



# **SPEECH OF SIR SYED AHMED KHAN AT MEERUT [1888]**

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# Sir Syed Ahmed Khan [ 1817-1898 ]

*Syed Ahmed Khan*

- **Nationality: Indian.**
- **Notable Work: The Mohammadan Commentary on the holy Quran.**
- **Institution: East India Company, Indian Judicial Branch, Aligarh Muslim University, Punjab University, Government College University.**
- **Notable Ideas: Muslim adoption of Western ideas.**

# The venue of the distinguished Speech

- **Location: Meerut, UP, India.**
  - Hosted by: Mahomedans of Meerut.
  - **16<sup>th</sup> of March, 1888**



- First Lecture at 8 A.M in the durbar tent of the Meerut fair.
- Duration of the Lecture: 1:20 minutes.( on the condition of Mahomedans and to the need of education.)
- The Second Lecture was on politics in the evening.
- Today's presentation is on his second Lecture on Politics.

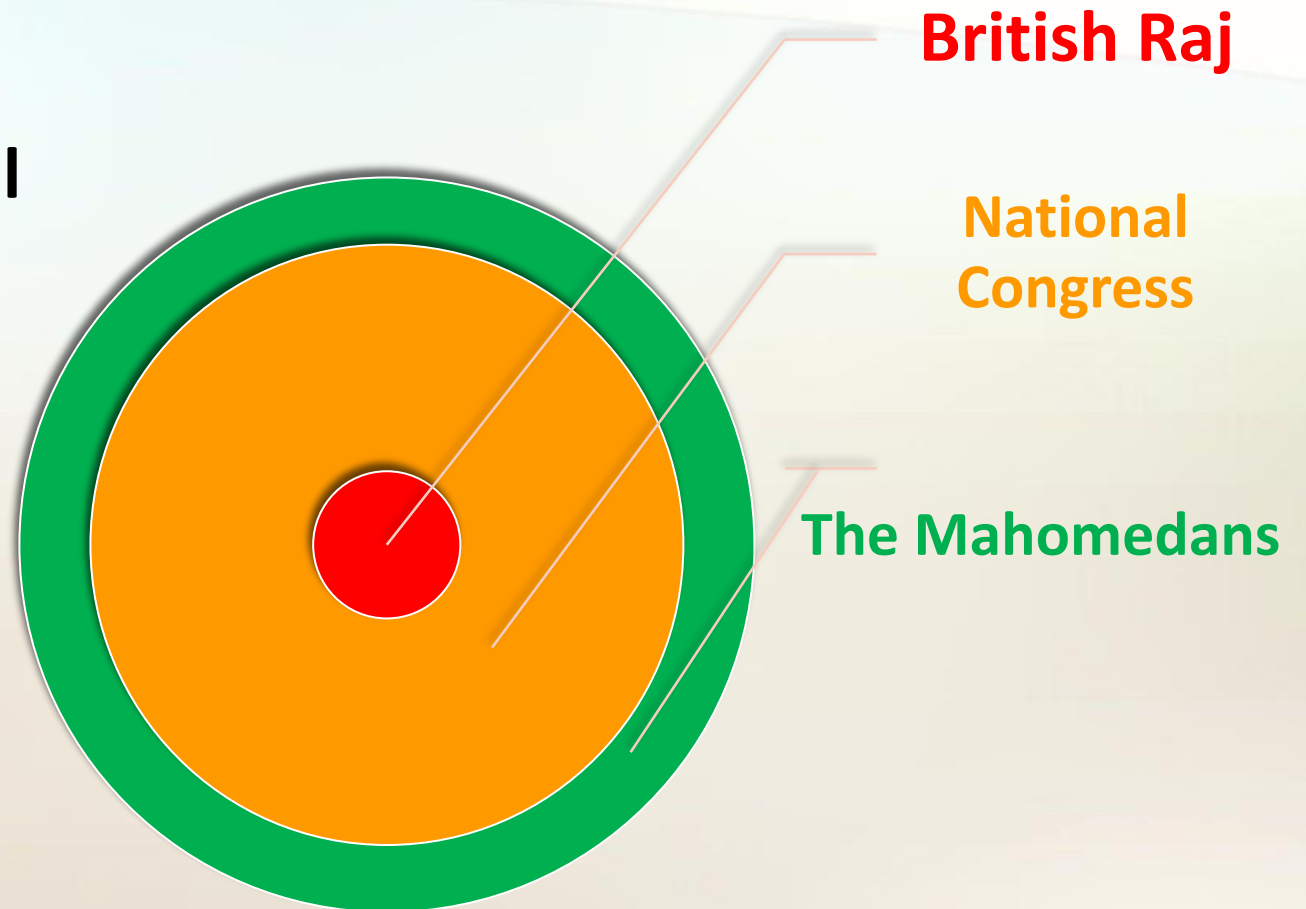
# To understand the speech of Sir Syed Ahmed, Let us clarify some terms used in this speech by him.

- **“National Congress”**: A political assembly mostly influenced by Bengali Hindus. ( Now it is Indian National Congress, INC)
- **“We and our nation”**: We = All the Muslims of India, our nation = the Muslim nationhood as a united community.
- **“My nation”**: My nation = The larger Muslim community.
- **The Mahomedans**: It means simply a follower of Mohammad. (**Oxford English Dictionary**.) Here, Mahomedans is a conscious group among the Muslims of India who had been struggling for equal rights and opportunities for Muslims in British India. ( My views).

[Source: Speech No: 01]

# Let us assume the following situation to understand the speech of Sir Syed Ahmed.

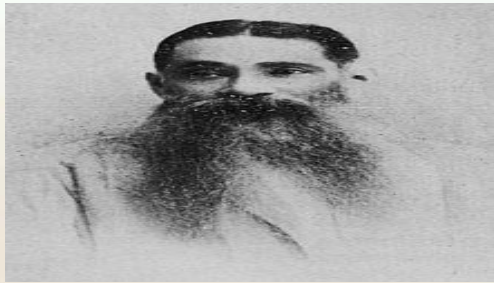
- **British Raj- The Colonial power in India.**
- **National Congress**
- **The Mahomedans**



# Speech- Part: 01



- **Allan Octavian Hume. He was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress.**



- **Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee was an Indian barrister and was the first president of Indian National Congress.**

- **Bengalis – National Congress.**
- **Bengalis had education and ability to form a political assembly.**
- **In this case, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had no objection of their political formation, especially by the Bengali Hindus.**
- **His object was to the concern that the Bengalis have made a most unfair and unwarrantable inference to his nation.**
- **His aim was to make his nation understand what would befall his nation from joining in the opinions of the Bengalis.**

# Speech-Part:02

- **The unfair interference**
  - National Congress brought pressure to bear on Mahomedans to make them join the Congress.
  - They deceived the people of England ( the Queen) showing the Mahomedans' false representation in the National Congress.
- **False impression**
  - The Mahomedans of those provinces agree with their opinions [ opinions of National Congress.]
  - Babus of Bengal, the Hindus of those Provinces and the English and Eurasian inhabitants of India claimed the Mahomedans' participation in National Congress.

# Speech- Part: 03



- **Badruddin Tyabji** was the first Muslim president of Indian National congress.
- He was the third President of Indian National Congress and he was appointed at Madras Congress Conference in 1887.
- Sir Syed Ahmed again criticized the Congress saying that they pressed men by weight of authority.
- He confidently asserted that my nation can not take part in the national Congress.
- Those who attended in it have been induced to go either by pressure, by folly, or by love of notoriety, or by poverty.
- He basically pointed out the participation of Badruddin Tyabji in the National Congress as false representation of the Mahomedans of India.

# Speech- Part:04



**There were two letter exchange between Khan and Tyabji where Badruddin Tyabji asked Khan to know which are opposed to the interests of Mahomedans, in order that he may exclude them from discussion. [ Because he was the president of Congress then.]**

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan claimed that Tyabji had made a mistake by joining the National Congress.
- Tyabji's opinion is different from ours [ The Muslims]
- He cited that no Mahomedan of Madras joined in the National Congress conference. [ source: Mirza Ismail Khan.]
- In a word , he emphasized that National Congress would not do represent them.

# Speech- Part:05

- **He stressed on notion that the National Congress is not useful for both Hindu and Muslim.**
- **He clarifies two things**
- **(i) Hindu fellow-countrymen think that as both they themselves and the Bengalis are Hindus, they have nothing to fear from the growth of their influence.**
- **(ii) Some Hindus think that by joining the Congress and by increasing the power of the Hindus, they will perhaps be able to suppress those Mahomedan religious rites which are opposed to their own.**
- **He suggested that mutual friendship and affection should be priorities rather than any pressure or force.**

# Speech- Part:06

- He advised to those Hindus whose condition be similar to that of the Mahomedans, then they ought to continue to cultivate friendship with us.
- He sought for greater alliance.
- He pointed out that there are equal proportion of Mahomedans and Hindus in Bengal. But the Mahomedans are not conscious about the movement of National Congress, they did not take part with them.
- He made a charge against National Congress saying that their initiatives and proposals might disturb the peace in Bengal because of the deprivation policy of National Congress against the Mahomedans.

# Speech- Part:07

- **Who would be rulers of India after leaving the whole English Army, taking with them all their cannon and their splendid weapons and everything?**
- **Sir Syed Ahmed did not deny the capability of the Mahomedans but he wanted to assure them with full opportunity and equality that is why he posed this question.**
- **Is it possible that the Mahomedans and the Hindus could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power?**
- **He strongly believed that one nation might conquer the other and in that case rivers of blood might flow from their frontier of north to the extreme end of Bengal.**
- **[ He saw some bloody collision between Hindu and Muslim in the past years.]**

# Speech-part:08 [ He condemned the so called Peace Theory set by the National Congress.



- The French, the German, the Portuguese, or the Russians
- They may attack in the absence of British.
- [ Hindus, Muslim,
- Pathans, Mahomedans ]

- The flag of United Kingdom.
- In case of foreign attacks after leaving the British, no one might come forward to guard the independence of India. Then India would be again under foreign rules.
- So, the presence of British should be preferable to set up peace in India.

# Speech-part:09 [ He criticized the notion of representative government.]



- Any foreign nation has not given representative government to the conquered people.
- “Abandon the rule of the country and put it in our hands.”



- **Abdur Rahman Khan**
- **When rulers and ruled are one nation, representative government is possible.**

# Speech-part:10 & 11 [ Question on Budget]

- **“Give us power to vote on the Budget. Whatever expenses we may grant shall be granted, whatever expenses we do not grant shall not be granted.”**
- **It is only possible when the rulers and the ruled must be of the same nation.**
- **The right to give an opinion on the budget depends also on another principal, which is this: that in a country in which the people accept the responsibility for all the expenses of the government, and ready with their lives and poverty to discharge it.**
- **These are conditions under which people have a right to decide matters about the budget.**

# Speech-part:12 [ The right to say in Budget



- **The Russian Army**
- **If the Russian army attacks British India, the Government itself has to decide the expenditure on it.**



**A Zamindar Palace in West Bengal**

**The Zamindars will never agree to pay extra revenue for this expenditure.  
So, what right have they to interfere in Budget?**

# Speech-part:13 [ Budget = Economy]



- **The queen of U.K, Victoria.**
- **Government practices economy as far as possible.**
- **Government is so strongly miserly that it will not uselessly give anyone a single pice.**



**As the generosity of the former Emperors.**

**The king of latter times presented poets and authors with estates of rupees.**

# Speech-part:14 [ The Budget in Defense.]

- **When the expenses have grown so much, the wonder is how on earth Government manages to carry on its business on the small tax which it raises.**
- **He basically challenges the arguments of increasing high taxation against the government in Budget.**
- **The criticized the National Congress claim the right to decide the matters about Budget.**

# Speech-part:15 [English Government is necessary]

- **If British Government is necessary for India, then the British might appoint their own European officers because anyone always keep in truth on his own nation.**
- **They might have a few secrets which they don't want to disclose before others.**
- **He said that one thing to claim it as right, and another for government, believing us to be faithful and worthy of confidence, to give us the posts.**

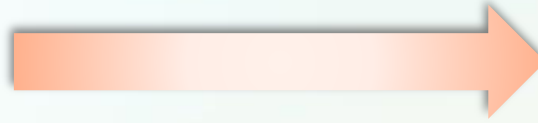
# Speech-part:16 [ **Bengalis Claims to scale a height to which it is beyond their powers to attain and ground reality.**]

- In the imperial Council thousands of matters of foreign policy and States secrets are discussed.
- The Bengalis and the National Congress are ignorant of the method by which a foreign race can maintain its rule over other races.

# Speech-part:17 [ Call for revitalizing the Muslims glorification to the Mahomedans.]



**Jahangir**



**Bahadur Shah Zafar**

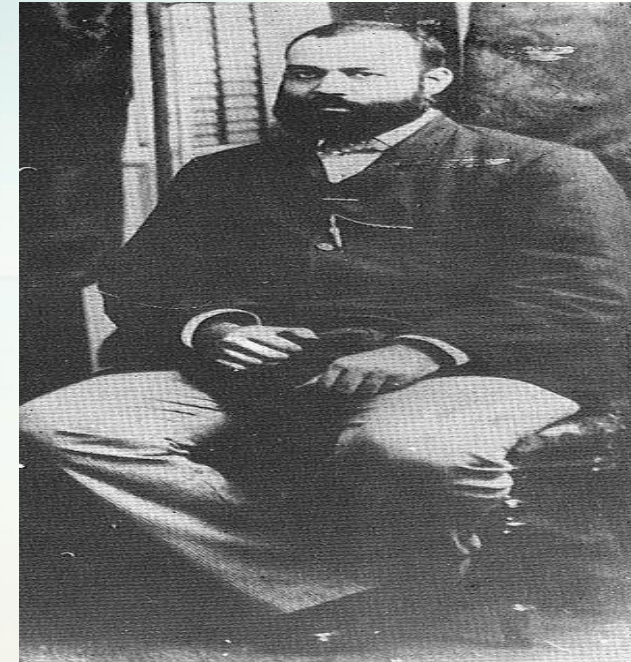
Muslim Rule in India 712-1857

# Speech-part:18 [ Muslim in Administrative position]



Lord William Bentinck

- It was Lord William Bentinck who appointed the native Indian in honorable posts like Munsif, Subordinate Judge, and Deputy Collector, and Calcutta high court Judge as equal English judge.
- As far as you have made yourselves worthy of the confidence of Government, to that extent you have received high position.



- Justice Syed Mahmood (also spelled Sayyid Mahmud) (24 May 1850 – 8 May 1903)
- First Muslim Judge in India in Allahabad High Court.

# Speech-part:19 [ **Advices towards Mahomedans to follow the Holy QURAN** ]

- **The Bengali Politics is not useful for the Mussalmans.**
- **Hindus from various States were leaving Mahomedans and joining the Bengalis.**
- **He urged to the Muslim to be united on the basis of Muslim Brotherhood as guided by the Holy Quran.**
- **Then they will be able to get rid of from their miserable condition.**

**Speech-part:20 [ He asked Muslim to make friendship with British so that Bengalis' plan to grasp the power would not be successful.**

- **He warned the Mahomedans saying not to join with Bengalis for anti-British movement.**
- **He assured the Mahomedans that remain faithful to the English Government does not mean to incline towards their religion.**
- **Basically, he was concern to the subjugation of Muslim under Bengali Hindus.**
- **He would think that British rule is better than the rule of Hindus.**

# Speech-part:21 [ He tried to convince the Mahomedans regarding the British Government]



Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice

**10 December 1888 – 11 October 1894**

**“There is no Government with which everybody is satisfied.”**



- **Abdul Hamid II**
- **Reign: 31 August 1876 – 27 April 1909**
- **He was the 34th Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and the last Sultan to exert effective control over the fracturing state.**

## **Speech-part:22 [ He urged the Mahomedans to keep trust on British Government.]**

- **He assured them that he would himself fight on their behalf for legitimate objects.**
- **“God had made them our rulers. This is the will of God. We should be content with the will of God.**
- **Do not bring false accusations against them and give birth to enmity.”**

**Speech-Last part. [He finally urges to the Mahomedans that they should hold themselves aloof from this political uproar, and reflect on their condition- that they are behindhand in education and are deficient in wealth.]**

- **He advised them to engage themselves in trade and commerce so that they could get better livelihood.**
- **To take proper education in order to get high positions.**
- **His final warning was that “ remember that Government will keep a very sharp eye on you because you are very quarrelsome, very brave, great soldiers and great fighters.**

# Thank you

For Staying with  
me in this  
presentation.

17.04.2020



