

Rt. Hon. Syed Ameer Ali (b. 1849 - d. 1928)

The decline of the Mughal dynasty during the eighteenth century marked a major turning point in the history of the subcontinent. This encouraged the leading European powers (especially the British) to flex their muscles and gradually establish their politico-economic presence in the Muslim world. The European colonisation of a large part of the Muslim world not only led to political confusion, economic decline and educational backwardness in the Islamic world, it also precipitated the degeneration of Muslim culture and society – morally, culturally and educationally.

During this critical period in the history of modern Islam, a number of prominent Muslim intellectuals and reformers emerged to rejuvenate the Muslim *ummah* (global Muslim community). Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and others emerged to call for Islamic unity, solidarity and reformation (modernism) throughout the Muslim world. While al-Afghani and his disciple, Shaykh Muhammad Abduh, were busy popularising their message of Pan-Islamism in Ottoman Turkey and the Arab world, Sir Sayyid and Nawab Abdul Latif launched their Islamic modernist movements in the subcontinent.

Inspired by the Islamic modernism (reformism) of the latter, Syed Ameer Ali of Bengal subsequently became one of the most eloquent and influential champions of Islamic values, principles and ethos during the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century.

Born at Cuttack in Orissa (located in present-day Indian State of West Bengal), Syed Ameer Ali's father, Syed Saadat Ali, traced his family's ancestry back to the Prophet of Islam through Ali al-Rida, the eighth Shi'a Imam, who lived during the reign of the famous Abbasid Caliph, Abdullah al-Ma'mun.....

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To read this full BIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY by **Muhammad Mojlum Khan**, please see his long-awaited book,

THE MUSLIM HERITAGE OF BENGAL:
The Lives, Thoughts and Achievements of Forty Great Muslim Scholars, Writers and Reformers of Bangladesh and West Bengal

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