complained; I always looked ahead"

### Scene I

(In a vast garden a narrow path leads to a palatial building. The garden provides a natural setting of meadowy land with conspicuous ups and downs. The building is situated at some elevation and a noisy rivulet flows down by its left side. The place seems to have been carved out of a pine forest which still surrounds it. There are no flower beds; but the ground is covered with a luxurious growth of white and pink daisies. The river-bank is lined up with pebbles and there are a couple of large sized rocks probably meant to be used as benches. The green of the foliage appears to permeate the atmosphere. Two men emerge at the other end where the path leads into the forest. They are walking towards the building. On the right is Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. He gives the impression of a prosperous well-built and a decidedly domineering personality. In spite of his profuse and entirely grey beard he is fresh and young in spirit. His companion Maulana Shibli Nomani is tall and wiry. His lean face and thoughtful, rather penetrating eyes express great mental strength and determination. Although hardly fifty-five his hair is all grey. As the two reach the rock besides the river bed they stop inadvertently—).

*Sir Syed*: Pleasant place, Maulana. Could'nt we rest here for a while?

*Shibli*: I suppose we could. There is yet some time for the discussion to start. (They sit down on the rock).

*Sir Syed*: It is strange, but this place reminds me of Aligarh. What a contrast! I doubt if I could stand so much dust and heat again—but those were different days.

*Shibli*: I will never understand why of all places you chose that arid desert for your college. I am told you were offered some land in Dehra Dun.

*Sir Syed*: I was. But the Muslim nobles at Aligarh were insistent and there were other facilities too.

*Shibli*: These Muslim nobles! I believe they are at the root of most of our troubles.

*Sir Syed*: A College does not have to be a picnic spot. Hardships are best educators and I wanted to prepare the boys for the hardships of life.

*Shibli*: Do you realise Syed Sahab that this wretched place has merely served to make them lazy wasters. Most of the time they sleep and rest of the time they complain of heat. Some one told me that everybody there, students and Professors alike, sleep for half the day during more than half of the year.

*Sir Syed*: I did not do this; nor did you. If today they are lazy how am I to blame?

*Shibli*: No-body is to blame—but climate does affect mental activity.

*Sir Syed*: Does it? I do not find that the cool and amiable climate here has made you any less obstinate. Frankly, I do not relish the idea of entering into the kind of discussion that you have arranged to day. I would like much rather to take a long walk in the forest.

*Shibli*: I am sorry Syed Sahab but I did not mean to irritate you. As for today's discussion it is merely historical. If I remember correctly, you were a great advocate of criticism in historical evaluation. You would not let me

write 'Al-Farooq' because you thought I would be partial to Hazrat Omar. I assure you I will not be partial towards you although I have the greatest respect and admiration for you. By God I have

*Sir Syed*: I did not want you to write 'Al-Farooq' because I was afraid you might raise a controversy and antagonise the Shias. I had other fears too.....

*Shibli*: Your fears were ill-founded. When you asked Imadul Mulk to dissuade me from writing 'Al-Farooq,' he said, "after all Islam has produced only one Farooq-e-Azam. It would be a pity if his biography was not written."

*Sir Syed*: I do not deny that you did justice to the personal glory of Hazrat Omar. But there are other sides to this question. Were you bold enough to write frankly about everything or objective enough to steer clear of sectional prejudices and sentimental affiliations like a true historian Khilafat is a delicate matter. I believe you know my opinion on this question.

*Shibli*: I know them well enough. In fact these became the starting point of our differences.

*Sir Syed*: I never concealed them. After all what could one write about Khilafat as a system of administration. Personally I divide those qualities which had collected in the person of our great prophet into two sets: qualities of statesmanship and qualities of saintliness. The Khilafat of the first went to Omar but the Khilafat of the second was inherited by Hazrat Ali and Ahle-Bait. Hazrat Usman destroyed everything. As for Hazrat Abu-Bakar, he did not matter much any way. It is easy to say all this but who would dare to write it. What is past is past.

*Shibli*: If I thought as you do, I dare say, I would write it.

*Sir Syed*: Don't think I am afraid of criticism. In my time I faced a lot and all of it was not very polite either; only I do not want to enter into useless controversies. You and I are very different. We set ourselves similar aims and we worked together for the same cause, yet I have always felt the difference. You are too serious. I took life as it came. I lived it fully. When young we played "Kabaddi" and enjoyed dance and music and all the good things. When I grew up I was called atheist, faithless and what not. I accepted it all; I never complained; I have always looked ahead. But you were too fond of the past. You were born old.

*Shibli*: In that case, Syed Sahab, you have known only half of me. Have you seen my letters to Atiya. I think I owe something to this Maulvi Abdul Haq. Thanks to him my other self has not been lost on the world. I am a man of for deeper sensibility than you imagine and the poet in me is too sensitive to be callous or unsympathetic. I have always admired the great work that you did. I have always respected you as a giant among leaders; as a man I have loved the idealism that kindled your soul; but I am a historian. I want to study you, to analyse your role. Please do not take it subjectively.

*Sir Syed*: If it be so, I am with you. I am not afraid to discuss. In fact I would like to see how bold you can be. I have always liked young men who can question.

*Shibli*: Let's go then; it is time for the discussion. And they must be waiting.

## Scene II

(The scene of this debate is a hall in the main building. The walls are bare except for an old clock above the main entrance. The participants are seated around a large central table. Among them, we recognise Maulana Altaf Husain Hali, Badruddin Tayabji, Surendra Nath Bannerji and Nawab Mohsin Ul-Mulk. The chairman of the meeting is a distinguished looking old gentleman whom we are unable to identify. Sir Syed is next to him on the right side while Shibli faces him. On either side of the table several rows of chairs are placed. These are occupied by visitors. It is a distinguished gathering and we can spot some of the out-standing personalities of the late 19th and early 20th century: Akbar Alahabadi, Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, Swami Vivekanand, Maulvi Zakaullah, Viqarul Mulk, Syed Mahmood, Maulvi Samiullah, Meer Vilayat Hussain, Maulvi Mazharul Haq, Raja Jai Kishan Das, Prof. Khuda Bakhsh, W. C. Bonnerji and Dr. Ziauddin. It is curious to note that Josh Malihabadi is sitting alone in the extreme left corner of the room. Akbar seems to recognise him and goes upto him.)

*Akbar:* Hello: Arn't you Shabbir Ahmad Khan Josh of Mahhabad. Strange to find you in this assembly of the dead.

*Josh:* I have special permission. In fact I am one of those living-dead and it won't be long before.....

*Akbar:* Yes I have heard it.

میں کراچی میں ہوں جس طرح سے کہنے میں حسین

سب شہادت کے عین آثار.....

All the same it is a pleasure to meet you. I have heard a lot about you and it is a long time since an interesting person joined us. Iqbal was such a disappointment. He is so full of his philosophy that he has begun to bore me. Of course, I do not approve of your language but your ideas are intelligible.

*Josh:* Thank you. I feel much honoured but I have no intentions of settling down here. The company of so many fatherly teetotallers will bore me to death. I thought you might at least serve some tea at this discussion.

*Akbar:* Why not? Our Syed Saheb is very fond of tea.

[The clock strikes ten and the chairman stands up. The murmur of animated conversation dies out. Nazir Ahmad taps Dr. Ziauddin's shoulders, who has meanwhile gone to sleep.]

*Chairman:* Gentlemen, we have gathered here to discuss the policies and work of one of the tallest among leaders of man. As one of the most distinguished inmates of heaven Syed Ahmad Khan needs no introduction to you. His dynamic personality is, to a great extent, responsible for keeping the spirit of critical thinking and ceaseless activity alive even in this community of the dead. We are, however, not going to discuss his present work. We shall confine ourselves to his life and work in the other world. I will call upon Shamsul Ulama Maulana Shibli Nomanani to

initiate the discussion. Since this discussion is informal, interruptions and rejoinders are permitted at all stages.

[Shibli gets up to speak]

*Shibli:* Mr. Chairman, I will not waste any time in preliminaries. My charge against Sir Syed Ahmad Khan is that he gave a wrong lead to the Mussalmans of India and he is responsible for the present predicament of that community. Needless to say, I do not imply that he has done no good; in fact, I greatly appreciate his services. I shared his lofty ideal of lifting the Indian Mussalmans from the morass of ignorance and decadence; I am of the opinion that he is the greatest among the Muslim reformers of the 19th century—

*Sir Syed:* You are kind but your kindness sounds dangerous. Go on.

*Shibli:* I only mean that his policies and methods have often harmed them whose cause he espoused. He worked against his own ideals. I lived and worked with him for 16 years but I was always independent in my opinions. In politics I have always disagreed with him. Many a times we have discussed our differences. Once again I shall enumerate the issues on which I have found myself unable to be one with him. For convenience I shall divide these into separate topics; all these however, are parts of the same thing. They flow from his outlook.

*Sir Syed:* What about my outlook? I only wanted to educate my people. I was neither a politician nor a philosopher.

*Shibli:* Yet you took sides in politics. You had an attitude and that mattered. From the very beginning you were staunchly pro-British. You were so overwhelmed with the superiority of the Englishman that you closed your eyes to the evils of their rule. You completely identified yourself with the foreign rulers.

*Sir Syed:* I supported the English because I thought they were right. I was not afraid of them. I did criticize Lord Lytton in most unambiguous terms when I disagreed with him.

*Shibli:* That was a purely educational matter. Politically you never disagreed with them.

*Sir Syed:* Of course I was a loyal subject of the Queen. So were all your tall-talking congressmen.

*Shibli:* We shall come to that later. The point is that you accepted the British rule as an unadulterated blessing. Were you right?

*Sir Syed:* You wouldn't say this if you knew what India was like when the English came here. It was a land of anarchy; they gave it a civilized government and the rule of law.

*Shibli:* Really! Was it so civilized? I do not deny that the English introduced stable administration but all of it was not Lord Rippon's rule. The East India Company, certainly was not so beneficent. Yet you were ready to bestow as much wholesome praise on the Company's rule as on Queen Victoria.

*Sir Syed:* This is mere sentimentalism. I belonged to a family of Muslim nobles. I had attended the court of the Mughal ruler and had basked in the light of imperial glory. I saw with my own eyes the breaking-up of Muslim power, the fall of noble families, the debasement and degradation of those whose very names had once made their enemies tremble. I saw the defeat of my own class. What could be more natural for me than to protest and fight? I was no coward but I saw farther than my class. The defeat was an inevitability. The English stood above

us. The natives of India, high and low, merchant and petty shop-keepers, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, manners and uprightness were as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man. True, the English had to fight many battles but in reality they conquered India neither by force nor by cunning. India needed a ruler and it was this crying need that brought them here. I saw the inevitability of all this. The protest would have been in vain, the battle fruitless. I saw too that the English had much to give us. They were our superiors in technique and industry and culture. They had civilization. If we could come out of the mire of decadence; if only we could attain this civilization, we might become, if not the superiors, at least the equals of the English.

*Shibli:* That was only one part of the story. The other part was told by famines and devastated villages and the bones of Indian handicraftsmen. It was the story of rapacious plunder and naked loot. Ten times as much was taken out of the country as was sent into it by this new type of merchant rulers. A third of the Company's dominions had been reduced to a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts. It is to the glory of our people that they did not take this lying down. Like lions they rose in the revolution of 1857, and shook the foreign rule to its foundations. They fought to the bitter end and in the course of ten days English administration vanished like a dream and left not a wrack behind. How completely you had identified yourself with the English is evident from your attitude towards this great rebellion. It fills you with anger and dismay only against your own countrymen. You shed tears for the English women and children who were 'slaughtered' by the rebels. What about the Indians? You have only rebukes for them. The Indian excesses shock you, the English atrocities seem to you excusable.

*Sir Syed:* This is untrue. I protest against this insinuation. I was as pained by the misfortunes of my own people by the tragic fate of so many ancient and noble Indian families as by what befell the English and their women and children.

*Shibli:* The question is this. Can the two sides be equated? Can the atrocious crimes committed by enslavers be compared with the 'mistakes of a people in revolt'. 'There is something in human history like retribution and if some sepoys misbehaved, it cannot be forgotten that the English and their government were responsible for the colossal tragedy. The story of English atrocities is blood-curdling; I better not narrate it. It would put even the most ardent protagonist of English civilization and culture to shame. The point is that it fails to evoke your condemnation. You are prepared to justify the feelings of anger and desire for vengeance which had full possession of the hearts of the English during those awful days.

*Sir Syed:* Maulana Saheb. I find you are trying to raise sentiments against me. I have already told you I am not, and I never was, a sentimental fool. 1857 did affect me. It affected me so deeply that for the rest of my life I could not erase its impressions from my mind. The emotions that it aroused in my soul have moved me in all my subsequent endeavours. The unsuccessful revolt laid bare the tragedy of the Indian situation before my eyes. I saw clearly that we were destined to be ruled by the English. I did not, like many others, wail and weep. I analysed the mutiny. I studied its causes, the conditions which had given rise to it and I set myself to remove these causes, to work for the amelioration of these conditions. I

was convinced that the English were mistaken in their assessment of the causes of the mutiny. It was wrong to suppose that 1857, was a political revolt aimed at the removal of the British rule. It was as a result of this misunderstanding that they treated the country as one should treat a rebel country. It was neither a political revolt nor a conspiracy. It was merely disobedience on the part of the soldiers and that too not actuated by a spirit of revolt but the result of ignorance and religious prejudices. I hope you know that modern historians are in agreement with my views on this question.

*Shibli:* As a historian I have my own views on this subject. However, at the moment, I am only interested in referring to 1857, as a background of your political and emotional identification with the foreign rule. My main contention is that you completely misunderstood the nature and function of British imperialism. What you welcomed as a civilizing and liberating angel was in fact an imperialist monster which had gripped the country in its tentacles and was sucking its life-blood. I do not deny that it had broken some of the mediaeval shackles that bound us; it brought some new ideas; it introduced among us some new tools of progress, the inventions of modern science; but it also established new fetters. The country was groaning under the burden of its exploitation. Progress could only take place by breaking these new fetters. As this realisation grew, there developed, in the country, a movement of opposition. It was a process which the foreign rule itself had stimulated and yet it was a process which was going to strike at the roots of foreign rule. Unfortunately this movement of opposition found you against itself.

*Sir Syed:* Pardon me Maulana, if you are referring to my opposition to Congress, then you seem to have lost all sense of historical perspective. How could there be any national movement in those days? There was no national sentiment at all. You are projecting an idea which is essentially modern into a situation where it did not exist. As for your Congress, it was far from being against rule. Its loud protestations of loyalty to the crown, repeated year after year, belie any such imputation. It was started by an Englishman.

*Shibli:* I am not referring to anything specific. I am only referring to the fact that the country was beginning to wake up to the realities of foreign rule. It had begun to protest. What if nationalism in its modern sense did not exist? The process had started. Indians had begun to realise that they were Indians and this collective self-consciousness, this self-realisation was the beginning of the national movement. The Congress was not the starting point. It marked a stage in this development. The British India Society, The British India Association, The Bombay Association, The Bengal National League, The Indian Association, The Sarva Janik Sabha, The Native Association and The Mahajan Sabha all led to it. What if the Congress professed loyalty to the crown? Its very first steps were steps of criticism. Within two years of its inception, in spite of its most mild and moderate language it invoked opposition from the English and their supporters. And it is here that we find you among the most vocal opponents of the Congress. It was not an accident. It merely followed from your complete and unconditional acceptance of the foreign rule. In 1877, you had declined to support the National Mohammedan Association founded by Amir Ali.

*Sir Syed*: I opposed the Congress because I disliked its methods. Its approach was agitational. I believed in constructive policies. I knew that the English rule had come to stay and I was convinced that to earn our rightful place in the new scheme of things we would have to prove ourselves worthy of it. Rights could not be gained by shouting for them. We had to raise ourselves from ignorance and degradation to deserve these rights. The need of the hour was education and not agitation. I stood for education. The Muslims were specially backward in this respect. The Bengalees and Hindus had gone ahead and acquired the new education but the Muslims were hostile and sulky. Education and not politics could put them on the road of progress. The Muslims had suffered much from the after effects of the mutiny. Whereas Hindus had regained the confidence of the English, the Muslims were still suspected. They were being victimised. This created special impediments in the way of their progress which had to be removed. I realised that if, at this stage, the Muslims became involved in politics they would merely create more difficulties for themselves. Agitations always lead to strife. The wounds of 1857 were still fresh and the Muslim community could never have survived another blow. After all a similar agitation was started in America and it ultimately led to the cry "no taxation without representation". Let those who are daring enough raise such slogans; I was not one of them.

*Shibli*: Such a policy suited the foreign rulers only too well. Besides, by trying to keep the Muslims away from the Congress you only aided the English in their infamous game of divide and rule. You told the Muslims that their interests were not safe in the hands of Hindus and that they could progress and prosper only under the aegis of the English. Not merely this; you tried to establish that by virtue of their respective religions there was an identity of interest between the English and the Muslims and that the English and not any other community were the true friends and benefactors of the Muslims. It was most unfortunate. You introduced that element of Muslim separatism which has been the biggest misfortune of Indian Muslims. You were only helping the English to divide us from our own countrymen. The Hindus and the Muslims had been united like brothers in the great struggle of 1857 against the Firangi and now you were telling them that if the Firangi left, one would devour the other. To what length you went in trying to keep the Muslims away from the Congress is known to all.

*Sir Syed*: I was not against the Hindus. I did not oppose the Congress because it was a Hindu organisation. I disagreed with its policy and disliked it and if the Hindus had listened to me I would have kept them away from the Congress too. I always stood for close co-operation between different communities. I emphasized the need for amity and friendship between Hindus and Muslims. In fact I clearly stated that the words Hindu and Muslim are only meant for religious distinction otherwise they belong to one nation. Just as the noble Hindu races came to this country we too came here. We forgot the land from where we came and India became our country. We have considered this land as our motherland and we have settled here as others did. Both Hindus and Muslims breathe the same air, drink the same water from the holy Ganges and the Jamuna, eat the produce of the same land; in death and in life we are together. So intimately have we lived together that the complexions of our skins have become one and our faces resemble. Muslims borrowed the customs of Hindus and Hindus adopted the habits of Muslims.

We intermingled and created a new language which was Urdu. It belonged neither to Muslims nor to Hindus; it was the language of both. My country to me was like a bride whose two eyes were the Hindus and the Muslims. I have expressed these sentiments repeatedly. I have worked for the common good of both communities. In the Scientific Society and the Ghazipur 'Madarsa', my Hindu friends were with me. During my term of service in the Viceroy's Council the interests of Hindus were constantly before my eyes.

*Shibli*: I never implied that you were anti-Hindu. You were too broad-minded to be that. All I suggested was that by your political policy you aided the English in creating a gulf between Hindus and Muslims. May be in spite of your wishes, but objectively this was the direct result of your all-out efforts to keep the Muslims away from others and within the fold of the English. This exclusive concern for the Muslims in the background of a supposed or real rivalry between Hindus and Muslims had its implications and I dare say the implications were not altogether hidden from your eyes.

*Sir Syed*: Give me one instance.....

*Shibli*: I shall give you two. When in Benares, you were once meeting Mr. Shakespeare in a deputation to discuss the problems of Muslim education, Mr. Shakespeare remarked that he was surprised to hear you speak of Muslims' progress. So far you had always concerned yourself with the progress of Indians as such. You said you were convinced that it would not be possible for the two communities to work together any more. You prophesied that this was the mere beginning of differences and that these differences would grow day by day and assume colossal dimensions. You were sorry for this and yet you believed this to be inevitable. And then we find that as early as 1857, you had chid the British for not forestalling the mutiny by playing the old game of divide and rule. You wrote "when Nadir Shah became master of.....Persia and Afghanistan he invariably kept the two armies at equal strength.....When Persian army attempted to rise, the Afghan army was at hand to quell the rebellion and vice-versa. The English did not follow this precedent in India.....If separate regiments of Hindus and separate regiments of Mohammadans had been raised, this feeling of brotherhood could not have arisen". If the English had not done this before they certainly did it after the mutiny.

*Sir Syed*: If I lost confidence in Hindus, I had my reasons for this. The Urdu Language was neither a language of Hindus nor of Muslims. It was merely an advanced form of Brij Bhasha. My friends tried to destroy it merely because it had grown and flourished during the Muslim rule. When Hindus in Benares initiated the move for replacing Urdu in Persian script by Bhasha in Dev Nagri as the language of the courts, I could see that it would be difficult for Hindus and Muslims to pull on together. I was convinced that this move was based on sheer communal prejudice. I will only add that events have justified my fears. What is the fate of Urdu in India today.

*Shibli*: That is because the English succeeded in their nefarious game. If only you had not accepted what was their wish as the inevitable reality—if only you had not lost confidence, may be things would have taken a different course.

*Sir Syed*: There are no "ifs" and "would bes" in history. I took the situation as I found it and I acted according to it.

*Shibli*: Your opposition to the Congress was so obstinate and blind that even though you professed to be a radical and a liberal you opposed open competitions for the services, you preferred nominations to elections and supported communal electorate as against joint. It completely baffles me. I can only see the white man's hand behind all this. However, I am not a politician: I will leave these questions to those who are more competent and pass on to matters which concerned me more intimately—I mean your educational and cultural policies.

*Chairman*: Maulana Shibli, you are taking too long. There are others and the time is limited.

*Shibli*: I will be brief. In fact I have finished with my main charge. The others only follow from it. Sir Syed's greatest contribution towards the progress of Indian Muslims consisted in spreading modern ideas and modern education. I was all for new education and it was in search of this that I came to Aligarh. The Indian Muslims are greatly indebted to the Aligarh Movement which taught them to keep pace with the march of time, which brought them out of despondency and frustration and destroyed the fear of the new in their hearts. It helped to draw them out of their feudal past and acquainted them with the realities of a new industrial order. Along with all this, however, there was a grievous fault. The movement was, from its very inception, too intimately dependent on the foreign rulers. In course of time this limitation made itself felt more and more heavily. Political expediency and short-sighted policies of immediate gain began to gnaw at its roots. Its high aims and ideals were distorted and cramped beyond recognition. Modern education in course of time came to mean a superficial acquaintance with the English language and an imitation of the English in dress and manners. It was Anglomania at its worst.

*Sir Syed*: This was not my idea of education. By education I meant the development of a faculty of discrimination in human beings, a power to think logically and critically, to be able to distinguish between right and wrong, to ponder over the affairs of nature and man, to know and be able to apply that knowledge to solve the problems that confront us. I believed in scientific education. I never considered a superficial knowledge of English or Geography or Arithmetic as education.

*Shibli*: Then you should have realised that your benefactors were not interested in this education. Lord Macaulay, whom you considered to be a great saviour of Indians and for the salvation of whose soul you prayed hard, did not want learning and scholarship to spread. He wrote in his notorious report "we have to create a class of people in India who should act as interpreters between us and the millions of our subjects..... this has to be a class of people who will be Indian in blood and complexion but English in tastes and opinions and understanding." It was such a class that Aligarh began to produce. I discovered this as soon as I came to Aligarh. It was the most vulgar class. Leave aside religion; love for freedom, idealism, enthusiasm for progress, these things were to be found nowhere. They were merely interested in exhibiting their coats and trousers. At that time it was widely believed that the graduates of Aligarh doubted the truth of religion. What a monstrous allegation! These poor things could not appreciate the movements of the earth. How could they think about God?

*Sir Syed*: I was no mean scholar myself and I knew the demands of scholarship well enough. I stood for quality

in education. In my evidence before the Education Commission I had clearly stated that it was much better to learn one subject with thoroughness than to know many superficially. When Syed Mahmood presented his proposals about the M. A. O. College in 1873, he made it abundantly clear that our object was to establish a University and not merely a college. I wanted to start a system of fellowships like the Cambridge University, to award scholarships to our graduates so that they may specialise in various subjects. I wanted to create a group of scholars and research workers who might spread the light of learning and science in the nation. But the government said that it would not give us any grants if we tried to build a University.

*Shibli*: And you gave in.

*Sir Syed*: What could I do? I was helpless. I knew that unless the people took the affairs of education in their own hands proper education was impossible. I wanted the Government to leave the educational institutions free but it would not listen to me. As for the coats and trousers, these had their place too. The Muslims were backward and shy. They needed self-confidence and assurance that they could work shoulder to shoulder with the English. By wearing European dresses, and by eating at the same table with them, they gained this confidence.

*Shibli*: I beg to differ. You thought that these dresses and manners would inculcate high ideals, courage, and the ruling spirit; in reality this imitation of foreign rulers made them useless for their own nation. The easy and costly living that you taught them, itself became an impediment to all real progress. Besides, it was not merely a question of dress. You thought that the remedy of the evil lay in this that in all respects, except in religion, we should become English. You wanted the nation to cut itself away from its past history and culture. The vehemence with which you opposed the institution of eastern studies in the Punjab and the Allahabad universities testifies to this. The neglect of Eastern learning and scholarship at the Aligarh College itself was a result of the same attitude. In the beginning the College had two departments, the English and the Oriental. Day by day, due to this policy of neglect, the Oriental Department deteriorated; ultimately it was closed down. In the beginning you were enthusiastic about spreading modern knowledge in vernacular languages. You started the Scientific Society for this purpose; at one time you even played with the idea of a vernacular university. But subsequently your enthusiasm for vernacular disappeared and you opposed those who wanted education to be imparted in Indian languages.

*Sir Syed*: Maulana, you have completely misunderstood me. You have mixed up two entirely different issues. The fact that I was not unaware of the importance of historical studies in our history and culture is proved by my own work on Asar-us-Sanadid and Ain-i-Akbari. The eastern studies that the Government wanted to introduce at that time was another matter. They merely wanted to take away high education from us on the pretext of eastern studies. What were the eastern studies anyway and what benefit could a modern university derive from these? What purpose would it serve to concentrate all our attention on some classical texts, to remind us of old stories, to tell us of the glory that is past. We were living in a new world under the British Government and we had to think about this new world. Could this revival of Eastern learning, this talk about ancient culture enable us to secure even ordinary posts like a Munsif or a Sub-Judge? The path be-

fore us was clear. We had to study European literature and European science to be able to go forward on the road of progress. The Banaras College talked a lot about Sanskrit and what did it achieve? It produced none to equal the Pandits who wrapped in their dhoties, sit on the stairs of Shivala Ghat and learn their Sanskrit from sacred books. What is the result of this learning except that we have a few more begging-minstrels in Banaras. Our universities have not produced a single scholar of Arabic or Persian who can compete with those that have learned these languages in the dark corners of mosques and hermitages living on the crumbs of "durood" and "fateha." What has the country gained except that we have a few more living on the bread of the dead? Even if our universities could give us the best of eastern education they would only add to the number of useless beggars.

*Shibli*: You are taking a very limited view of eastern studies. Precisely at the time when the nation was beginning to wake up against the foreign rule it needed to look back and derive strength and inspiration from its past to be able to fight for a new future. It was a part of this awakening which made both Hindus and Muslims delve into their past and draw upon the limitless treasures of their heritage. Look at your College. It was through and through pro-British.

*Sir Syed*: My College was a fine institution which was giving modern scientific education. It was not a place for religious revivalists and obscurantists.

*Shibli*: I had hoped it would be so and that is why I came to join it at a mere forty chips a month. I was to be disillusioned too soon. In one of the very first of the College functions which I attended, the seats of teachers had been placed in accordance with their salaries. I bore this insult and humiliation because I thought I was going to serve the nation. And what did I find? In the name of serving the nation we were teaching a few sons of the upper classes to monkey the English, and to look down upon our own people. We were bringing up loyalists and careerists. The English staff ruled the roost. Beek's word was law.

*Sir Syed*: It is a lie and a slander. The English staff was doing fine work. They were a part of the College of which we can justly be proud.

*Shibli*: I have facts. You quarrelled with Maulvi Samiullah and treated your life long friend as no decent man would treat his enemy, because the English were against him. You acted against all your friends and companions in appointing Syed Mahmud as the Joint-Secretary of the Trustees Committee because the English wanted you to do so.

*Sir Syed*: I did not appoint Syed Mahmud as my successor because he was my son or because the English were for him; I honestly thought that he was the most suitable man.

*Shibli*: And pray what made him suitable? Just that he was completely English in his outlook. The amount of despotic intolerance to opposition that you exhibited on this occasion was despicable.

*Sir Syed*: You are prejudiced and your vision is coloured. You look at every thing from a crooked angle. How can I explain my point of view to you? There were many considerations that had to be taken into account. I do not claim that all I did was right. I am sorry for my behaviour towards Maulvi Samiullah. But my intentions

were honest; I did everything in the best interest of the nation.

*Shibli*: Was the interest of the nation to be served by false recommendations, by securing a few jobs? I was not of this view and I was not the man to cringe before the English. That was why I left the College. The Englishmen of your College did not like me either. I am reminded of an incident. Once I was reciting a poem in the College when I came to the following couplet:

نو جوانو حریفوں کو دکھا دینا ہے  
اپنی قوت کو کھا قرم نے یہ کجا کیسا

Inadvertently on the word "hareef" I pointed my finger at the Englishmen. People went and told them that I was inciting the students to rebellion and everybody wanted me to explain. Such was the atmosphere.

*Chairman*: Please try to be brief, Maulana. You have already taken too long.

*Shibli*: I will conclude with my last point and that is about Sir Syed's attitude to religion and religious education. I assure you I am not one of those that Syed Saheb likes to call superstitious obscurantists. I did not like the prevailing ignorance among Muslims and the host of superstitions and prejudices that went in the name of religion; but Syed Saheb went to the other extreme. He minimised the importance of religion. This is evident from the place that religion and religious teachings have occupied in the life of his College. It is true that theology was taught—even compulsory attendance of prayers was enforced—but all this was merely meant to silence the opposition. It was not taken seriously. Religion was never made the permeating spirit of the College. It was merely a compartment and a neglected compartment at that. Even up to this day, the way theology is taught, no one takes it seriously. By paradox they call it "Part One". In fact it is not even the hundredth part of their education. Again I do not agree with the way in which Sir Syed tried to re-interpret Islam in the light of modern knowledge. I am not against modern knowledge. But I know its limitations. It is no use trying to prove that the word of God is always the same as the word of modern science. We can do so only at the cost of intellectual honesty and by twisting the word of God. Personally I believe that if modern knowledge is not consistent with the teaching of God then it is wrong. It is imperfect knowledge. It will have to be corrected and improved and brought in line with the knowledge given to us directly by the Almighty. Sir Syed set about this task in the wrong way. He attempted to interpret religion in the light of science and in this process committed such blunders, such silly mistakes, which only a person unaware of Arabic grammar and usage could commit. Once Sir Syed was writing an article on the reality of "Jinnaat", just then I happened to receive Imam Baqelani's Ejazul Quran. It contained some verses by pre-Islamic poets about "Jins"; how these "Jins" were their friends; how they ate with them and so on. When I mentioned these to Syed Saheb he showed great interest and lo and behold when the article appears, he says on the strength of these poems that the "Jinnat" in the Quran refers to wild and primitive Arabs living in forests. Now this kind of thing I call childish. It is true that excess of superstition is bad, but to say that the Quran or for that matter any other religious book does not mention any supernatural event is a bit much. The modernists may try to give all sorts of far fetched interpretations to these events but they cannot be acceptable to one who knows Arabic. I do not imply that Syed Saheb was not a true Musalman. His faith was sound



but he went too far in his enthusiasm for modern science and modern knowledge and in spite of his intentions this weakened the hold of religion. It gave rise to strong atheistic and naturalistic tendencies. My own brother could not escape this influence.

Akbar :

ذہانی کہتے ہیں سب کچھ سکر حقیقت میں  
یہ صرف قوت قوم نروا کو مانگے ہیں۔

Sir Syed : Maulana Shibli, you have raised a question which has been put to me all my life. You were too polite in your criticism. Others like you were not. They called me "Nechari", "Kafir" and Godless ; but I have never concealed my views in this matter. I shall repeat them for your benefit. Briefly speaking, I consider religion to be the word of God and nature to be the work of God. To me it appears preposterous to assume that the work of God could contradict his word. The work of God is there before our eyes. It is for us to know and understand. God reveals himself to us through nature. He is the biggest "Nechari". Your argument about the imperfection of human knowledge may appeal to sophisticated logicians but it fails to satisfy a large number of intelligent human beings. I am not speaking about those who accept their religion purely on faith; they are true Muslims and I admire them. But I was concerned about those Muslims who wanted to think, to argue out their beliefs for themselves. Modern science is an entirely new phenomenon in the world of ideas. It does not rest, like Greek philosophy, on formal logic. You cannot defeat it in a battle of polemics. It convinces by experiment, by demonstration, by practical achievements; it proves by precept. It has introduced a new element in thought, the scientific method. Now you cannot close your eyes to all this and say "do not worry about science because science is imperfect". To the world of today the achievements of science are so immense that when its teachings appear to be in conflict with those of religion, people are inclined to doubt the later. In such a situation you cannot ignore science. You have to contend with it. You cannot dismiss it as incorrect ; no intelligent man will listen to you. As for me I firmly believe that science appears to be in conflict with religion only because we have misunderstood religion. To the word of God we have added a large mass of senseless tradition which should be rejected outright. Even in case of the true word of God, if it appears to be in conflict with reality, we shall have to see if we have understood its meaning correctly, for there can be no real conflict. May be we have taken the allegories too literally ; we shall have to re-discover the true meaning and remove the apparent inconsistency between the word of God and his work. This is what I believed in and this is what I attempted to do in my "Tafseer". I may have made mistakes here and there but my premise was fundamentally sound and I stand by it.

Chairman : Gelatlemen, we have had a fairly long sitting. You are all visibly tired and hungry. We shall now break for lunch.

(The meeting disperses and the participants go out by the central door in small groups. They are all all talking animatedly).

### Scene III.

(A sumptuous buffet is served in the garden. The menu is extravagant. All imaginable kinds of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes are there. The participants, after filling their plates with eastables, have collected in small groups. Some are standing near the table, others

have drifted to farther corners of the garden and are enjoying the cool shade of the pines. On one end of the table we can see Akbar Allahabdi, Josh and Dr. Ziauddin. Dr. Ziauddin is eating away with great gusto).

Akbar (to Josh) : I think I could now say "سب کا حصہ" "من و سلوی"

Josh : I am surprised at your eating propensities here in heaven (Dr. Ziauddin does not seem to listen).

Akbar : After all we don't have many things to do and eating is one of the pleasantest occupations, one could find.

Josh : I should think so. By the way I have not come across any women here. Don't the ladies come to heaven ?

Akbar : They do ; but they have their own Zanana Park.

Josh : Damn this segregation ! Why even in Aligarh you could see girls around.

Akbar : You are right ; but for their dull ascetic lives all these Moulvis could be converted to Syed Saheb's side in a jiffy—remember what I said :

سید سے آج حضرت واعظ نے یہ کہا  
چرچا ہے جا بجا تیرے حال تباہ کا  
اس نے دیا جواب کہ مذہب ہو یا رواج  
راحت میں جو مغل ہو وہ کاٹا ہے راہ کا  
یورپ کا پیش آئے اگر آپ کو سفر  
گذرے نظر سے حال رعایا و بادشاہ کا  
آئے نظر علوم جدیدہ کی روشنی  
جس سے خجل ہے نور رخ مہرو ماہ کا  
دعوت کسی امیر کے گھر میں ہو آپ کی  
کسب مسون سے ذکر ہو الفت کی چاہ کا  
رکھے اگر اوہنس کے کہے اک بت حسین  
ول مولوی یہ بات نہیں ہے کناہ کا  
اس وقت قبلہ جھک کے کروں آپ کو سلام  
بہر نام بھی حضور کو کین خاتقاہ کا

Josh : That is reactionary stuff. I do not like this perverted humour. What do you think about today's discussion ? I wish they had discussed Dr. Ziauddin instead of Sir Syed.

Dr. Ziauddin : (Suddenly becoming attentive) What ! What is that you said about me ?

Josh : I wish they had put you in the dock instead of Sir Syed. After all it was you who made Aligarh a nest of the Muslim League.

Dr. Ziauddin : You do me great injustice. I was a true follower of Syed Ahmad Khan. I did a great deal for the University. Of course, if you want to succeed you have to be on the right side of the Government. That is elemental.

(On the other end of the table we find Sir Syed, Shibli, Vivekanand and Prof. Khuda Bakhsh).

Sir Syed : Have some chicken, Maulana ; I hope you have realised that a fowl is a fowl whether you cut its throat or strangulate it.

Shibli : I was never such a stickler in these matters. In fact during my voyage to Constantinople we had slaughtered mutton, I mean it was slaughtered without any proper recitation. But I still hold that your argument in favour

of a "neck-twisted" fowl being "halal" is theologically unsound.

*Prof Khuda Bakhsh*: You and your theology! I think Syed Saheb was too soft with people like you. After all which is more important, the spirit of religion or all this ritual and mythology. This is mere accretion. If it comes in the way of progress we should discard it and retain only the real thing.

*Vivekanand*: But what is the real thing? To me it is freedom—freedom of the mind and soul. I feel, Syed Saheb, that your knowledge of the West was rather superficial. You were too much dazzled by the brightness of its externals. The spirit of modern age is freedom. How could you implant Western civilization in a slave country? It was impossible; it would be a body without soul. I was greatly impressed by your mental vigour, by your bold and critical mind. I think that was your strong point.

*Shibli*: If you can see beyond sartorial designs and table-manners then East is not lacking in the spirit of freedom. Look at our past.

*Sir Syed*: Every time you want to look at the past.

*Shibli*: That is because our roots are too deep in the past. If you forget your roots and try to change the top by just so many coatings of white paint you begin to look ugly. What is required is a happy blending of the old and the new.

*Vivekanand*: Maulana Shibli, the trouble with you was that in religion you appeared to be too much of a conformist. That must have put Syed Saheb off. It would put off any really critical mind.

*Sir Syed*: You very truly said once "Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking pot and our religion is "do not touch me, I am holy".

*Vivekanand*: For my part I would prefer to see every one a rank atheist rather than a superstitious fool; for the atheist is alive and we can make something of him. But if superstition enters, the brain is gone; the brain is softening; degradation has seized upon the life.....

(In a distant corner of the garden Dipti-Nazeer Ahmad is involved in an angry discussion with Badruddin Tayabji.

*Nazeer Ahmad*: What was your Congress after all; a congregation of frustrated men with neither rank nor wealth; mere wind-bags.

*Tayabji*: I am glad we were educated and we were not so ill-mannered and vile-tongued as the congregation at Lucknow.

*Nazeer Ahmad*: You wanted the Muslims to work with the Hindus; stuff and nonsense! Hindus and Muslims are two nations with their own faiths and traditions; their interests are irreconcilable; they could live together in peace and tranquility only under the aegis of the foreign rule. History has proved it.

*Tayabji*: History has proved nothing. I am sorry for what has happened but people like you are responsible for it.

*Nazeer Ahmad*: What were you anyway? Syed Ahmad Khan stood heads and shoulders above you. It would have done you much good if you had listened to him rather than your Hindu and Bangali friends.

*Tayabji*: It is no small consolation for me to recall that I preferred to keep the company of Bonnerji. Dada Bhai and Feroz Shah.

#### Scene IV

(The debate is resumed in the same room. Everyone is back in his seat as the chairman calls the meeting to order.)

*Chairman*: I will now call upon Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerji to speak.

*Bannerji*: Thank you Sir, for giving me this opportunity to speak. With your permission, I shall confine myself to the policies of the National Congress and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's attitude towards it. In 1884 I happened to visit Aligarh in connection with my campaign against the reduction of the minimum age for the I. C. S. examination to 19 and for holding these examinations in India. I also addressed a meeting in the Institute Hall of the College. Sir Syed was present in this meeting. He complimented me on my performance and signed the petition which we were sending to the English Parliament. I was greatly impressed then, by his liberal views and enlightened outlook. It was a big surprise for me therefore, when four years later, not only he opposed the National Congress but thought it fit to disagree with us on matters like the institution of representative government and holding of open competitions for services. Very soon, however, I discovered the real reason behind this unexpected performance. Principal Beck was not very happy with my visit to Aligarh. Soon after my departure he called the Zamindars and Taluqdars of Aligarh and enquired whether they would like to be ruled by "Dhoti-Band Bengali Baboos"? When they all replied in the negative, he asked them to impress this on Syed Saheb and stop him from supporting the Bangalis. Apparently this pressure bore fruit. In 1888, Sir Syed formed the Patriotic Association with the express purpose of opposing the National Congress. This Association consisted of wealthy Zamindars and Taluqdars and was supported by Benaras, Hyderabad and other princely states, a conglomeration of precisely those reactionary classes against whose ideology Sir Syed was supposed to be struggling. Under its auspices a number of meetings against the Congress were organised. With the help of his students Sir Syed collected signatures from Muslims on a statement expressing opposition to the Congress. I am told some of these signatures were obtained by telling the Muslims that it was a petition against the ban on cow slaughter. Principal Beck was the guiding spirit of this activity. The vehemence with which Sir Syed opposed us remains inexplicable to me, except as inspired. After all, we also stood for all that was best in Western civilization; enlightenment, freedom and democracy. Not by any stretch of imagination, could you call us narrow minded or communal. My esteemed friend Badruddin Tayabji is here and I leave it to him to describe the part played by Muslims in the Congress. I will only say that we were genuinely national in outlook. I do not deny that our range of outlook was limited to administrative matters, that was but natural for a beginning, but we were destined to become powerful exponents of the political ambitions of the people of India. The doors of the congress were open to every Indian. We did not talk of Hindus and Muslims; we talked of Indians. To claim that we constituted a threat to the interests of Muslims is a travesty of facts. Men like W. C. Bonnerji, Keshab Chandra Sen, Dada Bhai Nauroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Badruddin Tayabji were not spokesmen of sects and communities. They were secular leaders of the highest calibre. It surprised me and pained me to find that Sir Syed, who shared with us the zeal for enlightenment and progress, chose to speak in another language, a language which was different from the language

of Ram Mohan Roy, a language which became the prototype of the disastrous two-nation theory.

I submit sir, there is a difference between Ram Mohan Roy and Syed Ahmad Khan which the later's admirers are apt to ignore. Ram Mohan Roy had drunk deep from the streams of enlightenment at their very source. He had imbibed the spirit of Western culture; he went to its roots. He learnt English, Greek, Latin and Hebrew. According to Monier-Williams, he was the first "earnest-minded investigator of the science of comparative religion that the world has produced". He was also attracted by modern science and technical achievements of Western civilization. He was anxious to modernise education and take it out of the grips of the old scholasticism. He emphasized the need for education in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, astronomy and other useful sciences. And yet he was deeply versed in Indian thought. He was a scholar of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic and was an embodiment of the joint Hindu-Muslim culture, the finest heritage left to us by Akbar's India. Sir Syed's acquaintance with the West was limited and, in spite of his short trip to England, essentially second-hand. He made the mistake of equating Western civilization with the English Government and advocated subservience to it, a mistake which Ram Mohan Roy could never have committed. As a result of this he fell a prey to the British policies of "counterpoise and balance". The same Sir Syed who had said about Bengalees, "I admit that in our country only Bengalees are a community, of whom we can justly be proud. It is only because of them that the ideas of enlightenment, freedom and patriotism have spread in our country—I can truly say that they are the king of all Indian communities"—could now see only "Bengali Mischief" in the National Congress. The same Sir Syed who considered Hindus and Muslims to be "two eyes" of the country, who was prepared to be called a Hindu himself, came to the conclusion that if the English departed, these "two eyes" would devour each other. It was an unfortunate conclusion and although it is idle to speculate on what might have happened, I only wish he had not come to it.

*Mohsinul Mulk* : Excuse my interruption, but in the light of what you have said, Sir Syed would appear to be an unpatriotic and narrow-minded person—a puppet of the English. Now I have known Syed Saheb intimately and if I have known anything, I can say with confidence that he was a fine specimen of humanity. He was a selfless man and he dedicated his entire life to the welfare of his people. Others go abroad for their personal ends. This servant of the nation went to England with the specific purpose of observing a people who had achieved ascendancy over others, in their own homes so that he may spread their qualities in his own nation. He did not support the English in the hope of rewards and favours. Mr. Shakespeare wanted him to accept the "Taluqdari" of Chandpur for his services during the Mutiny. Syed Saheb refused. I vividly remember that night when I was staying with him. A meeting of the Education Committee was to take place next day. When I woke up in the night, I found his bed empty. I came out and saw Sir Syed walking restlessly to and fro. Tears were flowing from his eyes. When I enquired if something unfortunate had happened, his weeping increased and he replied, "what greater misfortune could befall us than the present state of Musalmans? Their condition is deteriorating day by day and I see no remedy.....". I cannot describe the impression that the greatness of this man

made on my heart that night. Truly he was a man who lived for the nation and died for it

*Bannerji* : If you want me to believe that Sir Syed did everything in perfect good faith, I agree most heartily. But we are discussing his work and not his motives.

*Shibli* : There is a difference between personal motives and political influences. To say that the English did exercise influence on his views is not to question his honesty.

*Akbar* : The road to hell is paved with the best intentions.

*Shibli* : No. That is putting in too strongly. I have said :

کوئی پوچھے گا تو کہہ دوں گا ہزاروں میں یہ بات  
روشن سید مرحوم خوشامد تو نہ تھی  
ہاں مگر یہ ہے کہ تحریک سیاسی کے خلاف  
ان کی جو بات تھی آورد تھی آمد تو نہ تھی

*Chairman* : I will now request Mr. Badruddin Tayabji to speak.

*Tayabji* : I was associated with the Congress from its very inception and I presided over its third session. On the 1st of December, 1886, W. C. Bonnerji wrote to me inviting me to preside over the next session of the Congress. One of the reasons for this was that a very conscious effort was being made to keep the Muslims away from the Congress. "The forces of the Government which under Lord Rippon had worked for unity in the people were now being employed to bring discord among them." In the following year, Lord Dufferin came to Bombay and met me. He was very "courteous and affable"; he talked about his friendship for the Muslims and gave me a large group photograph of himself and his family—but I was much afraid of these gentlemen who brought presents and I could see that he was a shrewd and an astute diplomat; he wanted to wean me away from the Congress. He had a long interview with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and I am inclined to think that the interview was not entirely unsuccessful, for very soon, Syed Ahmad Khan, who had been a great advocate of Hindu-Muslim Unity was "ready to quote chapter and verse of the Koran itself to prove that Hindus and Muslims could never be friends—Muslims could only be friends with the Christians".

However, until then, there had been no serious opposition to the National Congress from the Muslims. When in 1887 Amir Ali invited me to attend his proposed conference of Mohammedans, I wrote to him that "in regard to political questions at large, Mohammedan should make a common cause with their fellow countrymen of other creeds and persuasions. I firmly believed in what my friend Ferozshah Mehta said on another occasion, "However, good Parsees, Hindus and Mohammedans we might determine to be, there was a higher plane of life in which we ought to forget all our differences and distinctions of caste, of creed, and of religion. We come to work for the people, not as Hindus, Mohammedans and Parsees but as Soldiers in the Common cause, standing side by side, doing our best to further, according to our lights, the interests, the development and the welfare of the common country to which we belonged and which we loved."

Sir Syed's opposition to Congress was violent. He said that it was an insignificant body and no Muslim of any consequence was with it. According to him it represented neither the masses nor the aristocracy and nobility.

He called us, those Muslims who had joined the Congress, nonentities and hirelings who had sold themselves for money. It is said that only two Muslims attended the first Congress. This is immaterial. I may point out that the second Congress was attended by thirty-three Muslims and the third Congress of which I had the honour to be the President had some eighty Muslim delegates. The bulk of the Muslim press professed support and sympathy for the Congress. The editors of such important Muslim papers as the Crescent, the Sitara-e Hind, the Miratul Hind, the Rozana Akhbar, the Rais and Rayasat and the Ahmadi were themselves delegates to the Congress in 1887. There were only two important Mohammedan papers which opposed the Congress, the Aligarh Observer and the Muslim Herald of Madras. Significantly enough both of these were edited by Europeans. What is even more important, however, is the fact that the Congress did not think in terms of Hindus and Muslims.

As regards the allegation that the National Congress did not represent the aristocracy and the nobility, one had only to look around at the Congress. You could not find a better representation of aristocracy, not merely of birth and wealth but also of intellect.

Soon after the Congress Session I wrote to Sir Syed Ahmed inviting him to discuss with me his differences with the Congress and to try to resolve them. I sent similar communications to other Muslim leaders who had kept aloof from the Congress. When these letters were written, I was not aware of the fact that on 28th of December Sir Syed had delivered a speech in Lucknow on the attitude, "the Musalaman community ought to assume towards the Government" and towards what, he called, "Bengali movement". He referred to Congress as 'stupid agitation', to the discussion at the Congress session as "بک بک" and "جھک جھک"; he described the Bengalees as a people "who at the sight of a table knife would crawl under the chair" and said "if any of you—men of good position, to whom God has given sentiments of honour—if you accept that the country should groan under the yoke of Bengalee rule, and its people lick Bengalee shoes, then, in the name of God, jump into the train, sit down and set off to Madras". He spoke of the reward which would come if the Muslims followed his advice: "You, my brothers, Pathans, Syeds, Hashimites and Koraisis whose blood smells of the blood of Abraham will appear in glittering uniforms as colonels and majors in the army". Alternatively, he threatened them with "the thrusts of the British bayonets or licking the Bengalee shoes". This glorious picture of themselves in glittering uniforms seems to have electrified the Lucknow audiences and they were completely won over by Sir Syed. This speech was highly acclaimed by the European press. 'The Times of India' wrote an editorial on this 'slashing address' and described it as 'vigorous, outspoken and eloquent'. Incidentally, Sir Syed was knighted three days after this performance.

On 22nd December 1887, an anonymous letter, signed as "an Indian Mohammedan" appeared in the London Times which followed the same line of argument as Sir Syed's Lucknow speech. It said that "the Indian National Congress was got up by a handfull of Bengalee, and Parsee gentlemen".....that the Calcutta Mohammedans had refused to send delegate because "they had perfect faith in the Government of India and "did not wish to force" its hands. It further declared that the Congress was essentially a Hindu Congress and the Mohammedans will have nothing to do

with it. It was clear that the anonymous writer was a person of authority and the letter was inspired. Sir Syed's Lucknow speech and his violent opposition to Congress created bitterness and resentment in a wide circle of Indians. Allan Octavian Hume wrote to me describing the speech as an "outrageous speech in the worst possible taste, in addition to all its other sins" and asked me to give an appropriate answer. Meanwhile, Sir Syed had replied to my earlier communication. He said that "India did not consist of one nation and to have a National Congress was an impossibility—I object to every Congress in any shape or form whatever, which regards India as one nation, on account of its being based on wrong principles". I was very reluctant to enter into any kind of personal controversy and again wrote to Sir Syed inviting him to resolve our differences, to tell me if I could do anything to make the Congress acceptable to him. I did not receive any reply. In the light of these events, I am constrained to think that his opposition to Congress was not due so much to conviction as to a desire to stand well with the Government.

*Hali*: Mr. Chairman, I have followed this discussion, specially the discourse by my learned friend Mulana Shibli, very attentively. My friends here have said a few things which may appear to be harsh; some of their arguments have been weighty and convincing. I, for one, welcome all this. It is always profitable to look back, to indulge in a bit of introspection. I shall, however, venture to make one request. Let us not pass judgements in the light of all that has happened afterwards. It is very easy to be wise after the event. But a man who acts, has to decide in time. He is forced to take sides on many questions. He does not enjoy the freedom of an academic historian to look at things in detachment, from a distance in time and to defer decisions if he so pleases. He is in it. Let us put ourselves in the position of such a man before we judge him.

Not even the worst opponent of Syed Ahmad Khan will deny that he was actuated by the best and the sublimest of all the motives, the desire to serve his people. He possessed the most valuable of personal qualities, determination and courage of conviction. If his temperament had a trait of intolerance and despotism—and I am quite willing to concede that his treatment of Maulvi Sameeullah Khan or his rather strong language against the Congress were unwarranted—it should not be overlooked that this weakness followed from a basic earnestness in him, a desire to remove every impediment in the way of progress.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a progressive to the core; politically, ideologically and socially. He firmly believed in doing away with all that was outmoded and decadent and in wholeheartedly accepting the new and the growing. Politics was not his province. Essentially he was a reformer and an educator. I do not imply that his political policies can be excused on this account. They shall have to bear the brunt of critical examination.

Syed Ahmad Khan should be judged by what was his main concern, that, is social and educational reform.

Now it is true that he opposed the National Congress with great vehemence. Let us see what were his reasons. Sir Syed's political outlook had matured at a time when the superiority of the English and their economic, social and political system was the most irrefutable reality. He was as keenly aware of the political and military strength of the English as of their social and

cultural achievements. We cannot seriously question his wisdom if he came to believe that the British power was invincible and their rule had come to stay. It was this basic understanding which affected all his later decisions. He used to say "we have to live as a subject people and hence those qualities which are needed in independent and ruling nations can be of no use to us". He also believed in that dictum of our Prophet "اعمالکم عمالکم". He was convinced that every country gets as good a government as it deserves. In view of this he was opposed to any kind of agitational activity and believed in securing our right by proving ourselves worthy of it. Who could imagine that the powerful British Empire would not last even two hundred years. The National Congress itself did not have this vision. Its outlook was limited to purely administrative matters. In such a situation when a full-fledged national movement had not yet come into existence, when the ideas of national unity and political freedom had not crystallised, we cannot seriously accuse Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of having betrayed the national struggle. True, he kept the Muslims away from the Congress but it did not prevent the Muslims, in the later days when the national movement really assumed the character of a mass struggle, from joining hands with their Hindu brothers. In fact the very elements among the Muslims, who has imbibed the real spirit of Sir Syed's teachings most, were in the fore-front of Khilafat. In those stormy days, Maulana Mohammad Ali himself had said about Sir Syed.

سکھایا تھا تمہیں نے قوم کو یہ شور و شر سارا

جو اس کی انہما ہم ہیں تو اس کی ابتدا تم ہو

After all we should not forget that Aligarh movement also produced men like Mohammad Ali and Hasrat Mohani.

*Akbar:* Unfortunately both of them had to leave Aligarh.

*Hali:* That is a different matter. It only shows that the people who succeeded Sir Syed were most unworthy of him.

*Dr. Ziauddin:* You mean me?

*Hali:* I do not mean you alone but the whole lot of you who made Aligarh a home of smugness, careerism and reaction. You inherited Sir Syed's mantle with out a touch of his spirit. Really, we cannot blame Sir Syed for your sins.

Sir Syed was not a communalist. It is true he concerned himself mainly with the education and upliftment of the Muslim community. But he was not against other communities. In his early days the Hindu-Muslim problem did not exist "and to be interested in the welfare of one community, as Sir Syed was, did not imply any antagonism to the other one." The scientific society which he founded in Ghazipur was not a communal group. I must however confess that communalism did become a factor in politics during the later part of his life and unfortunately Sir Syed did not realise that the English were purposely introducing and fostering this feeling.

Sir Syed was not opposed to democratic practices like elections to legislative assemblies or open competitions for public services in principle. He only felt that, in a country like India where the educational progress had been very uneven among different sections, institution of elections and open competitions would work to the disadvantage of backward sections. Thus not only Muslims but other communities

like Jats and Rajputs would be handicapped against Bengalees. Now, he may have been right or wrong in his appraisal but you must grant that his opposition was not unprincipled nor did it proceed from any ill-will towards other communities. It merely resulted from his anxiety to safeguard the interests of the relatively backward Muslim community.

When Sir Syed emphasised the interest of Muslims and used the words 'Muslim Nation' and 'Hindu Nation' neither a mass national movement nor a national consciousness existed. The idea of Indian Nationhood was just beginning to grow. The reactionary two-nation theory of the Muslim League came much later and the days of Khilafat had intervened in between. Sir Syed cannot be held responsible for it. I remember an enlightened Muslim friend had once said "when modern education began in India Muslims kept away from it; now they are reaping the consequences. In the same way Syed Ahmad Khan is trying to keep them away from the Congress. Who knows they will be sorry for this afterwards". Unfortunately these fears have come true but how could Syed Ahmad Khan foresee all this?

Syed Ahmad Khan's greatest contribution was towards the enlightenment and education of his people. I will not dwell on this aspect because it is too well known to all. He proclaimed the supremacy of reason, science and progress. He fought against superstition and ignorance with a zeal that few have equalled. Maulana Shibli has criticised Sir Syed's attempt to make religion compatible with science and progress. Now his very approach is incorrect. It is very easy to say that Sir Syed did not believe in Jinnat, or the physical reality of Meraj (معراج) and so on. But these are matters of detail. If you get bogged down in these you lose sight of his basic contribution. He established universal standards for the truth of all religions, the standards of conformity to natural truth and scientific fact. First of all you have to decide whether his basic contention is correct or not, only then we can go into questions of detail; otherwise you lose sight of the essence. Essentially his outlook was liberal, rational and scientific. Religion, if it has to live and survive, will have to be made compatible with such an outlook.

Some of you have also pointed out the limitations of his educational policy. I confess that Aligarh College as it subsequently developed suffered from grave shortcomings. Sir Syed's own ideas of 'high education' were never so narrow and limited. He did not only think in terms of securing a few jobs for Muslims. He visualised a nation of sea-farers, traders and industrialists who would spread far and wide in the world and compete with the modern nations in all walks of life. He dreamed of a day when his people would equal others in arts, literature and sciences. Unfortunately his successors lost this vision and reduced the university to a training ground for clerks and bureaucrats. I may point out that recently things have been changing. The leadership of Aligarh has passed into new hands and it may be noted that Zakir Husain Khan who may be called the architect of a new Aligarh, himself claims direct intellectual descent from Syed Saheb. He has been trying to restore, to the Aligarh movement, the vision of its founder.

I have heard that once an English officer, on seeing the names of hundreds of Muslims written on the walls of the College, remarked "it appears that all the Musalmans have surrounded this college arm-in-arm to protect it from the enemies". Unfortunately this description later came to epitomise an unsavoury reality. The college became an island in a hostile ocean. It was isolated from the country.

and its people and developed a world of its own, which was often quite different from the world of reality. Such isolation is disastrous for any academic institution and leads to intellectual decay. I am sure Sir Syed would have been the first to fight against this isolation and I am happy that the new Aligarh is trying to break it.

Last but not the least is Sir Syed's contribution to Urdu language and literature. In the hands of Sir Syed and his co-workers Urdu conquered unscathed heights. It developed a literature which was healthy and vigorous; it was natural simple and effective, and possessed an acute consciousness of life and its demands. Sir Syed's own writings apart, the novels of Nazeer Ahmad, the literary works of Chiragh Ali, Zakaullah, Viqarul Mulk and Syed Ali Bilgrami and, if I may be permitted to say so, my own humble contribution to poetry and literary criticism, were directly inspired by Syed Ahmad Khan and his movement. Even if Sir Syed had done no thing else his contribution to Urdu alone would be enough to make his name immortal.

Above all Sir Syed was a practical man. It is very easy to criticise but difficult to practice what you preach. Sir Syed may have made mistakes but what he achieved, more than offset these mistakes. He could justly say to all of us:

مشکلے دارم و دانشمند مجالس ہاں درس  
کارفرمایاں چوں خون کار کتر می کوشن

[Hali sits down.]

The Chairman thanks the participants and adjourns the meeting.]

## The New Ministry Intalled

*Role of Aligarh Emphasized—Union Celebrates Golden Jubilee.*

The Installation Ceremony of the new ministry of the M. U. S. Union was held on the 28th October at 7 P.M. in the Strachey Hall. Col. B. H. Zaidi, the Patron, presided. Mr. Ziaul Hasan Hashmi, the outgoing president, congratulated the new ministry and expressed his hopes in them to enhance the achievements which the Union has recorded in his term of office.

Syed Asif Ali, the incoming president, congratulated the opposite camp for the peaceful atmosphere during the election. He appealed to apply the maxims of Sir Syed into the present situation and thereby to make Aligarh a mediator between India and the Muslim world. He said that Union, with all its multifarious activities, is the centre of our academic life and the materialisation of the latent potentialities and exploration of all its hidden possibilities lie with the students.

Shah Abdul Qayyum, the elected Hony. Secretary, outlined the programme of the golden jubilee celebrations which the Union is going to hold on December 6, 7 and 8. He appealed the students for their fullest cooperation and active participation to make it a grand success.

Mr. Jafar Mehdi Taban, the defeated presidential candidate, in his emotional and slashing speech discordantly sharp on occasion, disliked the idea of construction and cultural activities.

The Patron emphasized the great responsibility of the students in deciding whether they have to become great persons and political stars or to remain insignificant figures in this country. This authentic choice implies so much of caution and diligence. Aligarh has to fulfill great promises of free India.

The function, amidst vain shoutings of "chhutti", came to a close at 8-20 p.m.

## U. N. Day in Girls College

The U. N. Day, on 24th October, was observed in Girls' College in an impressive function in the new building of the College. Prof. Habib inaugurated the function and a brief outline of the objectives and progress of the world organization was read out.

The mock session of U. N. O. was also organized. The show was very impressive and was of fairly high standard. The delegates of the leading member nations of U. N., attired in their national dress, were engaged in a heated discussion of world wide importance, keeping in view all the pros and cons of Power Politics. Incidentally the last item on the agenda, "That the women should replace men in the working of the government", was overwhelmingly passed.

An special exhibition on the working of U. N. O. was also arranged.

The College authorities deserve congratulation on such an impressive function.

## EPILOGUE

The stature of a person is to be gauged not merely by what he has been able to achieve but also by what he aimed to achieve. The moral side of an individual is no subordinate element. When talking of great men and the achievement of great aims by them we should not forget the subjective element in them. Their ideals and impulses, the desires and cravings that kindled their soul have, as Hegel said, "an infinite right to be consulted". Syed Ahmad Khan lit the torch of learning in the dark and cold night of ignorance. He challenged the world of superstition and falsehood. He succeeded in creating a zeal for reform and an enthusiasm for progress which was the Aligarh movement. However, inspite of the best intentions of its founder the movement had its limitations and shortcomings. Sir Syed's activities were varied and likewise his movement had many sides both positive and negative.

With the ebb and flow of time these different aspects kept changing in their relative significance. Often the zeal for modern civilization was taken to mean a superficial imitation of the English, the enthusiasm for progress was replaced by a hankering after jobs. At such times there were some who took their light directly from the founder. They discriminated what was essential and permanent in the movement from that which was incidental and temporary. Mohammad Ali, Hasrat Mohani and Zakir Husain did not hesitate to revolt when they found the atmosphere stifling. Today, when the Aligarh movement has entered a new phase it needs, more than ever, a revival of the spirit of its founder, the spirit of rational thought and critical judgement.

## V. M. Hall Union Election

With less pandemonium and more calmness, as apposed to previous years, the annual election of V. M. Hall Union was held on the 27th October. M. Farooq Azam, rivalled by M. Omair, led by 61 votes in the presidential election. S. Md. Hasan, candidate for Hony. Secretariship, outclassed his opponents. The votes polled in his favour, outnumbered those of his nearest rival by 61. Nabiullah Khan, the Librarian-elect, could get 119 votes in the four-corner fight. Members of the cabinet are Messers. Rais Shah and Fida Asghar (Marris), M. Iqbal Hashim and A. Wadood (Muzammil) Ghulam Haider and M. Ajmal (Nasrullah), and Abdullah Haroon and M. Haneef (Jubilee).

### Cricket :

## St. Stephen's Vs. Aligarh

*Aligarh registers dramatic win*

A suspense-packed match, which drew a large crowd, came to a dramatic close, with a win for Aligarh. The St. Stephens' gave a nice demonstration of their bowling and batting strength, but for equally good show from the home side, they failed to clinch the issue in their favour.

After having won the toss the home side decided to bat. Yashpal, the Delhi University Captain, baffled the batsmen by controlled length and swing. Consequently wicket fell in quick succession. The dull monotony was, however, enlivened by Israeli, whose two consecutive fours and a beautiful six drew repeated applause.

(Continued on Page 2)