
PART-II

Q1. Critically examine the political strategy of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan for the protection of Muslim interests in British India. How did his approach differ from the methods adopted by the Indian National Congress?

Q1. Answer.

Introduction:

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan emerged as the most influential Muslim political thinker of 19th-century British India. After the war of independence in **1857**, Muslims faced political marginalization, economic decline and deep mistrust from the British. Sir Syed's political strategy was shaped by realism and aimed at protecting Muslim interests through loyalty to the British, educational reform, and constitutional politics. His approach sharply differed from the confrontational method later adopted by the Indian National Congress (INC).

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan Political Strategy

The corner stone of Sir Syed's strategy was reconciliation with the British. After **1857**, he believed open resistance would further marginalize Muslims. In "Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind (**1858**)" he argued that Muslim rebellion was a misconception and emphasized

British administrative failures as causes of unrest. He famously stated, "We must make the English our friends if we want to progress."

Secondly, Sir Syed prioritized modern education as political empowerment. He founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in **1857** to produce a Western-educated Muslim elite capable of competing with Hindu professionals in government services. He believed political power would naturally follow educational and economic advancement.

Thirdly, Sir Syed opposed majoritarian democracy under British rule. He warned that representative institutions based on numerical strength would permanently disadvantage Muslims. In **1883**, he declared, "if elections are introduced, Muslims will be crushed under the Hindu majority." Therefore, he advanced separate political safeguards, including separate representation and

and government patronage.

Finally, Sir Syed adopted the constitutional and loyalist politics.

He discouraged Muslims from joining the Indian National Congress, arguing that it represented Hindu interests under the guise of nationalism. His strategy sought gradual reforms rather than mass agitation.

Political Strategy of the Indian National Congress:

Founded in **1885**, the INC pursued political agitation and mass representation. It demanded constitutional reforms, expansion of legislative councils and later self-government. The Congress assumed Indians formed a single nation and supported majority-based political systems.

However, in practice, Congress leadership and agenda were dominated by educated Hindus.

Sir Syed criticized this approach, arguing that Congress nationalism ignored India's social and religious

diversity. He viewed Congress politics as premature and dangerous for Muslim survival.

Critical Comparison and Evaluation:

Sir Syed's strategy was cautious, elitist and community specific, whereas Congress relied on mass mobilization and majoritarian politics. While Sir Syed delayed political activism, his approach laid the foundations for Muslim political consciousness, later influencing the All-India Muslim League.