

Q - Analyze the factors responsible for degeneration of Muslim society in 18th century. (Syeda Fizza Shoaib Zaidi)

INTRODUCTION

The Muslims ruled over sub-continent for centuries. The era that began with Muhammad bin Qasim in 712 AD saw many ups and downs of Muslim rulers in sub-continent. From all dynasties of Delhi-sultanate to Mughal empire, the entire sub-continent was controlled and looked after by solely Muslims.

However, a gradually decreasing curve was observed for the Muslim rule after the demise of sixth Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb and arrival of East India company in sub-continent. At the same time, rise of rival powers in the entire region played important role in degenerating the long-lasting Muslim rule over sub-continent.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Era of Aurangzeb:

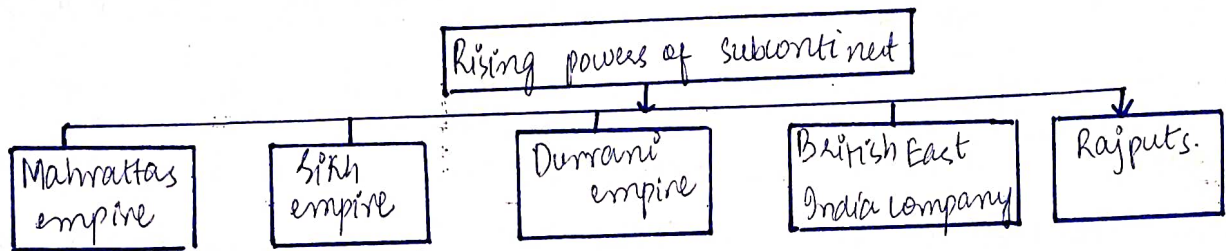
Aurangzeb Alamgir is considered as the last influential and powerful Mughal emperor who laid solid foundation of Islamic culture and promoted Muslim society in sub-continent. However, his rigid and orthodox policies were not welcomed by Hindus and other powers of subcontinent. But due to his power and competence, no rival forces could stand against his orders.

Rise of Rival Powers in Indo Subcontinent

After Aurangzeb's death, the Muslim power started disintegrating. The incompetent successors of the emperor and weak governing system of Mughal empire could not resist the rival powers against them.

The most influential and threatening power at that time was the **Marhattas empire** who under the leadership of their founder Shivaji gave tough time to Mughal empire.

The flow chart below illustrates a comprehensive detail of the most prominent and influential rising powers against Mughals in subcontinent.



It is true that Maratha and Sikh leaders raised their banner of revolt against Aurangzeb who in order to organize his government on Islamic lines, was acting against their interests.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar's observation on the role of Shivaji, the Maratha leader, is revealing:

"Shivaji has shown that the tree of Hinduism is not really dead, that it can rise from beneath the seemingly crushing load of centuries of political bondage, ..."

Role of rising powers in downfall of Mughal empire

Below is the table illustrating the different scenarios and roles of various rising powers in subcontinent and how they affected the Mughal empire.

Rising Power	Geographical locations	Role
Maratha	central India, Deccan plateau, northwestern regions of subcontinent.	They weakened the Mughal empire by challenging its authority and expanding their own empire through successful military campaigns. They disrupted the Mughal economy by imposing taxes and

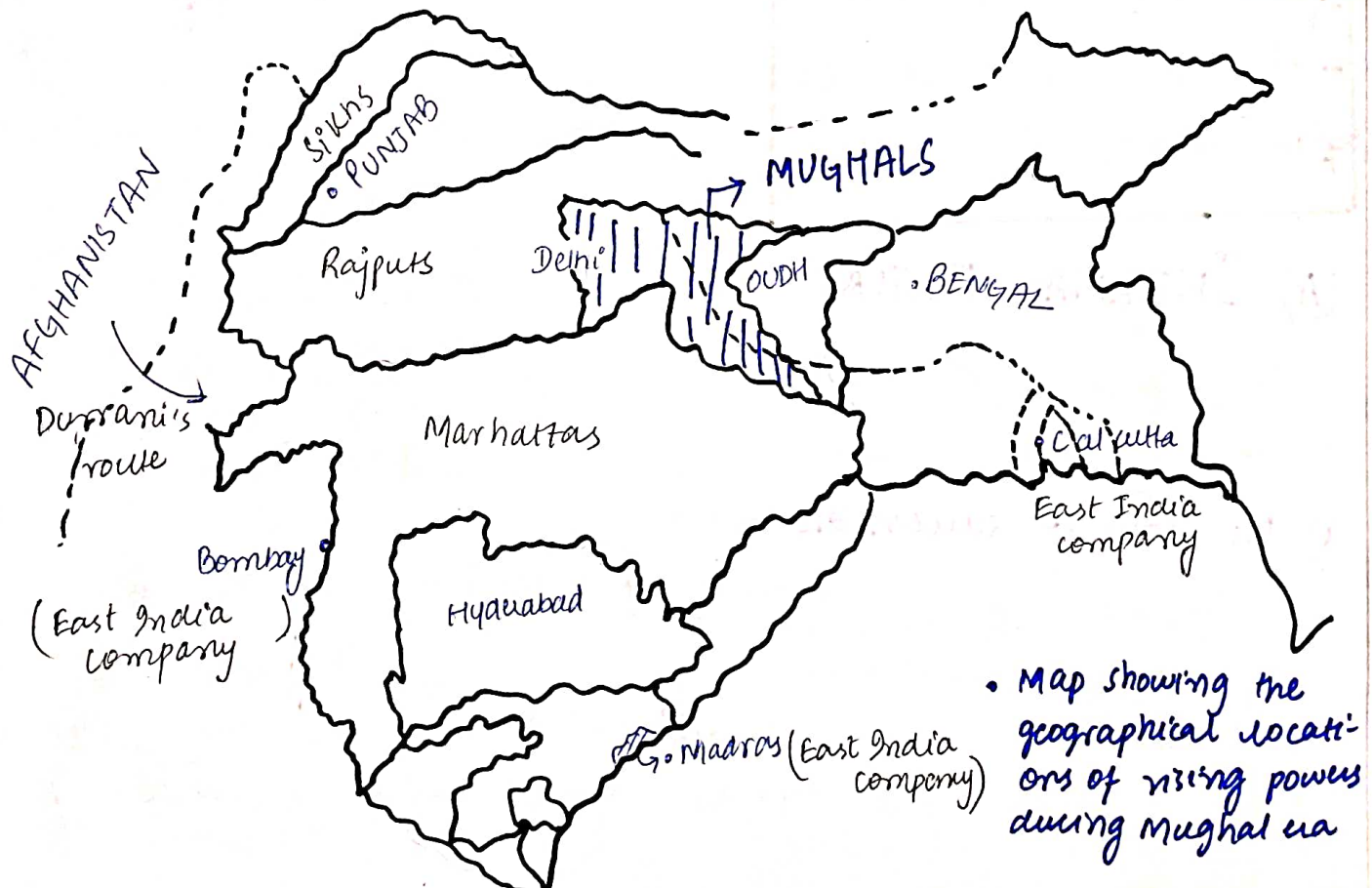
Plundering territories. Constant conflict b/w two further depleted resources and military power lead to Mughal empire collapse.

Sikh empire	Northwestern regions (particularly Punjab).	They gradually expanded territory against Mughals and other regional powers, ultimately controlling much of present-day Pakistan and northern India. Sikhs also disrupted Mughal trade and communication routes, further weakening the Mughal economy.
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Durrani empire	Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan.	Founded by Ahmad Shah Durrani → The empire played a vital role in demolishing the Marhatta empire severely and paved way for British control over entire subcontinent later on; that was not very easy in presence of Marhattas.
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British East India Company	Bengal, Bombay & Madras.	Initially started with the occupation of ports and later gradually gained control over entire subcontinent through alliances, military conquests and wars.
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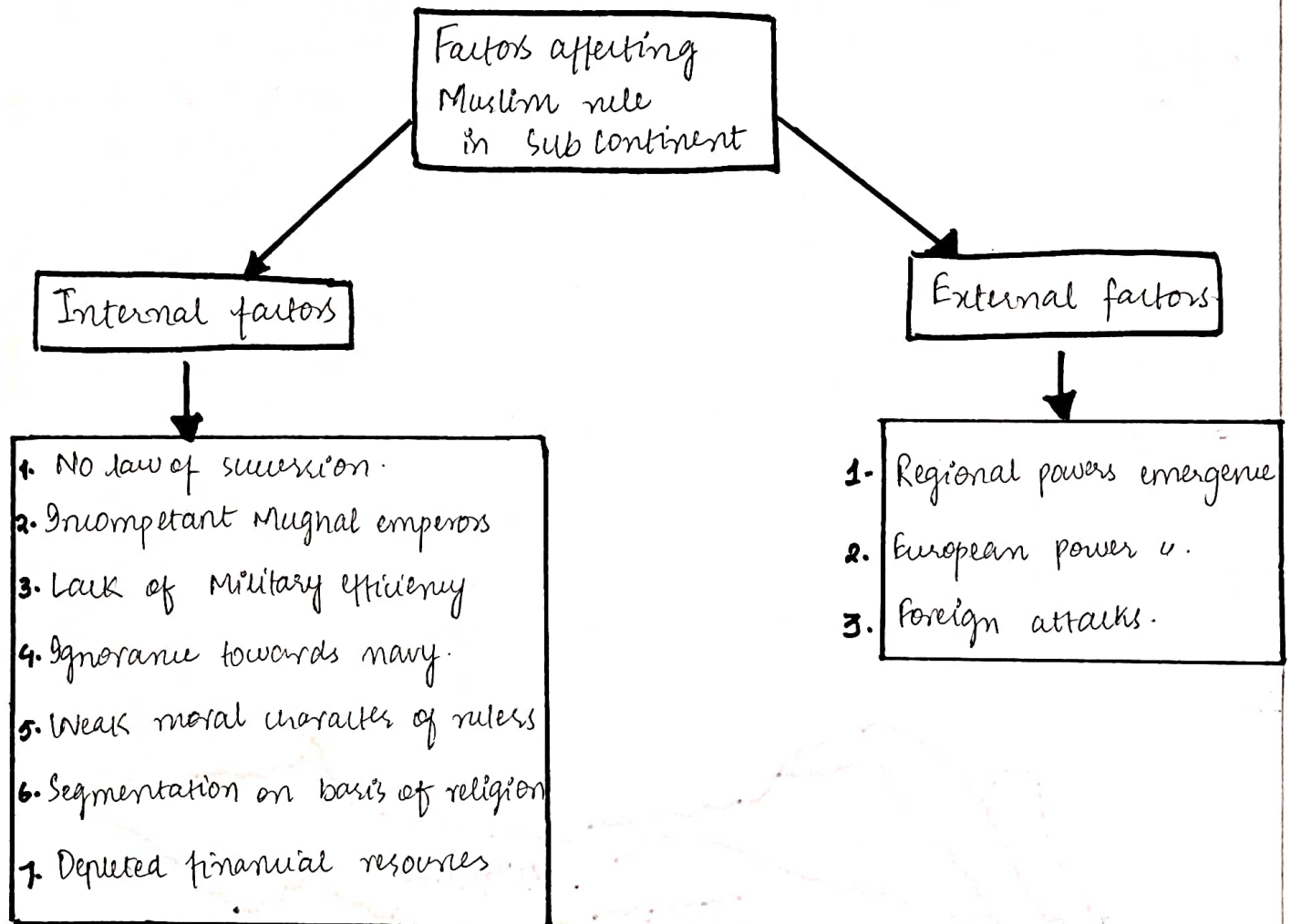
Rajputs	Northern & western region of India (Rajasthan).	The Rajputs, who were allied with Mughals, begin to resist Mughal rule and reclaim their territories, thereby weakening them over northern & western India.
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FACTORS AFFECTING THE DOWNFALL OF MUGHAL EMPIRE

There must be a large number of factors that lead the empire that had been built for centuries to be broken into bits and pieces.

The following flow chart summarizes the factors that played an important role in degeneration of Muslims of sub-continent.



(A) INTERNAL FACTORS

The following internal factors were the main reasons of the weakened Mughal empire and Muslim society.

a) NO LAW OF SUCCESSION

The Mughals had no law about the appointment of the new emperor, king or successor of the late king. Due to absence of such law, the successive heirs would fight for the position and such internal attacks would result in division of

land, resources and military power. Such a crisis situation gives rise to chaos and dispersion of power that ultimately resulted in weakening of individual units.

b) Incompetant Mughal emperors

The emperors that came later on after Aurangzeb were very incompetent and unprofessional. They had no sense of ruling a nation and were busy in their own internal fights and division of assets. It marks as the greatest reason of the downfall of Muslims because the leaders are the caretaker of nation.

"There is no calamity greater than a nation lying held on a ruler unworthy of her."

(Ali ibn Abi Talib)

c) Lack of Military Efficiency

Military inefficiency was also a prime reason that lead Muslim society to degenerate in subcontinent. The army that once had done large number of conquests and invasions was now demoralized and inefficient. They lacked lack of patriotism, cohesion and discipline. The military had no modern warfare weapons and resources. Perhaps, they were too divided amongst regional, ethnic and religious constraints. As said by Roman general Vegetius:

"If you want peace, prepare for war."

However, peace was never attained by Mughal empire, since the military had no power and will to fight a successful war against foreign invasions.

d) Ignorance towards navy

Muslim rulers especially the Mughals neglected the importance of sea power and naval army. They could not visualize the challenges imposed by European sea power later on. History

witnessed that the British Raj started to expand from the sea ports of Bengal, Madras and later Bombay.

e) Weak Moral Character of Rulers

Lack of great character and social intellect was another phenomenal contributor to downfall. Rulers like Sultan Aluttmash, Balban, Alaudin Khilji, Akbar and Aurangzeb were men of great character, power and intelligence. They knew the art of ruling and running a state and held great characteristics of honesty, hard work and modesty. However, the emperors that came later were coward, greedy and possessed a low character. Thus, they could not stand against sinners since they themselves were corrupt.

“If a ruler can get rid of private wickedness and promote public law, his people will become secure, and his state will become well-ordered.”

(Han Fei)

f) Segmentation on basis of religion

A chaos and disturbance was also caused in society due to certain steps taken by rulers on basis of religion. The two following situations are worth mentioning in this regard.

- (i) Akbar's religious dogmas resulted in weakening Muslim hold on government offices. Also a political and social unrest was created due to a newly formed religion by him i.e. Din-e-Ilahi.
- (ii) The strict and orthodox conventions of Aurangzeb Alamgir based upon Islamic principles also created social disturbance since it was very rigid for the other religious groups.

g) Depleted Financial Resources

Considered as one of the richest and powerful empires in the world during its peak 16th and 17th centuries, Mughal empire had weakened considerably by 18th century. Main reasons for this decline was high cost of warfare, corruption by officials, inefficient tax collection, economic decline and decline in currency value.

These factors weakened the empire and made it vulnerable to external pressures, ultimately contributing to its downfall.

(B) EXTERNAL FACTORS

Other than the internal chaos and unrest, few external factors also played an important role in downfall of the Muslims of subcontinent.

a) Regional Power emergence

The rise of regional powers like Marhattas, Sikh and Rajputs caused the Mughal empire to break into pieces gradually. Their rebellion and already financially unstable Mughal empire were enough to decline the power of Muslims and hence proved an important factor in demolishing the Muslim rule over subcontinent.

b) European Power emergence

While the regional powers gave a tough time to Mughals in battle field, the European power had a great impact on the resources of the empire. One after another, they occupied various states of the subcontinent and became so powerful financially

and economically, that it became impossible for Mughal empire to resist against them. At last, it was all under the British Raj after the War of Independence in 1857.

C) Foreign attacks

One of the important factors in downfall of Muslims are the attacks by foreign invaders especially Durani empire. The attacks of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah were a fatal blow to Mughal authority and paved way for British to easily grab the control over entire subcontinent. It would not have been easy in presence of Marhattas that were brutally defeated by the Durani rulers:

CONCLUSION

The Mughal empire, which once spanned a large part of the Indian subcontinent declined and eventually fell in 18th century.

Above mentioned were the several factors that contributed to this downfall.

In a nutshell, the Mughal Empire's downfall was the result of a complex set of factors that intertwined with one another. The depletion of financial resources, political instability, religious tensions, external pressures and decline in cultural prestige all played a role in weakening the empire and ultimately contributing to its demise.

Q- Evaluate the impact of the services rendered by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan towards the regeneration of the Muslims.

INTRODUCTION

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a prominent figure in the history of subcontinent, especially in the field of education and social awareness. Born in 1817 in Delhi, he belonged to a family of aristocrats and was educated in the traditional Islamic curriculum. However, he realized that the traditional education system was not enough to meet the needs of the changing times. Therefore, he introduced the modern reforms into Muslim mindset and took a lot of steps in political, social and economic conditions.

SIR SYED'S MOTIVATION

Sir Syed was deeply concerned about the decline of the Muslim community in India. He believed that the Muslims were lagging behind the Hindus in education and were becoming marginalized in the society. He attributed this to the lack of modern education among Muslims and the prevalence of outdated religious practices. He wrote;

"Without knowledge, there is no salvation for man, and without education, there can be no knowledge."

THREEFOLD STRATEGY OF SIRSYED

Sirsyed Ahmad Khan adopted a threefold strategy to uplift the status of Muslims in society. Following are the milestones set by Sirsyed in awakening the Muslims of subcontinent and redressing their issues with British government.

1) Loyalty to British

Sirsyed laid emphasis on Muslims to remain loyal subjects of British government. The British, after the 1857 war of Independence believed that the war was caused by Muslims due to Jihad element tendency in them. This perspective changed their attitude and thinking towards Muslims and saw them as a rebellious nation. Sirsyed denied this fact and tried to convince the British government that the war was not caused by Muslims but a no. of other factors. He tried to clear the differences b/w the Muslims and British. In his essay, Causes of Indian Revolt, he wrote:

"I say that we ought to prove our loyalty to the Government of India and to convince the English people that we are their friends, that we are true to our salt and that we do not wish to undermine their power in any way whatsoever."

2) Aloofness from politics

Sirsyed Ahmad Khan believed that Muslims in India should stay aloof from politics and focus instead on education and social reform. He said:

"Politics is a filthy drain. Those who are drawn into it are destroyed by the filth they have to handle."

He was of the opinion that Muslims in India were in a disadvantaged position and couldnot afford to participate in politics of time. He believed that political involvement would distract them from the

... to their progress and empowerment. Education and social upliftment, which he saw as the...

3) Education

Sir Syed was a strong advocate for education and believed that Muslims in India needed to acquire modern education to succeed in the changing world. He said,

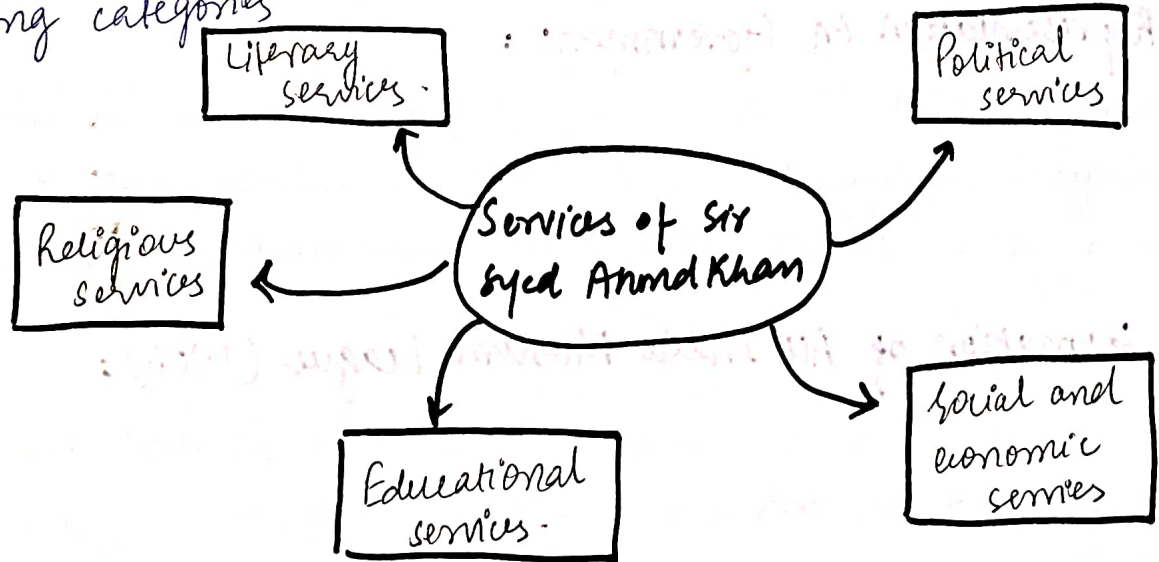
"Education is the means of unlocking the golden door of freedom."

He recognized that the traditional Islamic education system of his time was insufficient to prepare Muslims for challenges of modern world; and he urged his fellow Muslims to embrace modern education by highlighting its importance as follows:

"Muslims must embrace modern education, including English language, science and technology to succeed in changing world."

SERVICES RENDERED BY SIRSYED

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan rendered various types of services for betterment of Muslims. The services of him are divided into following categories



(3) POLITICAL SERVICES

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan played an important role in the empowerment and representation of Muslims in Indian subcontinent.

Some of his political services include:

(i) Advocacy for Muslim Political representation:

He believed that Muslims needed to be represented in the political process and advocated for their inclusion in government bodies and legislative councils. He also supported the idea of separate electorate.

(ii) Support for British Raj:

Sir Syed believed that Muslims needed to maintain good relations with British government in order to protect their interests and promote their welfare.

(iii) Opposition to Indian National Congress:

He opposed the Indian National Congress, which he saw predominantly as solely a Hindu organization that did not represent the interest of Muslims. As per the records, in the Congress session of 1886, there were only 33 Muslim delegates out of 431.

IMPACTS

His political services had a significant impact on the Muslim community in the Indian sub-continent. Some of the key impacts include:

a) Representation in Government:

As he advocated for Muslim rep in government bodies and legislative councils, his efforts helped to ensure that Muslims had a voice in the political decision making process.

b) Formation of All India Muslim League (1906):

Sir Syed's point of view about Congress and demand for Muslim representation in Indian sub-continent helped to lay foundation for formation of All India Muslim League in 1906. The league played an important role in political empowerment of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent.

Sense of Unity:
Sir Syed believed that Muslims needed to work together and promote unity in order to achieve their political goals. His advocacy for Muslim representation in government and formation of Muslim League helped to promote this sense of unity among Muslim community.

d) Protection of Muslim rights:

He was a strong supporter of protection of rights for Muslims. He asserted that the Muslims needed to have equal rights and representation in order to live in harmony with their fellow citizens.

e) Promotion of peace and harmony:

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's political services helped to promote peace and harmony between different religious communities in the Indian subcontinent. He believed that religious tolerance was essential for the progress and prosperity of society.

VIEWPOINTS BY SCHOLARS:-

According to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt who visited India in 1883 and wrote a book, "India Under Ripon: A Private Diary" took credit for having 'contributed something towards the cause I have made specially my own, that of the Indian Mohammadans.'

On his return to England, he persuaded Lord Randolph Churchill that Indian Muslims had not been justly treated. He thought that Churchill's visit as Secretary of State for India in 1885 marked a turning point in official policy towards Muslims.

In 1843, Lord Ellenborough writing to Lord Wellington said:

"I cannot close my eyes to the belief that the race [the Muslims] is fundamentally hostile to us and true policy is to reconcile the Hindus."

Overall, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's political services had a profound impact not only on Muslims but also proved impactful for British government. They developed a soft corner for Muslims and turned their policies that could be adopted by Muslims too.

(II) LITERARY SERVICES

Sir Syed made significant literary contributions to the Muslim community of the Indian subcontinent. Some of his literary services include:

- 1. Published Books:** Wrote a dozen of books on religious, social and historical topics. From 1840 to 1857 - some of his books are; Jam-e-Jum, Tuhfa-e-Musan, Asrar-us-Snadeed, Tazsheek-Aaen-e-Akbari, Tabeen-al-Kalaam, and Khutba-e-Ahmadia.
- 2. Establishment of Urdu Journalism:** Sir Syed Ahmad Khan played a crucial role in the establishment of Urdu Journalism in India. He founded the Aligarh Institute Gazette that became the important platform for promoting modern education among Muslims.
- 3. Promotion of scientific education**
 - wrote several books on science, mathematics & modern subjects.
 - book, "A Treatise on Astronomy" widely acclaimed for its scientific accuracy and clarity.
- 4. Promotion of social reforms**
 - wrote 'Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind → analyzed the causes of 1857 Indian rebellion and proposed reforms to prevent such situations.
- 5. Promotion of English education**
 - recognized importance of English education for progress
 - wrote several books & essays to emphasize on the need

IMPACTS

education.

6. Role in Hindi-Urdu Controversy

- established scientific society to promote study of modern sciences & Urdu language.

a) Promotion of religious Tolerance:

- His literary works emphasized importance of religious tolerance.
- promoted idea of unity among Muslims.

b) Cultural preservation:

- His works helped to preserve and promote culture & traditions of Muslims.
- wrote extensively on history and literature of Muslims.
- advocated for the use of Urdu language and literature in education.

c) Promotion of practical and modern Education:

- Muslims need to embrace Western knowledge & technology to progress.
- His works helped to popularize the idea among Muslim community.

d) Empowerment of Women:

- Promoted the education and empowerment of women in Muslim society.
- Believed that women plays vital role in development of youth.
- His works helped to raise awareness for need of women education.

e) Political empowerment

- Advocacy for Muslims representation in government & legislative councils.
- His works helped to lay foundation for formation of AIML.

COMMENTS BY SCHOLARS:-

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's literary contributions have been a subject of much study and analysis by scholars. Here are some of their

1. Frances W. Pritchett, an American scholar of South Asian literature wrote in her book;

"Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a significant figure in the development of Urdu literature. His literary works, including his translations and commentaries played an important role in evolution of Urdu language and literary tradition."

(Extracted from "Net of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics")

2. Ralph Russel, a British scholar of Urdu literature and linguistics wrote:

"Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's literary contributions were not limited to his own works but also extended to his efforts to promote and encourage Urdu literature more broadly. His establishment of the Scientific Society in Aligarh played a key role in the development of modern Urdu language and literary system."

(Extracted from "The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History")

(III) EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a pioneering figure in the field of education in the Indian subcontinent, and his contributions greatly benefited the Muslim community. Some of his educational include:

1) Establishment of Educational Institutions

- Educational institutions in Muradabad (1858) and Ghazipur (1862).

- - MAO school in Aligarh (1875) → later became ultimately university in Aligarh.
- - Scientific society in Ghazipur (1863) → later shifted to Aligarh.
- - Muhammeden Educational Conference (1886).
- - British Indian Association (1866).
- - Mohammeden Anglo-Oriental Defense Association (1888).
- - Mohammeden Civil Service Fund Association (1883).

2) Advocacy for modern education.

- - believed that Muslims must acquire Western knowledge and modern education.

3) Promotion of women education

- - established "Madrasetul Banat" school for girls in 1863.

4) Educational reform

- - work extensively on the need of educational reform in subcontinent.
- - believed that current system was outdated and needed to be updated as per modern requirements.

IMPACTS

1) Uplifted Status of Muslims

- - Muslims acquired modern education and later got high ranks in jobs and society.

2) Empowerment of Muslims

- - helped to empower Muslims in subcontinent.
- - His belief bore fruit that modern education was necessary.

3) Financial Assistance

- - Muslims got better with respect to their financial conditions by securing jobs.

7) Promotion of meritocracy:

- The CSFA established emphasized meritocracy → helped promote fair competition among all candidates.
- Enabled the best candidates to be selected → regardless of religion or race.

VIEWPOINTS BY SCHOLARS

1. Mushirul Hasan, an Indian historian wrote in his book:

"Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's educational services had a significant impact on the social and economic status of the Muslim community. He believed that education was key to community's progress. His efforts led to the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University, which has produced many notable scholars, intellectuals and leaders."

(Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence)

2. Ainslie T. Embree, an American historian, says that:

"Sir Syed was a visionary who recognized the importance of education for Muslim community. He believed that education was the key to community's progress and advocated for the spread of modern education among Muslims."

(India's Search for National Identity)

(IV) RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a prominent religious figure who made significant contributions towards promoting a modern and progressive understanding of Islam in subcontinent. Some of his religious services include:

1. Translation of Quran

- Translated Quran to simple and easy Urdu language.
- helped teachings to spread through wider audience.
- also wrote commentary on Quran.

2. Support for Religious reforms :

- Supported various religious reforms such as abolition of slavery and the purdah system.
- worked for women education.

3. Emphasis on moderation and tolerance :

- Importance of moderation and tolerance in Islamic teachings.
- Muslims should acquire modern education in accordance with Islamic principles.

IMPACTS

1) Promotion of rational and scientific thinking:

- emphasized the importance of rational and scientific thinking in religious matters.
- translation of Quran into Urdu → helped to promote a more rational and scientific approach to religion among Muslims.

2) Abolition of superstitions and dogmatism:

- approach of rational and scientific approach to religion helped to dispel superstitions & dogmatism that had crept into Muslims religious practices.
- helped to create a more enlightened and progressive Muslim society.

3) Modernization of Islamic thought:

- Emphasis on rational and scientific aspects of Islam helped to modernize Islamic thought.
- helped to counter the negative stereotypes of Islam that had due to lack of education and modernity among

VIEWPOINTS OF SCHOLARS

1. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad an Indian scholar and freedom fighter wrote in his book:

"He was a great Muslim scholar who worked tirelessly to revive the true spirit of Islam among the Muslims. He emphasized the importance of religious education and helped to create a new generation of Muslim scholars who could understand the true teachings of Islam and convey them to others."

(Tazkirah)

2. Dr Hamidullah, a Pakistani Islamic scholar, wrote in his book:

"Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a leading Muslim intellectual who recognized the importance of Islam in the light of modern knowledge... His efforts helped to counter the negative propaganda against Islam and spread its true teachings among Muslims."

(The Emergence of Islam in Indian sub-continent)

(V) SOCIO-ECONOMIC SERVICES

Sir Syed also rendered significant socio-economic services to Muslim community in the sub-continent. Some of his services are:

1. Support for Industrialization.

- supported the idea of industrialization to improve economic condition of Muslims.
- encouraged the establishment of small scale industries and supported the import of modern machinery to India.

2. Support for Agriculture:

- recognized the importance of agriculture as a livelihood for many Muslims.
- promoted adoption of modern agricultural techniques and encouraged the use of modern machinery in agriculture.

3. Social reforms:

- promoted social reforms
- abolition of purdah, child marriage and other social practices.
- supported women education.

4. Support for poor:

- established no. of charitable institutions to support poor & needy.
- institutions provided food, shelter & healthcare to poor.
- financial assistance to widows and orphans.

IMPACTS

a) Improved Economic condition

- promotion of small scale industries, modern agriculture techniques & support for development of infrastructure helped to improve economic condition of Muslim community.
- Moved traditional occupations → modern occupations.

b) National Integration

- created sense of unity among Muslim community and promoted communal harmony.
- helped to break down the barriers that existed b/w Muslims & other communities in sub-continent.

VIEWPOINTS BY SCHOLARS

1. Dr. Akbar S. Ahmad, a renowned anthropologist and author has praised Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's contribution to the development of the Muslim community by stating:

"Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's vision of a modern and progressive Muslim society still resonates today."

2. Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, a prominent Indian Muslim scholar and social activist has highlighted the contributions of Khan by stating:

"Sir Syed's effort in the fields of education, social reforms, and economic development were truly remarkable and helped to uplift the Muslim community in the subcontinent."

CONCLUSION

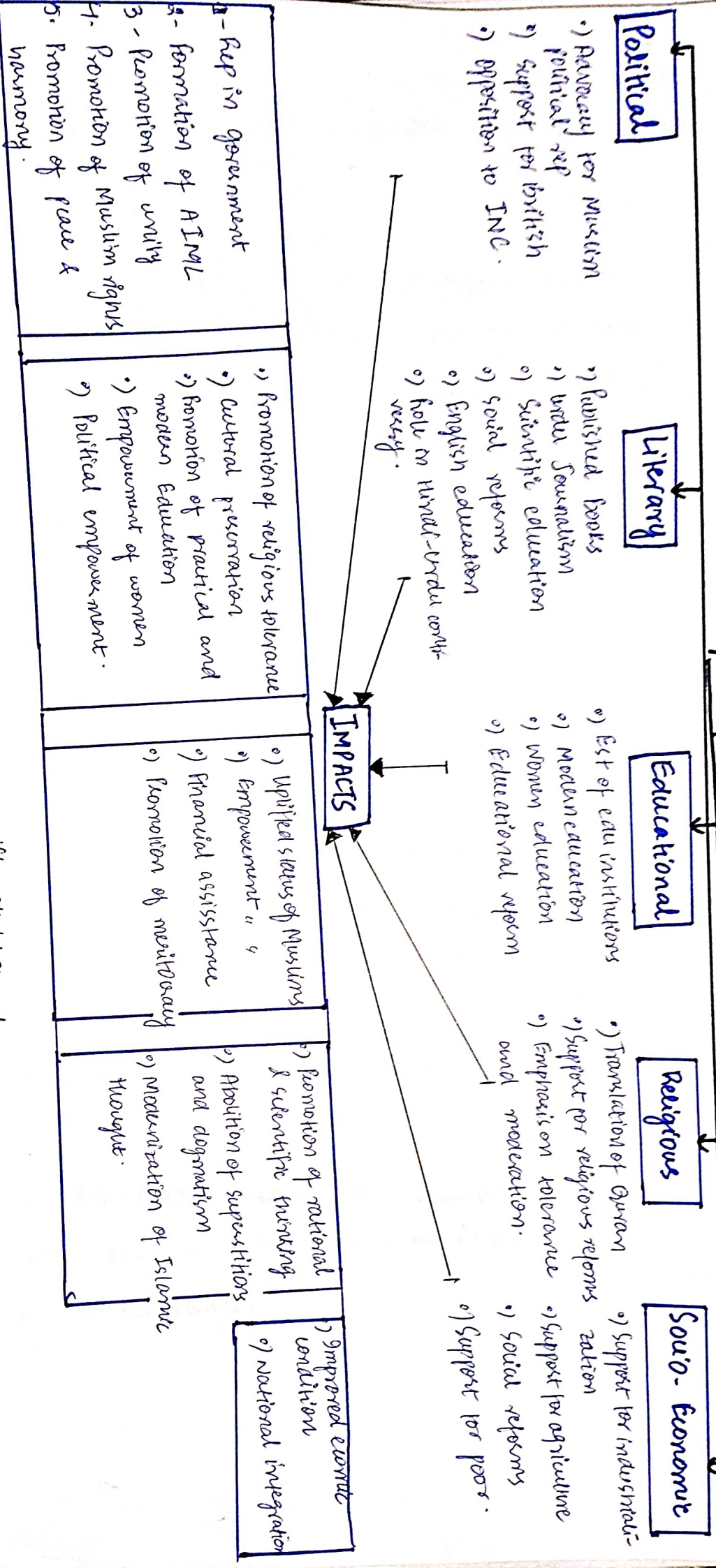
Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's services and contributions to Muslim community in the subcontinent were significant and far-reaching. His emphasis on education, social reform, economic development and national integration helped to uplift the Muslim community and create a sense of unity and self reliance among them.

"Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the foremost Muslim educationist of his time, who laid the foundations of modern education among Indian Muslims and imparted a scientific and rational outlook to their thinking."

(Dr. Zakir Hussain, former President of India).

Overall, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's services had a profound impact on the Muslim community in the subcontinent.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan Services



Flow chart showing different types of services rendered by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and their impacts on Muslims of subcontinent.