

## Nawab Abdul Latif (b. 1823 - d. 1893)

During nineteenth century, India produced two types of Muslim scholars and reformers; one group included the traditionalists (like Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi, the founder of the famous *dar ul-uloom* (Islamic seminary) in Deoband; Haji Shariatullah, an influential Islamic scholar and revivalist of Bengal, and Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, the initiator of the Jihad movement in northern India). The main task of the traditionalist scholars was to call the masses back to the fold of original, pristine Islam.

The other influential group of Muslim scholars and reformers who emerged in the subcontinent at the time adopted a reformist (modernist) approach to Islamic thought and practices. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Aligarh movement, was one such reformer. Disillusioned with the pitiful social, political, economic and intellectual condition of the Indian Muslims at the time, Sir Sayyid argued that the Muslims had no choice but to cooperate with the ruling British authorities to enhance their political standing and, at the same time, pursue modern education and learning (especially that of modern science, philosophy and technology) in order to reinvigorate Islamic thought and thereby improve the existential condition of the Indian Muslims.

Such a reformist approach to Islamic thought and culture was also shared by Nawab Abdul Latif of Calcutta, who is today widely considered to be the father of Islamic modernism and re-awakening in Bengal.

Nawab Abdul Latif was born into an educated and respected Muslim family in the district of Faridpur in East Bengal (located in present-day Bangladesh). His family traced their ancestry back to a notable family of Arabia whose members moved to Bengal during the Muslim rule of India and settled in East Bengal.....

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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