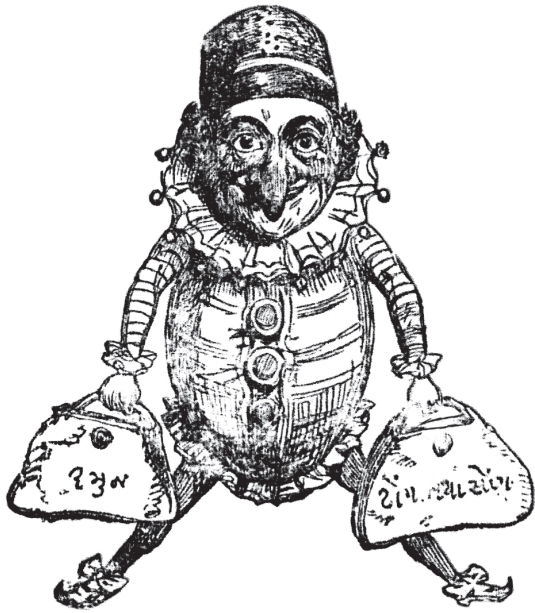


PROLOGUE



In my book *A Moral Reckoning: Muslim Intellectuals in Nineteenth-century Delhi* (2006), I closely examined the patterns of collaboration in the second-half of the nineteenth century. In this Prologue, I examine the same trends at work in western India among the urban notables or *shetias*, who maintained close links with and benefited from the British. Among the Muslims of upper India, Syed Ahmad Khan reflected the response of a particular generation which wanted to make the most of the opportunities offered by the colonial dispensation. A generation earlier, Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (1783-1859) exemplified the collaborative relationship that formed between leading Indians and the East India Company.

To carry the analogy further, Syed Ahmad was, undoubtedly, the principal protagonist of education amongst Muslims. He looked for their moral and material regeneration, and did everything to encourage the advance of western education, which he regarded as the principal source of government employment. He had many more reasons for starting the 'Aligarh movement,' for which he faced stiff opposition from various quarters. Bitter prejudice was raised against them and the smouldering fires of religious bigotry were fanned into a flame. The inheritors of a peculiar brand of morality, piety, and sanctimony targeted him. But the drive for education and social reforms simmered until he won the battle. Sensing the public mood in Delhi in the aftermath of the 1857 revolt, C.F. Andrews, who spent the early years of the twentieth century in Delhi, remarked: 'Syed Ahmad at last became loved instead of hated.'¹

Among the Parsis, Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917) 'unflinchingly held the torch of knowledge before his own community and lift(ed) them to a higher level, while weaning them from all foreign practices encrusted with the conservatism of over a thousand years.'² Other reformers like Dosabhoy Framjee Karaka, chairman of the Bombay

¹ C.F. Andrews, *Zakaullah of Delhi*. Introduction of Mushirul Hasan and Margrit Pernau, Delhi, 2003, pp. 96, 97.

² D.E. Wacha, *Shells from the Sands of Bombay: My Recollections and Reminiscences, 1860-1875* (Bombay, 1970), p. 688.