

Maulana Shibli's role in Aligarh movement, foundation of new educational center at Azamgarh

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Introduction

The 19th century was a landmark in India as it led to two important developments, the outcome of which is seen in India in the 20th Century and continued in the 21st century. The first half witnessed fight against social inequities and educational backwardness of the fanatic. The names of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivian Derozio and Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar are conspicuous enough to find a place in history pages. While reforms were at peak amongst Hindu society, Muslims were still primitive in their ideas. The uprising of 1857 brought further disaster to the Muslims which added to their backwardness and miserable plight despite the work of such enlightened men as Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Deputy Nazir Ahmed and so on. In these circumstances, he took up the cause of awakening among Muslims through western education.

In this background the name who shined like a beacon with his own versatile intellect was Maulana Shibli Naomani. Mohammed Shibli Naumani was born in May 1857 at Bindawal a small village

in Uttar Pradesh. Shibli was educated in traditional Muslim manner. He later completed his higher studies at Lahore. He got an opportunity to work Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan at his Aligarh University and served for sixteen years.

Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan and Maulana Shibli's relation at Aligarh

It is well known that Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan was a beacon of Muslim community. His efforts of upliftment of the community is well known through the establishment of M.A.O (Mohammedan Anglo Oriental) school in 1875, which later took the shape of a college in 1877 and finally became the renowned Aligarh university in 1920. The purpose of the movement was to impart western education amongst the fellow Muslim brethren. However, the vision of Sir Sayyid was to introduce contemporary studies along with the oriental languages. In order to fulfil this objective, he appointed scholars of varied subjects such as science, philosophy, Arabic, Persian, Islamic history and contemporary studies. Sir Sayyid always appreciated his fellow colleagues who assisted him in fulfilling his objectives.

One among the intimates and learned professor was honoured in the list of Sir Sayyid was Maulana Shibli. Maulana Shibli was appointed as the professor of Persian and assistant Arabic in the year 1883 and three years later promoted.

Though Maulana Shibli served Sixteen years at Aligarh in the company of Sir Sayyid he was neither overwhelmed by western education nor did he become the disciple of Sir Sayyid. However, Shibli was influenced by certain aspects and felt the need of contemporary education. He also urged his friends and family members to realize the need and started an English school in Azamgarh. Yet Shibli did not wish to give up oriental languages. He also clearly defined the qualities of the oriental studies and never hesitated to criticize and define the negative points of modern education. It is well known about the differences of opinion over politics and

government by the two. While Sir Sayyid favoured the existing government, their views on British were contradictory.

On one such occasion where Sir Sayyid was also present a debate was conducted over the topic self-governance versus democratic mode. Maulana Shibli delivered a convincing long speech against it. In this way Maulana Shibli expressed his opinions regarding British government, British culture, Turkish government, Turkish brotherhood and congress which contradicted Sir Sayyid's views.

Both were aware of their contradiction, yet they respected values and their co-operation never ceased.

By the mid Nineties Shibli grew disheartened and dejected at Aligarh. He could not reconcile himself to the increasing growth of anglicized trends at Aligarh to which Sir Sayyid also seemed to be helpless. Some ideological differences also grew up between them, ranging from pure religious approach to political and Pan-Islamic thought.

The drifting ideologies between Shibli and Sir Sayyid forced him to express his desire to leave Aligarh in 1896. But Theodore Beck, the principal of MAO college did not like Shibli leaving M.A.O college Aligarh. Instead he was proposed an offer to work for 6 months at Aligarh and next 6 months would be granted leave with full salary.

In 1898, Sir Sayyid died despite certain differences Shibli paid rich tribute and acknowledge that he owed his success to Sir Sayyid and his education movement. Even after Sir Sayyid death Shibli continued serving MAO college until the demise of Theodore Beck in 1899.

Post resignation of Shibli from Aligarh

Following this Shibli resigned from his post at MAO college, Aligarh. By now Shibli had decided to dedicate his whole life to the cause of Nadwa.

In a meeting held on 1st October 1902 Shibli was chosen as a member of the syllabus committee on the recommendation by Maulana Habibur Rahaman Sherwani and Masih-uz-Zaman Khan. Shibli also expressed his own idea which was accepted but some people disliked the thought of making editor. As a result, after some delay the first issue of Al Nadwa was published with Maulana Habibur Rahaman Sherwani and Shibli as its editor in August 1904.

Some other developments also took place during this period. On 16th March 1903, Shibli name was proposed for the post of Mu'tamad-i-Majlis Darul Uloom. However, he refused the offer due to various reasons.

On his arrival at Nadwa in April 1905, he was accorded a grand welcome. The subsequent history of Nadwatul ulama for 8 years (April 1905-July 1913) is marked for consolidation and progress. During this period a modified syllabus and the learning of modern Arabic was introduced. Measures were taken to promote the study of English, Hindi and Sanskrit. Eminent teachers with specialized knowledge were appointed. The task of translating the holy Quran into English was undertaken and a special period was allocated for training students to write *fatwa* (religious decrees) students were taught vocal rendering of the Quran, essay writing, study of history extempore speeches and art of oratory. They were encouraged to participate in debates and deliberations on various topics and current issues related to national and international affairs.

Shibli donated his personal collection of books to the library and persuaded others also to do the same. His most cherished pupil, Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi played an important role. Apart from religious sciences Shibli was equally interested in teaching of modern sciences. He introduced a book on physical science in Arabic written by a woman.

Shibli made untiring efforts to convince the people of the need for financial and succeeded in obtaining financial help from the government and land of 32 bigah for spacious campus. For

propagation purposes he travelled far and wide.

Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy:

Shibli during his visit to Egypt and Constantinople perceived the idea of starting up an academic centre exclusively for research work. In March 1910, while presenting the annual report of Nadwatul ulama, Lucknow, at Delhi, he envisioned the need for a well-equipped national library as necessary supplement for the growth of national college. It was here he suggested the creation of writer's circle at Nadwa on the pattern of European academies and forwarded the idea of establishing a separate building called Darul Musannefin (abode of writers) at Nadwa with a rich library catering facility for visiting scholars. But the scheme met with opposition.

After the death of his brother when Shibli went to Azamgarh he decided to lay the foundation of Darul Musannefin Shibli academy in his bungalow and chalked out whole scheme. It was decided that so long as the institution was unable to generate its own income, the grant of Rs. 300 that Shibli was getting from the state of Hyderabad be utilized for its functioning. However, before the endowment deed could be prepared Shibli breathed his last on 18th November 1914.

Conclusion

Although Sir Sayyid Ahmed and Shibli Naumani were contrary persons, yet they held high esteem and respected opinion, thoughts of each other. The contribution of Shibli to Aligarh has been immense. He so acquired vast knowledge and met various intellectuals during his stay in Aligarh. Its was this acquired knowledge that led Shibli to establish various institutions to promote his idea of education.