



INTERPRETIVE APPROACH TO SYED AHMED'S NATURALISM IN RELATION TO ISLAMIC MODERN EDUCATION

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INTERPRETIVE APPROACH TO SYED AHMED'S NATURALISM IN RELATION TO ISLAMIC MODERN EDUCATION

Ghulam Muhiuddin Solangi, Ali Raza khazada, Sadam Hussein Baloch

ABSTRACT:

The article aims to discuss some of the key components of Syed Ahmed's naturalism as a framework for understanding human growth, especially in the area of education within the framework of revealed text. This may make it easier to comprehend his modernist idea of education and naturalism in the context of Islam (as revealed in the book), and it may also help one recognize that, as long as one stays true to the core teachings of Islam, Islam is not a barrier to advancement. In the first section, I will briefly discuss some of the currents in naturalism that were put forth by Western philosophers in Europe during the nineteenth century (West) as background to illustrate how it differs from religious naturalism that was motivated by revelation and elaborated by Syed Ahmed. In the next part, I shall contend that Syed Ahmed's naturalistic argument is not an attempt to replace God with nature, but rather an attempt to establish a system for offering a rationalistic explanation of Islam. In contrast to his counterparts in the West, Syed Ahmed bases his theory of nature on the revealed text. Therefore, in my opinion, he believes that nature is a creation of God, much like the universe, humans, and other creatures, and that it is not real in and of itself. It implies that nature is constantly subject to the laws established by God and has no purpose when apart from its creator. The aforementioned points are not only beneficial for broadening one's understanding of Syed Ahmed's

naturalism, but they are also essential for demonstrating how one may infer a modernist philosophy of education based on his naturalism.

KEYWORDS: Islam, naturalism, the revealed word, God, reason, interpretation, and advancement in education

Introduction:

Naturalistic Trends in Europe During the 1800s:

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of nineteenth-century naturalism, it is important to assess it in light of evolving historical periods about religion and science. According to ¹Franklin L. Baumer, the nineteenth century is a century of becoming in his book *Modern European Thought: Change and Continuity in Ideas, 1600-1950* (Franklin, 1977). He quotes Ernest Renan as claiming that its historical perspective on the world is the most important invention of the nineteenth century. History is a feeling of continuous movement and advancement in human life, not only a "comprehension of the past." Stated differently, history is the "science of becoming" that explains almost everything; in fact, God is said to have "developed" alongside man and the natural world. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, conventional religion (Christianity), which views God as transcendent rather than immanent, saw a steep collapse. It leads to a crisis of the soul. A return to this slide may be seen in "nature mysticism," which defends God as an inescapable reality revealed by religious experience. Baumer claims that because of this change from transcendence to immanent God, Carlyle refers to the nineteenth century as the "Unbelieving Century," where God has vanished

¹ Baumer, Franklin L. "Modern European Thought Continuity and Change in Ideas, 1600-1950." (1977).

and is only limited by his own "rational laws" (Franklin, 1977). Schleiermacher adds another layer of "nature mysticism," reducing religion to a personal experience. He asserts that "true religion" is "sense and thirst for the infinite," existing in "feeling," the deepest part of a person's being. Franklin (1977) has so accurately defined Schleiermacher's view of religion as personalized, psychologized, and emotionalized. These kinds of religions lead to the divinization of nature, which makes God reliant on the natural order. Schelling's synthesis of God, man, and nature appears to imply that nature is represented as "visible spirit," leading to the ultimate representation of man as Spirit as "invisible Nature." Nature is seen by as a living thing that is dynamic, creative, and ever-changing. Herder sees this natural transformation in cultural variety, according to Baumer. He says that depending on a country's environment and culture, nature has given gifts to different nations. It contributes to human growth because of its variety of expressions. According to him, every culture has a distinct soul (Geist) that manifests itself most prominently in its literature, language, and religion. It then develops like an organism and, in the end, becomes a living organism that is greater than the sum of its parts. From a scientific standpoint, naturalism may be viewed through the lens of Beatrice Webb, who argues that science can address everyday issues by transforming people's awareness to a new motive: the feeling of kindness from God to humanity². Comte's positivist approach, which encourages one to give up the search for "Absolute notions," the beginning and end of the universe, and instead concentrate on the possibility of strengthening

² Axtell, James L., and John Locke. "The educational writings of John Locke." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 17, no. 1 (1969).

one's power over the natural world to keep wisdom within the "observational bonds," seems to reflect the change from God to man. According to him, positivism has replaced the theology and metaphysics that characterized thought in earlier eras (Franklin, 1977). Baumer seems to be implying that Saint-Simon, influenced by Comte, asserts that religion is valuable if it can simultaneously be considered socially beneficial, psychologically fulfilling, and trustworthy from a scientific standpoint. Thus, the "Religion of Humanity" is born. Feuerbach appears to have been persuaded by this elevated version of religion to assert that "Theology is Anthropology" since he feels that religion represents an objectification in human nature. He proceeds to prove that the Creator is a created humanity in his personal image, born out of his own desires and shifting aspirations, by reducing faith to human nature.

Feuerbach uses the Hegelian term "depersonalization of God" to explain the historical development of religion as follows:

*"That which was considered objective by a previous religion is now considered subjective; that is, what was once thought of and worshipped as God is now seen as something human."*Franklin (1977)

Charles Darwin's idea of evolution has contributed to the further advancement of this divinization of man. His interpretation of nature as an undersigned "cosmic process" sparked a fresh battle between science and religion. According to his theory of evolution, man is dependent on cosmic mechanisms rather than God while living under the guidance of nature. Darwin is led by this viewpoint to divorce God from nature and humans. He believes that God has no place in naturalism. Huxley claims that nature is non-moral rather than moral or immoral in favor of science. He believes

that man can construct a "worthy civilization" on his own and does not need the assistance of divine providence³. Many Christians believe that this viewpoint is incompatible with the Bible because it challenges their long-held convictions about "nature" and the "destiny of man" and calls into question the capacity of humans for abstract thought. Bergson's theory of intuition seeks to offset this overpowering influence of science. A sort of backlash against scientific inquiry invades the entire domain of epistemology, leading to determinism and restricting individual freedom. Because science places more emphasis on usefulness than understanding, it forces one to exert more control over the world. True understanding of life and its elements is given by "instinct" rather than intellect. While intelligence may be limited to certain "states" and "instants," intuition is an instinct which may become aware⁴ of itself and acquire comprehensive knowledge of nature. Bergson says that in order to have a comprehensive understanding of nature, one needs give up "scientific habits."

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To comprehend, in the framework of the revealed text, the essential components of Syed Ahmed's naturalism and how it promotes human advancement, particularly in the field of education.
2. To show how Syed Ahmed's modernist view of education aligns with Islamic naturalism, highlighting how Islam may accommodate development without departing from its central tenets.

³ Provenzo, Eugene F., ed. "Critical issues in education: An anthology of readings." (2006).

⁴ Losousky, Michael. "The Cambridge Companion to Locke." *International Studies in Philosophy* 29, no. 2 (1997): 118-120.

3. To contrast and emphasize the distinctive qualities of Syed Ahmed's spiritual naturalism with 19th-century Western naturalism.
4. To elucidate Syed Ahmed's view of nature as God's creation and how this view supports a modernist ideology of education based on his naturalistic methodology.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study utilizes qualitative research methodologies to thoroughly examine the fundamental aspects for Syed Ahmed's naturalism as well as the implications for human advancement, namely in the domain of education and the setting of the disclosed text. The following succinctly describes the main qualitative techniques employed in this study:

ANALYSIS OF TEXTS

Textual analysis is used in the research to examine Syed Ahmed's writings and other works, as well as pertinent religious literature. The subtleties of his naturalistic theory and how it connects to the idea of educational development are revealed and understood via the use of this approach.

Comparative Review

Comparative analysis is an essential part of the investigation. It aims to compare and contrast the naturalistic viewpoints put out by Western intellectuals in the nineteenth century with Syed Ahmed's religious naturalism. Through a comparison of various perspectives, the study seeks to emphasize the unique qualities of Syed Ahmed's methodology.

Justification and Argumentation

In-depth reasoning and arguments are used in the research to explain Syed Ahmed's naturalistic viewpoint. The paper tries to explain his methods for offering a rationalistic explanation of Islam through qualitative analysis and discussion, stressing the importance of God's non-replacement by nature.

Interpretation and Enrichment of Perspectives

The goal of the research is to improve readers' comprehension and viewpoint of Syed Ahmed's naturalism. To accomplish this goal, qualitative approaches pertaining to interpretation, discourse analysis, and idea synthesis are used. This method helps to illuminate the many facets of Syed Ahmed's naturalism notion.

By using these qualitative research techniques, this essay aims to provide a thorough analysis of Syed Ahmed's naturalistic theory, opening the door to a deeper understanding of its implications for learning and advancement in the context of the disclosed text.

Naturalistic Underpinnings of Contemporary Education: Syed Ahmed's Method

In contrast to his colleagues in the West, Syed Ahmed bases his theory of nature on the revealed text. In his view, nature is not a genuine entity in and of itself as some Western philosophers have claimed. According to him, God created nature separately from the rest of the universe and humans ⁵(Abdul Khaliq, 2023). Nature is ruled by the principles that God has established; it is meaningless without its creator. He refutes every charge made against him, according to Abdul Khaliq (2023), that he worships nature as God. His naturalistic argument is not an attempt to supplant God with nature; rather, it is only a methodological attempt to provide a rationalistic account of Islam. According to him, understanding the significance of the given truth is what makes religion really different. With this goal in mind, he believes that scholarly debate on religious

Abdul Khaliq Aboya, Irfan Muhammad. "SYED AHMED'S NATURALISM AND ⁵ MODERN EDUCATION: AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH." *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research* 6, no. 2 (2023).

matters is a benefit rather than a source of conflict because it shows that academics are committed to comprehending the genuine meaning of religion rather than just adhering to taqlīd (imitation). He is grateful for both kind of academics. There are those who endorse imitation, and there are others who apply reason to the process of ijtihād (rational interpretation). What unites them is their eagerness to yield to God's will in order to conduct their lives in accordance with Islamic precepts. He imitates to the extent that it is congruent with the disclosed text's meaning, which is what is being understood. If anything is accepted for its own sake, it has no purpose and might mislead someone away from God's truth. As a matter of fact, he highlights the need for careful planning to create a culture within which people debate religious issues in order to learn the truth as God intended. It implies that everything spoken about Islam that is founded on heresy, the product of interpolation, and unrelated to Islam should be eliminated. According to Syed Ahmed, one may contend as Islam is a faith revealed by God, who is also the creator of nature, for the benefit of knowledge. One may discover some consistency between the revealed scripture and nature. It suggests that the universe's natural composition was purposefully created so that, by considering certain of the Qur'anic verses, one might see the connection between God's message (the revealed text) and his labor (nature). The naturalism of Syed Ahmed differs from the philosophical philosophy held by several Western intellectuals. It's an effort to help people understand that using their brains to consider how everything fits together to govern the universe's affairs is fundamental to who they are (Abdul Khaliq, 2023). This could make one's faith in God stronger, but it doesn't mean that one's faith is reliant on this approach. Put differently, Syed Ahmed's naturalism might be interpreted as an attempt to formulate an epistemology based on selected Qur'anic

passages that encourage the use of one's empirical and reasoning abilities. It is clear from his works that he values both the logical and experiential components of a person's personality. He contends that because of the inherent nature of man, it is reasonable to assume that a person will take use of all the opportunities available to them in order to comprehend the world as they should. Some Qur'anic passages that Syed Ahmed mentioned that encourage one to perceive harmony and the design in nature can be used to support this notion. Take Sūrat al-a'raf verse 185, for example:

"Do they not perceive anything in the creation of Allah, including the earth and the heavens?"

This passage immediately draws attention to the magnificent underlying system and plan of the universe's creation, persuading and preparing the mind to ponder in order to realize God's omnipotence, grandeur, and kindness. This indicates that the passage in question encourages people to be satisfied with their faith, which is a natural outpouring of who they are, by looking for evidence of God's wisdom, design, and strength. He also quotes Sūrat al-An'ām verse 75 in this regard, which states, *"So also, we did show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, so that he could possibly have certitude."*

According to this scripture, people who are open to seeing the spiritual side of existence are able to see beyond the material realm. God alludes to the account of Abraham in this passage, who views reality in metaphysical terms rather than depending on his ancestors' gods. Abraham's first step toward God was exactly this. Syed Ahmed uses the aforementioned passage to try and explain that man is created by nature in such a manner that, by the use of his intellect, he would be able to understand the spiritual splendors that lie behind the amazing powers and the rules of the material

world. A fish, for example, cannot live on land. Similar to how man is naturally made, he has the capacity to think and engage with the world with the goal to grow meaningfully in his understanding. Syed Ahmed contends that the debate between determinism and liberty in the framework of an individual's natural constitution is outside the purview of Islam since it assumes that man is either free or constrained in his behavior. A study of human nature could reveal that there are two ways in which man is constrained in his behavior. One is preoccupied with one's external issues, while the other is more natural in nature. The former holds that a person's behavior changes as a result of exposure to many factors including culture, education, training, environment, and customs. In such circumstances, one feels independent and unaffected by outside forces. According to the latter, every human being possesses an all-encompassing capacity known as *qūwate-e-fikrī* (thinking power), which may be found by introspecting about oneself. This innate aptitude also aids in moral judgment and may help one become more adept at making normative decisions. The ability to follow the correct road, which is *mukallaf*, or responsibility, is another way it encourages self-reformation. Being responsible is the most fundamental quality that sets humans apart from other animals. Syed Ahmed really seems to be saying that man is capable of acting responsibly when he listens to the message of nature. Since God endowed humans with the ability to think at the moment of creation, fully exploring one's nature facilitates critical study of the text and may lead to a deeper comprehension. Because the truth will always be the truth, regardless of what others may think. It must be understood from a normative perspective. It implies that seeking the truth is one's highest duty rather than only depending on man's (stipulative, textual). Syed Ahmed expands on the notion that human thought ensures the possibility

of mental development and facilitates the exploration of things' hidden nature by stating that all men possess an ability known as nūr-e-qalb (the light of heart) or just nūr-e-fitrat (light of nature), which is what led Abraham to recognize truth as stated in the Qur'an's verse 79 in Sūrat al-An'ām: *“For me, I have turned my face, firmly as well as truly, to Him Who created the skies and the planet, and do not shall I present partners to Allah.”*

Syed Ahmed claims that this poem expresses Abraham's belief in the truth. Abraham never lost up on his quest for truth, even though he was raised in a setting where religion was predicated on idol worship. He makes use of the divinely sent light of his heart to investigate the metaphysical splendor concealed underneath this material universe. He never finds worshipping idols appealing, and to borrow Syed Ahmed's words, he disobeys the authority of his ancestors' religion and tradition. Owing to his unshakable dedication to the truth and ultimate reality, he ultimately discovers reality in the person of the Almighty Being (God) and states that Allah alone is the creator of everything.

Syed Ahmed's naturalism has occasionally been attacked under the guise of using natural science methods to support the presence of God. It undermines faith in God and conveys the idea that scientific knowledge is superior to Holy Scripture. Syed Ahmed makes an effort to soften this image. He claims that the idea that natural science is superior than the revealed text is predicated on the idea that scientific research and naturalism are discussing the same topics. He argues that there is no comparison between the natural sciences and naturalism because they deal with separate topics. Therefore, it is unjustified to argue that God becomes ma'zūl (which is distinct from the entirety of the universe) when natural knowledge is used. For example, natural scientists focus on how a certain

amount of hydrogen and oxygen combine to form water; they are not interested in the reasons behind this phenomenon or in the identities of those who are responsible for creating such pairings. However, naturalist theologians, or *necharīlāhīyyūn*, prefer to investigate the hidden essence of things rather than emphasizing how they exist. Rather than limiting oneself to appearance, they are curious about the divine purpose underlying this seeming reality and how to apply cognitive abilities to the revealed text to grasp the meaning and purpose of creation.

Syed Ahmed responds to the argument put forward by those who think that the presence of natural law implies God's suspension by stating that God's creation of natural order in no way implies that He has no say in human matters. His misconception stems from a limited understanding of God that views God primarily as a creator rather than as a sustainer. Another issue is the misconception about the rule of nature, according to which some scholars believe Syed Ahmed is studying the metaphysical study of nature (naturalistic thinking as a doctrine), seeing it as a separate entity from God. Conversely, he wants to draw attention to the fundamental metaphysical ideas that are needed to advance naturalism as an explanatory framework, as was previously stated. Syed Ahmed believes that there are three categories of natural science academics that may be used to better explain and define his position on the distinctions between naturalism as well as natural science (*firqa*). One stands for people who think matter and its many combinations are what created everything and that the world is dependant on this idea. They claim that the law of nature is unchangeable and incomprehensible since it cannot be comprehended by natural science. Therefore, asserting God's existence as

the first premise is pointless. Such supporters of the sciences of nature are referred to as (atheists), according to Syed Ahmed ⁶. Some people believe that knowledge of any type cannot exist without the domain of natural science. Furthermore, they would rather maintain their skepticism regarding God's existence because natural science is unable to establish his presence. They contend that while God could exist, there is no way to know for sure.

These natural scientists are known as agnostics, or *lā adriyyāh*. Third, those, who support nature and the natural law and think that God is the creator of both. These academics are currently referred to as naturalists or adherents of *thayth* (correct) Islam, while in the past they were referred to as *hukmā'* (prudent) theologians. The purpose of Syed Ahmed's classification of natural philosophers into these three groups is to highlight the fact that his theory of naturalism is an effort to create a link between God and nature and to argue that nature is meaningless in the absence of God. Put another way, it tends to show that God created the rules of nature and that, as the creator, He is not subject to it. Syed Ahmed's theory of the rule of causality may be used to analyze another argument against his naturalism and the issue of God's suspension. The law of nature can also be expressed through the law of interaction between cause and effect. According to C.W. Troll, *the eight tenets of the usūl al-tafsīr clearly explain Sir Sayyid's theologically grounded case for the reality and indestructibility of the rules of nature as a whole and each law of nature in particular: In the Qur'an, God makes verbal pledges that He will never*

⁶ Rusk, Robert R. "The doctrines of the great educators." (*No Title*) (1969).

renege on. A portion of these assurances make up the natural law that the cosmos was built upon. The natural law is an operational (procedural) covenant (WA'dah-i 'amali). God has revealed to man some of this rule of nature, and man has also discovered some (but not much) of it. However, what has been found is definitely God's operational promise, the violation of which would equate to the violation of God's verbal promise, which is impossible⁷ (Troll, 1979).

Syed Ahmed distinguishes between 'illat ul 'alal (God as the First Cause) and 'illat (cause). According to him, the procedure of cause and ma'lūl (effect) in connection to the Prime Cause is what one needs to comprehend the most. Because "cause" is a relative phrase that might refer to the result of another cause. Being the source of all effects, the primary cause cannot be distinguished from the Cause, either directly or indirectly. It is not restricted to any specific causal connection between items or events. It implies that one must consider the First Cause in order to fully comprehend the significance of the apparent causal link between occurrences. In order to demonstrate his concept of causality concerning the impossibility of God's suspension, Syed Ahmed makes reference to the definition of ahātah (encompassing knowledge) found in Sūrat al-Hā Mīm verse 54: *"Yes, exactly! He is the one who encompasses everything!*

The aforementioned verse discusses God's omnipresence while also addressing individuals who, because of their limited vision, do not see God as a Creator whose knowledge is all-encompassing and, as a result, do not believe in the Day of Judgment. However, they are ignorant of the fact that they will be held responsible for their actions on that day, which

Troll. "Syed Ahmed Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology". *Oxford University Press*. (1979).

cannot be avoided. This verse demonstrates the majesty of God by stating that He is the ultimate reality and that nothing is outside of His knowledge since He is the one who created everything and maintains order. Syed Ahmed also references Sūrat al-Nūr's verse 35, which states, "Allah is the Light that illuminates the skies and the earth," in this regard. According to Syed Ahmed, God employs the tamthīl (symbol) of light in this verse to illustrate the idea that, just as everything depends on light for manifestation, so too does everything depend on God for existence. This is the reason that God identifies Himself as Khaliq (the creator) and as nūr (light) in the aforementioned verse, among other places in the Qur'an. Something that breaks through obscurity and broadens one's viewpoint is light. It implies that one cannot explain God's suspension by attempting to comprehend the initial cause by contemplation of the natural law. This kind of difficulty comes up when naturalism is misunderstood as a metaphysical philosophy and is treated as something actual in and of itself rather than as Syed Ahmed's conception of it as an epistemic endeavor. Because of his limited intelligence, man is unable to know things the way God understand them. Therefore, it appears ridiculous to ask about God's suspension after creating the ideal laws of nature. Referring to some of the Qur'ānic verses mentioned above can help one better comprehend the said issue. These verses state that everything depends on God for its existence and survival, and as a result, there is no question about God's suspension from overseeing the affairs of this universe due to natural law after creation.

DISCUSSION

From the discussion above, two important concepts that Syed Ahmed emphasized in his works can be inferred. These ideas were important to the development of his thinking since they gave rise to a critical

reevaluation of the Islamic intellectual heritage. With such a mindset, Muslims in India might be able to follow the path of growth with people from all over the world. Modern education is the other, and naturalism is the first.

1. Naturalism:

Ahmed and Amin, (2021) presented that view that his idea of naturalism should be distinguished from the diverse forms of naturalism that were created in nineteenth-century Europe in order to be properly analyzed⁸. Syed Ahmed's naturalism, as I have previously stated, is only an epistemic attempt to logically explain the relationship between God, man, and nature as well as the reason behind man's creation. In no way does it adhere to the philosophical thought that influenced certain of his European contemporaries, especially those of the nineteenth century, who tended to establish nature as reality independent of any supernatural presence. Syed Ahmed claims that the laws of nature represent the permanent patterns required to govern the events of this cosmos as well as the majesties of God's underlying designs. Syed Ahmed has been called *hadrat-e-nachariā* (naturalist people) by many detractors who unjustly claimed that his naturalism was an attempt to create a rival religion influenced by Western naturalism and modern sciences. Syed Ahmed effectively used verse 30 of *Sūrat al Rūm* in his thought-provoking and must be understood in its real spirit answer to such criticism:

It is the basic religion, although most people do not understand it.

⁸ Ahmed, Tanjeel, and Muhammad Amin. "Nationalism, Patriotism and Political Ideas of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: an Analysis." *International Journal Ihya'Ulum al-Din* 23, no. 2 (2021): 138-151.

"Therefore, set thy face steadily and truly to the faith: (establish) Allah's handiwork in accordance with the framework on how he has made human beings: no shift (let their be) in the works (wrought) by Allah."

According to Syed Ahmed, the goal of the introduction of Islam was to assist humanity in removing all limitations placed by society in the name of custom and tradition, rather than the inherent potential of each individual, which is meant to be realized in accordance with God's Will. He really alludes as Shah Wali Allah as well as Ibn-e-Abbas, who had interpreted "God's nature" as "God's religion" in their Quraniiii comments, in order to support his argument on what nature means in the context of Islam. It implies that the greatest approach to discover the hidden complexities of nature is to use one's logical ability to comprehend and interpret the revealed text in order to fully comprehend religion, while also expressing one's innate talent without fear of so-called norms and customs.

Modernity in Education:

According to Qidwai (2021), Syed Ahmed's notion of contemporary education, in my opinion, follows logically from his philosophy of naturalism and makes sense when considered in the context of his opinions on the Eastern and Western sciences⁹. One of the strongest supporters of Western education, Syed Ahmed welcomed Lord Macaulay's suggestion to introduce English as a teaching language and the Western sciences into the Indian educational system. He criticizes people who hold the opinion that Macaulay, a devout man, thinks Asian faiths and culture are outmoded and unreasonable and that modern education should take their place. Syed

⁹ Qidwai, Sarah Ahmed. *Sir Syed (1817-1898) and Science: Popularization in Nineteenth Century India*. University of Toronto (Canada), 2021.

Ahmed argues that modern education is necessary for both Muslims and Hindus because he wanted people to become acquainted with the knowledge and learning practices that are prevalent in the West and are responsible for the prosperity and growth of the English country. The government's decision to support European philosophy and sciences in India, as well as the establishment of three Western-style institutions, are directly attributable to Macaulay's efforts. According to Syed Ahmed, it is hard to comprehend why most Indians, especially those in Punjab, are raising their voices in support of the eastern sciences. According to him, the three primary languages included in these sciences are Sanskrit, Arabic, along with Persian. He clarifies that while these are unquestionably the greatest languages, learning these languages is not the real purpose of education. Furthermore, an examination of Arabic and Persian literature reveals that, despite its expressiveness and artistic richness, it lacks the ability to evoke an individual's innate skills because of its legendary and romantic qualities, which appeal to feelings rather than logic (Ahmad, 2022). The fact that most of this literature is created to appease aristocrats and rulers is another issue with it¹⁰. According to Syed Ahmed, the people of India might draw inspiration from philosophy, the science of logic, and other Western-developed fields to aid in the improvement of education, philosophy, alongside logic on a broader scale. According to Syed Ahmed, the development of civilization and humanity rests on an individual's capacity to identify the innate abilities that God

¹⁰ Ahmad, Humaira. "Pioneering Apologetic Rationalism in the Sub-Continent: Syed Ahmad Khan and Syed Ameer Ali." *Nuqtah Journal of Theological Studies* 2, no. 2 (2022): 203-223.

imbued in each of us at the moment of creation¹¹ (Waseem, 2014). This might help someone in the educational process reach their full potential. This implies that his conception of contemporary education must be interpreted within the framework of naturalism, which is based on the revealed text, the final source of doctrine. He wished to underline that the most important things that need to be addressed are the situation of the Muslims today, the growth of knowledge, and changing circumstances of living. To have a deeper understanding, these aspects must be evaluated in the context of the sensory and cognitive faculties that nature has given to humans. Similar to how Syed Ahmed's naturalism differs from Western naturalism, as I have already described, his idea of contemporary education also has its roots in the revealed text. The term "modern" is not entirely new since, contrary to what some of his rivals have stated, Syed Ahmed does not intend to substitute it with traditions by adopting this phrase. It implies that his philosophy of contemporary education aims to cultivate an open-minded mentality that is prepared to learn anything, regardless of whether it comes from Western or Eastern scientific disciplines. According to him, adopting such a method is crucial for gaining an unbiased understanding of the Western sciences, which may be beneficial for one's personal situation and serve as motivation for critical and logical thought¹² (Anwar, 2023).

Here are five suggestions for more study based on the article's content:

Historical Comparative Analysis:

¹¹ Waseem, Filza. "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the identity formation of Indian Muslims through education." *Review of History and Political Science* 2, no. 2 (2014): 131-148.

¹² Anwar, Naheed. "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Multifarious Activities in England." *PERENNIAL JOURNAL OF HISTORY* 4, no. 1 (2023): 154-173.

Further study may build on this comparison of Syed Ahmed's naturalism and Western naturalism. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic, this may entail a historical comparative analysis of how naturalist philosophies have changed in relation to various religious and cultural contexts.

Naturalism's Empirical Application in Education:

Building on this article's observations, Belmekki (2009) further examined how naturalistic concepts are really put to use in modern educational settings, especially in nations where Islam is a major influence¹³. It would be beneficial to look into how naturalistic principles fit with contemporary curriculum design and teaching methods.

Conversations between Religions and Naturalism:

Future studies on the compatibility of naturalism with other religious traditions might center on interfaith conversations, considering the significance of revealed wisdom and religious texts in the article. It might be beneficial to investigate how naturalistic principles can promote better communication and collaboration amongst different religious communities.

Syed Ahmed's Naturalism's Influence:

Kidwai (2020) stated that it would be possible to conduct a more thorough investigation of how Syed Ahmed's naturalism philosophy has influenced contemporary educational concepts and practices, particularly in Islamic

¹³ Belmekki, Belkacem. "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's framework for the educational uplift of the Indian Muslims during British Raj." *Anthropos* H. 1 (2009): 165-172.

nations¹⁴. This would include researching the degree to which his concepts have been incorporated into institutions and policies related to education.

The implications of naturalism for philosophy:

The philosophical ramifications of naturalism in the context of justifying religious texts can be explored in more detail in future studies. A more thorough grasp of this method would result from investigating the wider ramifications of applying naturalism to the interpretation of religious texts in other belief systems, not only Islam.

These suggestions seek to enhance our grasp of naturalism's philosophical and historical relevance while investigating new facets and applications of the theory in educational and ecumenical contexts. They also attempt to expand on the information and insights brought out by the current study.

The exploration of Syed Ahmed's naturalism reveals a nuanced perspective that integrates Islamic principles with modern educational ideals. Unlike Western naturalism of the 19th century, which often sought to replace religious frameworks with scientific ones, Ahmed's approach emphasizes harmony between rationalism and revelation. By grounding his naturalistic theory in Islamic teachings, Ahmed asserts that nature, including human potential and growth, is intricately linked to divine creation and purpose. This perspective not only enriches our understanding of educational philosophy within an Islamic context but also highlights how Islam can accommodate progress without compromising its foundational beliefs.

¹⁴ Kidwai, Shafey. *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: Reason, Religion and Nation*. Routledge India, 2020.

Conclusion:

In essence, Syed Ahmed's naturalism offers a compelling framework for advancing education within Islamic societies, fostering a balanced approach that respects tradition while embracing modernity. By aligning educational practices with Islamic naturalism, there emerges a pathway to reconcile intellectual development with spiritual integrity, ensuring that advancements in knowledge remain rooted in faith.

This conclusion underscores the significance of Syed Ahmed's contributions, positioning his naturalistic interpretation as a bridge between Islamic tradition and contemporary educational aspirations, thereby promoting a holistic vision of human growth and societal progress.



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