

SECTION - II

Q. NO: 02

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?

ANSWER

I: Introduction

The political decline of Muslims after 1857 war of independence compelled Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to formulate a strategy aimed at safeguarding Muslim interests under British rule. His approach was cautious, realist, minority-centric, contrasting sharply with the activist and majoritarian politics of the Indian National Congress. Sir Syed's strategy was shaped more by political pragmatism than ideological submission.

II: POLITICAL STRATEGY OF SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN

I: Loyalist Policy Toward the British

Sir Syed advocated cooperation with British, considering open resistance practically suicidal for Muslims after 1857.

- He accepted British rule as an irreversible reality.
- He emphasized confidence building over confrontation.
- He sought Muslim rehabilitation through loyalty.

Though he was criticized as Pro-British, this policy shielded Muslims from further repression and created political space for recovery.

II Education as the Basis of Political Power

Sir Syed believed political rights without intellectual strength were meaningless.

II: Educational Reforms as a Political Instrument

Sir Syed believed that the political power without intellectual strength was meaningless, hence he prioritized education.

- Introduced Western Scientific education
- Emphasized rational thinking and modern knowledge
- Linked education with political and administrative empowerment

The approach was elitist in reach but proved decisive in producing muslim political leadership

III Aligarh Movement as Political Preparation

The Aligarh movement aimed to train muslims for leadership roles under colonial rule.

- Established MAO college at Aligarh
- Created a modern muslim intelligentsia
- Combined Islamic values with modern education.

Although limited to elites, it laid the institutional foundation for muslim political consciousness. ~~The~~ Later Aligarh graduates laid foundation of All Muslim League India in 1906.

IV: Acceptance of British Political Supremacy

Sir Syed accepted british dominance as irremediable and advised muslims to adapt rather than resist.

- Viewed resistance as futile and dangerous
- Prioritized muslims survival over confrontation.
- emphasized adjustment to new power structure.

This conservative realism prevented further political damage but delayed nationalist resistance.

V Opposition to congress and Representative Democracy

Sir Syed discouraged muslims from joining Indian National Congress, viewing it as unsuitable for minority protection.

- Considered congress Hindu dominated organization
- Opposed early representative institutions.
- Feared muslim marginalization.

This stance safeguard muslim interests but intensified political polarization

VI Rejection of one-man-one-vote principle

Sir Syed rejected majoritarian democracy in a Hindu majority society.

- Highlighted demographic imbalance
- Warned against permanent Muslim subordination.
- Advocated safeguards over numbers.

Though anti-democratic in nature, it was protective in minority context.

VII: Emphasis on Muslim Political Distinctiveness

Sir Syed emphasized cultural and political differences between Hindus and Muslims.

- Separate religion, history and social traditions.
- Warned against political assimilation.

This strengthened Muslim identity, but deepened communal consciousness, and Premable of Two-Nation Theory.

VIII Gradualism in Political Participation

Sir Syed advised Muslims to postpone active politics until achieving preparedness.

- Prioritized education and economic uplift.
 - Opposed premature agitation.
 - Advocated "politics after preparation"
- Delayed political activism but ensured strategic readiness.

IX Rejection of Emotional and Aggressive Nationalism

He opposed emotional anti-British nationalism, considering it harmful for Muslims.

- Preferred rational political conduct.
- Avoided agitation and confrontation
- Focused on long-term Muslim interest

This realism protected Muslim interests but reduced mass appeal.

Methods Of The Indian National Congress

I: Constitutional Agitation

The Congress relied on petitions, resolutions and debate to seek reforms.

- Used legal and constitutional channels.
- Pressured British authorities politically.
- This method favoured educated elites and numerical majority.

II Mass Political Mobilization

Congress mobilized the masses to exert political pressure.

- Relied on numerical strength.
- Encouraged public participation.
- Minority fears were overshadowed by majority dominance.

III Immediate Democratic Demands

Congress demanded representative institutions and electoral politics.

- Advocated majority rule.
- Pressed for election.

Democracy without safeguards endangered muslim political security.

IV: Promotion of Composite Nationalism

Congress promoted territorial nationalism over communal identity.

- Claimed represent all Indians.
- Downplayed religious distinctions.

In practice, Hindu dominance prevailed. (1936-37 Congress rule)

V Confrontational Attitude Towards British Rule

Congress gradually adopted a confrontational posture.

- Criticized colonial policies.
- Encouraged political resistance.

Ignored muslim vulnerability after 1857.

VI Politics Before Social Preparation

Congress emphasized Political agitation over educational reform.

- Prioritized Political demands.

- Neglected minority Preparedness.

Led to unequal Political Competition.

VII Reliance on Numerical Majority

Congress relied on demographic advantages in Politics.

- Majoritarian decision-making.

- Ignored minority apprehensions.

Confirmed muslim fears of majority domination.

1936-37 Congress rule and Shift of muslim vote

bank in 1945 general elections to AIML.

Conclusion

Sir Syed Political Strategy and National Congress Adaptations

Comparison Table

Aspects	Sir Syed Strategy	NIC Adaptations
Political Approach	Gradualist, realist	Activist, Confrontational
British Policy	Loyalty & cooperation with british	Constitutional opposition
Democracy	Skeptical due to minority fears	Strong advocacy
Minority Protection	Central concern	Assumed majority rule
Strategy	Education before politics	Politics before preparation

CONCLUSION

Sir Syed pursued a realist, minority focused strategy emphasizing education, loyalty, safeguards, whereas congress favoured activist, majoritarian and immediate politics. His approach ensured muslim protection and long-term political preparedness.