

**T.C.  
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY  
INSITUTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**THE INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT OF THE BENGALI  
MUSLIMS(1858-1924)**

**Abdulla AL MAHMUD**

**DOCTORAL THESIS**

**Thesis Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Fikrettin YAVUZ**

**JANUARY - 2023**

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**“This thesis was defended hybrid on 26/01/2023 and was unanimously accepted by the jury members whose names are listed below.”**

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- The use of humans and animals (including material/data) for experimental or other scientific purposes,
- Clinical studies on humans,
- Research on animals,
- Retrospective studies in accordance with the personal data protection law.)

**Abdulla AL MAHMUD**

**26/01/2023**

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## **ABBREVIATION**

<b>DUCL</b>	: Dhaka University Central Library
<b>E.B. &amp; A</b>	: East Bengal and Assam
<b>F.O</b>	: Foreign Office
<b>FA</b>	: Foreign Affairs
<b>H. of C.</b>	: House of Common
<b>DUCL</b>	: Dhaka University Central Library
<b>H.L.</b>	: House of Lords
<b>I. E.</b>	: in other words
<b>I. O. L.</b>	: Indian Offioe Library
<b>ICS</b>	: Indian Civil Service
<b>IHRC</b>	: Indian Historical Records Commission
<b>IIS</b>	: Institute of Indian Studies
<b>INC</b>	: Indian National Congress
<b>JAS</b>	: Journal of Asian Studies
<b>JRAS</b>	: Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
<b>ML</b>	: Muslim League
<b>NLC</b>	: National Library Calcutta
<b>Offg</b>	: Officiating
<b>P/S</b>	: Private Secretary
<b>PRO</b>	: Public Record Office
<b>SECT</b>	: Secretary
<b>Ttn</b>	: The Times-News

## ABSTRACT

**Title of Thesis:**The Intellectual Movement of the Bengali Muslims Against the British Imperial Power (1858-1924)

**Author of Thesis:** Abdulla AL MAHMUD

**Supervisor:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fikrettin YAVUZ

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The purpose of this study is to investigate and give a complete picture of the dynamics of the intellectual movement of the Muslims of Bengal from 1858 to 1924. The main objective is to deeply analyze the integrated movement for education, social and economic development, self-determination, and the development of political consciousness of the Muslims of British-ruled Bengal (Colonial Bengal). Additionally, The reasons for the backwardness of Muslims in all aspects, including socioeconomic and education, were explored in detail during the British colonial rule.

Moreover, the dynamics of the policy of compromise and modern education adopted by Muslim intellectuals after 1858 to improve the fate of the Muslim nation and to overcome the crisis of identity by avoiding the path of conflict against the British are presented. The struggle of the Muslim intellectuals of Bengal in the late nineteenth century under British colonial rule for modern education, the English language, the publication of newspapers, and the development of academic institutions like the Muslims of other parts of the Indian subcontinent is described. The relationship between the Hindu-Muslim and the League-Congress centered on the Partition of Bengal from 1905 to 1911 and the conflict between them was explained. The reaction of Congress to the establishment of the formal political organization of the Muslims, in 1906 and its impact on the government are also discussed. The role of Muslims in the establishment of Dhaka University and the adverse conditions faced by Muslims for its establishment have been examined. The important political awareness that Muslims learned through the Khilafat Movement (1919-1924) in the subcontinent has been analyzed impartially. This thesis is based on the Archival document, the government's official records, newspaper reports, and primary and secondary sources.

**Keywords:**Muslims,Bengal,Intellectuals,Movement,Britain,Colonialism,Reform

## ÖZET

**Başlık:** İngiliz İmparatorluk Gücüne Karşı Bengal Müslümanlarının Fikri Hareketi (1858-1924)

**Yazar:** Abdulla Al MAHMUD

**Danışman:**Doç. Dr. Fikretin YAVUZ

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Bu çalışmada, 1858'den 1924'e kadar Bengal Müslümanlarının (Colonial Bengal) İngilizlerin İdaresi'nde yaşadığı değişim süreci sosyal, siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel açıdan bir bütün şeklinde ele alınarak derinlemesine analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca Bengal Müslümanlarının İngiliz sömürge yönetimi sırasında sosyoekonomik ve eğitim dâhil olmak üzere yaşadığı geri kalmışlık her yönüyle incelenerek ayrıntılı olarak anlatılmaya çalışılmıştır. Müslüman aydınlar, 1858'den sonra Müslüman Bengal ulusunun kaderini tayin etmek amacıyla İngilizlere karşı herhangi bir silahlı çatışmadan kaçınarak uzlaşma ve modern eğitim politikalarıyla kimlik krizini aşmak için gayret göstermiştir. Bengal Müslüman aydınları, XIX. yüzyılın sonlarından itibaren İngiliz sömürge yönetimi altında eğitimin modernleşmesi, gazetelerin yayınlanması ve Hindistan alt kıtasındaki diğer Müslümanlar gibi akademik kurumların geliştirilmesi için mücadele etmişlerdir. Yine bu çalışmada Hindu-Müslüman ve Lig Kongresi arasındaki ilişki ve Bengal'in 1905'ten 1911'e bölünmesi ele alınmıştır. Kongre'de 1906'da Müslümanların resmi siyasi örgütlenmesinin kurulmasına tepkisi ve bunun hükümet üzerindeki etkisi de tartışılmıştır. Dakka Üniversitesi'nin kurulmasında, Bengal Müslümanlarının rolü ve kuruluşu sırasında karşılaştıkları olumsuz koşullar incelenmiş, Müslümanların kıtada Hilafet Hareketi (1919-1924) aracılığıyla öğrendikleri önemli siyasi farkındalık objektif bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir. Bu tezde, Arşiv belgeleri, hükümetin resmi kayıtları, gazeteler ile telif ve araştırma eserleri kullanılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:**Müslümanlar, Bengal,Aydınlar,Hareket,Britanya,Sömürgecilik,Reform

## INTRODUCTION

“The Intellectual Movement of the Muslims of Bengal” under British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent in the second half of the nineteenth century played a major role in creating the context for Muslims to develop their separate identities, including education, socio-economic and political power. Bengal (now Bangladesh and West Bengal in India) is a Muslim territory in South Asia, also known as one of the oldest regions in the Indian subcontinent. Muslim rule of Bengal had been established over a vast area for hundreds of years, under which different nations lived in peace for centuries. Before the arrival of the British, peace and order prevailed in Bengal in almost all areas, including religious, social and political. “Bengal” was known as one of the wealthiest provinces of the Mughal Empire,<sup>1</sup> as Muslims ruled Bengal for approximately five centuries, from 1204 to 1757. The British East India Company annexed Bengal through the Battle of Plassey in 1757, ending Muslim rule and Muslims suffered politically, economically and socially due to British colonial rule. With the economic intervention of the British, the economy of Bengal was almost crippled.<sup>2</sup> For almost a century (1757-1857) after the Plassey War, Muslims did not accept foreign rule in Bengal and did not adopt any policy of compromise with the British. At that time almost all of Muslim society, from the aristocracy to the religious community and the middle and lower classes, were involved in the anti-British movement. They waged many movements and armed revolts against the British, the biggest of which was in 1857(the Sepoy revolt) but despite losing many battles, the British maintained control over the Bengal.

After 1858, Muslims changed their plans as they entered a crisis of self-identity as advancement in education, political awareness and survival of economic competition formed great challenges in the context of the social changes occurring at the time. Although the spread of modern education, social institutions and the development of political consciousness in the Indian subcontinent, including Bengal, started in the early nineteenth century, Muslims did not participate in its early stages. However, at that

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Abdur Rahim, “An Aspect of Muslim Bengal Culture,” *The Proceedings of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Sixth session, Vol. I, No 2, (Karachi:Pakistan Historical Society, 1956), p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Nani Gopal, Chaudhury, *Cartier Governor of Bengal 1769-1772*, (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhapadhyay, 1960), p. 31.

time, the rival Hindu community changed their destiny by taking advantage of various opportunities, including English language education and modern education at the beginning of colonial rule. In this context, Muslim intellectuals started an intellectual movement from 1858 to the second half of the twentieth century to increase self-awareness, modern education, socio-economic development and political consciousness.

It is necessary to examine in what process and structure this intellectual movement was conducted. This thesis attempts to address this issue, which some have noticed is a historical problem that demands research. In this framework, various periodization's have been created to work on the "intellectual movement question of the Muslims of Bengal" under the British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent. Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 or the Government of India Act of 1858 is considered one of the turning points in the intellectual movement of Muslims. During this time, the colonial government adopted a liberal policy toward Muslims of the subcontinent, thereby improving Muslims' quality of education and providing economic benefits, which played a role in establishing a balance between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Muslims have long before become aware of themselves, but since the great uprising of 1857, this process gained pace. During this time, some intellectuals, thinkers and activists in the Muslim society of Bengal believed in the reality of a changing world order. Instead of revolting against the colonial rulers, this intellectual community of Muslims took various steps, including compromises for national development. This period (1858-1905) can be described as the stage of preparation for the creation of intellectual awareness as the coming of modernity had forced Muslims to reorganize and renew their action plans. To confront the demands of the new world order, they attempted to master modern education and values. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Muslim intellectuals began a brutal struggle for the self-improvement and self-awareness of Muslims under British colonial rule. The Muslims of Bengal, like Muslims in other parts of the Indian subcontinent, paid particular attention to the development of modern education, the English language and academic institutions, meetings and societies.

After 1905, the Muslim community of Bengal entered a new era, which can be defined as the period of efforts to develop Muslims' political consciousness. The establishment

of the Muslim League in Bengal in 1906 marked the beginning of a landmark change in various fields, including realizing the rights and interests of Muslims of the whole of India, including Bengal. The development of the national consciousness of Muslims was organized through the formation of the Muslim League. What were the bases of political relations between the Muslim League, the Congress and the Colonial Government during this period? How did the relationship between Hindu-Muslim and the League-Congress become hostile to the Partition of Bengal from 1905 to 1911? What was the reaction of Congress to the establishment of the Muslim League or the official political organization of the Muslims, and how did it affect the government? Based on these themes, the thesis intends to create a factual basis for understanding this historical moment.

With the abolition of the Partition of Bengal in 1911, a new problem arose in the development and reform of education centered on the establishment of Dhaka University in East Bengal, an issue with which Muslims had long been occupied. Due to the administrative change of government (Repeal of Partition of Bengal in 1911), Bengali intellectuals became quite concerned about the progress of Muslim education. To compensate for this, they put political and social pressure on the colonial government to establish a university in Dhaka, the capital of East Bengal. Later, on February 2, 1912, the government was obligated to authorize the university's founding.<sup>3</sup> The government promised to establish a university as a strategy to calm down and resist the Muslim movement due to the partition of Bengal, which the government did not have the will to implement. Later the government could not provide budget and land due to the economic crisis. At the same time, the First World War broke out, giving the government sufficient pretext to delay the establishment of the university. Although the Muslims lagged far behind in education for a long time, the people of East Bengal were in crisis due to the delay in establishing the university, which had an impact on all spheres, including the politics and economy of Bengal. Moreover, Nawab Sir Salim Ullah, the prominent leader of the Bengal Muslim League, donated his house in Shah bag and the adjoining 600 acres of land to establish the university. Although almost everything was ready for the establishment of the university, bureaucratic complexities

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<sup>3</sup>Muhammad Abdur, Rahim, *The History of the University of Dacca*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Publisher University of Dacca, 1881), p. 5.

were created, which centered on the complex relationship of Muslims with the government.

Besides the deterioration of government-Muslim relations over the establishment of Dhaka University, another problem was created from the obstruction or opposition of Hindus in the higher education of Muslims. From the beginning, political leaders, intellectuals, teachers, lawyers, elite business people and journalists of the Hindu community in Bengal opposed and objected to the government's decision.<sup>4</sup> Upper-caste Hindus worried that if an international standard university was established in East Bengal, it could lead to great progress for Muslims in education and economics, thereby destroying Indian nationalism and establishing Muslim authority over the Hindus.<sup>5</sup> Among the Hindu leaders, Ashutosh Mukherjee, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, and the politician Surendra Nath Banerjee were particularly well-known for their opposition.<sup>6</sup> They also believed that the government was conspiring to obstruct the advancement of the Hindu community by approving the University in East Bengal. On 18 February 1912, a group of Hindu leaders met the Viceroy of the Government; they pleaded not to establish the University, saying that it was a matter of dividing Bengal internally.<sup>7</sup> They repeatedly attempted to convince the government from 1912 until the founding of the university while threatening to engage in protests, armed conflict, blockades and other forms of non-cooperation.

With the development and reform of Muslim education in contemporary times, the “Khilafat Movement” emerged as an essential issue that occupied the Muslim-Hindu community a long time and affected the entire subcontinent, including Bengal, politically, economically and socially. Although the main phase of this movement took place from 1919 to 1924, it dominated the subcontinent for about ten years, from the time of the First World War to 1924. The Muslims of India have long been discontented over the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan Wars of 1912, the Tripoli massacre of 1911 and the European powers' long hostility and conspiracies against the Ottoman

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<sup>4</sup> Calcutta University Commission Report, Vol. VI, (1917-1919), p.112.

<sup>5</sup> Sheikh Masum, Kamal, “*Dhaka Bisshobiddalay Pprothisthsr Bippker Rajniti Abong Ttatkalin Bango Samaj (Politics and the then Bangasamaj against the establishment of Dhaka University)*”, 2nd. Edition (Dhaka: DyutiPrakashani, 2017), p.56.

<sup>6</sup> Syed Abul, Maqsood, *Dhaka Bisshobiddalayabong Bangladesher Uchosikkha (Dhaka University and Higher Education in Bangladesh)*, 2nd. Edition (Dhaka: Prothoma Publication, 2017), p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Sheikh Masum, Kamal, “*Dhaka Bisshobiddalay Pprothisthsr Bippker Rajniti Abong Ttatkalin Bango Samaj (Politics and the then Bangasamaj against the establishment of Dhaka University)*”, p. 52.

Empire, the leader of the Muslim world at the time. When the First World War broke out in 1914, the colonial government closely observed the Muslims of the subcontinent due to their concerns over Muslim sympathy towards the Ottoman Caliphate or Sultan.<sup>8</sup> During World War I, the government gave them various assurances as a strategy to win the support of Muslims and keep them calm. But after the end of the War in 1918, the government joined hands with the international community to plot the dismemberment of the Ottoman Sultanate, the deportation of the Caliph and the occupation of Muslim holy places, including Mecca and Medina. At that time, Muslim leaders met with the British government and demanded security for the Caliph and the holy places, but the government did not respond. Instead, the government continued to conspire with their international allies.<sup>9</sup> When the hopes of Muslims were dashed, they started a strong movement against the government centered on the Turkish caliphate at the same time that the Hindu community was carrying out a non-cooperation movement against the government. The Hindu-Muslim communities formed a single platform centered on the struggle against the colonial government on the Khilafat and the non-cooperation movement.

This case study is significant in showing the progress of self-formation and national development of the Muslims of Bengal. In this context, this study discusses the events of the intellectual activity of Muslims in Bengal from 1858 to 1924 in a systematic research framework. This thesis seeks to understand how Muslims were able to reach the mainstream again in a short time after 1857, despite the loss of political power, educational backwardness, social prejudice, religious narrow-mindedness and economic crisis. Similarly, the study finds that the intellectual activity of Muslims in the second half of the nineteenth century was closely linked to historical and political issues, such as pan-Islamism, nationalism, self-determination or competition for self-determination. Moreover, emphasis has been laid on how the political and social relations between the three parties, that is, the colonial rulers, Hindus and Muslims, were formed after 1858 and on the basis for the nature of its dynamics.

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<sup>8</sup>Shafique Ali, Khan, "The Khilafat Movement." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 34, no. 1 (1986): 33.

<sup>9</sup>Mushirul, Hasan, *Nationalism and communal politics in India, 1916-1928*. (South Asia Books: 1979), p. 34.

This study is divided into three sections to analyze the needs, objectives, importance, course of action, dynamics, challenges, realities, obstacles, successes and implications of the intellectual movement of Muslims in Bengal. The first chapter, entitled “The Political Transformation of Bengal and the Reorganization of Muslim Thought”, discusses various issues, including a brief but precise description of the geographical location of Muslim Bengal. The following section provides an initial idea of the end of Muslim rule and the beginning of the East India Company's colonial regime. The following section describes how Muslims were deprived of their educational, financial, social and political rights under colonial rule. The next part of the study deals with the basic movements and struggles against the colonial rule, particularly noteworthy among which are the Fakir Sannyasi Rebellion (1770), the Faraizi Movement (1820) and the Peasant Rebellion and the Great Rebellion or Independence Movement (1858). The next part of the chapter discusses the government's attitude and policy toward Muslims as the British East India Company's rule in the Indian subcontinent ended in 1858, with the direct rule of the British government instated instead. In addition to changing the perspectives of Muslim intellectuals in the Shesangs, it leddiscussion on how to combine the principles of traditional Islam with Western education, the English language and the modern system.

The second chapter, entitled “Contribution of the Leading Intellectuals and Activists”, discusses the activities of the leading intellectuals and activists of the time. The first part deals with Nawab Abdul Latif Khan, known as one of the leading intellectuals of the intellectual movement who is also called the pioneer of the Muslim renaissance. This part will analyze his visionary decisions, well-thought-out views and shrewd steps. The next part of the chapter discusses Syed Amir Ali, one of the greatest intellectuals of the time who played a memorable role in reviving the Muslims not only in Bengal but in the entire subcontinent. This chapter discusses his established organization, books and reform activities. This chapter discusses also includes a comparative discussion with Amir Ali on the methods of Nawab Abdul Latif and the famous intellectual scholar Syed Ahmed Khan of North India, the similarities and differences of thought and action. The next part of the chapter analyzes the cultural activities of Munshi Meherullah, a leading regional activist at the time and his resistance movements against the propaganda of Christian missionaries. The following section deals with the writings of

the famous Bengali writer and journalist Mosharrif Hossain, which impacted Bengali Muslims. Exclusive aspects of Begum Rokeya's women's awakening activities have been presented. Basically, the second chapter paints a complete picture of the thoughts, theories, working methods, activities, writings, reform movements and various aspects of their influence on the society of eminent intellectuals.

The third chapter, entitled “The Role of Socio-Political Organizations and Educational Institutions in the Intellectual Movement”, describes some of the essential institutions and socio-political organizations established in Bengal by the Muslims. The first part deals with the Muslim League (1906), the leading socio-political organization founded by the Muslims, which was formed by the concerted efforts of almost all the Muslim intellectuals of the then Indian subcontinent. The challenges of establishing the Muslim League, the obstacles, the contests, the modus operandi, the contributions, the effects and the nature of the activities are discussed in detail. The next part of the study discusses the Khilafat movement and its role in developing the political consciousness of Muslims. It will also discuss how this movement raised the political awareness of Bengali Muslims. The next part of the chapter discusses the context of the establishment of Dhaka University as an essential institution, Hindu opposition and the government's reluctance. The organization's contribution to the development and awakening of Muslim education is furthermore discussed. The last part of the thesis depicts the effects of the intellectual movement on the society and politics of the entire Indian subcontinent.

### **The Method of Study**

In this study, the author employed a qualitative research method by an analytical and interpretive approach to analyze primary and secondary sources. The study was conducted through a systematic framework to closely monitor the identified sources and analyze the primary & secondary sources. History researchers pay close attention to their source in orders to create a suitable history paper.<sup>10</sup> There are a number of sources in Bengali and English closely related to the intellectual movement in Bengal. These are necessary to understand, analyze and integrate the facts related to the research topic.

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<sup>10</sup>Reinhardt University, *Some Good Advice on the Writing of a Competent History Paper*, (2015), <https://blogs.reinhardt.edu/history/more-from-hamilton/>, Access 13/02/2021.

In the process, among the English language sources, Muhammad Abdur Rahim's (1978) book "The Muslim Society and Politics in Bengal (1757-1947)" describes how Muslims were politically, economically and socially degraded under colonial rule. The book highlights various revolts, movements and reform activities of Muslims as well as various activities of some intellectuals. This is a very important source for a better understanding of the history of Muslims in Bengal. Abdul Majed Khan's book "The Transition in Bengal 1756-1775: A Study of Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan" paints a picture of Bengal's economy during the British rule.<sup>11</sup> It depicts how the British established sole control over trade, occupied the revenue department and changed the economy as a whole through their plans. Muhammad Mohar Ali's book "History of the Muslims of Bengal: Bengal Muslims during the First Century of British Rule" gives an account of how the Muslims formed a resistance movement against the policy of colonial rule and a clear description of how the rulers resisted the Muslim movement. It is considered an essential source for the history of Bengal, as the author uses many primary sources. Sufia Ahmed's book "Muslim Community in Bengal, 1884-1912" describes the thoughts of some famous Muslim intellectuals, including Nawab Abdul Latif and Syed Amir Ali. Related topics are also discussed in William Wilson Hunter's "The Indian Musalmans (1876)"<sup>12</sup> and Jon Wilson's "The Chaos of Empire (The British Raj and the Conquest of India)".<sup>13</sup>

Among the sources written in Bengali, Wakil Ahmed's book, "UnishSotokerBanggaliMusulmanerChintaAbongChatonerDhara (Thoughts and Consciousness of Bengali Muslims in the Nineteenth Century)" (1973) describes various aspects of the education, social and political activities of Bengali Muslim intellectuals as well as the activities of various organizations established by Muslims. M Moniruzzaman's book "UpoMohadesherMusulman (Muslims of the Subcontinent (India-Pakistan-Bangladesh))" (2001) provides various ideas of the Muslim renaissance as well as a brief description of the establishment of the Muslim League and Khilafah movement. Mohammad Abdullah Al Masum's book "British AmleBanglerMuslimShikherSomoshaAbongProser (Problems and Expansion of

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<sup>11</sup>Abdul, Majed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal 1756-1775: A study of Sayid Muhammad Reza Khan*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>12</sup> William Wilson, Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, (London: Trubner & Company, 1876).

<sup>13</sup>Wilson, Jon, *The Chaos of Empire (The British Raj and the Conquest of India)*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2016).

Muslim Education in Bengal during the British Era (181-1941)” (PhD thesis was later published in book form) provides information on the Muslim education movement, reforms and modern educational activities. Although those mentioned above domestic and foreign sources contain precise, effective valuable information, there are many limitations, and the discussion style here is multifaceted and, in some cases, has negative aspects. The most striking limitation of the sources mentioned is that they do not paint a complete picture of the intellectual movement of Muslims in Bengal.

Emphasis has been placed on archival documents as this study's most acceptable primary source, of which newspapers are particularly significant. This thesis will use essential sources from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, including official documents, records, manuscripts, letters, memoirs, military journals and gazetteers of the Government of Bengal. This information has already been collected from various places, including Bangladesh National Archive (Dhaka), Bangladesh National Museum Dhaka, Ahsan Manzil Museum Archive (Dhaka), West Bengal National Archive, and Indian National Archive (Delhi). The Ahsan Manzil Museum Archive contains various descriptions of the contributions of the Muslim Nawabs of Dhaka, which show that the Nawabs played an essential role in spreading education and public awareness among the Muslims of Bengal. The archives of this museum contain the personal diaries and correspondence of Nawab Khwaja Ahsanullah, Nawab Abdul Gani, Nawab Atiqullah and most importantly, Nawab Khwaja Salimullah. Documents relating to the vital role played by the Nawabs of Bengal in the development of Muslim culture have been collected here.

Information about Nawab Abdul Latif and Syed Amir Ali has been collected from the National Archives of West Bengal and Central Library of Alia Madrasa, Calcutta. In addition, documents about the activities of various organizations established by Muslims, including the Mohammedan Literary Society, and the Mohammedan Education Society, founded by Abdul Latif, have been collected here. Documents and letters relating to Bengali of the British Government were collected from the Indian Office in London. This study will additionally use a collaboration of various sources, among which inscriptions, classical books, memoirs, and folklore are particularly significant. In addition, important information will be included by examining specific geographical areas, places and biographies of famous people using various sites on the

Internet. Coming out of the conventional method used in the research will be supported by articles, discussions, comments and various articles based on history related to this research work, and an acceptable conclusion will be reached by relating the latest research related to this topic.

### **The Significance of Study**

In the proposition of thesis writing, the original value such as scientific quality, difference and innovation, how to solve the deficiencies or what kind of solution to the problem or what kind of original methodological/conceptual contributions to the related science have their significance. There is no complete and independent study of the intellectual movement of the Muslims of Bengal at the time mentioned; although several sources and studies have been done on this subject, they did not evaluate the situation well and failed to create an objective framework like the aim of this research. Therefore, previous studies have not been able to properly examine the intellectual movement of Bengal Muslims. Although a few studies have answered various questions on this subject, they have mostly been presented in a fragmentary nature. This study has been prepared by applying several methods using different sources. The thesis thoroughly examines the reformist thinking and intellectual movements of the Muslims, and examines the causes of the eighteenth-century nationalist intellectual movement in detail and impartially. An essential aspect of this study's is that here the intellectuals have expressed their views using the sources where it is seen that very few Muslim intellectuals have been able to influence a sizeable Muslim population in a short period.

This study investigates how some Muslim intellectuals were able to quickly have a significant impact on the Muslim population. This study's analysis of the history of Bengal's Muslims (1858–1924) from an intellectual standpoint is a key component. In addition, the dynamics of the complex realities of Muslims' social, political and economic competition with the Hindu community living in the Indian subcontinent have been thoroughly analyzed. Moreover, Muslims have improved their status through modern education and have become more politically aware. The course of events in this period were analyzed as a whole. In order to better understand the politics and cultural movements of the Muslims, the culture, education and political movements of the neighboring Hindu community have been discussed and criticized at different stages.

Finally, this study presents the dynamic nature of the Bengali Muslims' intellectual movement to fill in the gaps described above, based on a descriptive analysis of the primary and secondary sources.

### **The Objective of the Study**

This study aims to examine the dynamics of the intellectual movement of the Muslims of Bengal from 1858 to 1924. The main objective is to deeply analyze the integrated movement for education, social and economic development, self-determination, and development of political consciousness of the Muslims of British-ruled Bengal (Colonial Bengal). The long period of British colonial rule from 1758 to 1857 deprived the Muslims of the subcontinent in all aspects, including social economic and left them far behind other communities. In this study, the reasons for the backwardness of Muslims will be explored in detail. Moreover, after 1857, a new consciousness arose among Muslim intellectuals to improve the destiny of the Muslim nation. They avoided the path of conflict against the British and made way for improvement by adapting themselves to the modern system through compromise. The dynamics of their thinking are also discussed in this study.

Another objective of the study is to assess the dynamic nature of relations between Muslim and colonial rulers and rival Hindu communities. Cooperative relations between the English rulers and the Muslims, the Hindu community's reaction to the ruler-Muslim relations, hostile attitudes, beliefs and various aspects of honesty will be analyzed. How the rulers dealt with deceptive policies based on Hindu-Muslim cooperation in Bengal after 1911 (after the partition of Bengal) will also be discussed. It also analyzes the role of political-socio-economic and cultural elements in shaping their relationship in order to deepen understanding of the historical events of the time. Another purpose of this study is to provide a complete analysis of the different levels of conflict and competition between intellectuals and conservatives over modern education and the adoption of Western systems.

Like every research work, this study has some limitations and problems. Since it is a somewhat rare and complex study, not many official documents are available its. In this study, the journals of that period have been used more as archive documents. Various references in Bengali, English and Persian have been used to resolve the source crisis.

Another major problem, on the other hand, was the creation of different terminology, including the different chapters of intellectual thought, the different stages of the movement, the search for the history of Muslims and its proper use. Due to the different opinions and analyses of local and foreign authors in the study, research has faced various conditions and complexities. For example, Muslim writers have described the intellectual movement as revolutionary, whereas Hindu writers have described it as a separatist. Hindu writers, intellectuals and their correspondents and spokespersons did not simply accept the rise of Muslims but sought to question and debate it. The academy has many documents about the obstacles they created in establishing large educational institutions in Bengal and increasing the government's budget for education. While some English writers presented it positively, others portrayed it more negatively. There have been difficulties in accurately determining and interpreting the ideas of the intellectual revolution, but despite these limitations, every effort has been made to make the study objective and reach constructive conclusions.

### **The Topic of the Study**

The present study examines the objective history of the dynamic nature of the intellectual movement of the Muslims of Bengal (1858-1924) based on analytical interpretations of the original primary and secondary sources. Originally an independent homeland for Muslims (Pakistan, later Bangladesh) was established when the Indian subcontinent became independent from British colonial rule in 1947 and systematically investigates the contribution of the intellectual movement from 1858 to 1924. The year 1858 is important because, in the aftermath of this period, Muslims got acquainted with modern education, philosophy, literature and culture and decided to advance themselves like other nations of the world. From then on, the colonial rulers gave the Muslims of the subcontinent a chance to move forward by providing them with some economic opportunities, including education and employment. At the same time, Muslims, like their rival Hindu community, were pushing hard for education, economics and political awareness. The survey will examine in detail and impartially the images of their collective struggle for self-improvement, including self-awareness, national development and political consciousness.

# CHAPTER 1: THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION OF BENGAL AND THE REORGANIZATION OF MUSLIM THOUGHT

## 1.1. Bengal as a Muslim Land

Muslims ruled Bengal from 1204 to 1757, i.e., for more than five hundred years. During this long period, Muslims were able to maintain their dominance over Bengal. It was ruled by Muslim sultans from 1204 to 1526 and later by representatives of Muslim Mughal rulers from 1556 to 1757. The contemporary Bengal was inhabited by people of different religions, including Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians but Muslims had supreme power in all spheres, such as political, economic and administrative fields.<sup>14</sup> From 1556 onwards, it was the largest province of the Mughal Empire and was also known as “*Subahi Bangla*.” It was relatively prosperous during the Mughal rule as Bengal underwent tremendous economic, social and political development. However, the empire began to weaken with the end of the regime of the last influential Mughal ruler, Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707), as the empire faced various internal problems which affected different parts of the subcontinent. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, hereditary conflicts started among his descendants and the Maratha community<sup>15</sup> used every opportunity to weaken the central power of the empire.

Accordingly, in history, the period from 1608 to 1757 has been considered one of the catastrophic times in the national life of the Muslims of Bengal.<sup>16</sup> When the center of the Muslim empire in the Indian subcontinent was in turmoil, many subcontinent regions began to function independently, of which Bengal was one. The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb appointed Murshid Quli Khan (1660-1726) as his aide to the ruler of Bengal in 1708 and in 1717 he was appointed the chief ruler of Bengal. After 1707, Bengal became detached from the central government of Delhi and started functioning as an independent sultanate and he led this administration. Although Bengal had relations with

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<sup>14</sup>Mohammad, Abdur Rahim, *History of Muslims of Bengal 1857-1947*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Ahmad Publishing House, 1976), p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>The Marathas are an Indian ethnic group, mainly found in the state of Maharashtra. Its nation emerged in India during the last days of the Mughal Empire. The founder of this nation was Chhatrapati Shivaji. The Marathas fought against the Muslims Empire in the Indian subcontinent for a long time. (A. R. Kulkarni, *The Marathas*, 1st. Edition, Diamond Publications, India, 2008, pp. 3-4).

<sup>16</sup>Asit Kumar, Banerjee, *Bangla Sahitter Itibitto (History of Bengali Literature)*, 1st. Edition (Calcutta: Modern Book Agency, 1963), p. 824.

the central government of Delhi, it was only a formality and it was governed as an independent state. In 1709, After the death of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Delhi fell into an economic, political, and military crisis while the economic condition of Bengal was quite strong. Even Bengal paid an annual tax to Delhi, which was its primary income source.

Murshid Quli Khan, the first independent ruler of Bengal, was an experienced administrator who led Bengal with competence for a long time. He was a visionary ruler who appointed his worthy relatives in the administration of Bengal. These relatives were quite supportive of Murshid Quli Khan in governing Bengal. However, he was strict enough regarding rules and regulations, especially about revenue collection, as he sometimes even punished any perpetrator in terms of revenue collection.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the harsh allegations were hurled against him, but, after all, he was a successful and far-sighted ruler. When he died in Murshidabad in 1726, his relative Sujauddin Mohammad Khan was appointed Subedar (ruler) of Bengal. Since then, the chaos started in Bengal and its result was far-reaching. Sujauddin was a man of simple nature and his experience in administrative matters was not enough. He appointed many Hindus in the government activities of Bengal and patronized them in almost all cases.

After the end of Nawab Sujauddin's regime in 1739, Alaverdi Khan (1676-1756) became the ruler of Bengal who, as the last influential ruler of Bengal, ruled Bengal very efficiently for 16 years, i.e., from 1740 to 1756. During his regime, the Marathas kept the administration busy by invading different parts of Bengal; while they could not occupy Bengal but only created chaos. During Alaverdi Khan's rule, the intervention of the European merchant groups had significantly increased in the internal affairs of Bengal. After the death of Nawab Alaverdi Khan in 1756, his successor Sirajuddaula came to power as the ruler of Bengal. Nawab Sirajuddaula was a young ruler of 17 years who had minimal political experience. Like other parts of the Muslim Empire, Sirajuddaula was confronted by his relatives, which made the reign of Sirajuddaula temporary and weak.<sup>18</sup> Nawab Sirajuddaula was the last independent Muslim ruler of Bengal. In 1757, the British East India Company fought a battle at Palashi against the

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<sup>17</sup>Abdul, Karim, *Murshid Kuli Khan and His Times*, 1st. Edition (Dacca: Asiatic society, 1963), p. 26.

<sup>18</sup>Muin-ud-din ahmad, Khan, *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in Bengal a.d. 1757- 1947*, 2nd. Edition (Dhaka : Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1982), p. 6.

independent Nawab of Bengal, whose defeat ended the Muslim rule in Bengal. Later, about 200 years of English domination was imposed over Bengal under the leadership of the British East India Company.

## **1.2. The Rise of the British East Indian Company in the Bengal Politics**

Bengal has been a prosperous region since ancient times and is related to the famous trade route from the port of Aden in Yemen to the port of Canton in China.<sup>19</sup> The arrival of Muslims in Bengal began in the Middle Ages. Many ethnic groups came to Bengal throughout the ages for various purposes, including trade. In the fifteenth century, different issues, including the discovery of waterways from Europe to India, the economic crisis in Europe and the widespread demand for spices in the temperate zone, brought the European merchant community to the Indian subcontinent. The Europeans travelled to several parts of Asia, including Aden, the port of Jeddah, and the Strait of Malacca, for commercial purposes. At last, they anchored off the coast of Bengal and chose Bengal as their primary trading area.<sup>20</sup>

Almost all the famous ethnic groups of Europe came to Bengal – the Dutch in 1602, the French in 1604, the Swedes in 1608, the Spanish in 1631 and the English in 1632. All the European groups that came to Bengal had internal strife and commercial rivalry, which later turned into strategic conflict and war. In this conflict, everyone except the British and the French were forced to leave the Indian subcontinent. The Portuguese were somewhat an exception among the other European ethnic groups as their primary purpose was to propagate religion, but later, they also gave importance to trade. The Portuguese came to the area with swords in one hand and Bibles in the other. British writer William Wilson Hunter says, “They are not Traders Knighten and crusader, their national temper had been formed in their contest with the Moors (Muslims) at home”.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Sirajul, Islam, ed., *History of Bangladesh (1704-1971)*, 2nd. Edition (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> Om, Prakas, “The European Trading Companies and the Merchants of Bengal 1650- 1725.” *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, no. 1 (3), 3763, 1964, p. 4. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/001946466400100302>, Access 20/07/2021.

<sup>21</sup> William Wilson, Hunter, *A Brief History of the Indian People*, 1st. Edition (UK: Morrison and Gibe, Edinburgh, 1860), p. 4.

The British East India Company came to the Indian subcontinent in 1630 but to Bengal in 1633. The Company established contact with the then-Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 1633 and secured a certificate from him allowing the company to conduct business in Bengal. This permission was its main foundation in Bengal. In 1638, Shah Shuja, the ruler of Bengal (Representative of the Mughal emperor), granted the English the right to trade in Bengal for only three thousand rupees per annum. This advantage later helped the company to expand its political dominance in Bengal. The East India Company established a factory at Kasim Bazar in 1658 and a large factory at Dhaka, the capital of Bengal, in 1668.<sup>22</sup> Later the British companies gradually started expanding their commercial activities in the whole of Bengal. They initially adhered to the trade rules of Bengal but later started breaking them. Especially in business, they were pretty cunning and corrupt and they forged the seal of the ruler of Bengal, bribed the revenue department employees, evaded taxes and carried out various forms of corruption, including the transportation of goods by night instead of daylight. Shaista Khan, representative of the Mughals (the ruler of Bengal), revoked their commercial license for some time in 1668 for their irregularities. Later, when the British admitted their mistake, Islam Khan, representative of the Mughals (the ruler of Bengal), allowed them to trade. In the aftermath, the English began to conduct their activities very carefully.

The British were concerned about security as well as commercial development. In 1690, they established a centre for trade with two villages, Sutanati and Gobindpur, now known as the famous city of Calcutta.<sup>23</sup> At that time, Calcutta was geopolitically most suitable place for trade. They started commercial activities on a large scale in the vicinity of Calcutta and built many fort for commercial purposes, especially the “Fort William” building. It was later turned into a fort, used by the British as the first military base in the subcontinent. Having taken advantage of the weakness of the Muslim Empire in Bengal, the British continued to increase their military strength and took the Hindu community of the region as allies to facilitate military activities. Although the British came to Bengal for trade and commerce, they later became interested in gaining power

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<sup>22</sup>Enamul, Haq, *Varote Muslim Shashoner Itihas (History of Muslim Rule in India)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: National Book Publication, 2005), p. 27.

<sup>23</sup>Asit Kumar, Banerjee, “*Bangla Sahitter Itibitto (History of Bengali Literature)*”, p. 4.

in Bengal due to the internal political conflicts among the Muslim rulers and the weakness of the central government.<sup>24</sup>

The Hindus had a strong position in the politics, economy and culture of Bengal since the Middle Ages and so was during the Muslim period. From the beginning of Muslim rule in Bengal (1204), the Hindu community was patronized by Muslim rulers, especially during the Mughal rule. From 1650 onwards, the Mughal representatives in Bengal were appointing Hindu officials to high positions of government. During the reigns of Bengal rulers Mir Jumla, Murshid Quli Khan, Alaverdi Khan and the last Nawab Sirajuddaula, Hindu officials held the posts of revenue department.<sup>25</sup> Especially during the reign of Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, all communities of Hindus, including Brahmins, got advantage in entering the administration and consequently, an elite class of Hindus was formed.<sup>26</sup> Since the regime of Nawab Murshid Quli Khan of Bengal (1717-1727), this elite class of Hindus became politically, militarily and economically influential, who later played an essential role in Bengal politics. Raydurlav and Umichand (At that time, a high-ranking government officer of the Bengal government, who were Hindu) could be cited as examples. These Hindu elites held high positions in the government of Sirajuddaula, the ruler of Bengal. When the British East India Company was in the final stages of seizing power in Bengal, it established intimate relations with the influential Hindu community.

After the death of Alivardi Khan, a silent rivalry developed between his relatives for the power of Bengal which later turned into a conflict. In other words, many close relatives of Sirajuddaula could not easily welcome him to his power. Among his relatives, Ghoseti Begum, Yarlatif and Mir Jaffar were remarkable opponents.<sup>27</sup> Mir Zafar Ali Khan, a relative of Sirajuddaula, was an early associate of the Nawab and he promised to cooperate with the Nawab but later joined the conspirators and played the role of

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<sup>24</sup> An engineer of the East India Company, who was engaged in professional duties in Bengal, informed the London government about the political situation in Bengal in a letter. He mentioned: "Hindus will be able to co-operate in seizing political power in Bengal. See more (Gupta, Brijen Kishore, "*Sirajuddaulah and the East India Company, 1756-1757, Background to the Foundation of British Power in India*," 1st. Edition, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966, p. 41).

<sup>25</sup> Mohammad Abdur, Rahim, "*History of Muslims of Bengal 1857-1947*," pp. 182-186.

<sup>26</sup> Ramesh Chandra, Majunder, *The History of Bengal*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: University of Dacca, 1943), p. 212.

<sup>27</sup> Jadunath Sarkar ed., *The History of Bengal: Muslim Period 1200 AD-1757 AD*, vol. 2, 1st. Edition (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1943), p. 43.

chief.<sup>28</sup>After taking power, Sirajuddaula gave a big responsibility to a Hindu officer named Mohanlal, which Mir Zafar Ali Khan could not accept.<sup>29</sup>The British formed a tripartite alliance with the relatives of the Nawab and the Hindus against the Nawab. As a part of a complex conspiracy, the British did not first seize power directly in Bengal. Accordingly, they planned to bring one of the close relatives of Nawab Sirajuddaula to power in Bengal.

As per the conspiracy, the East India Company started disobeying the rules and regulations of the ruler of Bengal. The British continued to conduct trade by formulating their own rules and regulations of trade and commerce. As a result, many minor military clashes between the British and the ruler of Bengal happened in 1756. Opposing and rebellious groups of the rulers of Bengal were sheltered by the British in their fort of Calcutta and, accordingly, were patronized in various ways. The son of Jagatsheth, the finance minister of Bengal, looted much money from the state treasury and took refuge to the British in Calcutta. Nawab Sirajuddaula asked the British to get the rebel back, but the British did not heed him. Nawab Qassim invaded the English commercial area of Bazar and dispersed the British. Admiral Watson, the then Commander of the Pacific Ocean of the British Navy, sent an order declaring war against Nawab Sirajuddaula in 1757, at Fort William Fort of the British East India Company in Calcutta after the Company's commercial base at Qassim Bazar had been attacked. Admiral Watson instructed the East India Company to make all necessary preparations and assured all possible cooperation from the British navy.<sup>30</sup> After receiving final instructions from the navy, the East India Company started preparing for war and thus the interrelation between the British and the ruler of Bengal became bitter. Finally, a war situation emerged. On 23 June 1757, the last independent Nawab of Bengal, Sirajuddaula, fought a battle with the British East India Company at Palash on

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<sup>28</sup> S, C, Hill, *British in Bengal during the reign of Sirajuddula, Indian Records Series Bengal in 1756-1757*, Vol. 2, Selection of public and private papers dealt with the affairs of the, (1905), p. 30, [https://archive.org/stream/bengalin175657se01hilluoft/bengalin175657se01hilluoft\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/bengalin175657se01hilluoft/bengalin175657se01hilluoft_djvu.txt), Access 13/06/2021.

<sup>29</sup> Ghulam Hussain, Salam, *Riyazu- S- Salatin (a History of Bengal)*, 1786-88, English translation by A. Salem, (Calcutta, India, 1904), p. 366,

<sup>30</sup> S, C, Hill, "British in Bengal during the reign of Sirajuddula, *Indian Records Series Bengal in 1756-1757*", p. 2.

the banks of the river Bhagirathi.<sup>31</sup> The battle lasted for about half an hour and due to the betrayal of Mir Jaffar, the commander-in-chief of the ruler of Bengal, the Muslims of Bengal lost the battle and thus Bengal came under the British rule.

### **1.3. Muslim Under the British Colonial Rule**

Though Bengal was under the complete control of the British through the defeat of the Muslims in the battle of Palash in 1757, the British did not directly interfere in the power of Bengal for strategic reasons. They appointed Mir Jaffar Ali Khan, a close relative of the former ruler Nawab Sirajuddaula as the Nawab of Bengal to govern Bengal. The company first became greedy of the treasury of the Bengal and looted 2.34 thousand rupees. They took a large sum of money from the Nawab of Bengal as compensation for the battle of Palash as well the members of the English navy took a lot of money from the Nawab in the name of gifts. Besides, the British Company forcibly occupied the western part of Bengal, which was originally very rich and strategically important area for trade and commerce.<sup>32</sup>

Before the battle of Palash, the English company made many promises to Mir Jaffar Ali Khan, but in the post-war period, they did not fulfill any promises. After the battle, the British began to mount pressure on Mir Jaffar Ali Khan, the ruler of Bengal, in various ways that made it impossible for him to rule Bengal. Given this context, in 1763, the British deposed Ali Khan and nominated Mir Qassim as the ruler of Bengal in his place. Mir Qassim was an independent ruler who did not trust the British and regarded them as merchants. He never accepted them as the partner of ruling Bengal. He made a treaty with the Mughal emperor and the Nawab of Ajodhya to form a joint army force for war against the British. Thus, on 17 October 1764, he fought a final battle against the British on the outskirts of Boxer. But, in this war, some dishonest Hindu officials, like Beni Bahadur, the Hindu Minister of Ajodhya government and Sitar Roy, the Hindu Dewan of the Emperor of Delhi, conspired secretly with the British. Its logical consequence

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<sup>31</sup> Brijen Kishore, Gupta, *Sirajuddaullah and the East India Company, 1756-1757, Background to the Foundation of British Power in India*, 1st. Edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p. 90.

<sup>32</sup> The English plundered the region so much that they became rich overnight. They smuggled a large part of the loot to Britain, which erupted much controversy in the British Parliament. The members of the East India Company embezzled 60 million in just ten years from 1757 to 1766. (Kathleen Gough, Forth Parliament Report: June 1858, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 9, No. 32/34, Special Number, Aug, 1974, pp. 1391-1393).

wasthe defeat of the Muslims in the Battle of Boxer. In this way, the British gained absolute power in Bengal and the members of the East India Company plundered the treasury of Bengal extensively after the Boxer War as they had done after the Battle of Palash.

Due to political, economic chaos and the plunder of the British in 1770, Bengal encountered a catastrophic famine that the people of this area had never seen. Millions of people died of starvation in this famine and even more than 6,000 people died in one week in Kolkata alone. While describing the “heartbreaking” consequences of this unprecedented famine, Indian historian Shivnath Shastri writes:

“It was challenging to find people to remove the bodies, but the newly formed British administration did nothing to address the plight. It is with great concern that we are to inform you that we have a most melancholy prospect before our eyes of universal distress for want of grain. Owing to an uncommon drought that has prevailed over every part of the country, insomuch that the oldest inhabitants never remembered to have known anything like it, and as to threaten a famine”.<sup>33</sup>

The new British administration, led by Warren Hastings, the appointed Governor of the East India Company, did nothing to save the lives of the famine victims. Instead, they persecuted the peasants lest their income should be reduced. In the financial year of 1770, the British rulers of Calcutta sent 152 lakh rupees to London and one crore 56 lakh was sent in the financial year 1771-1772 after the famine.<sup>34</sup> British administration-imposed taxes on all small landowners who either died of starvation or fled the country. The economic policy of the British company was the biggest challenge for the Muslims.

### **1.3.1. The Economic Condition of Muslims Under Colonial Rule**

After the famine of 1770, the East India Company adopted various policies regarding the rule of Bengal, among which the dual rule of 1774 was particularly noteworthy. The dual rule means that the British and the representatives of both sides<sup>35</sup> of Bengal would run the state together. Accordingly, the power of revenue collection, the military system and administration belonged to the English company. No progress was made in

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<sup>33</sup>Shivnath, Shastri, *Ramtanu Lahiri and the Then Bangsamaj*, 2nd. Edition (Dhaka: Navajug Prakashani, 2012), p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> J, C, Sinha, *Economic Annals of Bengal*, 2nd. Edition (Macmillan And Co., Ltd, London, 1927), p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> Reza Khan was the first representative of dual rule, who worked for both parties. (M, A, Rahim, “An Aspect of Muslim Bengal Culture,” p. 65).

this region under the dual rule and the economy of Bengal was much worse than before. When the dual rule of the East India Company failed, the British government directly interfered in the land system of Bengal and established control. The British government took various steps to make optimum use of the land of Bengal, the most famous of which was the “Permanent Settlement”. It was a landmark agreement executed by Lord Cornwallis' administration in 1793 between the East India Company government and the landowners of Bengal. This system (permanent settlement) is not new as it was a European system and it is much more common and widespread in Europe. Lord Cornwallis applied the European system only to Bengal.<sup>36</sup> The primary purpose of this system was to create a middle class, who would primarily work for the East India Company and be flexible in implementing company policies.<sup>37</sup>

East India Company representative Cornwallis wanted to mould the Bengali social system in the style of the Manorial System prevalent in Britain at that time. The Permanent Settlement was flawed as it was a measure to occupy land without demarcating the boundaries of anyone's kingdom. As per the earlier land system, the government had distributed land directly among the farmers and fixed the land rent. The real owners of the land during the Muslim rule were the peasants; they only paid rent to the government. On the contrary, as per the Permanent Settlement, the original land owners became the zamindars and the peasants were deprived of land ownership.<sup>38</sup> These zamindars could levy an extra tax on the farmers as per their whims and fancies, and the government would not interfere in this matter but there was a condition that the zamindars should ensure that the peasants did not go against the government under any circumstances. The English turned the zamindar class into their bodyguard or police force and in this way, the English companies defended themselves in the region.

Under the Permanent Settlement agreement, the zamindar became the absolute land owner in the colonial state system. In addition, to be the land proprietor, the zamindars acquired zamindari with the benefit of proprietary tenure at a fixed rate of revenue. Although the agreement blocked the way for the zamindars to increase the government's

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<sup>36</sup>Sirajul, Islam, ed., “*History of Bangladesh (1704-1971)*”, p. 322.

<sup>37</sup> Ascoli, Frank David, Early revenue history of Bengal and the fifth report 1812, *Parliament. House of Commons. Select Committee on the East India Company*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>Baden-powell, B. H., *The land systems of British India*, vol. 1, 1st. Edition (Delhi: Brite Printers, 1892), p. 289.

revenue demands, no restrictions were imposed on the zamindars to increase the revenue demands of the tenants. Zamindars had the right to transfer land through sale freely, mortgage, donation, etc., while their tenants were not given that right. Farmers had the traditional right to inherit land subject to regular rent payments, but they did not have the right to transfer land. However, the zamindars had a strict obligation to pay regular revenue. When the British came to power in Bengal, the rival forces of the Muslims in the subcontinent made the Hindus their allies.<sup>39</sup> A community of Hindus got much cash for working under the British. They made a permanent arrangement to get this cash out of their hands through a system.

The consequences of the Permanent Settlement of 1793 were far-reaching as land became a commodity through the new policy of the East India Company. Many Muslim aristocratic families became impoverished overnight. The settlement created an artificial middle class between the government and the peasantry. Its glaring example was the zamindars. They could levy taxes and rents on the farmers as per their wishes, which was the cause of the misery of the farmers. Most of the zamindars of Bengal were Hindus, while most of the subjects were Muslims. Speaking clearly, these Hindu zamindars used to torture the Muslim peasants by imposing arbitrary rents, but the company's government was utterly indifferent in this regard. The permanent settlement of Bengal was very different from the conventional land system of Britain. The landlord in Britain used to spend money on agricultural development, while the zamindars of Bengal did not spend their profits on agricultural development but on the luxury of the English.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the British government did not spend the money earned from Bengal for the development of Bengal, but they smuggled this money to Britain. Consequently, there was no development of agriculture and farmers in this region.

Earlier Muslim officers or employees had been employed or hired for tax collection, but the English abandoned and laid them off. As a result, many Muslims became utterly isolated from the various issues related to this work and became unemployed. On the other hand, this system changed the fortunes of a section of the Hindus of Bengal very rapidly and they became a wealthy nation.<sup>41</sup> The 'Permanent Settlement' was the most

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<sup>39</sup> Akhter, Mukul, "*Kolkata Kandric Buddijibi (Intellectuals of Kolkata)*", p. 89.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Metcalfe, an English member of the Indian government at that time, commented on the British 'permanent settlement' in 1820: "This policy is the ultimate in injustice; There is no precedent in any

significant economic blow inflicted on the Muslims of Bengal by the British, and this loss could no longer be recovered. In this way, besides the economic changes in Bengal, the British also brought significant changes to the education and Judiciary system.

### **1.3.2. Fundamental Changes in the Education System and Judiciary of Bengal after Permanent Settlement**

The Muslim rulers of Bengal contributed considerably to science and showed the most incredible generosity in education as William Adam comments that Muslims established many private schools in this country and did not accept education as a livelihood.<sup>42</sup> The education system in the region was up-to-date before the arrival of the English. In the early stages after the occupation of Bengal, the East India Company did not interfere in the education system. They were busy with Bengal's financial resources, land management, taxes, etc. That is why they did not pay attention to the Bengali education system. Until 1815, they tried to educate the people through the native education system. For a long time, especially from 1757 to 1813, some English officers, like Lord Warren Hastings and Don Cain, were in favour of the development of the education system in Bengal, but the British politicians were not interested in this matter. Reviewing the initial policy of the British government, it becomes clear that their main objective was to keep the people of this country in the dark by depriving them of education.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the British Company adopted a strategy of keeping a nation away from education in order to govern them.

Although the British did not interfere in the education system of Bengal, they occupied the economic source related to education. An essential feature of Muslim rule was the Lakh raj land<sup>44</sup>, or rent-exempt land donated to develop the education system. The Lakh raj property is associated with the history of the Muslim education system in the Indian subcontinent. The money received from the Lakh raj property was deposited to the

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country where all the land is given to the Hindu Babus of another group who do not want to give it to those who deserve it and who want to suck the wealth of the country by resorting to various corruptions and bribes. See also. (Mukul, Akhter, "*Kolkata Kandric Buddijibi (Intellectuals of Kolkata)*", p. 69; Ghosh, Binoy, *Kolikata Shohorer Itihas (History of Calcutta City)*, vol. 1, 1. Edition, Calcutta: Chandrabindu Publishing Company, 2018, p. 47 ).

<sup>42</sup>Md. Hasanuzzaman, Bipul, "*Brihot Jossor Directory (Greater Jessore Directory)*", p. 43.

<sup>43</sup> Mohammad, Abdur Rahim, "*An Aspect of Muslim Bengal Culture*," p. 22.

<sup>44</sup> A special feature of Muslim rule was rent-free land, which was called lakh raj. For the spread of education and the construction of religious institutions, the Muslim rulers gave lakhs of property as grants, (Sirajul, Islam, ed., "*History of Bangladesh (1704-1971)*", p. 311.)

Waqf Fund and everything in schools and colleges was run through waqfs. Even some scholarships were introduced from the Waqf Funds. The waqf fund provided complete education expenses for the children of the poorest sections of society and all arrangements for their upbringing. In 1772, Warren Hastings was the first to calculate that about one-fourth of Bangladesh was owned by Lakh raj. Since then, the English ruling class continued to make these lands subject to rent in various ways. In 1829, the East India Company enacted law and confiscated the *Lakh raj* property that closed the educational institutions, religious institutions and charities run by the Muslims. Thus, the Company snatched *Lakh raj* from the Muslims on various pretexts. The British government recaptured the Lakh raj property under the Tribunals of Resumption.<sup>45</sup> The British inflicted the first major blow on the Muslim education system by seizing *Lakh raj* property.

The East India Company's strategy had the most significant negative impact on the Muslim education system. Haji Muhammad Muhsin's<sup>46</sup> property worth lakhs of rupees was unjustly taken over by the British government and deprived its rightful owners. As a result, many ancient Muslim families were destroyed and many Muslim educational and public welfare institutions such as *khanqahs*, madrasas, mosques etc. were abolished. The primary source of income of many educational institutions in the country was cut off due to the usurpation of zamindari, lakh raj property etc. from Muslims on various lame excuses. Regarding the death of educational institutions. Jawaharlal Nehru, the eminent politician and scholar of the Indian subcontinent, said:

“After the establishment of Bengal by the British, there was a lot of Mafi or Lakh raj real estate. Many of them were private, but most were waqfed for the purpose of meeting the expenses of the educational institutions. Almost all primary schools, makhtabs and many institutions of higher learning depended on the income of these Muafirs. The East India Company needs to raise money quickly to make a profit for its partners in Bila. Because the company directors were putting a lot of pressure on it. Then the policy of confiscating the real estate of 'Mafi' was adopted

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<sup>45</sup>Smith. Harvey's Report of 19th June 1840, p. 6, Qouted in Mallick, Azizur Rahmah, British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757 - 1856, 1st. Edition (Dacca: Bangla Academe, 1977), p. 67.

<sup>46</sup> Haji Mohammad Mahasin (1773-1812) was the son of a noble Muslim family of West Bengal. He was known for his piety and philanthropy and before his death he donated all his wealth for the development of education. (Bradley-Burt, F.B., *Twelve Men of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd. Edition, Calcutta: S. K. Lahiri and Company, 1910, p. 35).

in a well-planned way. An order was issued to present hard evidence in favour of this real estate. But old and related documents are either lost or eaten by insects. Therefore, almost all the 'Mafi' or Lakh raj properties were confiscated. In many schools, the source of income from college was cut off. This way, many lands came under the government's control and many elite dynasties were uprooted. Until now, the educational institutions dependent on the income of the above 'Mafi' were closed, and many teachers and education workers became unemployed.<sup>47</sup>

In 1815, the English government changed their strategic plan regarding education in Bengal. Accordingly, they generated an opportunity to educate the Indians to strengthen their rule in the country. They did not disseminate world-class knowledge rather than technical education, including philosophy and astronomy, intending to create some employees. The Hindu College was established in 1818 and the Sanskrit College in 1824, while the government changed the curriculum of the Calcutta Alia Madrasa.<sup>48</sup> The British government formed the “General Committee of Public Instruction” in 1823 to develop the Bengali education system and various surveys were conducted through this committee and this was the first survey conducted by the government. The committee was formed to impart necessary education to the ordinary people of the Indian subcontinent. The committee was divided into two groups the Western plaintiff and the Orientalist. Orientalists favoured evaluating literature in the local language in the education system of the subcontinent but Westerners intended to establish the Western education system through English education. The committee were intrigued by the long debate on what would be the medium of instruction and philosophy in the subcontinent.

The British government commissioned Lord Charles Maclean to prepare a report on the education system in India. In 1935, Lord Michael submitted a report to the British Parliament after a lengthy survey and described the Indian education system and culture as unnecessary and useless. As Lord Charles Maclean writes: “Among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will

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<sup>47</sup>Jawaharlal, Nehru, *The Discovery of India*. 1st. Edition (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 376.

<sup>48</sup> Ali, Riaz, “Madrassah Education in Pre-Colonial and Colonial South Asia.” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 46(1): 2011, pp. 69–86.

not be easy to translate any valuable work into them”<sup>49</sup> He made a very brief reference to Prachi’s teachings and even threw derogatory remarks about the history of Indian medicine, astrology, and geography that were termed “literature of India and Arabian”. In the words of Lord McCall. He described the Western education system as much more advanced and English as one of the best languages in the world. He hoped the English language would awaken the sleeping Indians and create a new era, just as the Greek-Latin had once created a renaissance across Europe. One of the motives behind the introduction of the English language and the European education system was reflected in Nickel’s speech: “We must present at our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions who govern a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect”. In 1835, according to the advice of British intellectuals, the government introduced Western education instead of Indian education and the medium of instruction was English instead of Persian. Thus, Western education, instead of the extended traditional Islamic education of the subcontinent, was introduced and established English in all important places, including offices and courts, without giving Muslims an opportunity to prepare themselves for it.<sup>50</sup> Although there had been a sound English education system for Hindus for a long time, the British government had not made any good initiatives for Muslims to learn English. In 1835, the philosophy of Western education was imposed on Indians through an education policy that marginalized both Muslims and Hindus but Muslims were more harmed.

In addition to seizing political power in Bengal, the East India Company gradually established its authority over all administrative departments. As part of this process, they intervened in the Muslim judiciary. Until 1836, the Muslim judiciary in the subcontinent was governed by Islamic law, but other communities had different laws. In 1837, the East India Company abolished Islamic law in the judiciary and introduced European law for all communities. In the courts of Bengal, Europeans, instead of Muslims, were appointed as judges and law officers; thus, the Muslim judges and the Muslim staff involved in the courts of law were unemployed. Despite the change of

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<sup>49</sup> See more: Macaulay, Thomas Babington. *Minute on Education, British Raj, Colonialism, Selections from Educational Records, Part I 1781-1839* (India, 1919), <https://archive.org/details/SelectionsFromEducationalRecordsPartI1781-1839>, Access, 21/06/2021.

<sup>50</sup> Mohammad, Abdur Rahim, “*An Aspect of Muslim Bengal Culture*”, pp. 34-36.

official language and changes in the judiciary, Muslims could be seen in some departments of government offices for a few years, but the number of Muslims in the judiciary was greatly reduced.<sup>51</sup> When Muslims were subsequently expelled from the judiciary and administration, almost all sources of income for Muslims were cut off. Along with the Muslim peasantry living in the rural areas, the expeditions fell into an economic crisis. Due to the financial crisis, the expatriates left the city for the village but the lack of employment in the village created frustration among them. Due to economic frustration and disenfranchisement, Muslims launched significant movements like Faraizi, Fakir-Monks and peasant revolts against the East India Company and Hindu zamindars.

#### **1.4. Muslim Struggle and Resistance for Rights**

The Muslims of Bengal lost power to the English Company in the Battle of Palashi in 1757, but they did not accept foreign rule in their own country and did not accept any policy of compromise with the British. On the other hand, the British Imperial Force deprived the Muslims of all rights, including political, religious, social and educational. The Muslims were affected mainly by these British policies. In response to such discrimination, the Muslims conducted many reforms and armed movements against the British in order to retain their rights. For about 100 years, from 1773 to 1857, Muslims had many movements against the British, but the Fakir-Sannyasi (1773 - 1800), Faraizi Movement (1818-1840), Peasant Revol (1815-1855) and The Sipahi Revolt of 1857 are particularly notable. All classes of people, including the elite of Muslim society, participated in this movement against the British. The Fakir Sannyasis were the first movement in Bengal against the British Company and this movement kept the Company busy for a long time.

##### **1.4.1. The First Resistance Struggle of the Muslims of Bengal**

The fakirs and Monks were the first to form a resistance movement against the East India Company's rule in Bengal. This movement continued in Bengal-Bihar from 1773 to 1800. After the East India Company had seized power in Bengal, it imposed taxes on people of almost all communities, including the upper and lower classes of Bengal.

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<sup>51</sup>Ram, Gopal, *Indian Muslims; A Political History, 1858-1947*, 1st. Edition (Delhi:Asia. Pub House, 1964), p. 27.

During the pre-British period, no tax was levied on the fakirs and monks and they lived independently. Usually, these fakirs and monks were engaged in religious activities and they used to participate in various religious ceremonies. Fakirs and monks usually did not participate in politics or economic activities and lived at a distance from society. The life of the fakirs and monks was carried on with the common people's help, especially the Bengal peasantry. Both classes were economically marginalized when the British Company rulers imposed taxes on the ordinary peasants and later, the British government also imposed taxes on this fakir-sannyasis.<sup>52</sup> Due to the burden of taxes and the irregularities of the English company, the fakir monks of Bengal started an armed revolt.

Majnu Shah, the famous fakir leader of Bengal, led the "Fakir-Monks Movement," and is said to be one of the leaders of the spiritual world of the fakir-sannyasis of Bengal. The Fakir Sannyasi revolt started in isolation in the early stages but later spread to Bengal under the leadership of Majnu Shah. The local, peasant and rural communities secretly collaborated with the fakirs and monks against the English. The main target of the rebel attack was the commercial centre of the English company and the sanctuary of the zamindars loyal to the rulers.<sup>53</sup> The rebels kept the well-equipped British forces busy for a long time by using local weapons. Among the fakir-sannyasi forces, a few delegates, including Majnu Shah, rode on horseback, while the rest were included in the infantry. Although the Fakir monks did not have much military training, their attack style was quite innovative. Rebel fighters usually carried out deliberate attacks on English troops in the middle of the night, with more than four to five thousand infantry forces.

In 1763, the rebels attacked the East India Company's trading post at Baker Ganj and captured several company members, including some officers. In 1764, the monks invaded Dhaka, one of the largest strongholds of the English in Bengal and were able to drive out the English supervisor, but the English recaptured Dhaka a few days later. In the same year, rebels attacked various places in Rajshahi and many English members were imprisoned. In 1767, the rebels augmented their attacks on Rangpur, Rajshahi,

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<sup>52</sup>Suprakash, Roy, *Varoter Kirishok Bidroho Anong Gonotantric Songram (Indian Peasant Rebellion and Democratic Struggle)*, 1st. Edition (India: Publisher Radical Impression, 2012), p. 33.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, p. 37.

Koch Bihar and Jalpaiguri. Captain Diner was sent with troops to Rangpur in 1768 to repel the rebel movement in North Bengal, but the expedition failed and the British were forced to retreat. In 1774, the English conducted extensive expeditions in all the districts, including Burdwan, Kamarhati, Jessore, Mymensingh, Rajshahi and Bagua. In the battle of 1775, Majnu clashed with a large force of the British, and many fakirs and monks were killed, and Majnu Shah himself was seriously injured.<sup>54</sup> It is believed that Majnu Shah died after this battle. From 1785 onwards, the Fakir monastic movement lost momentum and gradually reached a standstill. Thus, the Fakir-Sannyasi movement was the first armed revolt against the tyranny of the East India Company and was the impetus for the subsequent struggle. Shortly after the Fakir-Sannyasi movement, the Faraizi Movement started in Bengal and is considered one of the most important chapters of Muslims history.

#### **1.4.2. The Transition from Religious Reform Movement to Armed Rebellion**

Along with the socio-political turmoil, the lack of education, various misconduct and un-Islamic activities in the social and religious life of Bengal Muslims became widespread. The Bengali thinkers and scholars were deeply concerned with the plight of the Muslim community due to its superstitions and religious ignorance. Consequently, a section of the eminent scholars started the "Faraizi Movement" for the proper observance of Islam's basic acts of worship. In other words, it was a movement of religious revival for Muslims. Faraizi Movement of Bengal, which has the distinction of being the first organized reform movement in India, was a religio-political, socio-economic and cultural movement launched in 1818 by the eminent theologian Haji Shariatullah.<sup>55</sup> He led the Faraizi Movement in Bengal in the early stages, but later it was led by far-sighted leaders like Titumir.

Haji Shariatullah, the founder of the Faraizi Movement was born in 1781 in the village of Shamail in the Madaripur district. From an early age, he was interested in acquiring Islamic knowledge and within just two years, he became proficient in Arabic and Persian. In 1899, he went to Mecca, the leading Islamic education centre, to receive

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<sup>54</sup>Ali, Asraf, "Fakir-Sannyasi Resistance," in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Online Education, (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Fakir-Sannyasi\\_Resistance](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Fakir-Sannyasi_Resistance). Accessed 21/08/2021.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid

higher education. He stayed in Makkah from 1799 to 1818 to acquire knowledge of Islam and became acquainted with the Islamic thought and ideology of Makkah, the centre of Islamic education and culture. During his extended stay in Makkah, he studied Arabic literature and Islamic jurisprudence under Maulana Murad for the first two years. For the next fourteen years, he acquired a vast knowledge of Sufism and other theological concepts from the eminent scholar Tahir Sambal. While staying abroad, he realized the need to eradicate the irregularities and superstitions in Bengali Muslims' religious and social life.

Having returned to the country in 1817, Haji Shariatullah started a religious and social reform movement in the Qur'an and Hadith spirit. Through this movement, he tried to inspire the Muslim masses to adopt the proper Islamic ideology and build their moral consciousness. He divided various un-Islamic customs and rituals prevalent in the Muslim society into two parts called "*Shirk* and *Bidat*." He declared grave worship, pir worship, singing beside graves, etc.; they were regarded as *bidat*. Haji Shariatullah visited various areas, including Dhaka, Faridpur and Bakerganj and met with Muslim representatives. He campaigned to create public awareness to remove superstitions from the various rituals of Muslim social life. As Bengal was ruled by non-Muslims, Haji Shariatullah considered Bengal as "*Darul Harb*" (kingdom of infidels).<sup>56</sup> He used to support the opinion of other scholars that it is *haram* to offer Jumu'ah and Eid prayers in *Darul Harb*. In terms of ideology, he was a follower of the famous Alim Shah Aliullah of the subcontinent. Although the goal of the Faraizi Movement was to reform, it later turned into a resistance movement against the Hindu zamindars as they used to oppress the Muslim subjects in various ways.

The Hindu zamindars of Bengal used to force the Muslims to pay tribute to various Hindu festivals such as Durga Puja, Kali Puja and Manda Puja. The zamindars forbade Muslims to sacrifice cows on Eid and in some areas, there was a ban on Eid prayers, the most significant Muslim religious event. Besides, various unjust taxes were also imposed on the Muslims. Even the Hindu lower caste masses could not escape from these oppressive zamindars.<sup>57</sup> The Faraizi Movement in Bengal united the Muslims against the oppression of the Hindu zamindars. Interestingly, some sections of the

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<sup>56</sup> Muin-ud-din Ahmad, Khan, "*Muslim Struggle for Freedom in Bengal*", p. 26.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 90.

Hindus also took part in the Faraizi Movement against the injustice of the zamindars. In Dhaka, Faridpur and Bakerganj, among the essential regions of Bengal, the Faraji movement gained immense popularity and spread rapidly. The Hindu zamindars were terrified by the movement and sought the cooperation of the East India Company government. In 1831, while Shariatullah was campaigning along his party at Nayabari in Dhaka district, he was involved in conflict with Hindu zamindars. As the Faraji movement was directed against the government, the British government took various measures to suppress the movement. Accordingly, in 1839, the police banned Shariatullah's activities. However, Haji Shariatullah, the landmark reformer of Bengal, died in his village in 1840. Widely circulated and famous newspaper of that time Samachar Darpan, published from Calcutta, had a membership of 12,000.<sup>58</sup> He is said to be the undisputed leader of the Islamic Movement in the subcontinent.

After the death of Haji Shariatullah, his son Mohsinuddin Ahmed Ali Dudu Mia took over the leadership of the Faraizi Movement. Under the leadership of Dudu Mia the movement entered a new era of history. By dint of his tireless work, the Faraji movement emerged as a strong organization and he transformed this movement into a modern political organization. To the members of the Faraizi Movement, he was known as Ustad (Master). He was born in 1819 in the Madaripur district and he learned Arabic and Persian from his father. After primary education, he was sent to Makkah at 12 for additional education.<sup>59</sup> On his way to Mecca, he stayed in Calcutta for a few days and met Titumir at his residence in the Chobbish Parganas district. After an extended stay of 5 years in Makkah, he returned to the country and devoted himself to organizing the Faraizi Movement. He had noticed various stages of the movement in the presence of his father since childhood. During his father's lifetime, he had witnessed the struggle of the Faraizi with the zamindars. Since then, he has deeply realized the need to build a strong organization. To this end, he himself learned to wield sticks and formed a strong battalion.<sup>60</sup>

Zamindar Dudu did not dare to use force against Mia. Although Haji Shariatullah's movement was reformist, Didu Mia waged an armed struggle against the oppressive

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<sup>58</sup> Samachar Darpan (Newspaper), 1837, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Wise, James M.D. *Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal*, (British Library: Historical Print, 2011), p. 23

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 23

zamindars and various policies of the government. He marched against the zamindar of Kanaipur in 1841 with his battalion. The zamindars agreed to abolish all forms of unjust taxes and worship and to avoid repressive policies against the tenants. In 1842, Dudu Mia attacked the Ghosh zamindars of Faridpur. The Faraizis destroyed the zamindar house and captured the supporter. Dudu Mia's party arrested one hundred eighteen members in the incident. Dudu Mia was also charged. But he was acquitted due to the lack of evidence.<sup>61</sup> The success of Dudu Mia's struggle against the zamindars spread and respect for his movement spread among the people. His name was transmitted from house to house in Faridpur, Pabna, Barisal, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Noakhali districts. Dudu Mia was so famous in the peasant society that the government did not dare to imprison him. After the death of Dudu Mia, the Faraizi Movement came to a standstill due to various adverse circumstances.

The Faraizi Movement initially started as a religious reform movement, but later it was conducted as a struggle against injustice. As a result of the Faraizi movement, Hindu zamindars refrained from imposing illegal taxes. The main objective of the Faraizi Movement was to dispel all the superstitions and un-Islamic activities that had infiltrated Islam. Many consider this movement as a peasant movement as many Hindu peasants also joined this movement. The impact of this movement on the people of East Bengal in the nineteenth century was immense. Through this reform movement, Haji Shariatullah awakened self-consciousness among the Muslim masses of Bengal. In this case, the Faraizi Movement was the first political organization in Muslim Bengal to establish Islam under colonial rule. This movement united Ashraf and Atraf (Elite & lower class), the two main sections of the Muslim society of Bengal. This unification geared up great movements later on.

### **1.4.3. Peasant Revolt**

The peasant revolt was centered on indigo cultivation, and that has been practised in Bengal since ancient times. After the East India Company had seized power in Bengal, they gradually became interested in indigo cultivation and at one stage, they started indigo cultivation in this region with great speed. An English businessman named Carol Bloom was the first to cultivate indigo in the region, and he was the first to set up a

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<sup>61</sup>Wise, James M.D., *Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal*, p.24

temporary institution for indigo cultivation in Kushtia, which was called *Nilkuthi*. Carol Bloom was very successful in his first year and this fact encouraged European traders to come to the region to cultivate indigo. He wrote a memorandum to the East India Company for indigo cultivation.<sup>62</sup> At this time, there was an industrial revolution in England, which led to a massive increase in the demand for cloth. The demand for indigo in the textile industry was increasing day by day. Given this context, the East India Company government started indigo cultivation in Bengal. By cultivating indigo, the East India Company got the expected results and even more profits. From this, they later started the Blue Cultivation on a large scale. According to one estimate, until 1803, all the costs of indigo cultivation were paid in advance by the company at low-interest rates. All the indigo that was produced went to England and the company made many times more profit. This business proved so profitable that many employees and government bureaucrats left their jobs to engage in indigo cultivation.

In the middle of 1815, numerous indigo factories were established in Nadia, Jessore, Khulna, Cobbis Parganas, Bogra, Rajshahi, Malda, Pabna, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Bakharganj and other districts. The blue fame of these areas spread all over the world. The story of getting rich overnight by trading the fine indigo of Central Bengal attracted all the prosperous and merchant communities.<sup>63</sup> Seeing the massive success of indigo cultivation in the Bengal region, local business people and politicians also started appealing to the government for indigo cultivation. They held various meetings for this. At one point, they began to put pressure on the government and met at the Town Hall in Calcutta on 15 December 1829 and sent a recommendation to the British Parliament demanding the expansion of indigo cultivation. Parliament responded to their call by bringing enslavers and slave operators from the West Indies to Bengal to oversee indigo cultivation. Extensive indigo cultivation necessitated the expansion of the state to Bihar and Orissa. For this purpose, the British occupied the other two independent Muslim independent states of the subcontinent, Agra and Ayodhya. 12.60 thousand of indigo was produced in 20.40 thousand hectare of land in Bangladesh. There was a total of 8452 indigo factories under 726 factories established by 116 companies in Bengal.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Chitrallekha, Bhattacharya, *Nil bidroher mullyayn (An Assessment of the Blue Rebellion)*, 1st. Edition (Calcutta: Kbp bapji publication, 2010), p. 15.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>64</sup>Chitrallekha Bhattacharya, "*Nil bidroher mullyayn (An Assessment of the Blue Rebellion)*", p. 57.

The British mainly forced the farmers of this region to cultivate indigo for their interests. Although indigo cultivation benefited the rulers and the Europeans, it was unprofitable farming for the ordinary tenant farmers. The peasants of Bengal did not feel the urge to cultivate indigo at first as it was only causing them losses, but the rulers forced the farmers to cultivate indigo. In order to cultivate indigo, the rulers were the first to agree with the peasants. The locals of this country had a role to play in forcing the indigo farmers to cultivate indigo in Bengal, just as the local zamindars used to play the role of allies of the British.<sup>65</sup> Such an agreement was flawed and against the interests of the farmers. Consequently, the farmers were deprived of their rights and subjected to horrific torture. This agreement was a fraudulent deal that always went against the farmers. Although indigo production was good, its growers used to buy indigo from farmers at low prices. If the farmers refused to cultivate indigo or if the production of indigo was not good, the local representatives of indigo planters would torture the farmers in various ways. Farmers were often subjected to physical abuse.<sup>66</sup> The English indigo planters used to set up torture chambers in the indigo factory and the family members of the farmers were brought here and tortured. Many heartbreaking rural songs and poems were composed in Bengal regarding this torture cell of the English.

Many innocent farmers were entangled in false cases and thus, harassed in various ways. Farmers had sued indigo planters many times, but they never received justice. European judges were never prepared to rule against their forces. If any farmer fled without cultivating indigo, the English would take unjustly punitive action against him and confiscate the farmer's house and property. Another critical issue was that indigo farmers were subjected to various levels of torture if they failed to submit their products on time. In this way, the “blue tax lords” created a scary atmosphere in the countryside. As the intensity of oppression increased, the peasants began to unite against indigo cultivation, and subsequently, revolts began all around. The middle class strongly supported the peasants. The blue rebellion started in a few villages on the banks of the Mathabhanga river in Chuadanga. As the highest quality indigo was produced in these areas, the indigo planters used to persecute them in the hope of higher production. The leaders of the group tried to set fire to the English residence. Rebel peasants attacked

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<sup>65</sup>Badruddin, Umar, *Bangladesher krishok abong krisok andolon (Peasant and peasant movement in Bangladesh)*, 2nd. Edition, Dhaka: Publication of national Literature, 2015), p. 67.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 68.

and set fire to local government buildings, police stations and various government offices. Hindu-Muslim peasants, irrespective of caste and creed, joined the revolt in unison. The people of Bengal supported this revolt, i.e., people of all walks of life.

The British company took very quick steps and a kind of horrible torture suppressed the blue rebellion and many peasants were imprisoned and fined for rebellion. But most of the farmers were Muslims who led the peasant revolt. Repeated revolts against the English evil forces raised protest like a storm. Although the peasant revolt was not entirely successful, it shook the foundations of British rule. This peasant revolt compelled the English to reconsider their indigo cultivation policy. During this time, the Germans discovered the colour, reducing the demand for indigo in the European market. After revolt,<sup>67</sup> the government completely stopped indigo cultivation. In the aftermath of the peasant revolt, the Muslims staged the first independence movement in the subcontinent, known in history as the Great Revolution (Sipahi revolt).

#### **1.4.4. The Last Armed Freedom Movement and its Impact**

In 1857, the Indian people fought for the last war (Sipahi revolt)<sup>68</sup> against the British in the subcontinent. There were many struggles before 1857, but they were regional. But a national struggle shook the entire subcontinent, including Delhi. The revolt of 1857 had many causes. The main motive was economic. The British entirely occupied the subcontinent and forced the farmers to hand over their products to the stockists appointed by the imperialists. The exclusive opportunity to control the price of essential commodities belonged to the stockists. The English interfered in the established trade and commerce of the region. They adopted various discriminatory policies on domestic industry to import goods from England to this region. At one point, they cornered the indigenous industry, which was the last thing destroyed.<sup>69</sup> As a result, people from different communities became unemployed. They suffered economically. As a result,

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<sup>67</sup> Nurul Hossain, Chowdhury, Indigo Resistance Movement, in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Online Edition (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Indigo\\_Resistance\\_Movement](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Indigo_Resistance_Movement), Accessed 31/08/2021.

<sup>68</sup> The rebellion of 1857 has been referred to by many as the last war of the Great Rebellion, the war of independence, the last armed struggle and the Sipahi Revolt, but most historians and writers of the Indian subcontinent refer to it as the Sepoy Mutiny. Writers like Bishwajit Bhattacharjee, Rudrangshu Mukherjee, etc., have mentioned it in Sipahi revolt.

<sup>69</sup> Abdul, Hamid, *Muslim Separatism in India: A Brief Survey 1858-1947*. 1st. Edition (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 3-4.

the domestic industrial system was destroyed and the country's economy became bankrupt.

Secondly, they were able to realize very well that there was a massive difference between the religious values of the people and the religion of the new ruling class, which would inevitably lead to the decline of the imperialist powers. Out of this realization, the ruling class were engaged in various deep conspiracies to eradicate all forms of religious consciousness. They took numerous steps to spread the language of the imperialists and their cultural education in the name of spreading education among adults and children. So, it is said that the European education system was introduced with the aim of enslaving the people of the region.<sup>70</sup> The scholars of the subcontinent never took it well. Religious groups in other communities also did not take it positively.

Thirdly, it was an open-secret matter that the British government was implementing a big project to convert the people to Christianity. Their main target was the poor and helpless people. In 1837 there was a severe famine in the region. Out of this famine, many people died. The government handed over many orphans to Christian missionaries. Later, all these orphans were converted to Christianity. From 1833 onwards, the government began directly supporting Christian missionaries and they were paid salaries and allowances by the government. Indigenous employees under the government were encouraged to convert to Christianity. For it, sometimes, there was pressure. High-ranking Christian officials were engaged in religious discussions with local officials. They tried to prove that Christianity is more peaceful and powerful than the religions of the subcontinent. Officers-employees continued to give large sums of money to Christian missionaries. After 1854, the government began to aid all Christian missionary schools following government policy.<sup>71</sup> The government began to bear its expenses. The government also approved many missionary schools throughout the subcontinent. Government officials visited all these schools and encouraged ordinary students to read the Bible.

Fourthly, Christian missionaries tried to find fault with Islam and Hinduism in the region. They used to publish various books to malign these religions' various sayings

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>71</sup> Satyen, Sen, *Britissh Birodhi Shadhinot Andolene Muslimder Vumika (The role of Muslims in the anti-British independence struggle)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Jatiya Sahitya Prakashani, 1988), pp. 26-34.

rules and regulations. This propaganda was widely propagated among the people. But their opposition to Islam was extreme. They manipulated various tactics to keep Muslims from their religion and religious culture. The missionaries adopted a far-sighted approach to convert the people to Christianity. As a result, Muslims became aware of Christian propaganda and this consciousness was the main reason for this great revolt. In addition, the ruling class used various methods to keep Hindu-Muslim soldiers away from their conduct, religion and religious beliefs.<sup>72</sup> They believed that if they could convert the brave soldiers to Christianity through various tactics, it would be easier to convert the ordinary people using force. No one else would proactively participate in this matter for fear of government punishment.

Hindu-Muslim soldiers served under the British East India Force. A new type of rifle called the Enfield Rifle was introduced for the Indian Army. The cartridge used in the rifle had to be cut into the shell and filled with the rifle. Rumour said that the cartridges contained a mixture of beef and pork fat. The Hindu and Muslim sepoy of the Company's Army became enraged at the threat of apostasy. They refused to use the bullet. In an editorial in *Ttn (The Times-News)* in 1857, it was cited as a major problem in India and the paper acknowledged that the use of religiously-offensive animal fat in Enfield cartridges was a mistake on the part of Anglo-Indian authorities.<sup>73</sup> It was identified as one of the direct causes of the rebellion.

In the first stage of revolt, the soldiers renounced government allegiance, breaking the chain of command as per the military system. At one point, the protest spread throughout the army barracks and it turned into a large-scale revolt. The law and order situation in the country was completely broken due to the violent movement of the rebels. The heat of this revolt spread beyond the city port to the rural areas. Given this situation, a mischievous group became especially active. In such a situation, the soldiers felt the want for leadership and they rushed in groups to the court of the Mughal Emperor of Delhi. They declared the old Mughal Emperor their leader and swore to continue jihad under his leadership.<sup>74</sup> But, this king was only a ruler in name and did not have enough courage. The condition of the aristocracy and other relatives of the ruler

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<sup>72</sup>*Moha Bidroho 1857 (Great Rebellion 1857)*, Ed: Fahmidur, Rahman, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Color Pencil, 2010), p. 45.

<sup>73</sup>The Times-News, June 8, 1857, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid*, p. 4.

was almost the same; in other words, there was no one left to lead from the elite. In this situation, some conscious scholars, ulama, warriors and a section of the general public together formed a combined force. The forward part of this force fought bravely against the British. They were able to secure the city of Delhi from the British for more than four months. The Indian Governor General called on the rebel soldiers to remain calm and the government issued a statement urging all soldiers to remain calm. However, the soldiers rejected the call and later joined the general public to strengthen the rebellion.<sup>75</sup> The revolt affected not only the Indian subcontinent but also the government and people of England, with the British praying almost daily in various churches in London for protection from the revolt. In the prayers, they wished good luck to their military members and civilians stationed in India.<sup>76</sup>

The English realized their mistake and took steps to resolve it quickly.<sup>77</sup> Initially, the British tried to calm down the rebels but failed and the British got panicked. Their commanders adopted a variety of methods to appease the troops, including the withdrawal of distributed cartridges, but the troops did not retreat from the rebellion. The British had lost faith in the rebel soldiers so much that the editorial in *The Times* in 1857 said that the rebels were “not to be trusted one minute”.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, the British later declared war against the rebels and started the war by assembling armies from different areas.<sup>79</sup> Sikh troops took part in the British expedition from the beginning and Hindus joined at the end. The British suppressed this freedom movement with the help of Sikhs and Hindus, while Hindu and Muslim soldiers first started the revolt. The number of Hindus in the army was the highest and the revolt started with their hands while the primary responsibility of the revolt rested on the Muslims. Although a section of the Hindu standard class participated in the revolt, the elite Hindus never supported the revolt. During the war, Calcutta-centric intellectuals and

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<sup>75</sup>National Archives of government of United Kingdom, (NAGUK), PRO 30/29/21/7, Calcutta Gazette containing the Governor General's proclamation to the Bengal army of May 16th 1857, See more : The Calcutta Gazette, Thursday, May 19, 1957, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup>NAGUK, HO 45/6857, A Church of England pamphlet: form of prayer and thanksgiving in suppressing the Indian rebellion, Sipahi Revolt of 1857 issues, p. 32.

<sup>77</sup>Members of the British Parliament sent a letter to Lord Canning saying: “Take means to make the Hindu and Mussulman Sepoys abandon their mutinous conduct, or else it will be much the worse for you”, (Sood hartoursun (Newspaper), May – June. 1857).

<sup>78</sup>The Times, August 20, 1857, p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> At the time, British mainstream newspapers were reporting positive news to garner public support in London. There was news in the famous Time magazine of that time “With what devoted courage our men must have fought.” (The Times News, November 12, 1857, p. 6).

members of the educated Hindu community sided with the British. They even prayed for the victory of the British.<sup>80</sup>

One of the main reasons for the defeat of the Muslims in this war was that there was no unity among the rebel forces. They took part in the battle chained and sporadic, lacking information and a communication gap. The battle was fought by Muslim and Hindu armies and army members belonging to different ethnic groups. As a result, unity was difficult to be formed among these different groups. Although the Indian forces were more in number, they were somewhat old-fashioned and used classical weapons and lacked visionary and competent leadership. Initially, members of different ethnic groups took part in the war, but only Muslims fought against the British in the end. The Hindu and Sikh armies, at one stage, abandoned the war.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, the British forces were highly skilled as they acquired skills through regular training activities in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, they used modern weapons imported from Britain. They also employed modern tactics in information and communication. Thus, the British finally got the support of the local Hindus and were able to manipulate the Sikh army against the Muslims.

A small number of British Company soldiers and some officers were killed in this battle. Although the people of different communities were engaged in the revolt, the British blamed the Muslims alone as the British had already had hostile relations with the Muslims.<sup>82</sup> After this independence movement, the rulers of the English Company exaggerated the role of Muslims in the revolt and they hit the Muslims back to back as this revolt shook the foundations of the British terribly.<sup>83</sup> After the revolt, the British began to regard the Muslims as their number one enemy in the whole Indian subcontinent. Accordingly, they had always viewed Muslims with suspicion.<sup>84</sup> They occupied the historic city of Delhi and committed a hellish genocide. They killed whoever was in front of them, including the young and the old and continued unlimited looting.

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<sup>80</sup> Akhter, Mukul, "Kolkata Kandric Buddijibi (*Intellectuals of Kolkata*)", p. 137.

<sup>81</sup> Satyen, Sen, "Britissh birodhi shadhinota andolene muslimder vumika (*The role of Muslims in the anti-British independence struggle*)," p. 65.

<sup>82</sup> Andrew, C. F. & Girija Mukherjee, *The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India*, 1st. Edition (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), p. 49.

<sup>83</sup> Jawaharlal, Nehru, "The Discovery of India", p. 36.

<sup>84</sup> Ramesh Chandra, Majunder, "The History of Benga'l", p. 56.

They arrested the last Mughal emperor from the tomb of Emperor Humayun and elected him for Rangoon, Burma. In addition, they shot and killed the princes without trial. They used Delhi's central *James Mosque* as a stable for horses and Hundreds of mosques were closed. Thousands of people were killed during this time. They persecuted the leading scholars of the Muslim community and killed thousands of scholars.<sup>85</sup> They tried to destroy the main libraries of Delhi as well as private libraries. They looted a lot of rare books and documents from Delhi and smuggled them to London.

The revolt of 1857 was a significant event in the history of the mullahs of the Indian subcontinent, including Bengal and had far-reaching effects. This incident was called the black chapter of British rule in the subcontinent. After the uprising, many things, including British policy, changed.

### **1.5. Transformation of Policy of British Rulers**

Whether this 1857 incident was a revolt or a war, it was a significant event since it affected not only Bengal but also entire the Indian subcontinent. The East India Company ruled Bengal for 100 years (1757-1857) while the company was only a commercial enterprise. Accordingly, its members experienced in trade could not show their skills in governing Bengal; they lacked experience in various fields, including social, economic, administrative, political and law departments. That is why the company made many mistakes, including interfering in the religious affairs of Hindu-Muslim. They confiscated the property of the Muslims' religious education institutes, which caused substantial religious and financial losses for the Muslims. The British professor Philips blamed the East India Company's policy for the revolt, claiming that conservative Brahmins were over-recruited into the army, which helped to incite religious fervor. The Bengal army was humble towards the British for a long time, but they were unruly in this rebellion.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the local zamindars, backed by the East India Company, harassed the Muslims, which the company had to bear. They interfered in many religious matters of the Hindus, most notably by introducing the "Widow Marriage" Act. This caused much displeasure in the conservative Hindu community. The Hindus had to pay for the mistakes of the East India Company.

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<sup>85</sup> S. M. Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan, 1858-1951*, 3rd. Edition (Pakistan: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1977), pp. 31-32.

<sup>86</sup> *The Time*, May 10, 1957, p. 6.

After the revolt of 1857, the British government underwent major changes in the governance of the Indian subcontinent. A special session of Parliament in 1858 initially blamed the East India Company's incompetence and shortsightedness regarding the mutiny in India and identified it as the result of negligence on the part of the Company. On August 2, 1858, the British Parliament passed the "Government of India Act", stripping the East India Company of all powers and annexing India to British rule.<sup>87</sup> Britain's Queen Victoria discussed the East India Company's contribution in 1857 and praised all the members of the company, as well as the company's long-term contribution to the Indian subcontinent. However, the Company was exempted from the rule of the subcontinent. Queen Victoria authorized the incorporation of India into the direct rule of the British Raj and took the title of Empress of India. Accordingly, the queen sent a governor-general to the subcontinent as her representative and the post of Secretary for India was created in the British Parliament, which was called the "India Secretariat".<sup>88</sup> The capital of the East India Company was Calcutta in Bengal, but the British moved the capital to Delhi under the new regime. The East India Company initially controlled Bengal and parts of northern India, but after the revolution, the British government brought the whole of India under their rule.

Simultaneously, the British made drastic changes in their views concerning various issues of the subcontinent. Several steps were taken to prevent revolt, including a policy of non-interference in religious matters. In addition to liberal policies in the social and economic spheres, Christian missionaries' activities were monitored by a section of English conservatives. This time span was considered a secular regime in which the British government also made sweeping changes in the military and tactfully kept the Indian natives from using modern weapons. They formed a mixed force in the military, consisting of different ethnic groups, so no single nation was dominant. Integrating multinational forces into the military had existed in the subcontinent long before the British, especially the Mughal army, had applied this famous method. Queen Victoria's proclamation signaled the change in British policy in the subcontinent: "... And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and

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<sup>87</sup>Mozammal, Haque, *British varoter sason tantric itihās*, (*Constitutional History of British India 1857-1947*), 1st. Edition (Dhaka: book house publication, 1976), p. 37.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability and integrity, duly to discharge ...”.<sup>89</sup>

After 1757, the British were liberal in their policy towards the Indian subcontinent by opening various avenues for the natives in terms of social benefits and employment as well as giving opportunities to different ethnic groups based on merit in civilian posts.

The British Government paid particular attention to the Muslims and continued investigating the causes of the Muslim revolt, taking cautious steps in the matter. The various issues of the Indian subcontinent were debated in the British parliament more than once and the members of the British parliament and experts raised various questions about the Muslims of the subcontinent and pressured the Government for a proper investigation. In 1869, Lord Mayo, then Governor-General, commissioned William Wilson Hunter, a former Secretary to the British Government, to investigate the matter. Hunter was a long-time magistrate and collector in Bengal and had considerable regional experience. He began collecting local traditions and records to make this report. In addition, he travelled throughout the province of Bengal and interviewed people of different religions. He compiled several journals and wrote several chapters on the local language. He used many old documents and many old books like *Ain-e-Akbari*.<sup>90</sup>

Hunter submitted the report to the government on May 30, 1871, after a lengthy investigation and the report was later published in the book “The Indian Muslim” in June 1872. He blamed the economic plight of Muslims and the short-sighted rule of the British East India Company as one of the reasons for the repeated Muslim revolts in the subcontinent.<sup>91</sup> William Hunter's report led the British government to adopt a new policy regarding the Muslims of the subcontinent and a more liberal moral policy. In order to manage British affairs properly in the subcontinent, the British emphasized improving the quality of education of Muslims. At that time, the government had

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<sup>89</sup>Queen Victoria's Proclamation, November 1, 1858, p. 2.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Proclamation\\_by\\_the\\_Queen\\_in\\_Council\\_to\\_the\\_princes,\\_chiefs,\\_and\\_people\\_of\\_India](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Proclamation_by_the_Queen_in_Council_to_the_princes,_chiefs,_and_people_of_India), Accessed 14/08/ 2021.

<sup>90</sup>John, Marriott, *The other empire Metropolis, India and Progress in the Colonial Imagination*, 1st. Edition (Manchester and New York: Manchester University, 2003), p. 25.

<sup>91</sup>“Not all Muslims took part in the Great Uprising of 1857, so it would not be appropriate to attribute the blame of the injustice of a small number of Muslims to all Muslims”. See more; William Wilson, Hunter, “*The Indian Muslims*,” p. 33.

adopted a particular policy on language in education. Since there were objections from a few more people, including Muslims, to learning English and reading and writing in the language, the government looked to resolve the issue. The Governor-General had formed a commission to translate the school books into the local language and the books were quickly translated into the local language.<sup>92</sup> From 1871 to 1882, the government took various steps to improve the quality of education for the general public, including providing additional budgets for primary and secondary education, paying particular attention to rural areas, building quality educational institutions and recruiting adequate teachers.<sup>93</sup> One of the objectives of the government was to create a check and balance between the Hindu and Muslim communities. After revolt of 1857, the Muslims also changed their plans.

### **1.6. Change in the Aspect of Muslims**

It has been discussed earlier that the Muslims did not adopt any policy of compromise with the British after the Battle of Palash in 1757. The Muslim ruling class, the elite, the middle and the lower classes were all involved in the anti-British movement. Many Muslim rulers, including Nawab Sirajuddaula, Mir Qassim and Tipu Sultan of Hyderabad, continued their struggle against the British without compromise. Although these struggles harmed the rulers of the English East India Company, the Muslims could not defeat them.<sup>94</sup> After 1857, it became challenging for the Muslims to survive as a self-sufficient nation. In the context of the plight of the Muslim nation, some intellectuals of the time became apprehensive and anxious about the future of the Muslim nation. Observing the stronghold of British government in the Indian subcontinent, the Muslims were able to realize that the opposition to the British government, especially through armed struggle, was a significant obstacle to the progress of the Muslim nation. It was clear to them that the change in the world order was a reality as the world system had transferred from the Middle Ages to the modern age. The British were the imperialist power in the new world order. Accordingly, they had established themselves as colonial powers in Africa and other parts of the world,

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<sup>92</sup>Vernacular Education Report, Home Department Proceedings April, 1877, p. 1.

<sup>93</sup>Report of the Indian Education Commission, Commission of Inquiry on Education in India, (Calcutta: Printed by the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1883.), p. 121.

<sup>94</sup>Enamul, Haque, “*Varoter muslim O Sadhinota andolon (Muslim of India and Independence Movement)*”, p. 34.

including Asia. Given this context, the then-Muslim leaders of the subcontinent were convinced to make drastic changes in their views.<sup>95</sup> Accordingly, the Muslims made two fundamental changes in their plans: gearing up activity in receiving modern education and adopting a policy of general compromise with the government and avoid all forms of armed resistance. Muslims adopted a policy of compromise with the British in order to move forward.

### **1.6.1. Defensive and Compromising Policy of Muslims**

After the Great Rebellion, the Muslims adopted the policy of compromise with the rulers. However, one of the major obstacles to modern education and reconciliation with the rulers was the fatwa called “Darul Harb.” The eminent scholar Shah Abdul Aziz declared India as '*Darul Harb*' in 1822 and took an active part in the movement to turn '*Darul Harb*' into '*Darul Islam*' or an Islamic state. Scholars like Abdul Hai also considered India ruled by the East India Company as “*Darul Harb*.” With this proclamation, the struggle of the Muslims began. The Muslim elite, the middle class and the ordinary people formed a violent movement against the British. In northern India, the movement was led by Shah Muhammad Ismail, Maulana Abdul Hai Inayat Ali, Bellay Yahya Ali Ahmad Ullah and many other Muslim leaders. The Bengali jihadi movements were led by Mir Nisar Ali Titumir, Dudu Mia and many others.<sup>96</sup> Whether or not the fatwa regarding India as “*Darul Harb*” is correct, there has been a long-running debate among mass Muslims and Muslim scholars. The intellectuals were sceptical about this fatwa's reality, effectiveness, and necessity, especially in the aftermath of the Great Revolt of 1857.

The intellectuals invoked the help of the famous Islamic Sharia experts in Makkah to solve this problem. A delegation of Muslim leaders met with eminent muftis in Makkah and obtained a fatwa from the heads of the three major Sunni sects, the Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi sects. The leaders of the three sects of the Muslim world declared the Indian subcontinent as “*Darul Islam*” instead of “*Darul Harb*.” The fatwa stated: “The land in which Muslims can normally lead a religious life does not belong to the heart of

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<sup>95</sup>Abdullah, Al Masum, *British amale bangler muslim Shksha Somossa o Prosar (Problems and Promotion of Muslim Education in Bengal during the British Period (181-1941))*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2006), p. 65.

<sup>96</sup> Mohammad, Moniruzzaman, *Upo mohadeser musliman varot-pak-bangladesh (The Muslims of the subcontinent is Indo-Pak-Bangladesh)*, vol. 2, 1st. Edition (Calcutta: Written publication, 2001), p. 22.

*Darul Harb* and is not a provision of Islam.” Scholars in northern India supported this view with written statements that had their seal.<sup>97</sup>Based on the fatwas of the Muftis of Mecca and the opinion of Indian scholars, Maulana Karamat Ali Jawnpuri, one of the best scholars of India at that time, declared the Indian subcontinent as “Darul Islam” and he also declared that henceforth war against the British Government was illegal. In 1872, Muslim scholars were united in a joint decision, which was considered a monument to the prosperity and progress of the Muslim community. Since then, the Muslims had refrained from any armed movement against the British government and adopted a compromise policy. The British government welcomed these Muslims' actions liberally. Later, Muslims also attached importance to modern education in national development.

### **1.6.2. Focusing on Modern Education**

In light of the new approach, Muslim intellectuals were ahead to pay attention to the education system as there was the least alternative for Muslims to move forward without connecting them to modern education. When the whole world system changed in the nineteenth century, Muslims were lagging in education worldwide. Particularly, the Muslim territories under colonial rule were far from education and the same picture was seen among the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. Muslim intellectuals emphasized the importance of the English language and modern education and called for modern education for all Muslims, but the conservative Muslim society opposed it. The conservative society could not realize that Islam had a direct connection with the education system of the Muslims from the primary level to the tertiary stage.<sup>98</sup> However, the English introduced an education system that had no relation to religion. So, the education system as designed by the British government was best known as the secular education system. The Muslim scholars objected to the secular education system and the scholars had an idea that the Muslim youth would be confused by this

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<sup>97</sup> Scholars in northern India; Maulvi Ali Mohammad of Lucknow, Maulvi Abdul Ma of Lucknow, Maulvi F avixllak of Lucknow, Mohammad Naim, of Lucknow, Maulvi Rsmatullah of Lucknow, Maulvi kutab-ud-din of Delhi, Maulvi and Mura S Abdallah of Lucknow, Maulvi Luttollah of Rampur, Maulvi Alumali, Rampur. (William Wilson Hunter, “*The Indian Muslims*”, p. Appendix.)

<sup>98</sup> Moniruzzaman, Mohammad, “*Upo mohadeser musliman varot-pak-bangladesh (The Muslims of the Subcontinent is Indo-Pak-Bangladesh)*”, pp. 149-152.

secular education system. Out of this fear, the conservative Muslim community came to oppose the English language and Western education.

Another fear of Muslim conservatives was the Christian missionaries that started converting the people through educational institutions, especially schools. Not only in Bengal but also in the surrounding areas, the Christian missionaries continued their religious propaganda. Consequently, the conservative Muslim class was apprehensive about the younger generation. For example, in the Hyderabad district of Sindh province, many Muslim students left the school in panic when a Muslim schoolboy converted to Christianity at the instigation of Christian missionaries.<sup>99</sup> This incident in Hyderabad created fear in the minds of the Muslims of the entire subcontinent.

Another reason for the Muslims' opposition to Western education was the anti-Muslim sentiment of British writers. Writers in England played a role in discrediting the Muslim rulers of the Indian subcontinent by presenting various allegations. Among the English writers, George Macaulay Trevelyan and Luke Scranton were noteworthy. English writers refer to Muslims as outsiders and Hindus as natives in the Indian subcontinent. These writers criticized the Mughal rulers for non-Muslim policies.<sup>100</sup> The British writers adopted a dual policy in their narration as they criticized the Muslims but did not comment on or protest against the oppression and economic plunder of the East India Company in Bengal.<sup>101</sup> Muslim conservatives fiercely opposed Western education because of this duality of the British writers.

Muslim intellectuals took a pragmatic approach to making the nation aware of the necessity of modern education. At last, Muslim intellectuals convinced conservatives that science is not the private property of any nation. The intellectuals tried to prove that there is no restriction to acquiring any pure knowledge in Islam by presenting arguments from the books of Islamic law, including the Qur'an and Hadith. Many new territories had been conquered in the early stages of Islam, but the cultures of these regions, including Persia, were not in direct conflict with Islam; instead, these cultures were easily adopted by the Muslims. By dint of these essential and practical examples,

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<sup>99</sup> Rafiq, Zakaria, *Rise of Muslims in Indian politics; An analysis of developments from 1885 to 1906*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Somaiya Publications, 1970), pp. 30-31.

<sup>100</sup> Abdullah, Al Masum, "*British Amale Bangler Muslim Shksha Somossa o Prosar (Problems and Promotion of Muslim Education in Bengal during the British Period (181-1941)*," p. 72.

<sup>101</sup> Sirajul, Islam, "*History of Bangladesh (1704-1971)*," p. 72.

Muslim intellectuals could convince conservatives that Muslim society could easily acquire any beneficial knowledge.<sup>102</sup> They presented a strong argument in favour of modern education, putting religion at the forefront. They tried to prove by various arguments that those who are agents of the Christian missionaries in Bengal are far ahead of the Muslims in terms of education. So, there is no alternative to modern English language education for Indian Muslims to counter Christian missionaries and protect the Muslim youth from the process of conversion. Consequently, Muslims became interested in the practice of modern science and they re-focused on the practice of knowledge. A few intellectuals and activists emerged out of the plight of the Muslim society of Bengal and who gave concrete guidance to the Muslim nation with great skill and competence. Through their planned effective action, Muslims re-educated and acquired skills.

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<sup>102</sup> Mohammad, Moniruzzaman, “*Upo Mohadeser Musلمان Varot-pak-bangladesh (The Muslims of the Subcontinent is Indo-Pak-Bangladesh)*”, p. 22.

## **CHAPTER 2: CONTRIBUTION OF LEADING INTELLECTUALS AND ACTIVISTS TO INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENTS**

The role and contribution of several intellectuals and workers in the Muslim intellectual movement in Bengal were the greatest, coming forward to guide the bewildered Muslim population. Most of these intellectuals received religious education as well as modern education so that they were well-informed about the situation at that time. At that time, many intellectuals of Bengal received higher education from London. All the qualities required for social change and political reform were present among these intellectuals. All the qualities required for social change and political reform were present among these intellectuals. They planned for success and took adequate steps to implement it. The steps taken by them were scientific and quite contemporary. They showed foresight in their plans and actions. They worked tirelessly to remove ignorance, superstition, and economic reform from Muslim society. their efforts, modernity was combined with religious education. As a result of their efforts, educational, political, economic, and cultural changes in Muslim society took place.

The intellectuals traveled all over Bengal to encourage the practice of knowledge among Muslim students and during this time they presented the importance of the practice of knowledge to the general public. They were able to convince Muslims that superstition had infiltrated Muslim society due to distance from modern education, science, and civilization. They tried to increase the number of Muslim students in educational institutions, but it was not easy. One of the reasons for the backwardness of Muslims in education was economic as discussed earlier. Due to the economic crisis, they could not get modern education. But intellectuals worked for a long time on how to achieve modern education at a low cost. They had to face difficult conditions to increase the number of Muslim students. the intellectuals felt the responsibility to build socio-political organizations to protect the national interests of the Muslims. Because it was the demand of the time and Muslims had no other alternative. However, the intellectuals faced many obstacles in conducting their activities independently, among them, the religious conservative class, social obstacles are particularly significant. However, despite all these obstacles, they managed their activities, which resulted in a positive change in the entire Muslim society. To strengthen their activities, the intellectuals

established many institutions through which activities were carried out for the educational, social, and political development of Muslims. All these institutions were built in modern Pathan to meet the needs of the era. The role of intellectuals in the leadership and management of institutions was considerable.

Bengal underwent a meaningful change with the efforts of all, including intellectuals and reformers. At that time, a large number of intellectuals and reformers served in Bengal, among whom Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif Khan, Syed Ahmed Khan, Munshi Muhammad Meherullah, Mir Mosharraf Hossain, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Nawab Salimullah were particularly notable.

### **2.1. Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif Khan (1826-1893)**

After the revolt in the subcontinent in 1857, a small number of intellectuals began to think about improving Bengal's Muslim society. Nawab Abdul Latif was one of them and he played a pivotal role in Bengal's Muslim awakening. He was born in the British Bengal region of Faridpur in 1828 to an elite Muslim family. His contribution to the development of Bengal's Muslims in the latter part of the nineteenth century was immeasurable and he seen as the pioneer of the Muslim renaissance.<sup>103</sup> He received his primary education from his family. Although English education was not popular in the Muslim community then, his father tried to provide him with a balanced education. It was mainly because of his father's interest that he received the opportunity to receive religious education as well as modern education from an early age. Even amid the Muslim community's frustration and crisis, he obtained the highest levels of education.<sup>104</sup> He was known as an exceptionally meritorious student from childhood and was recognized many times in his academic life. He obtained a number of government scholarships due to his merit and qualifications and obtained the highest degree in Arabic, Persian and English from the then Alia Madrasa, a renowned educational institution. He was one of the few people in the Muslim community who was highly educated and qualified. Due to his adoption of traditional and modern education, he was able to gain an accurate idea of the social and economic system of the time.

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<sup>103</sup>Muhammad Mojlum, Khan, *The Muslim Heritage of Bengal: the lives, thoughts and Achievements of Great Muslim Scholars, Writers and Reformers of Bangladesh and West Bengal*. 1st. Edition (Uk: Kube Publishing Ltd, 2013), p. 211.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.115.

Abdul Latif began his career in 1846 as a teacher at Dhaka Collegiate School, which aided him in the eventual fulfilment of his mission goal. Shortly after, he was appointed as the personal secretary of the emir of Sindh and it was in this capacity that he became acquainted with Muslim administration duties, which enhanced his reputation.

In 1848, he resigned from the post of secretary and returned to his old profession of teaching Arabic and English at the Alia Madrasa in Calcutta. As a young teacher, he gained wide popularity and thus became known to society.<sup>105</sup> In 1859, he began his career as a Deputy Magistrate and was elevated to Presidency Magistrate based on merit. He was named a member of the Board of Civil-Military Education in 1863 and a Fellow of Calcutta University the following year. He was appointed a judge when the Calcutta Municipal Corporation was created in 1865 and retained the position till 1875.<sup>106</sup> Because of his intellectual qualifications and skills, he was promoted rapidly and in a short period. He had easy access to English and Hindu elites of the period for higher schooling, qualifications and government jobs. He gathered diverse experiences due to his extensive involvement in teaching, administration and the judiciary, which helped him comprehend the reasons behind the Muslims of Bengal's backwardness at the time.

### **2.1.1. Abdul Latif's Integral Role in the Muslim Education**

Abdul Latif attached the utmost importance to the education of Muslims and felt that the progress of Muslim society and the solution to all its problems needed to be tackled through education and intellectual practice. It was from this motivation that he urged the Muslim community to take up pens in their hands instead of weapons. He started a movement to create awareness of education among the Muslims and for this purpose contacted almost all the prominent Muslim leaders not only in Bengal, but in the whole of India. He campaigned extensively for the religious education of Bengal Muslims as well as for modern education.<sup>107</sup> In Abdul Latif's view, superstitions had infiltrated Muslim society due to their distance from contemporary education, science and civilization. He began a reform effort to free Muslims from these superstitions,

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<sup>105</sup> The Daily Star, Jul 11, 2012, p. 6.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>107</sup> A.B.M. Shamsuddin Ahmed, "Nawab Abdur Latif", in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Vol. 2, 2nd. Edition (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), p. 62.

encouraging both modern education and religious culture, as well as organizing a group of young Muslim associates. He thoroughly studied and researched different elements of the Muslim community, including education, culture, economic and social problems in the same way that Hindu thinkers of the time did. At the time, however, the question arose as to whether he had properly considered the economic crisis of Muslims, as education was difficult for anyone not financially independent.

Long before the insurrection of 1857, Abdul Latif had made several initiatives to promote the development and awareness of Muslim education. He launched an essay contest called “The Benefits of Learning English” in 1853 to encourage Muslim students to pursue contemporary education. This essay competition attracted not only Bengali pupils, but also students from all around the subcontinent. Abdul Fattah, a school teacher from Bombay, won first place in the essay competition and was awarded with 100 taka. The competition's award ceremony was held in Calcutta and was attended by famous Calcutta residents as well as high-ranking government officials. During his address, he chastised the government for Muslim kids' lack of access to contemporary education. He urged the government to offer Muslims with possibilities to pursue contemporary education.<sup>108</sup> The essay competition got a large response from students and the educated community and was well received by many. Nonetheless, some other Muslims, particularly conservatives, condemned the competition and began to suspect Abdul Latif. Despite the fact that the essay competition's theme was 'English Education,' the competition's question was written in Persian, causing some controversy.

Abdul Latif showed foresight in 1854 by drawing the attention of the Muslims of Bengal to the “Muhsin Fund”.<sup>109</sup> The British government seized the Muhsin's fund money from Muslims in 1829 and spent it on Hindu students instead of Muslim students, despite the fact that Muslim students were the true beneficiaries of the fund. The government used this considerable budget to establish different institutions in West Bengal, including Hooghly College, charities and medical facilities. However, Hindus

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<sup>108</sup>Shamim, Firdous, “Role of Nawab Abdul Latif in the Development of Modern Education in Colonial Bengal.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 76, no. 2, 2015, p. 508.

<sup>109</sup> Haji Muhammad Mohsin (1733-1812) was a wealthy Muslim from Bengal, who became a legendary figure. He was born in 1833 in Hughli, West Bengal. As he was childless, he set up a fund known as the Mohsin Fund on April 20, 1806 to spend this huge sum of money on the welfare of Muslim students. All proceeds from this fund were used to provide scholarships to Muslim students. (Daily Prothom Alo (Newspaper), December 19, 2013, p. 3.)

were given priority in this regard. Many people, including Muslim leaders at the time, became interested in the fund again after Abdul Latif's encouragement. In 1861, he became the Muslim representative in Bengal, bringing the Muhsin Fund to the attention of the Lieutenant Governor and demanding justice. Later, as part of the legal procedure, he filed a written complaint with the Governor General's Office, which was published in book form in 1863. Eventually the government agreed to spend the Mohsin Foundation for Muslim students because of the opposition and advice of Nawab Abdul Latif. In 1873, the Governor General, Lord Northbrook, approved an annual grant of Rs. 50,000 for Muslim students, through which three madrasas were established in Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi.<sup>110</sup> Though a number of others also tried to to fund Muhsin, Nawab Abdul Latif's efforts were crucial, which attracted the ire of the Hindu society at the time. Indeed, Calcutta based Hindu publications reprimanded Nawab Abdul Latif on the issue.

Abdul Latif took a number of timely initiatives to improve Muslim students' access to government facilities, as well as bringing issues about Muslim students' interests to the government's consideration. Prior to 1840, the government Alia Madrasa in Calcutta solely taught Arabic, with no knowledge of any other language, a system that disadvantaged Muslim students. He pushed hard for the establishment of English and Persian departments in this institution, with the government eventually doing so as a result of his efforts. In 1860, the government considered closing the Hooghly Madrasa in Calcutta, which he opposed and the government eventually retracted its decision due to his and the people's objections.<sup>111</sup> He was instrumental in the development of Calcutta and the Hooghly Madrasa, it was with his assistance that the Arabic department of the Hooghly Madrasa was acknowledged and the government built some dormitory halls for Muslim students. The government created a Hindu College in Calcutta in 1817 to teach modern education, but Muslim students were not allowed to enroll and at that time Muslims had no other alternative educational institution. In an effort, in 1854, Muslim students were admitted to the Hindu College and the name of the college was changed to Presidency College. His singular effort resulted in the establishment of the Presidency College, which was regarded as one of the most

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<sup>110</sup>Shamim, Firdous, *“Role of Nawab Abdul Latif in the development of Modern Education in Colonial Bengal*, p. 506.

<sup>111</sup>A.B.M. Shamsuddin Ahmed, *“Nawab Abdur Latif”*, pp. 62-69.

important centers for modern Muslim education.<sup>112</sup> One of the methods of Abdul Latif's activities was to create opportunities for Muslim students to study in government institutions rather than to establish new educational institutions for Muslims. Due to his work plan, facilities in various government educational institutions increased after 1854 and interest in formal education increased in the Muslim community, which led to an increase in the number of Muslim students.

### **2.1.2. Academic Pursuits for Muslim Development**

Nawab Abdul Latif, in addition to being a skilled organizer, published a number of academic essays and books on developing intellectual activity, through which the Muslim community was given clear direction. His first article was 'One Minute on the Hooghly Coin', which he wrote in 1861 at the request of Sir Grant, K.C.B. (Lieutenant Governor of Bengal)<sup>113</sup> His article was considered important as Muslims greatly benefited from the article. Abdul Latif says:

“Subsequently, my representations, unceasingly made and pressed upon the government from 1861, for the proper administration of the princely Endowment of the Late Haji Mahomed Mohsin, of Hooghly attracted the notice of Sir George Compbell and Lord North-brook and His Lordship had the kindness to make an additional grant of Rs. 50000/00 per annum to the cause of Education in 1873, for the purpose of liberating the funds of the Mohsin Endowment”.<sup>114</sup>

'One Minute on the Hooghly Coin' was later published in book form in 1877 by the Municipal Press, Alipore, Calcutta. He urged the government to build the Hooghly Madrasa as well as increase the quality of modern education for Muslims in this essay. He read two key articles entitled 'The nature of objects and advantages of periodical scenes' at a meeting of the Bengal Social Science Association in 1865, which was afterwards widely discussed in other communities, including among Muslims. In 1868, he wrote his famous article 'A Paper on Mohammedan Education in Bengal.' He wrote

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<sup>112</sup> Mohammad, Moniruzzaman, “*Upo mohadeser muslman varot-pak-bangladesh (The Muslims of the subcontinent is Indo-Pak-Bangladesh)*”, p.92.

<sup>113</sup> J P Grant, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, from 1859 to 1862, served as Bengal's representative of the British government. His greatest contribution was to the indigo growers, for whom he delivered the correct judgement. See more in, Sirajul Islam, *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, vol. 4, (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), p. 54.

<sup>114</sup> Abdul, Latif, *Muslim Bangla: Amer jug (Muslim Bengali: My age)*, ten, Abu jafor Samsuuddin, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1936), p. 22.

The Mohammedan Law of Marriage and Dare in 1875 and legal concerns between the British government and the Muslim population concerning marriage were settled as a result of this article. It was published under the title 'Paper on the Present Condition of the Indian Mohammedans and the Best Means for Improvement' in 1880. Nawab Abdul Latif wrote two great autobiographical works, both near the end of his life.<sup>115</sup>

Most of Abdul Latif's essays and books were written in Persian, English and Urdu, but none of his writings are available in Bengali. Despite knowing the Bengali language, he did not write anything in Bengali for which he has been criticized. One of Abdul Latif's weak points was that he did not write in his mother tongue, a sign of shortsightedness.<sup>116</sup> Nawab Abdul Latif's academic works were not in Bengali, though he did encourage others to write in Bengali. Inspired by him, many poets later made important contributions to the development of literary Bengali language. Syed Ismail Hossain Siraji is one of the poets and writers who continued the practice of Bangla language due to his enthusiasm.<sup>117</sup> He also edited many of Abdul Latif's lectures and essays in Bengali and also wrote many poems dedicated to Abdul Latif which are considered as invaluable resources of Bengali literature. In addition to his academic activities, Abdul Latif focused on creating independent institutions, one of which was the Mohammedan Literary Society.

### **2.1.3. Establishment of Mohammedan Literary Society (1863)**

Abdul Latif's greatest achievement however was The Mohammedan Federation for the Advancement of Muslim Education, which he was able to found in Calcutta in 1863 after overcoming numerous hurdles. At the Literary Society's inauguration celebration, Abdul Latif invited leaders of Bengal's Muslim community as well as government officials to participate. The occasion was attended by educationist Mohammad Wafi and the headmaster of the Calcutta Madrasa's Arabic department. Maulvi Mohammad Wazi,

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<sup>115</sup> His first autobiographical book, *A Short Account of My Public Life*, was published in 1855 by Newman & Co, Calcutta. His second autobiographical and latest book, "A Short Account of my humble efforts to promote education, especially among the Mohammedans", was published in 1886. (Rahim, M A, "History of Muslims of Bengal 1857-1947" p. 33.)

<sup>116</sup> Wakil, Ahmed, *Uniss Hotoker Banglar Musulmanerchinta O Chatonerdhara, (The Thought and Consciousness of Bengali Muslims in the Nineteenth Century)*, 3rd. Edition (Dhaka: Novel Publishing House, 2013), p. 89.

<sup>117</sup> Shamsher and Qayyum Asefa, Ali, A great benefactor of Muslims and of communal harmony, Daily New Age, on July 09, 2018, p. 6.

Kazi Abdul Bari and Mohammad Wazi Hafiz Aziz Ahmed, among others, was a well-known Muslim politician, writer, teacher and other professionals. At the inaugural ceremony, he delivered an article outlining the organization's needs, giving the audience a clear picture of the organization's goals and objectives. The Mohammedan Literary Society's head office was for a long time located at Nawab Abdul Latif's mansion in Calcutta and all of the society's early functions were held there. Mohammad Wazid was the President of the Mohammedan Literary Society, with Kazi Abdul Bari and Hafiz Ahmed as Vice-Presidents and Nawab Abdul Latif as Secretary.<sup>118</sup> With the founding of the Mohammedan Literary Society in 1863, the Muslim educational movement entered a new phase. Nawab Abdul Latif said about the purpose and goal of the society:

“With a view to rouse the Mahomedan Community into literary activity and public spirit, I found, in April 1863, the Mahomedan Literary Society of Calcutta the Meeting of which were held for many years in my house and are now being held in the Hall of the Calcutta Madrassa and which has been joined by a large number of Mohamedan noblemen and gentlemen, from all parts of the Country and has moreover become the parent of similar societies in various other places throughout India.”<sup>119</sup>

The Mohammedan Literary Society was run like a modern organization which had a definite purpose and goal. It adopted a robust approach to strategic planning, which was time-efficient.

#### **2.1.4. Mohammedan Literary Society: Goal and Purpose**

The Mohammedan Literary Society conducted programs with specific objectives, the important aspects of which are presented below.

1. To take various steps in the Muslim community to realize the need for education. Eliminate Muslims' hatred of Western education and make them interested in learning English.
2. Taking various steps to allay the suspicions and mistrust of the British rulers towards the Muslims and thereby reduce the distance between the two nations.

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<sup>118</sup>Sufia, Ahmed, “*Muslim Community in Bengal: 1884-1912.*” 1st. Edition (Dhaka: University Press Ltd, 1974), p. 122.

<sup>119</sup>Abdul, Latif, “*Muslim Bangla: Amer jug (Muslim Bengali: My age)*”, p. 128.

3. Hold a conference every month to present essays on various contemporary issues of Muslims. It was decided that these articles would generally be presented in Urdu, Persian and English. It was decided to invite intellectual scholars and important Muslim leaders to the monthly meeting, but anyone else wishing to attend would be allowed to attend.

4. It was decided to invite scholars from different parts of the subcontinent, including Bengal, to the monthly meeting.<sup>120</sup>

The Mohammedan Literary Society used to hold regular monthly meetings and at this event people with experience in various subjects of the time would present essays on various subjects including history, politics, economics, agriculture, science and commerce. Usually these articles were presented in Persian and English but for the convenience of the listeners Abdul Latif translate the articles into Urdu. They were later also translated into Bengali. These programs were attended by scholars of different nationalities and many lectured on these academic programs, such as the then telegraph officer F.G. Teale, who gave a lecture on Science and Technology which was translated into Urdu by Abdul Latif. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan gave an important lecture on “Patriotism and the necessity of promoting knowledge in India” at the fourth meeting of the institute. In a program in 1864, Dr. Narayan Nade gave an important lecture on medicine and on May 30 of the same year, the Society's first annual program, which was attended by more than 500 people, took place in the hall room of the Calcutta Madrasa.<sup>121</sup> Through such fairs, not only Muslims but also people of different professions especially Muslim youth were attracted towards modern knowledge and science. The society took various initiatives including round table meetings, discussion meetings and interfaith debates to establish harmony among all communities, including Muslims, Hindus and Christians. Through their activities, they tried to create an environment to establish national unity in the entire subcontinent.

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<sup>120</sup>Enamul, haque, *Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif: A 19th Century Social Reformer : His Writings & Related Documents*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Nandonic prochashoni, 1964), p. 45.

<sup>121</sup> Enamul, haque, *Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif: A 19th Century Social Reformer : His Writings & Related Documents*, p. 257.

### 2.1.5. Role in Establishing Communal Harmony

Abdul Latif took a number of political and diplomatic initiatives to improve relations between the British rulers and the Muslim population, one of which was to praise the British government, the royal family and grieve their deaths at every chance. He prepared reception and farewell programs for government delegations through the Literary Society, as well as special programs for the reception of British delegates in India, in order to draw the attention of high-ranking British government officials and delegates.<sup>122</sup> On the occasion of the Prince of Wales' marriage in 1864, he sent congratulatory greetings to the Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales on behalf of the Muslim community in Calcutta and organized a special meeting in Calcutta to wish them well. The Society welcomed Prince Charles on his accession to the throne in 1864 and wished him well. When Prince William became gravely ill in 1872, several Indian groups sent messages wishing for his recovery and the Literary Society also sent a telegram at the time.<sup>123</sup> The group also maintained contact with British envoys in India in order to dispel British skepticism and enlighten British envoys about the numerous problems faced by Muslims in order to increase British understanding on these issues. On multiple instances, the British government invited members of the society to various government functions, establishing a channel of communication between Muslims and the British government through this group.

Furthermore, the Literary Society held discussions on occasion to promote unity among various religions ethnic groups. On March 13, 1865, the Society hosted an inter-religious conversation at Calcutta's famed Town Hall, which was attended by significant members of the Muslim community, elite members of the English society, major Hindu leaders, and representatives of the Jewish community. The second highest conversation was held in Calcutta on March 2, 1867, with Sir Cecil Beadon, Representative of the Government of India, as the Chief Guest and members of the Christian community in India.<sup>124</sup> Sir Cecil Beadon complimented the Mohammedan Literary Society and Nawab Abdul Latif for their contributions to education during the talk, which was the first and

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<sup>122</sup>India Office Records, London (hereafter, IOR), Internal Document, No. 333. 24 March 1864, in Enamul, haque, "*Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif: A 19th Century Social Reformer: His Writings & Related Documents*", p. 136.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p. 137.

<sup>124</sup>Enamul, Haque, "*Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif: A 19th Century Social Reformer: His Writings & Related Documents*", p. 198.

largest interfaith debate ever held in the whole subcontinent. These activities were organized nonstop by the Literary Society, with Nawab Abdul Latif never ceasing to hold them. The society's activities fostered harmony and coexistence among the various communities, which benefited the entire community.

### **2.1.6. Influence on the Legislative Process**

The Literary Society attempted to influence Muslims by providing their opinions to the government when it came to enacting laws on various issues. For example, when the government imposed a tax on Muslim marriage cabinets in 1877, the society spoke out against the law and the government withdrew the bill at the society's request. The government withdrew a slew of religious laws with the support and counsel of the Literary Society. The government enacted several new laws based on the suggestions of many communities, including the Mohammedan Literary Society. For example, the society contributed to the passage of the Memon Bill in 1885 and the Consent Bill in 1891 by providing aid, advice and consent.<sup>125</sup> Nawab Abdul Latif and the leaders of the Mohammedan Literary Society met with senior British officials to examine a number of issues impacting the Muslim community and potential solutions. In 1871, Nawab Abdul Latif and the leaders of the Society met with William Wilson Hunter, the head of the Hunter Commission, to examine the Muslim community's concerns and potential. In 1883, he met Blenter (High-ranking representatives and officials of the British Government) and attempted to persuade British officials to view Muslims favourably. He tried to persuade British officials that Muslims did not want to fight the British government with guns, but rather wanted to see India prosper.

Abdul Latif led the organization professionally on his own for more than 36 years and represented the Muslim community in all of Bengal's major movements and progress. After his death in 1893, his son, Barrister A. I. M. Abdur Rahman, took over the Mohammedan Society, but lacked his father's knowledge and foresight, bringing the Mohammedan Publicity Society to a halt. The society's monthly meeting was discontinued after Abdul Latif and it was limited to the mid-yearly meeting only.<sup>126</sup> As a result, the association's grandeur faded with time, but it had a lasting impact. It served

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<sup>125</sup> The Muslim Chronicle (Newspaper), May 22, 1897, p. 6.

<sup>126</sup> Sufia, Ahmed, "*Muslim Community in Bengal: 1884-1912.*" p. 138.

as the principal voice for Bengal's Muslims at the period, continually giving new impetus to the Muslims' thoughts and feelings. In fact it was instrumental in guiding Bengal's Muslims. In this sense, the Society was an educational and reform institution as it conducted considerable research on education policy for Muslims. Through its educational initiatives, the organisation was able to make a significant impact on the Muslim community. By adopting a policy of compromise with the British government, the society enhanced the opportunities of the Muslim population. The Society helped upper class Muslims more, however, as it had little effect on the Muslim working classes. Despite the fact that it expanded the educational activities of all Muslims, it could be stated that the society did not help the economically lower class Muslims. Although this group was open to individuals of other religions and had enough liberal access to the area, Hindu academics were rarely present, which is why it is best to think of it as a service-oriented organization.

#### **2.1.7. Contribute to the Safeguarding of the Muslim Community's Interests**

Nawab Abdul Latif opposed the tyranny of Bengal's indigo planters. While acting as the District Magistrate of Satkhira in Bengal in 1853, he publicly opposed the region's persecution of indigo planters. He complained to Sir JP Great, the Government's Acting Governor, about the mistreatment of indigo planters and asked for restitution. He traveled to several parts of rural Bengal to witness the misery of indigo farmers and campaigned against their persecution. He provided unbiased rulings in several cases while serving as a judge in court, which enraged the English indigo planters. He was transported from Satkhira to Hughli when indigenous indigo planters, notably Europeans, put pressure on the government to punish him.<sup>127</sup> Abdul Latif was a vocal opponent of the persecution of Bengal's indigo planters and a harsh critic of the indigo planters. He worked tirelessly to deliver numerous advices, guidance and support to the Muslim community. He addressed many demands to the government on behalf of the disenfranchised peasants after being elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1862.

Developing Muslim contacts with the rulers was not an easy task because Nawab Abdul Latif was one of the first from his community to try to improve Muslim relations with

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<sup>127</sup>Enamul, Qaque, "*Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif: A 19th Century Social Reformer: His Writings & Related Documents*", p. 122.

rulers and British officials also looked at Muslims with disbelief, making his task difficult. With his intellectual qualifications, he was able to forge his own path, as he impacted not only Hindus and Muslims, but also Europeans, whom the British ruling elite regarded favorably.<sup>128</sup> Abdul Latif made an indelible contribution to the Muslim community of Bengal's national growth through education, culture and political awareness, making him a relevant figure to this day.<sup>129</sup> The efforts of Abdul Latif had the most influence on the general elite and educated Muslims in general, but they had little impact on the rural populace. The economic element of the Muslim community did not receive much attention due to his concentration on education and culture but in light of the social milieu of the time, he tried his best to contribute to the community's development, which is now considered a milestone in Bengal's intellectual movement. Syed Ahmed Khan also made a vital contribution to the development of the Muslim community.

## **2.2. Syed Ahmed Khan (1817- 1898)**

The contribution of a group of thoughtful people, led by Syed Ahmed Khan, was responsible for the transition that occurred in Muslim society in the second part of the nineteenth century in the Indian subcontinent. He has been dubbed the forefather of the subcontinent's Muslim intellectual movement and seen as one of the masterminds of the Muslim mind's new consciousness. He spent a lot of time working on the subcontinent's Muslims' economic, social, political and cultural problems.<sup>130</sup> Syed Ahmed was born in 1817 to a wealthy Muslim family in Delhi, where his father worked for the Mughal authorities and his mother was a noblewoman. During the time of Mughal Emperor Arangzeb, Syed Ahmed's grandfather held a high position.<sup>131</sup> Syed Muhammad Twaki, his father, was a devout Muslim who frequented the *khanqah* of the then-famous Alim Shah Ghulam Ali in Delhi on a regular basis.<sup>132</sup> Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, a well-known

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<sup>128</sup> K. Z. Islam, Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif, Daily star, Jul 11, 2012, p. 7.

<sup>129</sup> F.B. Bradley birt, *Twelve men of Bengal in the nineteenth century*, 4th. Edition (Calcutta: S.K. Lahiri & Co, 1910), p. 123.

<sup>130</sup> Fahmid Ur, Rahman, , *Uttara Adhunik Muslim Mom (Postmodern Muslim Mind)*, vol. 2, 1st. Edition, (Dhaka, Color pencil, 2020), p. 76.

<sup>131</sup> Major Genral G.f.i ,Graham, , *The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*, 1st. Edition (Karachi: oxford, 1974), p. 22.

<sup>132</sup> Imam Rabbani, Sheikh Ahmed Al Farooqi Sirhindi (1564–1624), one of the greatest Mughal Islamic thinkers was well-known as a Muslim revivalist who struggled to rid Muslim culture of superstition. He is also well-known for his opposition to the Mughal emperor Akbar's attempt to introduce a new religion

scholar on the subcontinent, was a follower of Ghulam Ali. When Syed Ahmed was a child, Syed Muhammad Twaki used to take him to the saint's shrine to help him establish character.<sup>133</sup> Syed Ahmed grew up in an aristocratic family with strict rules and regulations and he had the opportunity to see the dying days of the Mughal Empire in Delhi at a young age, seeing firsthand how an established city was destroyed. In his introduction, Graham, his biographer, wrote:

“He is of middle height and of massive build weighing upwards of nineteen stone. His face is leonine- a rugged witness to his determination and energy. He has a hearty laugh; and enjoys a joke as much as any man. He has been a widower for many years and has had only one wife. He informed me the other way; with a twinkle in his eye, “that he might marry again! ”But he said, ‘She must be English, in order that I may mix more freely in English society and she must be eighty years old and have lost her teeth!’” He is born orator, His lips quiver with suppressed emotion; the voice and figure follow suit. Up at 4 a.m... he.... works far in to the night”.<sup>134</sup>

Syed Ahmed Khan took supported academic programs to create awareness among Muslims. He wrote many articles and books in Urdu to convey his message to the common people. His academic works were written not only for Muslims but also for the welfare of various communities of the entire subcontinent.

### **2.2.1. Ahmed Khan's Academic Activities in Public Awareness**

After 1857, Syed Ahmed was the first to start his career in writing to help the Muslim community emerge from its crisis as it was a great way to reach out to the government, the educated class and the masses. He knew English, Urdu and Persian but used to write in Urdu. In 1855, he wrote his first book entitled “*Asbabai Bagwat Hindi*” (Reasons for Rebellion in India) to investigate the cause of the Great Uprising. The British blamed the Muslims for the uprising of 1857, or blamed it on Russian provocation, but Syed Ahmed aimed to prove that Russia did not conspire in the revolt and the Muslims did not obtain any help from abroad. Given the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah’s role in the revolt, he attacked Bahadur Shah harshly, portraying him as an imaginary emperor.

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called Deen-i-Ilahi. (Chaudhry, Abdul Qayyum, Sadia Islam and Maira Zareen Sadiq, “Educational Thoughts Emphasized by Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi.” *Al-Azva* 30, no. 44 (2015): 9-17).

<sup>133</sup>S.M. Ikram, “*Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan, 1858-1951*”, p. 20.

<sup>134</sup>Major Genral G.f.i.,Graham, “*The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*”, p. 43.

In the book, he noted that not all Muslims throughout the subcontinent were involved in the uprising, so it was not appropriate to place the blame for the uprising on the entirety of the Muslim community. He criticized British policy towards Muslims and remarked that the British were making a historic mistake by only accusing Muslims, the consequences of which would not be good for anyone. In the book, he mentioned that not only Muslims but also Hindus and Sikhs were involved in the uprising but only Muslims were punished. He criticized the rule of the English East India Company, saying that there were major flaws in the company's military structure and policy. He argued that the Mughals' military policy was far more powerful than that of the British because the Mughals formed a military force consisting of different ethnic groups. The Mughal forces were controlled in a very orderly manner and different languages were used but the government of the East Indian Company could not form a multi-ethnic regular force which led to rebellion. He said that it was not only the people of the region who were responsible for the uprising but also the administrative weakness of the company system and rulers. The publication of this book had a profound effect on the ruling party as Syed Ahmed Khan had considerable influence on the subsequent decisions of the British government.

He wrote several essays about Islam's history and theological issues to raise Muslim knowledge and help them better comprehend Islam considering the contemporary circumstances. In 1846, he wrote his book '*Intekhab ul Akbar*,' in which he examined Muslim law in depth. At the time, there was a lot of debate over Muslim family and social regulations and thus the article attracted much attention. In 1847, he wrote his famous work '*Asarul Sanadid*,' in which he covered numerous major aspects of Muslim archeology in the Indian subcontinent.<sup>135</sup> In 1850, he edited and published Abul Fazl's classic work '*Ain-i-Akbar*,' as well as '*Tarikh-e-Firozshahi*' and '*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*' in Urdu. However, *Asarul Sanadid* and *Ain-e-Akbari* were two of the most popular works in the early phases of his writings and prominent historian M Mujib commented on these two books; "These two works entitled Syid Ahmed to a high position among the scholars of the world".<sup>136</sup> His writings were based on Islamic theology and they helped him earn a lot of reputation among Muslims on the subcontinent as well as

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<sup>135</sup>Mohammad, Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, 1st. Edition (USA: Allen & Unwin publication, 1967), p.34.

<sup>136</sup>Mohammad, Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, p.35.

academicians at the time. Syed Ahmed Khan's second book, 'The Loyal Mohammedans of India,' was published in 1860 and it referred to Muslims as loyal subjects of the English rulers of the subcontinent. He presents Muslims as a peace-loving community and Islam as a tolerant faith. He attempted to assuage the British rulers' fears of a Muslim uprising through this book. He chastised the Muslim soldiers for taking part in the Sepoy insurrection, calling them "short-sighted" and stating that a violent revolt against the regime and its leadership was inappropriate. Others who participated in the rebellion should be punished but bringing those who were not involved to justice is not the proper solution, according to him. He seeks to persuade the British authorities in the book that some Muslims helped the British during the uprising and played a neutral role while assisting them in preserving their lives. He asserted that only a tiny portion of the Muslim population, not the entire community, participated in the uprising.<sup>137</sup> Syed Ahmed's goal was to develop friendly relations between the Muslim community and British rulers. Regardless of whether his views and knowledge concerning the uprising are impartial and factual, he published these two volumes for the betterment of Muslims.

Syed Ahmed Khan's critical book "*Khutbahi Ahmadiyya*," (The speech of Ahmadiyya) which he authored in Urdu during his tour to London, was published in 1870. The work was translated into English as 'The Essay on the Life of Muhammad' when he was in London and it has subsequently been translated into many other languages. He also wrote another important book, *The Life of Muhammad*, during his stay in London. William Moore, a British government official, published a controversial book about the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>138</sup> In response to Moore's claims, Syed Ahmed worked hard to publish a sermon in Ahmadiyya, in which he attempted to show that Islam is not incompatible with modern civilization and progress. He wrote Nawab Masinloc a letter on the work, in which he said the following: "It simply came to our notice then. I am now reading Mr. William's book about the Prophet, it has set my mind on fire, he has

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<sup>137</sup>Khursheed Kamal, Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan*, 1st. Edition (Lahore, Sang-e-Meelpubl, 2005), p. 119.

<sup>138</sup> William Moore misrepresented a lot of facts about Islam and Muhammad in this book, which enraged Muslims all throughout India. Muslims across India condemned the book at the time and many English authorities were critical of it, thinking it would disrupt communal harmony. See more: Abdullah, Mohammad, *Sir Syed Ahmed Khan Religious and Social Thought*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh 1982), p. 34.

been unjust and biased. I have made a resolution and before that I wanted a book about the life of the Prophet. I don't care if I run out of money and I have to beg, I will write this book".<sup>139</sup>

Most of his writings were written for the political and reformist purposes of Muslim society but this book was completely exceptional in that it was written out of resentment and religious consciousness. He criticizes some Western orientalist's writings in the book and encourages them to be more impartial in their understanding of Islam.

### **2.2.2. Efforts to Spread Education in a Different Ways**

Syed Ahmed Khan saw the necessity to educate Muslims in contemporary education and established a school in Moradabad in 1860 as a result of this sense of responsibility. In the field of education, he placed a specific emphasis on teaching in native tongues. He felt compelled to translate new books from various languages because the school lacked the requisite texts for teaching in the students' native tongue. He tried several times to establish a translation institute before finally establishing the Scientific Society in Gazipur in 1864. The goal of this organization was to translate well-known science books from the Western world into Indian languages for the benefit of the Indian people. He was transferred to Bali Ghar in 1864 and the institution was later relocated to Aligarh. Many acres of land were purchased for agricultural research in the name of this organization.<sup>140</sup> The translation bureau published the "Aligarh Institute Gazette," a journal that translated many science texts into different vernaculars, including history, economics, politics and mathematics. In 1868, the Aligarh Scientific Society conducted a meeting, which was attended by a large number of European and Indian scientists.

Syed Ahmed Khan referred to the East India Company's administration as "oppressive" and hailed the entry of the British government at the same time. He believed that Europeans required an association to improve relations between the West and India at the time. An association called "British Indian Association Aligarh" was eventually created in response to Syed Ahmed's proposal, with Joy Kisan Das as president and Syed Ahmed as secretary. Many of those who attended the event became members of the organization right away. The Europeans' approach changed dramatically as a result

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<sup>139</sup>Mohammad, Abdullah, "*Sir Syed Ahmed Khan Religious and Social Thought*", p. 35.

<sup>140</sup> Major Genral G.f.i., Graham, "*The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*", p. 32.

of Syed Ahmed's speech and they were more interested in building cordial relations with the people of this country. This organization was open to members of all faiths and anybody could join. It included many Europeans and Hindus and was open to anybody living on the Indian subcontinent. It is believed to have been the first platform for a Hindu-Muslim alliance. The organisation did not last long and was disbanded in less than a year, but one of its efforts was to apply to the British government for the establishment of a vernacular university in India.<sup>141</sup> When Syed Ahmed Khan proposed Urdu as the university's language, the Hindu members present were adamantly opposed. According to them, many foreign words had infiltrated the pure tongue of Hindi, causing a great deal of controversy between Hindus and Muslims. Syed Ahmed understood that the subcontinent's Urdu-Hindi struggle will eventually undermine Hindu-Muslim unity.

Muslims created the "Muhammadan Education Congress" in 1886 under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, which was mainly a non-political organization. The institution played a crucial role in the expansion of education among Indian Muslims. Every year, the Muhammadan Education Congress convened and various members of the Muslim Committee were in attendance. Apart from education-related topics, numerous challenges in Muslim society were discussed and important choices were made. Syed Ahmed Khan and his associates always felt the importance of establishing a university. They also felt that there was no alternative to the university for raising public awareness and developing national consciousness and talked about their various programs for the establishment of the university.<sup>142</sup>

Syed Ahmed Khan worked to prevent anti-Islamic discourse, religious education and protect the interests of the Muslim community at home and abroad in the curriculum of various schools and colleges of the country. He represented Muslims in numerous official responsibilities, including as a member of the Legislative Council and played a significant role in the growth of Muslims during his term. He gave a long statement on local government laws as a member of the Legislative Council, recommending that Muslims be nominated separately. He mentioned the following:

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<sup>141</sup>Ishtiaq Husain, Qureshi, "*A short history of Pakistan.*" 1st. Edition (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1967), p. 149.

<sup>142</sup>The Muhammadan *Anglo-Oriental College Magazine*, New series vol. vii, February, 1899, p. 28. <https://archive.org/details/McGillLibrary-128395-4847>, Accessed 12/11/2021.

“The system of representation by election in countries where the population is composed of one race and one creed is no doubt the best system that can be adopted. But, my Lord, in a country like India, where caste distinctions still flourish, where there is no fusion of race, where religious distinctions are still violent higher education in its modern sense has still not made equal or proportional among all section of the population, I am convinced that the introduction of the principle of election, pure and simple to the local board and District Council would be the attendant height with evils of great significance.”<sup>143</sup>

Syed Ahmed Khan was interested in western education due to the fact that in the 19th century, the western education system was much more advanced than the eastern one. He encouraged the youth of the Indian subcontinent to pursue western education and science. He was in favor of the development of the East through Western education.

### **2.2.3. Learning from the West and Applying to the East**

In the twentieth century, the universities of Cambridge and Oxford in England had a strong reputation on the Indian subcontinent and many Indian students came to study there. Syed Ahmed aspired to construct a Cambridge-style educational institution in India. Syed Mahmud, his eldest son, was awarded a scholarship to study at Cambridge University, so he traveled to England in 1869. Syed Ahmad travelled along with his son at the age of 52, visited several parts of England and was astounded by the British educational system, culture, civilization, way of life, manners and decency. He believed that the practice of science, as well as the fact that science was taught in people’s mother tongue, was the primary reason for the West’s success and wealth. He also visited private institutions and tried to absorb the intricacies of each one. He was introduced to many new concepts during his stay in England.<sup>144</sup> There, he met several notable persons, including Lord Lawrence, Charles Dickens and the novelist Carlyle. He was able to engage in several government and academic initiatives and was able to closely observe the administrative structure and teaching methods at Cambridge University. Syed Ahmed complimented the English habits, laws and regulations, as well as their hard work, cleanliness, punctuality and ordered living, in many publications. He

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<sup>143</sup>Rajmohan, Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim mind*. 2nd. Edition (India: Penguin Books,2003), pp. 45-46.

<sup>144</sup>Sufia, Ahmed, “*Muslim Community in Bengal: 1884-1912*”, p.34.

believed that Muslims have a lot to learn from the English language. In the Muslim world, he voiced optimism and happiness in the case of Turkey and Egypt. They, he claims, were among the best civilizations in the Muslim world.

In 1870, Syed Ahmed Khan returned to India after a tour of Britain and joined a new workplace in Varanasi. His ideas changed considerably and he published a magazine called '*Tahajibul Akhlaq*' for Muslim Social Reform. The main purpose of the magazine was to correct many misconceptions prevalent in Muslim society and to draw Muslims' attention towards Western science and English education. Through the magazine, Muslims had the opportunity to freely practice their knowledge and express their religious views. The newspaper played an important role in correcting the behavior of Muslims. The paper compared the daily life of Indian Muslims with the activities of the West. The first issue of the paper was published on December 24, 1870.<sup>145</sup>

In the early stages, Syed Ahmed Khan encouraged the youth of the subcontinent to pursue modern higher education in the West, but at that time the students faced obstacles due to the high cost of modern education in Europe. Later, he worked on the purpose of building advanced educational institutions in India on the model of the West. He established several modern educational institutions so that more students could be educated in modern education.

#### **2.2.4. Establishment of Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College (1875)**

Syed Ahmed Khan identified education as the most important element for the development of Muslims of the subcontinent and devoted his utmost efforts and attention to its spread. Without groundbreaking education, the Muslim nation could not be established anywhere in the world, including the subcontinent. His visit to England was a turning point in his work plan and mindset and it became his dream to establish an educational institution like Cambridge for Muslims in the subcontinent. After 1870, he wanted to establish a university in India but there were various obstacles in the way of establishing this university due to the British government's negative stance towards establishing the university. The local administration and the Hindu community also refused to provide land for the university.

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<sup>145</sup> S.M. Ikram, "*Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan, 1858-1951*", p.43.

Due to these obstacles, he decided to set up a college first, leaving aside the idea of a university. In 1872 he formed a committee of eminent Muslims and the purpose of this committee was to raise funds for the establishment of the college. For the initial fundraising, Syed Ahmed Khan failed in all parts of India, but Muslim leaders did visit. He retired from the service at the age of 1876 and then devoted himself to making every effort to establish this college. He visited all over India after his retirement to raise funds for the college and appealed to the Muslim rulers of Punjab, Patiala and Hyderabad for financial support for the establishment of the college and they too responded.<sup>146</sup> In 1871, the then English Viceroy, Lord Lytton, laid the foundation stone of the college and in his eloquent speech, he described the day as “an epoch in the social progress of India under the British rule.” Lord Lytton promised the British Government all the support of the College. He also promised to personally contribute Rs 500 per month to the fund. Other donors to the college included the Nizam of Hyderabad, the representative of Benares, the Maharajas of Patiala and the villages of Viziana, Northbrook, Sir William Jones and William Hunter. The initial name of this college was Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College and later it became known as Aligarh College. Mohammedan College not only practiced modern studies but also placed great emphasis on character development.

Apart from education, the students of Aligarh College were also given various trainings in their dress and manners. In this case Syed Ahmed took Turkey as a model, he used a fez hat in imitation of the Turks and made it compulsory for the students of Aligarh College to use the fez hat and Turkish dress.<sup>147</sup> With the establishment of Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College, Ahmed Khan emerged as a national figure and Muslim leader of the Indian subcontinent. The British Government established good relations and contacts with him as the initiator of education activities in India. Various representatives of the British government, such as Lord Lytton and later Lord Ripon, nominated him as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council. He had the opportunity to do many good deeds for the Indian Muslims in various meetings of this council. He was later appointed by the government as a member of the Education Commission of the Indian subcontinent and with his help, a section of Muslims was able to participate in

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<sup>146</sup>Enamul, Haque, *Varoter muslim O Sadhinota andolon (Muslim of India and Independence Movement)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Bangla Academi, 1995), p. 77.

<sup>147</sup> S.M. Ikram, “*Modern Muslim India and the birth of Pakistan, 1858-1951*” p.47.

government service. Aligarh College became the center of hopes and aspirations of the Muslims in the subcontinent and through this institution the social, cultural and educational activities of Muslims gained momentum. Originally a movement was organized around Aligarh College which is better known as “Aligarh Movement.”<sup>148</sup> Through this movement Muslims became acquainted with modern ideas and thoughts and became more politically aware. With Aligarh College in mind, Muslims later emerged in Indian national politics and played a benevolent role for the Muslims of the entire subcontinent. The Aligarh movement of Syed Ahmed Khan was one of the major initiators of the subsequent emergence of Muslim middle class in the Indian subcontinent.

### **2.2.5. The Political Ideology of Syed Ahmed Khan**

While Ahmed Khan was present during the insurrection in 1857, he did not participate in the Great Revolt because he understood that Muslims would not be able to win a fight against the well-educated and disciplined Englishmen using primitive military weapons and technology. He saved the lives of numerous ordinary English residents, their families and government officials from the rebels during the revolt. He supported Shakespeare, an Englishman who was a prominent official of the East India Company. Following the confiscation of many Muslims' property in 1857, Shakespeare gave Syed Ahmed Khan ownership of a big plot of land, which he kindly returned. Syed Ahmed did not desire to improve himself in the tragic backdrop of the Muslim community in such a crisis. Rather, he was always committed to stand at the Muslims' side in their pleasures and sufferings. He acted as a neutral figure, warning Muslim authorities such as Nawab Mahmud Khan about the uprising. Despite his neutrality, the revolt had an impact on his family. His uncle's family was utterly decimated and most of his relatives were slaughtered. The Sikhs, on the other hand, killed his family members. Fearing the British, his mother fled Delhi and Syed Ahmed accompanied her to Meerut, where he died. After witnessing the British and Sikhs' oppression and violence, he decided to leave India and travel to Egypt. However, in 1858, he was transferred to Moradabad as a new place of employment and tens of thousands of Muslims gathered here for a public meeting. He changed his mind about going to Egypt after seeing the misery of these

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<sup>148</sup>Ishtiaq, Qureshi, “*A short history of Pakistan.*” p. 152.

Muslims.<sup>149</sup> Because all past attempts to re-establish the Muslim Empire in India had failed, Syed Ahmed believed it was impossible to avenge the British or re-establish the Muslim Empire in India, thus he was eager to pursue a policy of cooperation with the British. He saw cooperation with the government as the only way for Muslims to survive and English education as the only option. According to historian Hafiz Malik: “Their policy was based on unquestioned loyalty to the British government simply because they had no alternative”.<sup>150</sup>

Conservative Muslims were not pleased with Syed Ahmed's attraction to Western culture and close ties to the British. However, it is true that his behavior altered dramatically after his return from England in 1870, which was in stark contrast to the prevalent Muslim culture in India and sparked controversy. He composed *Resalater Taramain* response to cultural allegations against him, in which he maintained that eating with the People of the Book (Christians) and embracing the positive features of their culture was not a sin. Syed Ahmed's western education policy and Aligarh College's liberalism were not accepted by the mullah elite.

The Deobandi<sup>151</sup> scholars are particularly important in this case.<sup>152</sup> Scholars from Deoband were among Syed Ahmed's harshest detractors, as they feared that imitation of the western way of life could lead to the destruction of Muslims' culture and historical identity. Syed Ahmed also fought for Hindu-Muslim reconciliation at first, but due to growing Muslim hate and Hindu opposition, he later focused solely on Muslim growth.<sup>153</sup> He used to refer to Muslims as a country, referring specifically to Muslims on the Indian subcontinent. The concept of Khilafah was never accepted by the entire Muslim Ummah. The fundamental difference between his and Jamal Uddin Afghani's

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<sup>149</sup>Wilfred Cantwell, Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, 1st. Edition (London: V. Gollancz, 1946), p. 7.

<sup>150</sup> Hafeez, Malik, *Muslim Nationalism in India and Pakistan*, 2nd. Edition (Washington, public affairs press, 1963), p. 32

<sup>151</sup> In 1866, the Deoband Madrasa was established in Uttar Pradesh, India, one of the best Islamic educational institutions in the subcontinent. Many students from this institution have subsequently contributed in various fields at the national level of India. (Daily Inqilab, October 28, 2016).

<sup>152</sup> In 1866 AD, Maulana Qasim Nanutubi founded DarulUloom Deoband Madrasa in northern India, which at the time was India's greatest Islamic educational institution. They were opponents and critics of Western education culture, with educational institutions having a role in a variety of independence movements, including the anti-British movement. Despite their participation in the Indian independence struggle in 1947, they were opposed to India's partition. (Yahya, Abul Fatah Muhammad, *Dawavandandolon: itihis, oithiijo o abobdan (Deoband Movement: History, Tradition and Contribution)*, Dhaka: Alamin Research Academy, 2011, p.156).

<sup>153</sup>Fahmid Ur, Rahman, “*Moha Bidroho 1857 (Great Rebellion 1857)*”, p. 25.

thought is as follows.<sup>154</sup> Syed Ahmed was always aware of the protection of Muslim interests. The main reason for his association with the British government was the development of Muslims in the subcontinent. He sought to re-establish Muslim identity in India with a strategy of co-operation with the colonial rule. Due to his foresight, Muslims were later able to establish themselves in Indian politics and the trend that he created was to turn Muslims from a community to a nation.

### **2.3. Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1926)**

Syed Ameer Ali was one of the pioneers of the Muslim Awakening in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century. His role in the revival of Muslims not only in Bengal, but the entire Indian subcontinent is immense. He was born in 1849 to an aristocratic Muslim family in Cuttack, Orissa, present day India. His father Syed Sadat Ali was a resident of Ayodhya and later he moved to Hughli in Calcutta.<sup>155</sup>

His early education started from his family and later he learned Persian, Urdu, English and Arabic from famous teachers in Calcutta and became proficient in these languages. He was quite gifted from an early age. At the age of 12 he studied the famous Persian poet Sheikh Sadir Gulistan and the Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbons. He was very enthusiastic about acquiring knowledge and was well known as a talented Muslim student of Calcutta. He passed his M.A. in 1867 and later went to London in 1869 to study law. After graduating from London in 1873, he returned to Calcutta and began his career as a lawyer. In 1874 he was appointed a Fellow of Calcutta University and from 1875 to 1879 he was Professor of Muslim Law at Presidency College.<sup>156</sup> He was later a judge of the Calcutta High Court from 1890 to 1904 and was the first Bengali Muslim to hold such a high position in the government.

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<sup>154</sup> Jamaluddin Afghani was born in Asadabad, Afghanistan, in 1839 and died at the age of 58 in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1897. Some academics claim he was born in Assadabad, Iran, however this is disputed. He was dubbed the “Father of the Theory of Pan-Islamism” because he essentially spread propaganda aimed at destabilizing the Muslim world in the face of Western invasion. He spent his entire life trying to develop the concept of Pan-Islamism. He influenced a group of Muslim academics from all over the world, including Turkey, Africa and Asia, who were instrumental in spreading post-Afghan pan-Islamist doctrine. (Abdulla, Ahmed. “Syed Jamaluddin Afghani's Ideas Blaze the trail. *“Pakistan horizon”* 34, no. 2 (1981): 35-43.

<sup>155</sup>Khursheed-kamal, Aziz, “*Ameer Ali: His Life and Work*”, 1st. Edition (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1968), p. 56.

<sup>156</sup>Muhammad Mojlum, Khan, *The Muslim Heritage of Bengal: the lives, thoughts and Achievements of Great Muslim Scholars, Writers and Reformers of Bangladesh and West Bengal*, (Kube Publishing Ltd, 2013), p. 16.

He received several other titles, including C. A. Ein 1887, Khan Bahadur in 1864, in recognition of his career achievements. He was elected a member of the Privy Council of England in 1909, the first Indian to be nominated for the post. Amir Ali was the first Bengali Muslim to become a High Court judge, the first to hold the highest degree and the first PC Council member.<sup>157</sup> He obtain the highest degree from London and hold the first position in the PC Council. He acquired both Islamic and Western education, he has been a part of modern Western society for a long time and had the opportunity to learn a great deal about Western civilization and philosophy. He was able to distinguish between traditional Islam and the Western secular education system as a result of his extensive awareness of the European-led system. He, like other intellectuals, emphasized academic activities in developing awareness among Muslims.

### **2.3.1. Academic Pursuits of Ameer Ali**

Amir Ali placed great importance on educational activities in order to create awareness among Muslims and he adopted writing as his medium. A particular aim of his writings was to present Islam accurately to Europeans and Indians. He was the first Muslim writer of the Indian subcontinent to present the history and culture of Islam in India to the West. It was through him that the West, especially the British, gained a better idea of the Muslims of India.<sup>158</sup> He was a regular contributor to important English newspapers and magazines at the time, writing about Islam and Muslims in India.

One of Amir Ali's best books was "A Short History of the Saracens", written in 1899 and published by Macmillan and Co., Ltd., in London. Sheikh Riaz Uddin Ahmed translated the book into Bengali and published it in two volumes in 1891. It was a primary textbook for the history of Arab Muslims at the time. He wrote a book about medieval Muslim civilization and the Arab tribes, rich in information and data for Muslims and the educated community in the West. This book gives a basic idea about the rise of Arabs, their various conversions to Islam and the society, state and economy of Muslims. The book covers major areas of medieval Islamic history such as: the geographical location of Arabia, a brief description of the population at the time, the

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<sup>157</sup> Abdul, Haq, *Banglarjagoron (Bengali Awakening)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Anupam Prakashani, 2001), p. 44.

<sup>158</sup> Fahmid Ur, Rahman, "*Moha Bidroho 1857 (Great Rebellion 1857)*", p. 37; See more: Aziz, khursheed-kamal, *Ameer Ali: His Life and Work*.

advent of the Prophet of Islam, the mission and the *Khulafa Al-Rashidin* (the Rightly-Guided Caliphs), the Umayyad dynasty, the Abbasid dynasty and the Fatimids. He described various aspects of the beauty of Muslim architecture in Arabia. The fall of Baghdad in 1258 and the rise of the Ottomans were discussed in detail.<sup>159</sup>

Amir Ali was also a prolific essayist with a number of well-known and influential columns and articles.<sup>160</sup> One his outstanding pieces, ‘A Cry from an Indian Muslim’, was published in London in 1903. He discusses numerous facets of the Muslim education system in Bengal and laments that the government provides more facilities to Hindus than to Muslims, leaving all fields in Bengal, including education, unbalanced for a long time. He argued that while progress had been made in other communities over the previous 25 years, Muslims have fallen far behind, for which he blamed the British administration. He highlighted that Muslims had the option to work in numerous government positions before 1824, but that after 1857, Muslim government jobs were reduced and that this imbalance became more obvious after 1861.<sup>161</sup> In this article, he urged the British government to provide additional services to Muslims and attracted the attention of British officials in Bengal to the issue. He acknowledged Muslims' weaknesses in this essay, writing:

“A nation can siting of upwards of fifty millions of souls, with great traditions but without a career, deprived, by slow degrees, of wealth and influence by mistaken sentimentalism [of the Englishmen] mixed with a contemptuous disregard for popular feelings, must always constitute an important factor in the administration of India. It is this factor which cannot be ignored and which must be considered by Government in all future projects for the well-being of India.”<sup>162</sup>

Writers and scholars from the Western world were greatly influenced by Amir Ali's writings, from which they gained a clear idea of Islam, especially of the Muslims of the subcontinent. While Syed Ahmed Khan and Nawab Latif wrote much about Muslims and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), their writing were mostly defensive in tone, whereas Amir Ali's writings reflected the strong culture and strength of Islam. Nawab Abdul Latif and Sir Syed Ahmed tried to refute the various arguments of the Christian clergy,

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<sup>159</sup>Syed Ameer, Ali, “*A short history of the Saracens*”. 1st. Edition (Hyperion Books, 1899), p. 22.

<sup>160</sup> Muhammad, Ali, *History of the Muslims*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Upl, 1988), p. 54.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>162</sup>khursheed-kamal, Aziz, “*Ameer Ali: His Life and Work*”, p. 36.

but Syed Amir Ali refuted the arguments of the Christian clergy and thrown counter-arguments to them. According to him, Islam is not against modernity but it has always been in favour of anything beneficial to the people.<sup>163</sup>

Syed Ahmed Khan was greatly influenced by Western education and scholars due to which he made many controversial statements about Islam, but Amir Ali tried to establish the superiority of Islam based on many arguments. He believed that there was much to be learned from Islam and that Islam had made a significant contribution to the development of Western civilization. Amir Ali had no qualms about the history of Islam, culture or its rules, but was confident enough about it and was enterprising. In the words of Wilfred Cantwell Smith:

“The ideals, the approach, the way of putting things, the Religious spirit all are now contemporary relevant to the new, liberal age. And this new Islam is ready, not only to take a place in the modern world, but to take the supreme place. Christianity is challenged, attacked, even ridiculed. The Muslims who accepted his religion from this writings might hold his head high, even when confronting Western Europe. His religion, point by point, is proved the finest in the world---judged by the most modern standards. The Prophet whom he adores is the supreme character of all history. The Muslim might well be proud and confident. The spirit of his religion, he found, is the highest liberal ideas, put here is contemporary and in glowing terms.”<sup>164</sup>

Syed Ameer Alilike other intellectuals, emphasized modern education and considered political awareness as essential. For this he considered the importance of institutional education for political awareness and founded the National All-Muslim Association for this purpose.

### **2.3.2. The Formation of the National All-Muslim Association**

Amir Ali gave particular importance to the development of the education system of the Muslims of Bengal as well as to their political awareness.<sup>165</sup> Because the political awareness of Muslims was considered the demand of the time. Two other prominent Muslim intellectuals of the time, Abdul Latif and Syed Ahmed Khan, played a

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<sup>163</sup> Wilfred Cantwell, Smith, “*Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*”, p. 33.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>165</sup> Sufia, Ahmed, “*Muslim community in Bengal: 1884-1912,*” p. 96.

substantial role in educating Muslims in modern education, but Amir Ali believed that political awareness was essential along with education. After the Sepoy Mutiny in the Indian subcontinent, Muslims became educated and politically aware, but the Hindu community was aware of this long before. Intellectuals like Surendra Nath Banerjee and Ashutosh Mukherjee had taken various steps long before that to make the Hindu nation politically and administratively aware. The Hindu Zamindars Land Holders Society in 1837, British India Society in 1843, India Association in 1877 and many other political and social organizations were formed in collaboration with Hindu intellectuals.<sup>166</sup> But these organizations promoted the idea of Hindu nationalism and defended Hindu interests. Amir Ali realized that Muslims would not get any concessions from Hindus and that in employment and modern education, Muslims would face challenges from the educated Hindu class. In this context, Amir Ali realized the importance of a political institution for the development of relations with the government as well as for the political awareness of Muslims. He founded the National Mahommedan Association in Calcutta in 1877.<sup>167</sup>

Amir Ali was the founding editor of this organization and held the position for 12 long years. Many people of Bengal including scholars, intellectuals, journalists, writers, poets and literary men were members of this organization. Many zamindars and nawabs were involved in this institution but a large section was middleclass. Amir Ali's efforts soon established branches in about 53 regions of India, including Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, UP, Delhi, Punjab, Madras, Bombay and Sindh. At the beginning of the association it had 200 members but in 5 to 6 years the number of members had reached seven hundred. In 1883, the word "space-time" was added to its name to form the Central National Mahommedan Association. As an intellectual and political organization, the organization simultaneously conducted various intellectual, political, social and educational activities.<sup>168</sup> It was responsible for overseeing the affairs of the Muslims not only in Bengal, but in the whole subcontinent. Legally and constitutionally

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<sup>166</sup>R. C.Majumder, *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, 1960), p.88.

<sup>167</sup>In this regard, Amir Ali said, "Perceiving the complete lack of political training among the Muslim inhabitants of India, the immense advantage and preponderances the Hindu organizations gave to their community, I had founded in 1878 the National Mohamedan Association". See more: Aziz, khursheed-kamal, "*Ameer Ali: His Life and Work*" p. 557.

<sup>168</sup>Mohammad,Rahim, "*History of Muslims of Bengal 1857-1947,*" p. 135.

the association represented Muslims and encouraged Muslims in modern education. The association took a stance in favor of building an educational institution with the money of Mohsin Fund.

In the intellectual movement of Bengal, along with the intellectuals, activists played an important role, among whom Munsii Muhammad Meherullah was one of the main people. He played the role of a social reformer and preacher and involved the youth in social reform activities.

#### **2.4. Munshi Muhammad Meherullah (1861-1907)**

Munshi Muhammad Meherullah was one of the pioneers of the cultural reform movement of Bengali Muslim society who conducted many activities in the Muslim awakening. When the Muslims of Bengal were subjected to cultural invasion and under pressure from all sides, Munshi Meherullah emerged and he played the role of a social reformer and preacher of religion. Munshi Meherullah was born on Monday 26 December 1861 in Ghop village of Kaliganj police station in Jessore district, a famous region of Bengal.<sup>169</sup> He was born into an aristocratic Muslim family. His father's name was Wares Uddin who was known in the society as a devout Muslim. However, very little is known about his predecessors. Meherullah's father admitted him to a rural school in Jessore, which was a Hindu school.<sup>170</sup> At that time the number of Muslim-run schools was very small and almost non-existent. Although there were 1 or 2, they were in the city centre. Munshi Meherullah's reading and writing career started in school, but when his father died at the age of seven, his education was interrupted and his studies stopped due to financial crisis.

However, his mother's role was the most important in his education. His mother always wanted her son to be educated in higher education, as a result of which Munshi Meherullah was inspired to pursue education. At the age of 14, he left home to pursue education at the behest of his mother. He was a connoisseur of the Persian language and later on wrote extensively in the language. He was a scholar of the famous Persian poet Sheikh Saadi's *Gulistan* and *Pandnama* and translated some parts of it into Bengali

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<sup>169</sup>Muhammad, Mohar Ali, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, Vol. 2, 1st. Edition (Riyadh: Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University Press, 1988), pp. 227-230.

<sup>170</sup>Doinik Sangram (Daily Sangram), January 2, 1997, p. 6.

which enriched Bengali literature.<sup>171</sup> He studied theology with deep concentration and memorized the entire Qur'an, as well as a deep knowledge of the logic of Hadith and Islam. He was well versed in the Urdu language which gave him the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge of the basics of Islam as there was a lot of Islamic literature and books on the history of Islam in Urdu at that time.

Munshi Meherullah could not continue his studies due to the family's financial difficulties and in 1881 he resigned from his studies and joined the district board under the English colonial government as a clerk. For a long time, however, he did not feel comfortable working under the colonial government, which led to his resignation. In 1884 he returned to Jessore district, his home district and devoted himself to the independent profession as a tailor.<sup>172</sup> He was very skilled and popular as a tailor and people used to come to him for this profession. Through this profession he had the opportunity to get acquainted with Christians, Englishmen, government officials and clergy. He had the opportunity to interact with ordinary people. In this way he was able to understand the social system of that time very closely. When the Christian missionaries started spreading propaganda against Islam in Bengal, Munshi Meherullah took effective steps to counter it. He made important contributions to the intellectual movement through social reform.

#### **2.4.1. Munshi Meherullah's Struggle Against the Propaganda of Christian Missionaries**

The arrival of missionaries in the subcontinent began during the Mughal rule in the 16th century, with the Dutch being the first Europeans to come to the subcontinent to spread Christianity. During Muslim rule, they did not benefit much from preaching, but after the Battle of Palashi in 1757, missionary activities gained momentum due to the arrival of a large number of European clergies in Bengal. Initially, missionaries conducted missions with the permission of the Muslim rulers, but after the Battle of Plassey, they began operating independently, forming the Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society. But the Indian company banned

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<sup>171</sup>Arjuman Banu Alo, *Munshi Mohammad Meherulla: Dharmoseba Somajchinta O Sahityasadhana (Munshi Muhammad Meherulla: Religious Service, Social thoughts and Literature austerities)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: BangajPrakashan, 2018), p. 15.

<sup>172</sup>Muhammad Mojlum, Khan, "The Muslim Heritage of Bengal: the lives, thoughts and Achievements of Great Muslim Scholars, Writers and reformers of Bangladesh and West Bengal", p. 225.

the missionaries for fear of public outcry over the missionaries' activities and for not being financially viable.<sup>173</sup> However, when the East Indian Company lifted the ban in 1813 under pressure from London, missionary activities in Bengal gained momentum. From this time onwards, the missionaries continued to conduct their activities independently in Bengal and its adjoining areas. After 1813, many officials of the East India Company provided assistance to Christian missionaries, thus enabling the operation of Madrid to continue successfully with the help of government manpower.

Christian missionaries used a variety of techniques to carry out their missions in the region, most notably education, establishment of orphanages, provision of food and shelter for the needy, etc. The main activity of the missionaries was to attract the common people to Christianity by establishing educational institutions in different parts of the region.<sup>174</sup> They established elementary schools for young children, adult education centers for adults and night schools for workers. In all these educational institutions, English was the medium of instruction as well as a few subjects were taught in the local language but it was very insignificant. Originally the main goal of the missionaries was to draw Christianity through English education as well as Western culture and education. In these schools, Hindu students were the most educated in the early stages and the number of Muslims was very small. Later, a section of the poverty-afflicted Muslim population was also attracted to these schools. Another strategy of the missionaries was to teach many local languages such as Bengali and Urdu, through which they preached Christianity to the common people.<sup>175</sup> Christians applied these tactics through education, which raised suspicions about Christians within the Muslim and elite Hindu classes. Although Christians naturally interacted with the people of the region and learned the language of the people of the region, they had a deep hatred for the local religion.

Christian missionaries regularly published various publications to reach out to the common people as well as the educated people in the area, that is, to propagate the religion, among which newspapers and books were particularly noteworthy. They used

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<sup>173</sup>John Nicol, Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, 2nd. Edition (London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1924), p. 8.

<sup>174</sup>Mohammad, Mohorali, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, "p. 49.

<sup>175</sup> Mohammad, Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Manas O Bangla Sahitya (1858-1918)*, (*Muslim Mind and Bengali Literature*), 1st. Edition (Dhaka: CharulipiPrakashani, 1984), p. 69.

to publish these publications in different languages like Bengali, Persian, Urdu and Arabic. The Christian clergy were highly educated and taught Urdu, Arabic and Persian, practicing the Muslim religious text, the Qur'an and Hadith, to try to mislead ordinary Muslims by distorting misrepresenting various interpretations of the Qur'an and the Hadith and publishing them in book and magazine form and distributing them to the Muslim community for free. Numerous such writings were found at the time. Among them were Hakikal Iman, Islam Darpan, Talime Mohammadi, Mizanul Haq and many more.<sup>176</sup> Although the missionaries initially established their missions in and around Calcutta, they gradually spread to different parts of the whole of Bengal, especially in Jessore-Khulna, Jhenaidah, Barisal, Faridpur and Madaripur areas. Their primary target was the uneducated people in the rural areas, a large part of whom were Muslims. During this time, missionaries roamed the countryside, trying to misrepresent Islam to the lower and uneducated Muslim community, emphasizing instead the importance of Christianity.

The Christian clergy not only distorted Islam, but also tried to present the Prophet of Islam to the common Muslims as a person of perverted morals. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was described by Christian patriarchs as having epilepsy and was also portrayed as a greedy woman, an utter untruth and a heinous lie. They promoted Islam as a limited, narrow and unrealistic backwards religion and presented Christianity as more peaceful than Islam.<sup>177</sup> The clergy used economics as a weapon to deceive the people of the region as one of their main tactics. Christians reached the doorsteps of the common people by providing free education to poor children in the region in Christian missionary schools. They also formed medical teams and gained the confidence of the people by providing free medical services to the poor and afflicted people in remote areas. Converted Christians were given new small houses as gifts from the missionary fund to solve the housing crisis and were also promised social security.

In the late 19th century, there was a severe famine in Bengal, which caused economic hardship to many families. In the context of this situation, the Christian clergy took advantage of this opportunity to help the lower-class people. The Christian clergy were

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<sup>176</sup>Sheikh Habibur Rahman, *Sahittaratna, Karmabir Munshi Meherullah (Action hero Munshi Meherullah)*, 1st. Edition (Calcutta, 1934), p. 310.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid, p. 34.

largely successful in converting a large amount of people to Christianity. At that time people of different religious communities in Bengal were forced to convert to Christianity due to the economic crisis.<sup>178</sup> Another of the tactics of the English clergy was to go around almost everywhere, including the hat bazaar, giving speeches to the common people and at the same time trying to confuse the common people by distorting the local religion. Although a section of the Hindu class was initially affected by such tactics of the Christian clergy, the uneducated lower-class Muslim community suffered the most. In this context, the general uneducated and lower-class Muslims were greatly misled by the Christian missionaries and a section of them were mentally prepared to leave Islam and convert to Christianity. Unexpectedly, an educated section of the Muslim and Hindu communities was also deceived by the Christian clergy and attracted to Christianity.

A large part of scholars and ulama in Bengali society at the time were too busy with their own interests to resist the conspiracies of the Christian missionaries. Although a section of the scholarly community understood this, they were not able to move forward due to a lack of courage. Besides, there were various questions about the qualifications of the scholars of that time. Their education or acquaintances were so limited that it was difficult for them to deal with the Christian clergy with limited knowledge.<sup>179</sup> Munshi Meherullah was one of the leaders who played a pivotal role in rescuing the Muslim community from the machinations of the Christian missionaries. Personally, Munshi Meherullah believed that Islam was the only solution to all problems. He came to the fore with timely and far-sighted arguments against Christian missionaries in the face of unrest in Muslim society, especially in rural areas. He thought deeply about a plan to rescue Muslims from this conspiracy. He began extensive studies on comparative theology to deal with Christian clergy. In a very short time, he finished reading the Bible and all the published books of the Christian missionaries very well in the form of research. Meherullah used three special methods to deal with the Christian clergy, namely (1) he decided to engage in a direct argument with the Christian missionaries,

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>179</sup>Abdullah Al, Masud, Ramatulloh Karonawo (1818-1891) and Munsho Mohammad Meherullohs (1861-1907) Methodology in the Study of Christianity: a Comparative Analysis, (*PhD Thesis* in kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2021), p. 36.

(2) he published letters in magazines and small books to the youth to deal with the Christian missionaries intellectually (3) At the same time, organizationally, he took special steps to move forward.

Munshi Meher was the first to give lectures at public gatherings in the bazaars and he began to give the general public a basic idea of the fundamental tenets. Through various arguments, he tried to prove that Islam is the most balanced religion and a complete way of life. He tried to prove the superiority, greatness and clarity of Islam. Muslims were encouraged by his lively speech and Meherullah's fame spread all around and lots of people started communicating with him. Ordinary people rushed from far and wide to listen to his speeches. He avoided a conventional style of discourse and adopted rational scientific discourse, the method of persuading people, which made him appealing to the common man. Long before Meherullah's activities, Christian missionaries had established a very strong network around the whole of Bengal. Due to which it became very important for Munshi Meherullah to travel all over Bengal. People from various parts of Bengal began inviting him to visit their region and offer lectures on Islam, particularly to dispute Christian missionaries' claims.

Munshi Meher formed a team in 1899 and through it he maintained regular contact with the common people in different parts of Bengal. Munshi Mohammad Hasan and Munshi Golam Rabbani, the two main allies of his team, provided important support to Meherullah throughout the struggle. Meherullah refuted the irrational claims of the Christian clergy with logic, wisdom and intelligence and presented logical evidence against their erroneous ideas. He raised various questions about the Christian Scriptures, the Bible and presented to the public many proofs of the futility of the Bible.<sup>180</sup> He occasionally appeared on the programs that the Christian clergy used to deceive the common people, asking questions of the clergy and defending them against falsehood. This led to occasional heated arguments with the clergy, which necessitated debates between the two parties and later Munshi Meherullah's team held several debates with the Christian clergy. Munshi Meherullah and his team had formal debates with the Christian clergy in different parts of Bengal, in which they failed to give satisfactory answers to his strong argumentation in all these debates. Through his sharp arguments,

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<sup>180</sup>Sheikh Habibur Rahman, Sahittaratna, "*Karmabir Munshi Meherullah (Action hero Munshi Meherullah)*", p. 30.

the influence of the Christian clergy began to wane and the importance of Munshi Meherullah among the general public increased and the Muslims became much stronger. In addition to speeches, Munshi Meherullah started an academic struggle to confront the Christian missionaries, he also tried to respond to the missionaries through writing.

#### **2.4.2. Academic Pursuits of Munshi Meherullah**

Munshi Meherullah devoted himself to publishing to answer the writings of Christian missionaries in the intellectual arena. He responded to missionaries through his regular writings and showed the direction of light to the Muslim society. Where Christian missionaries distorted Islam, he testified to aspects of Islam's sublime dignity. He wrote nineteen pamphlets over a short period, the most notable of which were:

1. The Futility of Christianity (1887)
2. Meherul Islam (1887)
3. Widow Ganjan and Bishad Bhandar (1894)
4. Canceled Christian and Documentary Islam (1895)
5. Muslim-Christian Argument War (1901)
6. Karamatia Madrasa (1901)
7. Islamic Curves (1908)
8. Pandanama (1909)<sup>181</sup>

Munshi Meherullah's '*Meherul Islam*' is regarded as one of the best works. It was first published in Calcutta in 1897, but afterwards reprinted in a number of locations, including Jessore. The main topic of discussion in this book was the reform of the religious and social life of Muslims in the light of Islam. The book is divided into 6 chapters, the first of which deals with Allah, the Creator of mankind and his messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In the second chapter, he tried to prove that Islam was a complete and fulfilling way of life and presented it as a monotheistic religion through various data and arguments. In the third chapter, he advised Muslims to imitate and follow the example of their Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It has been said that the only example for Muslims is to follow the example of the Prophet (pbuh). The fourth chapter deals with the five daily prayers, one of the major religious activities of Muslims,

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<sup>181</sup>Ahmad, Ali, *Banglar Muslim Grontho Ponji*, (Bangla Muslim Bibliography), 1st. Edition ( Dhaka, Bangla Academy, 1985), p. 45.

through which it is hoped that Muslims will become morally strong.<sup>182</sup> The fifth chapter deals with the life of the rich Muslims, here the Muslim rich are somewhat reprimanded due to showing indifference towards their children and their lifestyles of consumerism. In the last chapter, Munshi Meherullah discusses the view of worldly life. According to him, life of this world is very short. There is more work than time, more hunger than food and life in the hereafter is more important than life in this world.

Munshi Meherullah criticizes Hindu-Christianity in the book and rebukes contemporary Hindu-Christians for deviating from the original religious beliefs, but he praises the role of some Hindu intellectuals, such as Raja Rammohun Roy.<sup>183</sup> Because Raja Rammohan Roy started the reform movement to raise public awareness against the superstitions of Hinduism. Meherullah expresses his concern and opposes the performers of Baul Fakir-Kabi songs in this book, advising Muslim youngsters to avoid them as they are corrupting Islam's culture. Anisuzzaman is a researcher who has worked on the biography of Munshi Meherullah. In his remark on this book, Meherullah writes: "Meherullah not only intended to defend Islam from Christian attacks, but also wanted to reform traditional religious life". It is easy to believe that the reform movement impacted Syed Ahmed. As he helped the Muslims to eliminate many superstitions from the traditional way of life, but their conservatism prevented them from making concessions to modern living. Meherullah, likewise, did not engage in the creation of the Sukumar art of secular philosophy and music, since he wants religion to be properly established in our lives. Furthermore, it should be remembered that, rather than the pure practice of dancing songs, this supplementary disorder developed in the Bengal in the eighteenth century. Munshi Meherullah also debunked the Christian missionaries' misconceptions about Islam in this book.<sup>184</sup> His book was one of the best scholarly contributions to Christianity and missionary activities in Muslim society, despite the

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<sup>182</sup>Munshi Mohammad, Meherullah, *Mehrul Islam (The Sun of Islam)*, Qouted in Nasir Helal (ed.), *Munshi Meherulleh Rochonaboli (The compilations of Munshi Meherulleh)*. Vol. 1 (Dhaka: Sureed Prokashon, 1999), p. 257.

<sup>183</sup> Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), was a famous Hindu religious reformer who knew many languages including Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. He started a movement against the superstitions of Hinduism. He played a pivotal role in the adoption which is why he is called the savior of the Hindus. See more: Chattopadhyay, Nagendranath, *Life Character of Mahatma Raja Rammohun Roy*, 1st. Edition (Calcutta: Roy Press Depository Ghoshal, 1881), pp. 28-35.

<sup>184</sup> Abdullah Al, Masud, "*Ramatulloh Kaironawo (1818-1891) and Munsho Mohammad Meherullohs (1861-1907) Methodology in the Study of Christianity: a Comparative Analysis*", pp. 63-64.

fact that it did not contribute significantly to literary quality, as his novels had little literary value.

Munshi Meherullah's best-selling book, "*Bidhoba Ganjana*" (Widow's Agony) was released in 1897 and called for the reform of a key practice that was considered superstitious in the Hindu-Muslim community at the time. The late 19th century was a difficult time for Bengali Muslim and Hindu society, at a time when both communities of education, culture and social prejudice were under pressure. Due to ignorance in the Hindu community, child marriage became widespread and widow marriage was prohibited, due to which the Hindu community had been suffering from instability for a long time. Unexpectedly, the impact of this child marriage and widow marriage was also noticed by Hindus in Muslim society as the Muslim society has a historical tradition of widow marriage. The prohibition of widow marriage has never been allowed in Islam since its inception. The prophet of the Muslims himself historically introduced the practice of marrying widows.<sup>185</sup> In his book, Meherullah discusses the prejudices of Muslim and Hindu societies and tries to warn the whole nation against it because he has witnessed the tragic consequences of prohibiting widows from re-marrying.<sup>186</sup>

In 1905, Munshi Meherullah had an argument with a Christian clergyman over religious issues, which was later published in the form of an article in *Islam Preacher*. This article was later published in book form in 1908 under the title 'Muslim-Christian Argument'.<sup>187</sup> In 1905, at a gathering in Pirojpur district of Bengal, Christian pastor R. A. Spurgeon, Pastor Ishan Mandal and several others took part in debates with Munshi Meherullah.<sup>188</sup> The debate competition was held in three sessions over three days and hundreds of people attended the debate. In this book, Meherullah expressed doubts about the potential of Christianity to meet the needs of the present age. He also highlighted the importance of the relevance of Islam at the present time by answering

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<sup>185</sup> Mohammad Abu, Talib, *Munshi Mohammad Meherullah Deskal Sama (Munshi Mohammad Meherullah: Country, time, society)*, 2nd. Edition (Dhaka: Bangladesh Islamic Foundation, 1983), pp. 137-42.

<sup>186</sup> Munshi Meherullah said in this regard: "As far as I am aware of the details of the widow's heart in various ways, I have been able to use as much power as possible to express it in simple and plain language. I didn't even feel ashamed to use common feminine language especially in the place." (Nasir, Helal, *Meherullah Essays*, Vol. 1, 1st. Edition, Dhaka: Suhad Publications, 1999, p. 44.).

<sup>187</sup> *Islam Procharok*, (Preacher of Islam, Newspaper) January 23, 1906, p. 7.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

various complaints and questions of the clergy regarding the extreme conservatism of Islam. Christians describe Jesus Christ (the Prophet Jesus) as the son of God, which Munshi Meherullah called a misconception.

He also published '*Hindu Dharma Rahasya O Debalila*' (The mystery of Hinduism and Dvlila) in response to Hindu intellectuals' repeated anti-Muslim attitudes. Hindu writers had been attacking Islam for a long time, not only in Bengal, but the entire Indian subcontinent. Some examples were Hindu writer Bankimchandra's "Will of Krishnakant""Raj Singh""Book of Poetry""Mrinalini" Ishwar Chandra Gupta's "Collection of Poetry" Deenbandhu Mitra's "Jamai Barik" Damodar Mukhopadhyay's "Pratap Singh." Apart from these, many other books were deliberately distorted by Hindu writers and poets.<sup>189</sup> However, among all these writers, Bankimchandra's writings revealed the stringest anti-Muslim sentiments.<sup>190</sup> In this book, he presents the Hindus as an imaginary chosen nation. According to him, they have shifted from monotheism to polytheism due to which valuable time of life is wasted in worshipping various objects including imaginary deities, stones, trees and animals rather than their original creator. In fact, through this book, he took steps to reform both the Muslim and Hindu religions and to develop the social system of Bengal as a whole. At this time Raja Rammohun and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, two of the leading reformers of Hindu society, were mainly in favor of widow marriage and Munshi Meherullah applauded them for supporting their cause.<sup>191</sup> Apart from contributing to the academic field, he also gave special importance to institutional activities, he played the role of an efficient organizer. The organizations he founded played a role in the development of Muslim culture.

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<sup>189</sup>Nasir, Helal, "*Meherullah Essays*", p. 67.

<sup>190</sup> Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) was a novelist and journalist best known as the author of *Badi Hindu Resurrection*. He sought the restoration of the moral, cultural and religious heritage of ancient India. This idea of his is clearly expressed in *Ananda Math* (182) and *Devi Chowdhurani* (182) and in the commentaries on *Dharmashastra* and *Gita*. He was a reformer of neo-Hinduism and tried to form a Hindu caste. To this end, he surprisingly ignored the course of history. The changes and reorganizations that have taken place in the society of Bengal and Hindu-Muslims in the last few centuries have not been captured in his mind. See more: Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, *Banglapedia*, Vol. 7, 2nd. Edition, Dhaka : Bangla Academy, 2003.

<sup>191</sup> Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) was a renowned educationist, reformer and scholar in Bengali society. He was born in Midnapore district of West Bengal in 1820. He was gifted with the title of Vidyasagar in recognition of his genius. He was appointed principal of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta by the British Government in 1851 at the age of just 21 years. He is called the father of Bengali prose and a famous star in the world of journalism. He fought all his life against the prejudices of Hindu society. See more: Daily Nayadiganta, 13 December, 2008, <https://www.dailynayadiganta.com>, Accessed 12/12/ 2021.

### 2.4.3. Influential and Effective Organizational Activities of Meherullah

Munshi Meherullah not only delivered speeches but also played an important role as an organizer. As well as leading the reform movement in the Muslim community, he also took various steps as an education organizer, most notably the establishment of the Karamatiya Madrasa. The first foundation of Keramatia was laid at Manoharpur Madrasa in Jessore in 1898 and he was appointed as the Secretary of the madrasa.<sup>192</sup> Various school colleges were established at that time, but he established this madrasa for modern education along with Islamic education. Moreover, there were more Muslims than Hindus in Jessore at that time so there was always a need for an educational institution for Muslims. He commented on the Madrasa:

“Jessore district has twice the number of Muslims than Hindus; But it is doubtful whether even five people are literate in a century. Due to lack of education and discussion of religion, the condition of Muslims has deteriorated to such an extent that they are completely inexperienced in principles and religion. There is no work that uneducated people do not do. For this reason in Jessore there is a high number of thieves, robbers, rioters, litigants and the poor. It is impossible to get rid of all these demonic thoughts from society without education and discussion of religion. That is why we have established this madrasa together with some poor Muslims. The poor and uneducated peasant society, so that they can easily study and discuss religion at no cost or with little expense, have been provided excellent facilities in the madrasa karamatiya”.<sup>193</sup>

Meherullah's efforts led to the construction of an academic building for the madrasa and the subsequent expansion of the madrasa. He worked hard to manage the funds of the madrasa and a rich man named Ahmad Ali of Khulna was instrumental in his efforts to fund the Madrasa.<sup>194</sup> For a long time after Meherullah's death, the madrasa contributed to the development of the Muslim community. The introduction of Bengali as well as English education in this madrasa was opposed by a section of scholars of the time, so Meherullah later established a school next to the madrasa where Bengali and English

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<sup>192</sup> Abdullah Al, Masud, “*Ramatulloh Kaironawo (1818-1891) and Munsho Mohammad Meherullohs (1861-1907) Methodology in the Study of Christianity: a Comparative Analysis*,” pp. 63-64.

<sup>193</sup> Wakil, Ahmed, “*Unisshotoker Banglar Musulmaner chinta O chatoner dhara, (The Thought and Consciousness of Bengali Muslims in the Nineteenth Century)*”, p. 273.

<sup>194</sup> Abu Taleb, “*Munshi Mohammad Meherullah Deskal Sama (Munshi Mohammad Meherullah: Country, time, society)*”, p. 74.

were taught. The influence of the Karamatia Madrasa was felt in the whole Jessore region.<sup>195</sup>

He founded an organization called 'Islam Dharmottejika Sabha'(Islam theological conference) in 1889 in protest of the missionaries' preaching of Christianity as well as fabricated lies about Islam. The main purpose of the organization was to spread the message of Islam to the people. Important people from different parts of Bengal, including Calcutta, were invited to various meetings of the organization. The organization was patronized by wealthy people of the time, among whom was Syed Abdullah, a famous businessman from Jessore.<sup>196</sup> The various programs of the organization provided motivational lectures to the Muslim audience and encouraged them to read the important magazines of the time. The organization's programs featured the popular magazine "Sudhakar" (Satisfying) at the time and encouraged Muslims to subscribe to such magazines.<sup>197</sup> Munshi Meherullah is known as a famous organizer through the establishment of "Islam Dharmottejika Sabha."

Munshi Meherullah was one of the founders of the Bengal Provincial Muslim Education Association established in 1903, that was one of the dreams of Syed Ahmed Khan. However, the main organizer was Syed Waheed Hossain.<sup>198</sup> The organization was considered as a modern organization and various publications including its pamphlets were prepared in Bengali and English. The president of the organization was Mirza Sujat Ali Beg and the co-president was Delwar Hossain Ahmed. Syed Shamsul Huda, Meherullah, Jamiruddin and many others participated as members. The main objectives of this organization are following :

1. To establish a residential college for higher education of Muslim students.
2. Separate educational institutions for the expansion of women's education.

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<sup>195</sup> The madrasa was named after Maulana Karamat Ali YaniPuri. Maulana Karamat Ali was known as a famous preacher at the time. Karamatia Madrasa was established for the children of local poor Muslims. *Journal of Munshi Meherullah Academy*, Special Issue, June 1999, p. 64.

<sup>196</sup> Sheikh Muhammad, Zamiruddin, *Meher Charitra, (Meher's character)*, 1st.Edition (Calcutta: siraboni publication, 1909), p. 10.

<sup>197</sup>The weekly Sudhakar was published from Calcutta in 189. It was one of the earliest Muslim-published journals in Bengal, with Mohammad Reyazuddin Ahmed as its first editor. The aim of the Bengali language newspaper was the national development of Muslim society. The magazine wrote articles on the glorious history of Muslims, including science, literature and economics. Munshi Meherullah, Jamiruddin and other famous writers of that time used to write articles in regular periodicals. (Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Manas O Bangla Sahitya (1858-1918),(Muslim mind and Bengali Literature)*”, pp. 6-7).

<sup>198</sup> Islam preacher (Newspaper) June-July 1903, p. 12.

3. To send religious scholars to districts for the development of religious culture among Muslims.
4. To build educational institutions for trade and industry.
5. Organizing various programs for building national unity among Muslims.<sup>199</sup>

This organization organized many programs in different parts of Bengal. Among them Jessore Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and the program in Rangpur is significant. Meherullah actively participated in programs in Jessore and North Bengal. The first session of the organization was held in Rangpur. The 2nd annual session was held in Tripura and the 3rd annual session was held in Barisal. All these sessions were funded by wealthy local Muslims such as *zamindars* and famous businessmen. The Bengal Provincial Muslim Education Association created a great stir among the Muslim community which distinguished it from other organizations of the time. A large section of the youth was enlivened by attending numerous programs in different parts of Bengal and women's participation increased significantly. Sudhakar, Mihir and Islam Pracharak played a special role among the contemporary weekly, monthly and fortnightly newspapers to speed up the activities of this organization. He played a unique role in organizational activities as well as in the cultural development of the Muslims of Bengal because at that time the Muslim culture was corrupted due to neighbouring communities and ignorance.

#### **2.4.4. Cultural Reform of Meherullah**

Muslims in the contemporary period of Munsif Meherullah superstition entered the culture strongly. At that time, Muslims had been attacked not only by Christian clergy but also by the influential Hindu poets, writers and the educated class of the region. The Indian subcontinent has long been a hotbed of rivalry and conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Since the British took over power from the Muslims in the aftermath of the Battle of Palashi in 1757, the Hindus of the region played the role of collaborators with the British, making them the main rivals of the Muslims. After the British came to power, the Hindus were at first the foremost in learning English language and Western education, which resulted in the formation of a young generation of Hindus who began

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<sup>199</sup>Ibid,

to consider Western culture superior to the religion of the region. Some of them considered Islam a backdated religion. Many Hindu writers at the time published satires on various issues of Muslims and Islam. Muslims and Hindus lived side by side and Hindu culture, including superstitions, began to enter Muslim society as Muslims became weaker. The Muslims left their traditional culture and became entangled in the superstitions of the Hindus as there was no provision or practice of preaching *Mangal Pradeep* (Beneficial lamp) before initiating any good deed in the Muslim society but unexpectedly a section of the later Muslim society also fell prey to this superstition.<sup>200</sup> Besides, Muslims were attracted to various subcultures when they saw the neighboring Hindus lighting evening lamps, using incense sticks, sacrificing animals and taking Hindu names. Muslims, like the Hindus, began to believe in the future by handwriting, adopting the Hindu method of initiating care for a new child, and making extensive use of auspicious and ominous signs in counting the days.

Although the influence of Hindu culture was felt in Muslim society, the faith of the Muslims was not damaged, but social life was disrupted. Meherullah played a role in rescuing the Muslim community from this predicament, he called on the scholarly community to protect Muslims from this superstition and culture of different nations. He repeatedly called on the Muslim community to return from all forms of un-Islamic practice, including participating in Hindu festivals, making sacrifices like them and taking Hindu names. He himself emphasized the importance and superiority of Islamic culture in his speeches and discourse. As a result of Meherullah's efforts and the role of the *Alem Samaj*, widow marriage was reintroduced in Muslim society according to the tradition of Islam, which was one of the best contributions of Munshi Meherullah. He answered various questions of Hindu writers and intellectuals and protested their false accusations against Islam. Some Muslim poets and writers were attracted to Hindu culture and were influenced by Hindu intellectuals in the practice of literature in Bengali and adopted erroneous policies in the practice of literature, for example writing poems praising the gods and goddesses of Hindu literature. Notable among them was the poet Munshi Abdur Rahim who wrote the *Gazi-Kalu-Champabati Puthikavya*. The poet Sheikh Faizullah in his epic also gave many descriptions praising the Hindu

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<sup>200</sup>Arjuman Banu, Alo, “*Munshi Mohammad Meherulla: Dharmoseba Somajchinta O Sahittiyasadhana (Munshi Muhammad Meherulla: Religious Service, Social thoughts and Literature austerities)*”, pp. 52-54.

goddess. Muslim writers have also praised Hindu monks in composing local folk music of Bengal.<sup>201</sup> Munshi Meherullah strongly opposed the practice of such un-Islamic culture by Muslim poets and writers. Meherullah himself used to practice literature and in addition encouraged a group of young people to practice literature, many of them engaged in writing under his direct and indirect influence. Most of these young writers later contributed significantly to Bengali language and literature.

#### **2.4.5. Meherullah Encouraged Young Writers**

Munshi Meherullah showed foresight in social reform as well as patronizing young Muslim writers in the Muslim Awakening. At that time there were very few people who could study literature in Bengali, but one of the main reasons was the backwardness of Muslims in education. However, in such a situation when it is safe to say that there is no practice of poetry and literature among Muslims, Munshi Meherullah, today considered the savior of Bengali literature, devoted himself to the study of literature. Most of these young writers later played important roles in Bengali literature, among them Syed Ismail Hossain Siraji, Maulana Akram Khan, Sheikh Fazlul Karim and Sheikh Habibur Rahman.<sup>202</sup> He was very optimistic about the youth and kept in touch with various youth organizations. Inspired by him, a large section of the Muslim youth became eminent scholars during the period following the independent of Pakistan. One of the writers most influenced by Meherullah was Sheikh Muhammad Jamir Uddin (1880-1938), who fought for a long time as a comrade of Meherullah.

Jamiruddin played the role of preacher and social reformer and struggled as Meherullah's main ally. He also used to travel all over Bengal following Meherullah and during his travels he organized Muslim youth. Jamiruddin placed special emphasis on religious education and Islamic culture and on the organizational role of Muslims in strengthening their culture. He used to write with the advice and encouragement of Meherullah. He was active in publishing as well as lecturing, as his writings were

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<sup>201</sup> Mohamad, Akram Khan, , “*Moslem Bonger Samajik Itihas (The Social History of Muslim Bengal)*, 2nd. Edition (Dhaka: Heritage Publications, 1983), pp. 91-96.

<sup>202</sup> Sheikh Habibur Rahman (182-1908) was known as a conservative writer and poet. He had a special relationship with Munshi Meherullah. His famous book 'Salvation' was published in 1902. He used to write for the purpose of propagating Islamic ideals. See more: Alo, Arjuman Banu, “*Munshi Mohammad Meherulla: Dharmoseba Somajchinta O Sahityasadhana (Munshi Muhammad Meherulla: Religious Service, Social thoughts and Literature austerities)*”, p. 72.

published in various journals and wrote two important books.<sup>203</sup> Initially, Jamiruddin deviated from Islam under the influence of missionaries. But later, under the influence of Munshi Meherullah, he returned to Islam. After his return to Islam, he played a significant role in the development of Muslim society. He devoted himself to the work of reform with renewed vigor and enthusiasm. Sheikh Jamiruddin's most read book was "My Life and Conversion to Islam." It was published in 1903 by Jessore. Jamiruddin wrote the book on the advice of Munshi Meherullah and Meherullah was also its publisher. In the book "My Life and Conversion to Islam.", Jamiruddin presented strong arguments about the truth of Islam. The book describes the reality of Jamiruddin return to Islam and the cultural purity of Islam. Munshi Meherullah also wrote an introduction in the book. In 1905, Jamiruddin asked, "Who is Isa?" in an eponymous book. In the book, various misconceptions spread by Christian missionaries of the time were answered and it aimed to present a clear idea of Hazrat Isa (a) in Islam.<sup>204</sup> The book was dedicated by Jamiruddin in gratitude to Meherullah.

Sheikh Jamiruddin wrote his most famous book "MeherCharit" (Character of Meherullah) which was a biography of Munshi Meherullah written after the latter's death in 1908. Jamiruddin argued that the Muslims of Bengal were affected by Munshi Meherullah's passing away at a young age.<sup>205</sup> The book paints a picture of the Muslim society of the time and the activities, strategies and activities of the Christian missionaries are specially portrayed there and the author mentions the role of Munshi Meherullah in tackling these problems. He presented Meherullah as one of the major reformers of the age and he led various reform movements after Meherullah.

Munshi Meherullah was not a national figure but was immortalized as a cultural reformer of the Muslim community in Bengal as he worked tirelessly at the root level of Bengal society to protect the Muslim community from the tactical attacks of Christian missionaries. To deal with the missionaries, however, he carried out various propaganda campaigns on Christianity, which many scholars did not accept well. In addition to criticizing Hindu writers for their activities, he also presented the weak points of

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<sup>203</sup>Abul Hasan, Chowdhury, *Munshi Sheikh Jamiruddiner jiboni grontho, (Munshi Sheikh Jamiruddins Biography)*, Vol. 23, 1st. Edition (Dhaka, Bangla Academy:1990), p. 34.

<sup>204</sup>Abul Hasan, Chowdhury, *Munshi Sheikh Jamiruddiner jiboni grontho, (Munshi Sheikh Jamiruddins Biography)*, p. 40.

<sup>205</sup>Sheikh Muhammad, Zamiruddin, Zamiruddin, "Meher Charitra, (Meher's Character)", p. 7.

superstitious practices of Hinduism in a few books, which led to him being harshly criticized by Hindu scholars like Sureshwar Mukherjee.<sup>206</sup>In various writings of Meherullah, he harshly commented on the followers of Hinduism and its basic culture. Therefore, he has sometimes been described as a strict and conservative personality. However, it is true that at that time not only Meherullah, but also many educated personalities of Hindu society avoided the social prejudices of Hindus. Despite political pressure, tactical attacks by missionaries and criticism of Hindu scholars, Meherullah continued the reform movement. He faced adversity through strong organizational skills and strong action in the root level Muslim society. Initially he started this movement personally but later a large generation (like Sheikh Habibur Rahman, Syed Ismail Hossain Siraji, Maulana Akram Khan) was influenced by him and strengthened this reform movement. In the same time, Mir Mosharraf Hussain also played an important role in the development of Muslim society, who mainly influenced the public through writing.

## **2.5. Mir Mosharraf Hossain (1847-1912)**

Another figure who made a significant contribution to the development of the Bengali Muslim community was Munshi Meher Ullah's contemporary, Mir Mosharraf Hossain. He was better known as a famous writer and journalist. He was one of the few scholars who influenced the Muslim society of Bengal through his writings known as the pioneer and writer of Bengali Muslim period. Mir Hossain was born in Kushtia district in 1847.<sup>207</sup> He was fluent in Arabic and Persian from an early age, as Persian was part of his family tradition. In his early life, he was admitted to a local Madrasa and he memorized various parts of the Holy Quran, but did not entirely memorize it. The Muslim students of the time had psychological barriers in learning English, especially the local scholars, relatives and even the neighbors did not like English educated people. In such a complicated situation, his father decided to enroll him in an English school and move to Calcutta. In 1863 he was admitted to Krishnanagar Collegiate School and had the opportunity to master the English language.<sup>208</sup> While studying in Calcutta, he

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<sup>206</sup>Masud, Abdullah al, "*Ramatulloh Kaironawo (1818-1891) and Munsho Mohammad Meherullohs (1861-1907) Methodology in the Study of Christianity: a Comparative Analysis*", p. 46.

<sup>207</sup> Abul hassan, Chowdhury, "*Mir Mosharraf Hossain*," p. 11.

<sup>208</sup> Mir Mosharraf, Hossain, *BanshPuran Amar Jiboni (My Biography)*, Ed: Shri Devipada Bhattacharya, 1st. Edition (Calcutta: General Printers, 1955), p. 201.

got married to Azizunnesa, the second daughter of Nader Hossain.<sup>209</sup> Mir Mosharraf Hossain was one of the very few Muslim journalists at that time. He patronized the traditional culture of Muslims through journalism and wanted to make Muslims aware through it.

### **2.5.1. Mosharraf Hossains Contribution Through Journalism**

The death of Mir Mosharraf Hossain's father in 1864 was considered a turning point in his life as he was forced to quit his studies and return to the village. He came to Lahinipara and took care of his father's property and stayed here for some time. Later, in 1871, he worked as an Arabic teacher in a school in Hughli, Calcutta, which was his father's old profession. He later moved to Shantikunj in Tangail district where he took a job as an estate manager and worked there for a long time.<sup>210</sup> Later, Mir Mosharraf Hossain started journalism for the purpose of awareness and awakening of Muslims.<sup>211</sup> Although he was involved in journalism through this magazine, he received proper training there as he was in charge of an important position like the literary department of the magazine. For this he had to struggle a lot, which is why in a short time he started to be known as an emerging journalist. In addition to working for Sangbad Prabhakar (a Bengal newspaper), he also worked for Grambartā, a local newspaper in Kushtia, whose editor was journalist Harinath Majumder.<sup>212</sup> While

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<sup>209</sup>Kulsum Bibi has contributed a lot to the success of Mir Mosharraf Hossain's career. Bibi Kulsum used to encourage him in his literary pursuits. On the advice of Kulsum Bibi he settled permanently from Tangail district and this district brought stability to his life. He wrote a lot of valuable literature during his stay in Tangail, which is why the people of Tangail still remember him with reverence. (Hossain, Mir Mosharraf, *BanshPuran Amar Jiboni (My Biography)*”, p. 2011).

<sup>210</sup>Abul Hasan, Chowdhury, *Munshi Sheikh Jamiruddiner jiboni grontho, (Munshi Sheikh Jamiruddins Biography)*, p. 55.

<sup>211</sup>Sangbad Prabhakar is one of the important newspapers of Bengal which was started in 1831 as a weekly newspaper. It was published by Ishwar Chandra Gupta and was published in Bengali. Sangbad Prabhakar appeared on 14 June 1839 as the first daily newspaper to be published in Bengal. The newspaper carried news from India and abroad as well as articles on various topics in literature, society, religion and philosophy. Many famous scholars and highly educated people like Jayagopal, Raja Radhakanta Dev, Prasannakumar Tagore and Ramkamal Sen used to publish their writings in the magazine. See more: See more: Chaudhuri, Indrajit, Sangbad Prabhakar, in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Online Edition (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Sangbad\\_Prabhakar](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Sangbad_Prabhakar), Accessed 3/4/ 2021.

<sup>212</sup>Harinath Majumdar, better known as Kanganal Harinath, was born in 1833 in the village of Kumarkhali in present day Kushtia district. Although he started his career as a teacher in 1855, he later rose to prominence as a journalist and writer and was a disciple of Fakir Lalon Shah, an important devotee of Bengal. Evidence of his considerable contribution to Bengali literature as a writer can be found in the eighteen books he wrote over the course of his life. With his encouragement, young writers like Jaldhar Sen, Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Dinendranath Rajai later became writers. See more: Dastider, Shipra, Harinath, Kanganal (1833-1896), in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Online Edition

working for this magazine, he gained experience in writing as well as running the magazine. He traveled far and wide to collect the news of Grambarta and during this time he developed friendships with many writers, poets and journalists. While working for Grambarta, Mosharraf Hossain was associated with the then eminent journalist editor, Kangal Harinath, who had a noticable influence on his journalism and literary practice.

Mosharraf Hossain gained enough experience for journalism in various newspapers for a long time and later started editing some newspapers himself. In 1884, he published a magazine called 'Azizun Nehar' which was published in Bengali and it was first published from Hooghly College, Calcutta.<sup>213</sup> He realized that there was no alternative to the newspaper, which was urgent for the self-awareness and intellectual movement of the Muslim youth that were facing difficult challenges. The magazine dealt with contemporary issues, including the importance of Muslim heritage, history, culture and education. It also discussed the biographies of Bengali scholars, especially poets and writers and many poets and writers of the time used to send their writings to the magazine.

The most famous journal of Mosharraf Hossain's journalistic life was Hitkari (beneficial) which was published in 1890 from Lahinipara in Kushtia district and he himself was in charge of editing the paper. However, later the newspaper was published from Tangail and its medium was Bengali. Debnath Biswas was the editor of the newspaper for a very short time but other important responsibilities were entrusted to Mosharraf Hossain. Although he was the owner of the paper in 1894, he handed over the editing to Musleuddin Khan and the name of the paper was changed to Tangail Hitkari. He bought a printing press called Ahmed Press to co-publish the newspaper and it was also located in Tangail.<sup>214</sup> He tried to create employment among the young

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(Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Harinath,\\_Kangal](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Harinath,_Kangal), Accessed 29/4/2021.

<sup>213</sup>A group of young writers of the time had the opportunity to work as a journalist in the magazine which made it very popular among young people. Mosharraf Hussein had to fight hard to get the magazine published because of the financial crisis and conservative Muslims were not in favor of it. He used to print magazines from a distant press and distribute them himself, that is, deliver them to readers' homes and in many cases, when there was a financial crisis, he had to look for funds. (Mamun, Muntasir, *Unish sotoker Bangla songbad potrika (19th Century Bangladesh News paper)*, vol. 2, 2. Edition, Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1988, p. 45).

<sup>214</sup>Mohammad, Anisuzzaman, "*Muslim Manas O Bangla Sahitya (1858-1918), (Muslim Mind and Bengali Literature)*", p. 4.

writers in the rural areas through this magazine. Hitkari magazine always stood for justice and truth and tried to influence the rural youth. The newspaper was associated with a large section of the Hindu community and also aimed to raise the awareness of the people of North Bengal. Hitkari started its journey with the message of honest and objective journalism but at the time it was very difficult to run the magazine honestly and objectively. The paper initially expressed its views independently but was subsequently pressured by the British government to avoid direct criticism of the government, to raise public awareness and to continue publishing truthful news. When the paper portrayed the corruption of local government officials, local bureaucrats stood in the way of the paper. Religious groups also became skeptical of the paper due to its comments on various social norms such as child marriage and extreme conservatism. However, editor Mir Mosharraf Hossain continued to reveal his truth uncompromisingly. Along with journalism, he emphasized academic activities in developing awareness among Muslims. He had many academic works, through which the Muslim society was greatly influenced.

### **2.5.2. Mosharraf Hossain's Academic Works for Development of Thinking**

In the twentieth century, Mosharraf Hossain was one of the few Muslim writers who wrote literature in Bengali. In the economic crisis of the Muslims, learning and practicing literature was very difficult, a kind of impossibility, but even in such a cloudy environment, he practiced literature on his own initiative, which was one of the achievements of his life. He carried forward his academic activities through a long forty years of literary pursuits through which the Muslim community of Bengal was encouraged to practice literature and philosophy.<sup>215</sup> He started his literary career through Grambarta and Sangbad Prabhakar and later started writing independently. His interest in literature can be compared to an old practice, in which he regularly read books by famous writers of the time. Of which Abdur Rahim, Ishwar Chandra Gupta, Harinath, Akshay Kumar Dutt's novel, *Kasasul Ambia* are particularly notable.<sup>216</sup> He wrote a total of 35 books during his long literary career, the most notable of which are:

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<sup>215</sup>Wakil, Ahmed, “*Unisshotoker Banglar Musulmanerchinta O Chatoner Dhara, (The Thought and Consciousness of Bengali Muslims in the Nineteenth Century)*”, p. 234.

<sup>216</sup>Mushirul, Hasan, “Religion and Politics: The Ulama and Khilafat Movement”, p. 45.

1. Ratnavati Hazar 1869
2. Gorai Bridge 1873
3. Basantakumari Natak 1873
4. Zamindar Darpan Hazar 1873
5. Music Wave 1987
6. Bishad Indus 1885 to 1891
7. Hazrat Omar's Religious Life Gained 1905
8. BB Khadija's Marriage in 1905
9. Muslim Heroism 1907
10. My Biography 1908-1910
11. Conquest of Islam 1908
12. Muslim's Bengali Education 1908
13. BB Kulsum 1910

Among the countless books by Musharraf Hossain, the most popular book was '*Bishad Sindhu*' (Sorrow Sindhu). He wrote the book in three phases: 1885, 1887 and 1891 respectively. *Bishad Sindhu* is considered to be his best book, the language of the book was Bengali and it was translated into Hindi in 1930. It is a historical novel based on the story of Karbala in Islamic history.<sup>217</sup> It was written in collaboration with various Arabic texts focusing on important events in Islam. He described the purpose of writing this historical novel, calling on Muslims to learn from history.<sup>218</sup> After the book came on the market, it was discussed and criticized. Among these, Dhaka Prakash (Newspaper) was severely criticized. The newspaper commented that *Bishad Sindhu* could have an adverse effect on the common people, not only among Muslims but also among Hindus.<sup>219</sup>

Mosharraf Hossain's writing began with the book *Ratnavati*, the first of which was published in September 1869 from Hughli, Calcutta. *Ratnavati* novel is a comic story type book in which educational events are described and it is presented in the guise of a big story between knowledge and wealth through fiction. This little book of 61 pages

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<sup>217</sup> Abdul, Awal, *Mir Mosharrafer Bangla Rachna (Composition of Mir Mosharrafer)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1975), p. 60.

<sup>218</sup> Mir Mosharrafer, Hossain, *Bishad Sindhu*, 1st. Edition (Jossor: Muharram Episode, 1885), p. Interpage.

<sup>219</sup> Dhaka Prakash (Dhaka Revealed, Newspaper), January, 1900, p. 6.

depicts an imaginary picture of a prince and a minister talking.<sup>220</sup> Criticism of the book was published in the popular newspaper Dhaka Prakashe of the time, The magazine said about Ratnavati that although it could be an educational essay, it was not very important in the field of literature. In 1873, Mosharraf Hossain's first book of poetry, Gorai Bridge, was published. Many of his books of poetry were published, but among them it gained considerable readership and was able to attract the attention of analysts of the time. Criticism of the book was published in Bangadarshan, a popular magazine of the time, in which Mosharraf Hossain was praised for writing poetry in Bengali. The magazine often expressed frustration with Muslim writers because most Muslim writers wrote in Urdu instead of Bengali. However, Mir Mosharraf Hossain was praised in the editorial of the newspaper and it was hoped that he would continue his writing in Bengali.

Musharraf's most controversial book, Go hotta (Cow slaughter), was published in 1886. There was a long-running dispute between the two main communities (Hindu-Muslim) of the Indian subcontinent, including Bengal, over the slaughter of cows. In this book, the author opposes the killing of cows, citing the fact that killing cows is considered as a very sensitive issue in both communities and preferred to preserve unity between the two. When the book was published, there was a huge reaction in the Muslim community. This is how Indian and balok (Newspaper) did it. "The book was written with the intention of saving the lives of Hindus and Muslims alike. The fact that the author has become a Muslim and has shown generosity in this regard is not only a joy but also a surprise to us. I hope other Muslims will follow him".<sup>221</sup> There was a mixed reaction among Muslims to Musharraf's book, with Muslims protesting the conservatives but refraining from criticizing another educated class. Newspapers published by Muslims criticized the book, especially the newspaper Islamia (1884), which had multiple columns. Some conservative scholars gave him the fatwa of disbelief and he was also sued. The book "Go Assassination" was also reported by "Inquiry" magazine in which Musharraf was praised. An article in the investigative journal said, "Mosharraf Hussein, being a Muslim, has written a book on the treatment

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<sup>220</sup>*Musharraf Rachna Sambhar (Composition of Mir Mosharraf Hossain)*, Ed: Abdul Mannan, Kazi, Vol. 1, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1976), p. 86.

<sup>221</sup>Bandopadhyay, Sribrahmandranath, *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad*, (literacy society of Calcutta), 1st. Edition (Calcutta, 1950), p. 40.

of cow-killing. He has also seen in their scriptures that cow-killing is not right, but also sheds light on the disadvantages of beef in this country and the benefits of beef milk.<sup>222</sup> Many believe that Musharraf's views on the issue were influenced by the journalist Kangal Harinath.

In 1873 he wrote a popular play called "*Zamindar Darpan*" which was one of the most popular plays of the time. Musharraf himself was a member of a wealthy family but in "*Zamindar Darpan*" he depicts oppressed zamindars, in which he shows how oppressed zamindars treat their subjects. Many zamindars have tried to portray the true nature of the character. When the play was published, the zamindars were furious and some newspapers and Hindu scholars of the time protested against the play. Bankimchandra, a writer of the time in Bangadarshan, praised the quality of the play '*Zamindar Darpan*' but suggested that the play be stopped.<sup>223</sup> According to Bankim, the drama would create chaos in the society and not only Bankim but many more zamindars opposed it. In the real sense, the real picture of the society of that time was revealed through the play and it clearly depicts the persecution of marginalized sections of the society, especially lower caste Muslims.

Mosharraf Hossain's autobiographical books "*Udhasin Phothiker Mon*" (The Mind of the Indifferent Traveler) (1890) and "*Ghazi Mia Bastani*" (1899) depict various experiences of his life. The book 'The Mind of the Indifferent Traveler' emphasizes the importance of philosophy of life and the writings here draw the attention of the community to strengthen the communal harmony of the subcontinent. In this book, the author tries to analyze how he viewed the society of that time.<sup>224</sup> The book addresses a number of issues, most notably the discrimination and persecution of indigo growers. The author describes most of the English indigo planters as oppressive and greedy. In his book '*Ghazi Mia Bastani*', the author presented the inconsistencies of society at the time through satirical or humorous stories. In the book, he tried to highlight the corruption, degradation, chaos, moral degradation and social problems of society. The author not only criticizes here but also points to the social reforms, which made this book special. In the contemporary monthly Pradeep, Akshay Kumar presented Gazi Mia

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<sup>222</sup>Anusondhan (Newspaper), January 1901, p. 12.

<sup>223</sup>Bangadarshan, (Newspaper) August 1887, p. 6.

<sup>224</sup>Mir Mosharraf, Hossain, "*Bansh Puran Amar Jiboni (My Biography)*", p. 374.

Bastani as a quality novel but also commented that the language of the book was a bit harsh.<sup>225</sup> The book was a scathing critique of English rule in Bengal and the author's boldness in describing various important aspects, including the government's bias in the judiciary and social system.

Among the most important books written by Mosharraf Hossain are: Bibi Khadija's Marriage (1904), Hazrat Omar's Religious Life (1905), Hazrat Belal's Biography (1905), Medina's Gaurab Hazar (1906), Moslem's Heroism (1960), Islam's Conquest (1908), Muslim's Bengali Education (1903) and Moulud Sharif (1917).<sup>226</sup> He wrote religious books in his last years. Through these books, he focused on the social reform movement as well as religious services.

He fluently presented many aspects of religious subjects through historical fiction in order to influence general readers.<sup>227</sup> Among the readers of Bengal at that time there was a distinct fascination with Islamic theology and history which encouraged him to write about religion. Although he did not describe the rise of Islam in these books, he did highlight the importance and contributions of pre-modern civilization, social politics and economics. The author tried to present Islam as a religion of peace and equality through the conquest of Islam and other books.

In 1908, Mosharraf Hossain's own biography book 'Amar Jivani' (My life) was published which was completed in 12 volumes. The first volume was published in 1908 and he completed the writing in 1910. Although the author presents the book as his autobiography, it only discusses his 18 years of life which is less likely to be called a full biography. In the book, his family identity, educational life, beginning of journalism, important events that happened in his time, including the beginning of his family life, his first marriage and various educational events about his wife. In the book, he gives a perfect description of the obstacles of the early stages of his career. The book

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<sup>225</sup> Mashik Prodhup, Pous, 1294, (Monthly Prodhup, August, 1901).

<sup>226</sup> Khandaker Shamim, Ahmed, *Mir Mosharraf Hossain*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Katha prakashni, 2014), p. 40.

<sup>227</sup> Mosharraf Hossain introduced secularism at the beginning of his journalism and had a somewhat liberal outlook, but later abandoned his secular policy and adopted a completely Islamic outlook. In 1900, Syed Amir Ali convened a meeting on the failure of madrasa education and here Mosharraf Hossain opposed the proposal to reform the madrasas of Bengal like Aligarh. Originally from 1900 onwards, Mosharraf placed special emphasis on Islamic religion. (Ahmed, Wakil, *Unishotoker Banglar Musulmaner chinta O chatoner dhara, (The Thought and Consciousness of Bengali Muslims in the Nineteenth Century)*", p. 233).

was first published from Calcutta and later from Dhaka, the then capital of East Pakistan, when the subcontinent became independent. Mosharraf Hossain's autobiography is considered as an invaluable resource in Bengali literature because he discussed various aspects of the reasons, importance and necessity of literary practice in the book.

In 1913, his last complete book 'Bibi Kulsum' (Misses Kulsum) was published from Jessore which he wrote about his wife. He named the book "Biography of My Life", citing the contribution of his wife, Bibi Kulsum, to the success of his life.<sup>228</sup> He describes his love and deep affection for his wife in literary terms. The book, however, only describes one of his wives, but does not write anything about his other wife. One of Musharraf's most popular books of poetry is "Sangeet Lahari", published in 1887. The book's specialty is that most of the songs have melodies, the author has given clear directions as to what the rhythm will be. Most of the songs in this book were written in a romantic style, but other songs tried to paint a realistic picture of the society.<sup>229</sup>

In his early life as a journalist he was in touch with Kangal Harinath, a few Hindu scholars, journalists and writers and was influenced by secular ideas due to his long association with them. Musharraf's secular ideas and thoughts were not well received by Muslim religious leaders and many avoided him for a time. However, he played an important role in shaping the ideology of Muslim nationalism among the Muslim educated class of Bengal. He influenced people the most through his essential literature. Through literature, he presented various important aspects, including the weakness of the judicial system of the government, the instability of communal relations and the lack of development of the national consciousness of the Muslims. He is one of the few Muslim poets who are given importance in Bengali literature because of the appeal of his writings even today. In the nineteenth century, Musharraf started journalism in a troubled Muslim society and was able to firmly establish himself as a journalist. His edited journals and his writings in various journals played an important role in the Muslim Awakening and the national development of the Muslims. Begum Rokeya

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<sup>228</sup>Mir Mosharraf, Hossain, "*Bansh Puran Amar Jiboni (My Biography)*", p. 355.

<sup>229</sup> The Sangeet Lahari Kavyagrantha was criticized in various periodicals of that time, of which Sudhakar Patrika is particularly noteworthy. Sudhakar writes: "Can a terrible thing come out of a Muslim who believes in the true religion of Islam?" (Sudhakar (Newspaper), Assin (July), 1296 (1903).

Sakhawat in contemporary times like Mosharraf Hossain women also played an important role in awakening.

## **2.6. Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932)**

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, one of the leading pioneers of the Muslim Women's Awakening Movement in Bengal, was a Bengali thinker, novelist, essayist, literary and social reformer. She came to prominence at a time when the entire female society of Bengal was immersed in bigotry, prejudice, illiteracy and could not claim equal rights. She was given the opportunity of religious education from an early age due to being born of an elite Muslim family in North Bengal, but was deprived of the opportunity of modern education. Her father was not in favour of Bengali and English education but encouraged her to take up religious education in order to grow up as an ideal Muslim woman. Her father was a modern educated man but he had a different view of his daughter.<sup>230</sup> She did not obtain a modern education, her two brothers Ibrahim Saber and Abu Asad Khalil got the opportunity to receive a modern education and even went as far as London to get an education. However, there was an advantage for her as she had the opportunity to get an elementary level education in English from her elder brother Ibrahim which later served as the inspiration for her higher education. She later learned English and modern education through her own efforts, which was a rare occurrence in Muslim society then.<sup>231</sup>

She got married to Sakhawat Hossain in 1898 which was one of the most important events of her life.<sup>232</sup> Sakhawat Hossain, a devotee of education, did not hinder her

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<sup>230</sup>Bharati, Ray, *Early Feminists of Colonial India: Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*. 1st. Edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 17.

<sup>231</sup>At that time, Muslim aristocratic families lived by strict rules regarding the veil system as a religious provision. Women had limited access, which was one of the major obstacles to women's education. Girls from Muslim families were given the opportunity to receive religious education in most cases, but it was difficult for them to get modern education. See more: Abdullah, Mohammad, *Sir Syed Ahmed Khaner dhormoi & Shamajik chintha dhara (Religious and Social Thoughts of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan)*, 1. Publication, (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1983).

<sup>232</sup>Syed Sakhawat Hossain, who was given the title of Khan Bahadur, was a successful Muslim district magistrate of Bhagalpur in the present state of Bihar. After receiving modern education from England, he came to India and took part in government service, due to which he was able to understand the meaning of education properly. He was fascinated by Rokeya's multifaceted talent and because of Rokeya's passion for learning, he gave her the opportunity to study and provided resources to this end. Khan Bahadur Syed Sakhawat Hossain was an Urdu speaker, but did not prevent Rokeya from getting education in Bengali. The RokeyaSakawat couple had two daughters but died at a very young age. When Syed Sakhawat Hossain died in 1909, he was buried in Bhagalpur Cemetery. (Elahi, Eliza Binte, "Begum

education but gave more encouragement which enabled her to continue his regular reading and writing work and she was inspired by her husband to write and perform social work.

### **2.6.1. Rokeya Sakhawat's Writings for the Awakening of Muslims**

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain gained fame as a writer and the main theme of her writing was the development of women. She used writing as a medium to promote the social status of Muslim women, give them access to modern education, grant them freedom and to allow widow-marriage in other religions, including Hinduism, to amend inheritance laws and to prohibit polygamy.<sup>233</sup> Her literary pursuits and writing career began in 1902 with the publication of an article entitled 'Pipasha' (thirst) in Calcutta's Navprabha magazine, which continued for a long time. However, from 1909 to 1914, there was a stagnation in her writing because her children, parents and husband had died during this period, which was basically the most difficult time of her life. She was able to re-employ himself in the writing field after a short time.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's first complete book 'Matichur' (Fall of Diamond) was published in Calcutta which was a combination of many published articles. The book was first published in 1904, but later several editions were made from different places and the book was divided into two parts. In this book, she uses the shortened form of her name Mrs. RS Hossain as a kind of pseudonym. Matichur's articles were previously published in the monthly magazines Nabaprabha, Mahila and Nabnoor, but when it was published in the book form, these articles were revised and changed in many places.<sup>234</sup> The author divided the book into seven chapters, namely, Pipasa, The Decline of the Wife Nation, Innocent Bengali, Ardhangini, Sugrihini, Burka and Griha. In this book, she describes the real condition of the female nation at that time in the chapter on the degradation of the female race: "Readers, have you ever thought about your plight?" "What are we in this civilized world of the twentieth century? Dashi? We hear

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Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Her Vision of Women's Liberation in Sultana's Dream." *International Conference on Language, Literature, Culture and Education*, 24th & 25th March 2017).

<sup>233</sup> Alam, M. S, *Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Life and literary works (Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Jiban O Shahityakarma)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2009), p. 40.

<sup>234</sup> M. S. Alam, "Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Life and literary works (Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Jiban O Shahityakarma)", p. 40.

that slavery has gone out of the world, but is our slavery gone? No? Why are we slaves?"<sup>235</sup>

She argued that in Bengali Muslim families, boys and girls were not given equal rights and in all these cases boys are given priority over girls which was a major obstacle to the development of girls. Bengali society provided all kinds of facilities for the qualification of boys but there was no such investment in the case of girls. There were some people in the Bengali Muslim community who thought that girls did not need education. She called on this part of the Muslim community to learn from the Messenger of Islam, as the Prophet educated his own daughter Fatima in standard education and provided her with all kinds of facilities.<sup>236</sup> He criticized the Hindu-Muslim community's attitude towards women on various issues, saying that both Hindu-Muslim society was unaware of women's rights. There was a lot of discussion and criticism in the society of that time centering on his book *Matichur* which is mostly found in the newspapers and magazines of that time.<sup>237</sup>

Besides, other magazines discussed and criticized this issue, one of which was *Nabanur*. However, the language and literature of the author's book were highly praised in *Nabanur* magazine and it was mentioned that the author's arguments were sufficient. The magazine argued that the style of expression, style of writing and thematic discussion deserved considerable praise. Ordinary women of the time did not usually describe their problems in such a nice way and it was also commented that all the problems of women's society were portrayed in her writings.<sup>238</sup> Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was one of the most talked about and critically acclaimed writers of the day, but it was through this that she rose to the position of special status which later paved the way for her to lead the then women's society.

His second book, *Sultaner Sopno* (Sultana's Dream), was published in Calcutta in 1908 and became famous as a fictional novel.<sup>239</sup> In this book, she paints a picture through

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<sup>235</sup>Mir Mosharrif, Hossain, "*Bansh Puran Amar Jiboni (My Biography)*", p. 13.

<sup>236</sup>*Ibid*, p. 36

<sup>237</sup>The book was criticized in *Kohinoor* magazine, it was said: '*There is no doubt that his sincere intention is great but there is enough doubt about his neutrality. He has taken the seat of writer on the occasion of torturing his brothers.*' *Kahinur* (Newspaper), May 1905.

<sup>238</sup>*Nabnoor* (Newspaper), May 1905.

<sup>239</sup>She wrote an article in English called *Sultana's Dream*, which was first published in 1905 in *The English Ladies Magazine*. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was one of the few Muslim women writers to write

fiction where the image was the exact opposite of reality. In her fictional society, the position of men and women was not equal, where women were powerful and men were subordinate to women. She placed women in the seat of authority in the society and gave men the responsibility of household chores. Here men are shown as weak and submissive. Men were described as having no ability or qualification to work outside the home, as well as having no participation in the development of society, race or country.<sup>240</sup> She believed in the utopian concept and the basic premise of this concept was to establish a society in which men and women would enjoy equal rights and be able to contribute equally to national development. She herself was an independent female activist and played a role in enlightening Muslim women towards self-reliance. According to her, if women get proper education and training, they will be able to show proper qualifications in running the state.

She highlighted the great contribution of women in every sphere of life, from the courtyard to the residence of the head of state. Peace and order were established in society through the constructive activities of women in various fields including social, political and economic. The women in her fictional society became much more self-reliant by being patient, hardworking and responsible. Through this book, she tried to present the areas in which Muslim women in Bengal were particularly backward in a very special way. She also termed the women of Bengal as generally being shy introverts and taciturn. He pointed out that the strict veiling of Islam was not a major obstacle to the advancement of Muslim women but a problem for the Muslim ulema. At the same time, he raised the question whether women should wear veils or not. Men will enjoy freedom of movement, but women will be deprived of it which is not an equal right, she said.<sup>241</sup> There are two universities in the world of her imagination and in these universities various scientific discoveries have been made and were led by women as well as the administration of the university and women in all fields were performing different responsibilities. Sultana's dream has been analyzed as a first-class science

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in English at that time. Sultana's dream essay was later translated into Bengali in 1906 and published in book form by Lahiri & Company, a well-known publishing house in Calcutta. (Alam, M., & Rima, N. A, "Rokeya Sakhawat Hossains dream: an avant-garde of economic independence on women towards freedom" *Language Literacy: Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Language Teaching*, 4 (2), 2020), pp. 185-195)

<sup>240</sup>Rokia, Sakhawat, *Sultana's Dream*, 1st. Edition (Calcutta: National Publication, 1908), p. 39.

<sup>241</sup>Hossain, Yasmin, "The Begum's Dream: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and the Broadening of Muslim Women's Aspirations in Bengal." *South Asia Research* 12, no. 1 (1992): 1-19.

fiction. In an age when Muslim women did not know English well, she wrote science fiction in English, which is considered an exceptional example.

The book *NarirPotton* (*The Fall of Women*) was written in 1926 and was published from Calcutta. The main theme of this book is the strict veil of Muslim society which has resulted in Muslim women falling behind in various fields. There was a strict curtain practice among the women of the Muslim community as well as among the aristocratic families of the Hindu community at that time, especially among the Hindu women of North and Central India. The movement of these women was also limited in various programs including social ceremonies as well as these women were deprived of the opportunity to meet anyone except their husbands, children and close relatives.<sup>242</sup>Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain referred to it as inconsistency, torture and injustice. In this book, he points to the removal of overly strict social and cultural principles in the name of the religion of the Muslim community.

Her other famous book was *Padmaragh* which he wrote in 1924 and was also published from Calcutta. She was engaged in writing for almost thirty long years and wrote till the last day of her life. Her latest article was “Women's Rights”, an unfinished article but very important, published in 1957, 25 years after her death. She wants to compare women with men in some of her writings, arguing that if women do not get equal rights as men and cannot act independently then society will not progress. She presented the women of Persia as an example to the women of Bengal because the women of Persia performed different duties like men but this freedom was not easily achieved so they had to struggle for a long time. Persian women faced various challenges at home and abroad, ran businesses, competed with men for money, but she thinks Indian women were not advanced enough. He called upon women to take up the challenge as men and said that women should play a leading role in this regard.<sup>243</sup> She has a number of unpublished articles and was a regular contributor to the periodicals of the time among these magazines *Nabanur*, *Kohinoor*, *Mahila* are particularly notable. She played the role of organizer to organize the women and also showed considerable skill in the

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<sup>242</sup>Hossain, Mohammad Quayum, *Rokeya Sakhawat and Istrijatir Abanati: Woman's Downfall.* Transnational Literature 4, no. 1 (2011), p. 54.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

field. She founded important organizations through which the Bengali women's society was united.

### **2.6.2. Organizational Role of Rokeya Sakhawat**

At that time only men played the role of leader and organizer for social development and progress of the nation but in the case of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, it was a complete exception as she was the first woman in Bengal to show considerable organizational skills like a man. There were many Muslim-run organizations in British Bengal and India, such as the All India Educational Conference, the All India Muslim League and the Central Mohammedan Association, most of which were socio-political organizations and all of which were male-controlled. There was no organization controlled or run by women in Bengal, through which women could be vocal and aware of their rights. When the Anjuman-i-Khawatin-i-Islam was established in Ali God, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain became its member and representative of Bengal.<sup>244</sup> In 1916, through her efforts, a branch of Anjuman Khawatine Islam (A Muslim organization in North India) was established in Bengal and she played the role of its head. Through this organization various kinds of assistance were provided for the protection of the rights of women in Bengal, the organization held regular programs in Calcutta where representatives of various women's organizations were present. It was through her efforts that the Bengal branch (Bengal Education Conference) of the All Indian Muslim Education Conference started its journey in 1916. She was the leader of this organization and under her visionary direction the activities of the organization became dynamic.<sup>245</sup> The largest conference on women's issues was held in Calcutta in 1926 under her presidency and representatives of all the women's organizations of the time were present at the event. The Bengal Muslim Conference was held in 1930 where she spoke strongly on the importance of the Bengali language and its spread which led to her being called one of the patrons of the Bengali language. One of the major problems of Muslim women in Bengal was deprivation of education and strict veil, she considered education as the main vehicle for the establishment of society. Rokeya says:

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<sup>244</sup>Begume, Maleka, *Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Publication, 2018), p.64.

<sup>245</sup>Alam, M. S, "*Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Life and literary works (Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Jiban O Shahityakarma)*", p. 32.

“Owing to the lack of education we have been unfit for gaining freedom. For being unfit we have lost our freedom. The imprudent men have so far deprived us of education for their self-interest.”<sup>246</sup>

She took several steps to promote women's education, among which was the establishment of Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in 1911. With the money left by her husband, she established this school in the city of Calcutta through which the women of Calcutta could obtain education and become self-reliant.<sup>247</sup> This School placed great emphasis on modern education as well as religious education and gave special encouragement to English education. Although she was well educated, she did not have the organizational skills to run a school which led her to visit many schools in Calcutta to try to gain experience from there. She had the opportunity to interact with many Hindu and Christian educated women, not just Muslims, to run the school and carry out organizational responsibilities, which further enhanced her outlook.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain faced obstacles to the women's liberation movement, with the first obstacle coming from her family, but big pressure came from the ultra-conservatives. Conservative newspapers always reported negative views against her and many slandered her with a hostile attitude. Christian missionaries, for example, were slandered by preachers, including misguided, shameless women, heretics and sexists. Many members of religious groups have also been described as misleading.<sup>248</sup> But nothing could stop Rokeya from her purpose and goal. Instead, she played a major role in the women's liberation movement by working hard to overcome all these obstacles. She has been compared to Mary Olstoncraft, a hardline feminist writer in Europe and Simone de Beauvoir, a French writer. However, she is not very well known globally, as few people know that Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain of Bengal was a fearless feminist who struggled all her life, one of the reasons being that she was averse to propaganda. Not only Muslims but also Indian women were neglected and backward in the colonial system and women in the society were not properly evaluated. She showed the way to

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<sup>246</sup>RokeyaSakhawat, *AborodhBashini (blockade)*, Ed: Rahmen Habib, 1st. Edition Dhaka: Books fair Publication, 2016).

<sup>247</sup>Sufi, Motaher Hussain. *Begum Rokeya: Jibon O Shahitya (Begum Rokeya: Life and Works)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Subarna Publication, 2009), p. 25-26.

<sup>248</sup>Jahan, R, *Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Sultana's Dream, A Feminist Utopia and Selections from The Secluded Ones*. (New York: The Feminist Press, 1988), p. 44.

enlighten and empower Bengali women by breaking down all religious, social, economic and traditional barriers.

She was one of the first Bengali Muslim women writers and intellectuals to play a leading role in women's education and liberation movement which has become a milestone in the 'women's liberation movement' in Bengal history. Through her writings and activities, she gained acceptance not only in the subcontinent but also in the Anglo-American Academy, a huge achievement for a Bengali woman writer.<sup>249</sup> There were many other Bengali female writers in her time, most notably Faziltunnes, Mahmuda Khatun Siddique, Razia Khatun Chowdhurani, Ayesha Ahmed, Masuda Rahman and Khairunnesa Khatun whose writings were widely circulated and important. But most of these female writers did not show much interest in women's emancipation, despite its need at the time. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain came out of the contemporary boundaries and went beyond the conventional trend and thought of exceptions which gave her specialty. She was the first of the Bengali Muslims to publicly raise the question of equal status of women and thus ushered in a new era in the social history of Bengal's urban culture. A few intellectuals played a major role in the intellectual movement of Bengal who tried their best to make the movement successful with great skill and competence.

## **2.7. General Evaluation of Intellectuals and Activists**

After the revolt in the subcontinent in 1857, a small number of intellectuals began to think about improving Bengal's Muslim society. Nawab Abdul Latif was one of them and he played a pivotal role in Bengal's Muslim awakening. He attached the utmost importance to the education of Muslims and felt that the progress of Muslim society and the solution to all its problems needed to be tackled through education and intellectual practice. He was one of the few intellectuals who played an important role in the development of Muslim education. The institutions that he established in contemporary times played a significant role in the acquisition of modern education and the practice of science among Muslim students. As a result of his efforts, the number of Muslim students in educational institutions increased. He campaigned extensively for the

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<sup>249</sup>Sarkar, Mahua, "Looking for feminism." *Gender & history*, 16, no. 2 (2004), pp. 318-333.

religious education of Bengal Muslims as well as for modern education. He encouraged Muslims to take modern education in 1857. He made an understanding with the British colonial government to establish the right of the Muslims of Bengal. He made them aware to understand the right of Muslims. He made efforts to establish communal harmony between Muslim and Hindu communities. The biggest complaint against Abdul Latif is that despite knowing Bengali, his writing was in English and Urdu. He wrote a lot in Bengali. This issue is still being criticized in the academic world of Bengal. But later, almost all his books were translated into the Bengali language. Abdul Latif made an indelible contribution to the Muslim community of Bengal's national growth through education, culture and political awareness, making him a relevant figure to this day. Like Nawab Abdul Latif, Syed Amir Ali contributed significantly to the intellectual movement of Bengal.

Another important intellectual of the intellectual movement of Bengal, Syed Amir Ali emphasized on modern education as well as political awareness for the development of Muslims. According to him, not only modern education but also political education is very important. His outlook was timely because the entire world system was changing at that time when modern education was very much needed. He wrote about various important issues in the life of Hazrat Muhammad, the last prophet of Islam. Although he was educated in western education, he made an important contribution to the development of Islamic culture through writing. Many western writers complained about the Prophet of Muslims but Amir Ali did not try to answer their complaints. In contrast, he tried to highlight various aspects of the noble character of the Prophet of Islam, which was a very intelligent move. Although many Muslim intellectuals do not present Islam as a progressive religion, Amir Ali describes Islam as a progressive and modern religion. Amir Ali's writings on various subjects of Islam were different from other intellectuals and quite interesting. He presented the Muslims of the subcontinent not as a community but as a nation and through which Muslims gained a strong sense of nationalism.

He emphasized the history of Islam because he believed that there was an opportunity to be inspired by the glorious history of Islam and that it was important to learn from it for the revival of Muslim society. Through his writings and organizational activities, he was able to influence the large Muslim population of India, especially the youth, who

took Amir Ali as a model. He married an English woman, despite being a Muslim and lived in London for the rest of his life, which caused some Muslim conservatives to disagree with him. Some religious leaders accused him of being Western. Another allegation against Amir Ali was that despite being born in Bengal, he did not write in Bengali and wrote all of his essays, books and newspaper columns in English. Due to this linguistic gap, his thinking could not reach the root level of Muslim society. But many Bengali writers saw Amir Ali's writings about Islam as positive. Through his writings, not only the people of the subcontinent but also the westerners were influenced. Writing in English increased his acceptance and popularity in the international arena and through his writings Muslims and non-Muslims in the West gained a clearer idea of India and Indian Muslims.

Syed Ahmed Khan, like other intellectuals, has given utmost importance to modern education of Muslims, according to him, without modern education, Muslims cannot face the challenges of the age. That is why he paid special attention to education. Many Western writers criticized the Prophet's biography and tried to tarnish the Prophet's character. Syed Ahmad boosted the morale of the Muslims by answering these charges. He wrote a lot about the important aspects of Islamic history, especially the biographies of Muslim heroes and through these writings, he had a considerable influence on the common people. But he gave more importance to theology and showed wisdom in his scriptural discussions, through which he tried to make Muslims aware. Like others, he also presented various important aspects of Prophet Muhammad's life before the people through writing. He presented Muslims as a community but Muslims are essentially a separate race. Other intellectuals of the subcontinent presented Muslims as a race. He was flexible enough towards the Turkish sultans and sultanates which strengthened the ties of Indian Muslims in the international arena. He obtained many advantages for the Muslims through his contacts with the British Government. One of his main goals was the development of Muslims in the subcontinent, he sought to re-establish Muslim identity in India through a strategy of cooperation with the colonial regime. Due to his foresight, later Muslims were able to establish themselves in Indian politics.

Munshi Mohammad Meherullah was known as one of the pioneers of the cultural reform movement of Bengali Muslim society. Despite his low education, he effectively dealt with the anti-Islamic activities of the Christian missionaries. At that time,

Meherullah played a leading role even though the famous ulama could not properly deal with the activities of the missionaries. He answered many false accusations of the missionaries with great skill and competence, due to which the common Muslims found the right path. His campaign made common people aware of the machinations and conspiracies of Christian missionaries, which was his most significant contribution. To counter the propaganda against Islamic culture, the three inspired a group of young people who later made significant contributions to the Bengali language and literature. He played the role of a social reformer and preacher. Muslim intellectuals formed many social political organizations to strengthen the intellectual movement in Bengal and besides there were many educational institutions, through which the intellectual movement became quite dynamic.

## **CHAPTER 3 : THE ROLE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT**

At the beginning of the 20th century, a significant change began among the Muslims of the subcontinent, during which the intellectuals felt the responsibility to build socio-political organizations to protect the national interests of the Muslims. Because it was the demand of the time and Muslims had no other alternative. At that time, many Hindu communities, rivalling the Muslims, went to establish political organizations, due to which the Muslim intellectuals emphasized the establishment of the political organization Muslim League in 1906. In addition to the establishment of political organizations, the Muslims struggled in 1912 to establish an international standard university in Dhaka for the development of the Muslim education system. At this time most of the Muslim intellectuals gave utmost importance to political organization due to which the establishment of Muslim League was given priority. The Muslim League played a major role in increasing the political awareness of Muslims and exerting pressure on the government and protecting their rights.

After the establishment of the Muslim League, the Muslim intellectuals of Bengal demanded the establishment of an international standard university in Dhaka. Syed Amir Ali was most interested in establishing a university in Bengal; he wrote from 1982 onwards. Political leaders and intellectuals were interested in establishing a university in Bengal. Even though the rival Hindu community of Muslims had the opportunity to study at the university in Calcutta long ago, the Muslims of Bengal were quite pessimistic. Due to this, the establishment of the university was one of the most important steps of that time. Dhaka University was established in Bengal only as a result of the struggle of Muslim intellectuals and politicians but for this, the Muslims of Bengal had to struggle a lot. Because of the demand for the establishment of Dhaka University, the First World War started, due to which the British government tried not to establish the University. Hindu intellectuals and politicians of Calcutta strongly opposed the establishment of Dhaka University due to Muslim rivalry. Due to which the establishment of the University Due to which the establishment of the University was delayed but finally it was established in 1921.

Along with the struggle to establish Dhaka University, the Muslim intellectuals of Bengal carried out the Khilafat movement in the subcontinent as part of international politics. The Khilafat movement centered around the Muslim Sultanate of Turkey was one of the most significant events in the political history of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. Because the Sunni Muslims of India accepted the Ottoman Caliph as the leader of the Muslim world and considered him a symbol of the Muslim world. Moreover, Indian Muslims saw the Ottoman Sultan as a symbol of the unity of the Muslim world. The Muslims of the subcontinent made the Khilafat movement an issue of national politics and made every effort to implement this agent. The Muslim ulama, intellectuals and political leaders were subjected to many tortures by the occupying imperialist colonial government to implement the various programs of the Khilafat movement. But the Muslims of the subcontinent continued to struggle till the dissolution of the Turkic Caliphate. Through the Khilafat movement of the subcontinent, the political consciousness of the Muslims developed and along with this, the political awareness of the Bengali Muslims also increased to a great extent. However, in the first chapter of the 20th century, a major change in the society and politics of the entire Indian subcontinent was initiated through the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906. The establishment of the Muslim League has a long history and background.

### **3.1. The Formal Political Organization of Muslims**

The Muslim League (1906) was the first formal political organization for Muslims in the subcontinent to establish Muslim rights during colonial rule and later to be one of the driving forces behind the independence movement of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>250</sup> The establishment of the All Indian Muslim League in Bengal in 1906 marked the beginning of a landmark change in various fields, including the protection of the rights and interests of the Muslims of the whole of India, including Bengal. The development of the national consciousness of the Muslims of India was mainly organized through the structure of the Muslim League. The All India Muslim League, was founded in 1906, But it was a long context established.

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<sup>250</sup>Ayesha, Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, 2nd. Edition (Uk: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 33

### 3.1.1. The Backdrop of the Inauguration of the Muslim League

Muslim League had a context that was associated with the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885. With the establishment of the Congress many events took place, one of which was the rise in political awareness of the Muslims. In 1885, the All Indian National Congress was formed as the largest organization in the subcontinent.<sup>251</sup> The Congress was formed in Calcutta in the presence of delegates from all over India including Allahabad, Punjab, North India, Delhi and other places. Although Umesh Chandra Bandyopadhyay, Dadabhai Nowrozi and Surendranath Banerjee, intellectual from Calcutta, were among the educated Hindu intellectuals in India behind the establishment of this organization, the government was the main initiator. Hume, a retired English government official, founded the Hume Congress as part of the British plan to control the Indian educated class.<sup>252</sup> Lord Ripon was one of the founding representatives of the organization.<sup>253</sup> Politically the local representatives of the rulers played a significant role in developing awareness among the people of the subcontinent. They were always active in the political affairs of the Muslim and Hindu representatives.<sup>254</sup> The colonial rulers were always trying to keep Muslims and Hindus away from religious activities and its influence because they felt that imperialist interests could be harmed through religious sentiments. The main purpose of establishing the organization was to create a loyal opposition party who would stay within particular bounds. In 1885, as part of the British policy, the government tried to get the active participation of the mainstream Hindus and a small section of the educated class of Muslims through the Congress.

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<sup>251</sup>The first session of the All Indian National Congress was held in Bombay in December and the second session was held in Calcutta. The Bombay session had a total of 72 delegates, two of whom were Muslims, and the second session had 413 delegates, of whom 27 were Muslim members. (Annual Congress Report 27- 30, December, 1886, Calcutta, pp. 26-27).

<sup>252</sup> S. R. Mehrotra, The Early Organisation of the Indian National Congress, 1885-1920, *India Quarterly*, October-December 1966, Vol. 22, No. 4 (October-December 1966), p. 329-352.

<sup>253</sup>Banerjee, Anil Chandra, *Indian Constitutional Documents -1757-1939*, (Calcutta: A mukharji & con, 1946), p. 88.

<sup>254</sup> The caste and religious differences certainly in respect to the two great groups of Mahomedans and Hindus are showing signs of weakening and that in the next generation there is a great prospect of the disappearance of the separation of caste and religions in deference to the calls of political aims. (Morley, Minto paper, "Lord Minto and the Muslims." In Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1973, pp. 26-31).

Although the Congress started its journey as a national level representative body for all religions and castes, the Hindu leaders had a majority and influence here and they always maintained their dominance. Originally organized by the intellectuals and political leaders of Hindu society, the organization became a common platform for Hindu nationalism. However, the Indian National Congress had at various times claimed that the number of Muslim delegates in their programs was always high but the reality was different. Of the 538 members at the 1903 annual session, 10 were Muslims and at the 1905 annual session, there were 20 Muslim attendees out of 658 members.<sup>255</sup> For various reasons, including the support of the Congress for Hindu interests and the neglect of Muslim interests, the Muslim leaders became skeptical of the activities of the Congress. Thus, since the establishment of the Congress, Muslims kept their distance and did not regularly participate in the various functions of the Congress. Syed Ahmed Khan, one of the leading leaders of the Muslims of the time, warned Muslims against joining the Congress and gave a public speech on the issue. He felt that the time was not right for Muslims to participate in the Congress and that it was a short-sighted decision. He also thought that joining the congress would darken the future of Muslims.<sup>256</sup> Although some Muslims were attracted to the Congress, Syed Ahmed's views led most Muslims to withdraw from the Congress.

Syed Ahmed's views led to condemnation of Muslims by Hindu members of the Congress and Hindu newspapers, including the *Patriot*, the Indian Mirror's Young Bangla newspaper. Among the Muslim religious organizations, the Mohammedan Central National Association,<sup>257</sup> including Rifai Am in Allahabad, considered his views reasonable. However, after 1906, Muslim leaders showed some flexibility towards the Congress. During this time, influential leaders like Wazir Hasan and Muhammad Ali

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<sup>255</sup>Annual Congress Report, 1905, December, Calcutta, p. 56.

<sup>256</sup>Rafiq, Zakaria, *Rise of Muslims in Indian politics; An analysis of developments from 1885 to 1906*, 1st. Edition (Mumbai: Somaiya Publications, 1970), pp. 53-54.

<sup>257</sup> Syed Amir Ali founded this political organization in 1877 with its main center in Calcutta. Initially, the organization started with only 200 members, but within a short time the number of members increased to 600 and a total of 50 branches were established in different parts of the subcontinent. This organization supervised all matters related to the interests of Muslims. The organization published various reports on Muslim education of which the report of 1881 was the most effective. This organization was the most important until the establishment of the Muslim League. See more: Khaleque, Md Abdul, Central National Muhamedan Association, in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Online Edition (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Central\\_National\\_Muhamedan\\_Association](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Central_National_Muhamedan_Association), Accessed 25/12/ 2021.

Jinnah acted as observers of the Congress and also participated in several sessions of the Congress.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslims all over India, including Bengal, faced various crises (Political, Economic and Partition of Bengal), especially with the death of Syed Ahmed Khan in 1899, leaving the Muslim community without any kind of leadership. At this time there was some confusion, frustration and indecision among the Muslims. In northern India, controversy also erupted over the Urdu and Hindi languages, which later turned into conflict. In this context, Nawab Ahmed was followed by Nawab Mohsin ul Mulk, who was very quick to try to lead the Muslims from Aligarh province to the whole of India.<sup>258</sup>

The influence and activities of the Central National Muhammadan Association and the Muhammadan Literary Society were greatly diminished, creating an intellectual vacuum among Muslims. The Mohammedan Political Association<sup>259</sup> was formed in July 1903 at a special function in Saharanpur, northern India, to protect the interests and political rights of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent.<sup>260</sup> The organization was originally used as a platform to meet the social and political needs of Muslims. There were many roles behind the establishment of the organization but its main initiator was Nawab Vikar-ul-Mulk.<sup>261</sup> The organization was established to peacefully raise the demands of Muslims to the government, not to compete with other communities and to form a representative government and facilitate the entry of Muslim students into supportive jobs. However,

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<sup>258</sup> Mohsin-ul-Mulk (1837-1907) whose original name was Nawab Medhi Ali Khan, in his early life started by working under the East India Company. He is said to have played a neutral role without participating in the 1858 uprising. Due to his job, he held various positions as Deputy Collector under the British Government till 1893 and was able to establish himself as a competent official of the Government. In 183, when Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was conducting political activities, he did not agree with him, but later he changed his mind and emerged as a supporter of Syed Ahmed Khan. He later became one of the leading figures of the Aligarh movement. (Syed, Iqbal Pervaize, Nawab Mohsin Ul-Mulk and Muslim awakening in the Indian sub-continent (1837-1907), (PhD Thesis in History, Australia National University, November 1986, pp. 1-17).

<sup>259</sup> In July 1903, Muslim leaders of the subcontinent formed the Mohammedan Political Association at Saharanpur in northern India. The organization was established by the efforts of Nawab Vikar-ul-Mulk and he served as its president. This organization was formed with the objective of organizing the scattered Muslims. (Usmani, Parveen, Page Origin of the All India Muslim League, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Vol. 23, Issue 2, Ver. 4, February 2018, p. 38).

<sup>260</sup> Ibid, p. 37-40.

<sup>261</sup> Nawab Vikar-ul-Mulk was one of the founders of the Muslim League, who was born on March 24, 1841, in North India. Joined the government service in 1861 and was influenced by Syed Ahmed Khan. He was a devoted worker of the Ali Garh Movement and played an essential role in establishing the Muslim League in 1906. See more: Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, Sunday, June 01, 2003, <https://storyofpakistan.com/nawab-viqar-ul-mulk/>, Accessed 5/12/ 2022.

the organization failed to meet the demands of the time and build the future of Muslims. The need for a national organization to fulfill these fundamental needs of the Muslims in the national sphere was acute and it was the need of the hour. Besides this, there was a major change in the administration of the government during this period (Partition of Bengal in 1905) which was also considered as one of the important elements for the establishment of the Muslim League.

The largest presidency or state in the Indian subcontinent was Bengal with a total population of 78 million and an area of 189,000 square miles (including Bihar, Chhota Nagpur and Orissa).<sup>262</sup> It was very difficult to effectively manage such a large province. Andrew Henderson Leith Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the representative of the Government, proposed in 1903 that the districts of Dhaka and Mymensingh should be transferred to Assam separately from Bengal and his proposal was readily accepted by the then Chief Ruler of India, Lord Curzon. Thus it was decided to divide the greater Bengal. Later, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, in his speech at Dhaka on 18 February 1904, declared that the partition of Bengal would actually help the Muslims of East Bengal to unite. The Government of India's letter on 13 September 1904 conveyed the final draft of the partition plan.<sup>263</sup> The letter stated that Dhaka would become the provincial capital where Muslim interests would be predominantly considered and the capital of West Bengal was Calcutta. The new province was named East Bengal and Assam, with a population of 18 million Muslims and 12 million Hindus. Although the partition of Bengal took place on 16 October 1905, in effect it had begun earlier.<sup>264</sup> The partition of Bengal provoked a mixed reaction between the two main communities of Bengal and the Muslims, whom the Hindus regarded as a blow to the colonial rulers and a conspiracy against them. They thought that their trade and commerce would suffer economically because of the partition of Bengal and that this was done to strengthen the Muslims against the Hindus. They rejected it as an obstacle to the development of their national consciousness.<sup>265</sup> The Partition of Bengal was basically an administrative initiative of the colonial government as well as a political

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<sup>262</sup>B. C. Allen, *Dacca District Gazetteers 1912*, p. 23.

<sup>263</sup>Sumit, Sarkar, Neeladri Bhattacharya and Dipesh Chakrabarty. *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*, 1st. Edition (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973), p. 9-21.

<sup>264</sup>Sufia, Ahmed, "Muslim community in Bengal: 1884-1912." p. 48.

<sup>265</sup>Anil Baran, Ray, "Communal Attitudes to British Policy: The Case of the Partition of Bengal 1905." *Social Scientist* (1977): 34-46. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3520087>, Accessed 2/4/ 2022.

move because for a long time a nationalist movement was developing in the Calcutta-centric Hindu community which was a threat to the government. The colonial rulers wanted to strategically suppress the nationalist activities of the Hindus, especially the Bengali Hindu nationalism, which they considered a threat to the British Empire.

The Hindu members of the Indian Congress did not accept The partition of Bengal. A large part of them led a strong movement against the partition of Bengal from 1905 to 1911, which is known in history as the Swadeshi movement.<sup>266</sup> In the initial stage, Hindus protested in an orderly manner by holding meetings, advertisements in newspapers, holding processions, meeting and giving memorandums, but without any success, leading to the formation of Swadeshi Committees in Parbati. In 1905, a huge rally was held in the town hall of Calcutta to demand the boycott of products produced by the British government. Protests were staged using domestic products and later this protest movement turned into a violent movement, one of the main leaders of which was Surendranath Banerjee, the poet Rabindranath Tagore and many others.<sup>267</sup> The main theme of this movement was to put economic pressure on the government by boycotting British goods to force them to comply with their demand as well as to use domestic products. Due to the Swadeshi movement, the production of various products including local products such as the textile industry increased.<sup>268</sup>

Hindu nationalists led by the Congress called for a boycott and the Swadeshi movement even before the partition of Bengal took place. Which was intended to put pressure on the British government to stop selling British goods. As a result, when British factories and mills came to a halt, the British administration began to consider partitioning Bengal. The government was also pressured by British businessmen to cancel the division of Bengal. However, the British authorities were worried by a plan to assassinate government officials, judges and British rulers through the founding of the Gupta Revolutionary Association at one point during the Swadeshi movement. The rebels attempted to assassinate Bengal Governor Fraser, Baralat Minto and East Bengal

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<sup>266</sup> Ranjit, Roy, Swadeshi Movement, in Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh, Online Edition (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Swadeshi Movement](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Swadeshi_Movement), Accessed 28/4/ 2021.

<sup>267</sup> Rabindranath Tagore (181-1941) was one of the leading poets of Bengali literature, who was a member of the Brahmin community and grew up in an aristocratic family in Calcutta. He made unforgettable contributions to Bengali literature and won the Nobel Prize for his book *Gitanjali*. (Mukherjee, Prabhatkumar, *Rabindrajivanakatha*, Calcutta: Ananda Publisher, 1981, pp.191-198).

<sup>268</sup> Ranjit, Roy, "Swadeshi Movement,".

and Assam Governor Bampfylde Fuller. The revolutionaries assassinated English Magistrate Kingsford. Despite the fact that Khudiram, Prafulla Chaki and others were hanged for the murder, these activities continued, prompting the British administration to consider abolishing the Bengal split.<sup>269</sup>

The Swadeshi movement was joined by Abdur Resul, Didar, Din Muhammad and some other leaders from the Muslims, but they were aware of the need to unite the Hindu-Muslim community. As a result of the Swadeshi movement, relations between the Muslim Hindus in Bengal deteriorated drastically, leading to shootings and riots. Later, many Hindu and Muslim scholars commented that the colonial administration wanted to provoke Hindu-Muslim riots by partitioning Bengal.

Although the Muslim community of Bengal did not initially react to the partition of Bengal, they later accepted it as positive. The new administrative system was expected to establish fair rights for Muslims as Muslims in Bengal, despite being a majority, had lagged far behind Hindus in various fields including employment. Hindus were getting more benefits than Muslims but the new system made it clear that Muslims would obtain benefits in various fields including social, political and economic. However, a section of Muslims opposed the partition of Bengal and took a different view as they thought it would be detrimental to the Bengali nation.<sup>270</sup> Among the famous Muslim leaders were Atiq Ullah Khan Bahadur, a relative of the Nawab of Dhaka, Mohammad Yusuf, Barrister Abdur Rasool and many others. Although a small number of Muslims thought differently, the majority of Muslims believed that the partition of Bengal would lead to their future development and saw it as an opportunity for them. Although the Congress was established as a Sarab Janin party, the Hindus were predominant here. The Congress, founded in 1885, failed to represent the entire Indian community and Muslims were forced to think differently when its members became involved in terrorist activities in the name of the Swadeshi movement.<sup>271</sup> Muslims later realized the importance of creating a formal political platform to defend their own interests and make demands to the government. Thus, the context was set for the establishment of the

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<sup>269</sup>Syed Anwar Hossain, Bongo Vangoraderprotichiriya: sason tantric bisleshon (Response to the Partition of Bengal: Constitutional Analysis), 1st-3rd issue, no. 3, *History society*, Dhaka, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>270</sup>Annual Congress Report, vol. 12, Calcutta, 1896, p. 26.

<sup>271</sup> Nurul Islam, Monjur, *ShatoBarsho Pore FiredekhaItihas (History looked back after a century, the partition of Bengal and the first appearance of the Muslim League)* 1st. Edition (Dhaka, Ghotidhara publication 2010), p. 115.

largest political organization of Muslims in the subcontinent and the Muslim intellectuals established the All India Muslim League in 1906 as a timely move.

### **3.1.2. The Inception of the Muslim League as an Integrate Muslim Political Organization**

In the aftermath of the Partition Movement of the Indian Congress and Hindu leaders in the aftermath of partition, Muslim intellectuals realized that the government could change the Partition policy if it could not exert pressure on the British through a political organization.<sup>272</sup> Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka was most passionate about the rights of Muslims and supportive of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of British India, to advance the Muslims of Bengal politically and to make the partition of Bengal a success.<sup>273</sup> He was one of the few Bengalis the government had discussed the partition of Bengal with. In the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal, he realized that Muslims needed a political organization to protect the move.<sup>274</sup> In addition, Syed Amir Ali (formerly discussed), one of the leading intellectuals of Bengal, published two important articles on Muslim political institutions in the journal *Nineteen Century*. In this article, he emphasized the importance of creating political institutions for Muslims.

During this time Salimullah's<sup>275</sup> political contacts with the Muslim leaders of North India continued and it made considerable progress towards the Shimla deputation.<sup>276</sup> After the partition of Bengal took effect in 1905, he formed a political association called 'Provincial Mohammedan Union' with a number of visionary and famous politicians like

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<sup>272</sup> M. A. Rahim, "*History of Muslims of Bengal 1857-1947*", pp. 151-52.

<sup>273</sup> After 1901, Nawab Salimullah emerged as the chief Muslim leader of Bengal especially in 1905, he appeared on the political and social scene centering on the change of administrative system (Partition of Bengal) of the British government in Bengal. In 1901 he was appointed Nawab of Dhaka and this was the beginning of his political career. He has made significant contributions to the development of social service, Muslim politics and education. In his early life, he placed great emphasis on the education of Muslims but later on, became involved in politics and continued to give utmost importance to politics. See more: Alamgir, Mohammad, *Muslimder shikhar unnion abong gothoner Nabob sir salimullah (Nawab Sir Salimullah on the development of education and life formation of Muslims)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Khoshroj Kitab Mahal, 2014), p. 2.

<sup>274</sup> Muhammad, Abdullah, *Nawab Salimullah: Jiban-o- Karma. (Nawab Salimuallh: Life and Works)*, (Dhaka, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1986), p. 222.

<sup>275</sup> M. D. Alamgir, "*Muslimder Shikhar Unnaaneebong Jibon Gothne Nawab Sir Salimullah (Development of education and life of Muslims: Nawab Sir Salimullah)*", p. preface

<sup>276</sup> On October 1, 1906, in a summer camp in the northern border town of Shimla, an Indian representative of the Muslims met the representative of the British government, Lord Minto, with various demands, which is known in history as Shimla Deputation. (Pluralism and Equality Values in Indian Society and Politics, Ed: Imtiaz Ahmad, *SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd*; 1st. Edition (December 18, 2000, p. 116)

Muhammad Yusuf of Rajshahi, Ali Nawab Chowdhury of Comilla and Fazlul Huq of Barisal. The aim was to make the Muslims aware of the need to implement the partition of Bengal and to keep up the pressure on the British government.<sup>277</sup> He was nominated as the chief patron of the 'Provincial Mohammedan Union' and also presided over various events. He used to speak on various occasions through this organization and tried to make the people of Bengal aware. In a speech in Munshiganj, he remarked, "The Partition of Bengal has awakened us from a dormant life and pushed us to the path of active life struggle"<sup>278</sup> The organization acted as a spokesperson for Muslims on important socio-political issues and was aimed at uniting and empowering the Muslim masses. The main objective of this political organization was to consolidate the partition of Bengal and to form a strong position against the opposition movements. But there was a need for a larger organization from the provincial Mohammedan Union to deal with the Swadeshi movement, to preserve the Bangabhang and to assert the rights of the Muslims.

In order to deal with the political crisis in the subcontinent after the Partition of Bengal, the Bengal intellectuals felt the need to form a joint political organization with the Muslim leaders of North India. In 1906, Nawab Salimullah invited eminent leaders of the subcontinent to his residence in Shahbag to discuss the current situation and to hold an all-India education conference.<sup>279</sup> Nawab Vikarul Mulk presided over the conference. The session was attended by thousands of delegates from different parts of the Indian subcontinent, most notably Aligarh, Delhi, Lucknow and Calcutta. The All India Muslim League was established at this All India Education Conference and initially the Muslim League was in charge of the leaders of different regions of the subcontinent especially the visionary leaders of Bengal and North India. Nawab Mohsin ul Mulk and Nawab Vikarul Mulk were the joint secretaries of the Muslim League and Nawab Salimullah of Bengal was the vice-president.<sup>280</sup> Harun-ur-Rashid commented on the establishment and activities of this organization:

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<sup>277</sup>Nadeem Shafiq, Malik, Formation of the All India Muslim League and its Response to some Foreign Issues - 1906 - 1911, *Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 19, Issue - 2, 2012, p. 172.

<sup>278</sup>Ibid, p. 173.

<sup>279</sup>Ibid, p. 174.

<sup>280</sup>Lal Bahadur, Shastri, *The Muslim League: its history, activities & achievements*, 2nd. Edition (Agra: Agarwal Press, 1954), p. 41,

“The foundation of the All India Muslim League (AIML) in 1906 in Dhaka was a landmark in Muslims politics in India as well as in Bengal. Although for three decades from its inception the League remained an elitist body, it was the first attempt to organize an All India Muslim political community. Except for certain years a provincial League existed in Bengal throughout the period.”<sup>281</sup>

Prominent leaders of this party include Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Khwaja Nazimuddin, Nawab Sir Salimullah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Fazlul Haque, was one of them. Although the Muslim League was established in Dhaka, its headquarters was located in Lucknow and its temporary offices were shifted to different cities. Aligarh College was especially involved in the organization and its students made every effort to advance its activities. On this occasion Nawab Salimullah had said in a letter containing the plan of Muslim League:

1. Today is the birthday of our benevolent emperor. On this auspicious day, I am expressing my views to my Muslim brothers about my planned All India Muslim Union (Muslim League).
2. Unable to join the all-India Muslim delegation sent to His Excellency the Governor at Shimla, I informed my friends in writing of my plans. I wrote that there was a need to form a central Muslim body to realize the aspirations of the Muslim community throughout India.
3. I learned that the delegates had discussed the subject of my plan in a private meeting and without taking any decision, they suggested that a decision be taken at the All India Muslim Education Conference in Dhaka in the last week of December.
4. In view of the discussions in Shimla, I have forwarded the full draft of my plan to various organizations, community members and news organizations in our country and called for a fair discussion on the rationale for forming a planned political body. I request that representatives of various organizations and provinces attend the Dhaka Conference with full capacity to express their views on the plan. In that case, the intention of the Muslim community can be reflected in the discussion.

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<sup>281</sup>Harun-or, Rashid, *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh, Bangal Muslim League and Muslim Politics (1906-1947)*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, (Dhaka: The University Press Limited Dhaka, 1987), p. 2.

5. I have learned that most of the delegates in the Shimla discussion on my plan are in favor of establishing a central body for Muslims, but I wish that the views of the minorities should also be taken into consideration.

6. Some people think that there is no need for a central body because it would weaken the local bodies. According to them, the emphasis should be on the formation of local bodies instead of central ones. Again, some fear that the establishment of a central institution could be detrimental to the Muslim education center in Aligarh. Because its founder wanted to keep it away from all politics. But I believe that if it becomes a central institution, the benefits and effectiveness of Aligarh Education Center will increase greatly and it will be possible to set up similar education centers in every province. Regarding politics, I would like to say that if we do not want to be left behind in the competition of life, then we have to keep pace with the times. Aligarh College has been established for twenty-five years and its purpose has been fulfilled. In order to maintain its capacity and usefulness, we have to enter the next stage of political life of our country and nation. I hope that the leaders of our community will consider my proposed plan and the plan given by others so that after full discussion we can take a decision which will pave the way for the welfare of our community.

7. Many understood the need for a central institution and the memorandum submitted by our all-India delegation to the governor stated, "It cannot be denied that Muslims are a distinct community; They have their own vested interests, these interests have nothing to do with other communities and these interests have been neglected due to lack of proper representation. It is not possible to protect these special interests of our community without a central institution. Having a central body helps the government in this regard. In this context, I am quoting the comments of the Times of India. One of its articles on the meeting of the Muslim delegation to the Governor said, the memorandum states that other communities have nothing to do with these special interests. "Thoughtful people in our community agree with the Times of India that due to the existence of a large number of Muslim organizations, the government authorities are unable to accept the correct views of the Muslim community and our youth often express contradictory views when it comes to the interests of Muslims. In political life, some irresponsible Muslims and organizations for personal gain have harmed the Muslim community in many ways through their activities. They have represented the

government to the people as leaders. But no one questioned their right to represent them. For this reason, special emphasis is not placed on their statements. However, even if the authorities accept their opinion, it is not acceptable to the Muslim public. As a result, it is detrimental to the Muslim community. In this case, if we set up an all-India organization, the government would be able to take the advice of this organization to get the opinion of our community as needed and there would be no possibility of Muslim interests being jeopardized by the vested interests.

**8.** The goals and objectives of the organization need to be clearly stated. Many of us may not agree with this, but I believe that in order to make an organization effective and strong, it is necessary to specify its principles and objectives. The sole purpose of this organization will probably be to support the rule of law of the government and to work for the protection and uplifting of the interests of our community across the country.

**9.** Here's how it should be done: Appropriate naming of the organization we are considering. After much deliberation, I think the name 'All India Association of Muslims' will be useful for this because it will act as the spokesperson for all Muslim social, religious and political organizations and leaders and unite all for the benefit and uplifting of our community. Its purpose: -

**A)** To counteract the growing influence of the so-called National Congress. The Congress is trying to undermine British rule in India and this could lead to a miserable situation.

**B)** The youth of our community who have joined the Congress as we do not have a suitable political body, if the proposed body is formed, they will have the opportunity to present their qualifications and identity in the field of politics.

**10.** From the discussions that took place in Shimla, it is clear that no one is inclined to express our intentions so openly; They think that our Hindu brothers may be dissatisfied with this. But the time has come for us not to rely on emotions. Due to this sentiment, destruction and misery have started among us now centering on the partition of Bengal. Our Muslims must honestly discuss and decide whether the activities of the extremists are in favor of the British rule. Extremist parties are part of the Indian National Congress. In this case, if the Congress does not accept the proposal in a public meeting that it has nothing to do with the views of the extremists, then the Muslims cannot be

associated with it. We are sorry, but we cannot deny that the views of the so-called Indian National Congress on the country are being valued. We, as loyal and loyal subjects of the British government, should try our best to prevent the influence of the Congress, because it could destroy all our favorite things. There is no doubt that our educated Muslim youth will not be able to get a job unless they join the Congress or at least support it. Our Muslim newspapers often complain that there is no shortage of young Muslims with degrees these days. But they are not employed and the reason given is that they do not qualify according to the criteria set by the government. (This information is mentioned in the memorandum to the governor). The staff of our proposed organization will maintain liaison with all local organizations and look to the future of our talented youth; They will no longer have to look to the Congress for a living.<sup>282</sup>

Nawab Salimullah's plan regarding the Muslim League was very valuable, if it is properly evaluated it is clear that the necessary elements for the formation of the Muslim League were present here. He formulated the plan with great foresight and skill. Here he advised building the organization structure based on the opinions of all the members and mentioned that the decision of the people or the members are final. The establishment of the Muslim League was opposed by some Muslim members but Salimullah gave appropriate answers to their arguments. The opponents of the establishment of the Muslim League complained that the establishment of this organization would harm the educational institution of Aligarh, but Salimullah responded to this charge by saying that the educational institution of Aligarh would not be harmed but would benefit. Here Salimullah expressed politics as an important element for the development and self-awareness of the Muslim nation along with education. Without a central political organization it is not possible to realize the rights of Muslims in any way, he said to the members of the Muslim Committee. In his plan, he clearly defined the objectives and goals of the organization. He wanted to convey that through this organization not only Muslims but all of the subcontinent would benefit. Here he explains the reason why Muslim youth joined the Congress, according to him the youth joined the Congress because of the lack of proper organization of

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<sup>282</sup>Syed Sharifuddin, Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents(1906-1947)*, vol. 2, 2nd. Edition (Karachi: National Pub. House ,1969), p. 45; also see, *The Bengali*, 24 December, 1906.

Muslims. He hoped that this organization would act as a source of inspiration for the Muslim youth. After all, this plan was the most important role in the establishment of the Muslim League. The structure of the Muslim League was modern and fairly standardized, a working committee was formed to establish the constitution of the organization, all of whom were educated. Later, the constitution of the Muslim League were discussed.

### **3.1.2.1. Constitution and Formation of the Muslim League**

A 60-member professional committee was formed to create a strong constitution for the Muslim League, which was given four months. Aligarh and some talented intellectuals from Oxford University worked together to form the constitution, of which Mohammad Ali was particularly noteworthy. This constitution was later distributed among all the members. The first session of the organization was held in Karachi in 1907, with Bombay leader Adamjee Pir Bhai presiding over this important meeting. The newly formed constitution of the Muslim League was approved and unanimously adopted after scrutiny and the next ceremony was held in 1906 at Aligarh in Karachi to complete some important unfinished work.<sup>283</sup> Initially, the organization's constitution was not very strong, but its activities were very dynamic. Originally the establishment of the Muslim League was a demand of the time and a powerful step and thus it emerged as a powerful organization in the politics of the subcontinent.

The establishment of the Muslim League at that time provoked various reactions in the politics of the subcontinent. It was feared that the establishment of the Muslim League would lead to more Hindu-Muslim disputes and the paper expressed some frustration. The English Ment (News paper), on the other hand, welcomed its founding and commented on it. Almost all the Congress-backed newspapers slammed the Muslim League and presented it as a barrier between Hindus and Muslims. Time magazine expressed doubts about whether peace would be established through the organization.<sup>284</sup> There were pros and cons to the establishment of the Muslim League, but it was not well received by the Hindu educated class and the leaders of the Congress. There was a mixed reaction among the representatives of the British government, although a large

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<sup>283</sup>Parveen, Usmani, "*Page Origin of the All India Muslim League*", pp. 37-40.

<sup>284</sup> M. Moniruzzaman, "*Upo Mohadeser Musلمان Varot-Pak-Bangladesh (The Muslims of the subcontinent is Indo-Pak-Bangladesh)*," p. 225.

section of the local representatives of the British government were flexible on the issue, as they thought that the two largest communities in the subcontinent would play a role in establishing order through modern political activities.<sup>285</sup> With the establishment of this organization, there was considerable enthusiasm among the Muslim-supported newspapers in the whole subcontinent including Bengal. The Muslim League had branches not only in the subcontinent but also in other parts of the world.

### **3.1.2.2. London and Bengal Branch of the Muslim League**

The Muslim League was not confined to the Indian subcontinent, but established branches in various parts of the world, most notably the London branch which was established in London in 1908. It was established in a glittering ceremony on 8 May 1908 at the Cake Hall in London and its main initiator was Syed Amir Ali. He commented on the objectives of the London branch of the London Muslim League - to protect the rights of Muslims in a systematic way and to create an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation among different communities. He further said that some issues like Indians need to be recruited in greater numbers in government and expansion of representative institutions. The interests of Hindus and Muslims was intertwined and there was some issues which was limited to Muslims only. He further added that while Muslims could not be merged with other nations, they were always ready to cooperate with people of other nations for the greater good of the country.<sup>286</sup> He was the head of the branch for a long time and he coordinated its activities with the leaders of the subcontinent. Originally, the London branch began its operations at full speed and continued until the partition of the country in 1947. The London branch provided various assistance, support and advice in various movements and struggles in the Indian subcontinent. Another important branch of the Muslim League was the Bengal branch.

In 1908 a Provisional Committee was formed to establish the Bengal branch of the Muslim League. On the recommendation of this committee, with the approval of the Central Committee, the Bengal Muslim League was established in 1909 with Sikander

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<sup>285</sup>Pardaman, Singh, "Lord Minto and the Muslims." In *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 34, *Indian History Congress*, 1973, pp. 26-31.

<sup>286</sup>The Bengali, October 24, 1908, Quoted in MA Rahim, "*History of Muslims of Bengal 1857-1947*", p. 139.

as its president and Syed Shamsul Huda as its secretary.<sup>287</sup> Among the several branches of the Muslim League in the subcontinent, there was a notable branch in Bengal, one headquartered in Calcutta and the other in Dhaka. The branch was open to the public but the minimum age for membership was 21 years. Most of the leaders of the Muslim League in West Bengal were members of aristocratic families who showed considerable incompetence in understanding the language of the common people due to which the activities of the West Bengal Muslim League were not very successful.<sup>288</sup> Nawab Salimullah personally took the initiative to strengthen the Bengal Provincial Muslim League and his initiative was carried out extensively by the East Bengal branch. The Nawab allowed Ahsan Manzil, his residence, to be used as the office of the Bengal Muslim League. Later, when the partition of Bengal was canceled, the Bengal Muslim League played a major role.

### **3.1.3. Administrative Changes in Bengal and Role of Muslim League**

Despite the British government partitioning Bengal in 1905, there were still differences of opinion among the British politicians themselves that would lead to the decision being reversed a mere six years later. For example, in the context of the indigenous terrorist movement, English leaders thought that the issue could be reconsidered if there was a valid reason against the partition of Bengal.<sup>289</sup> The Muslim League leaders protested the government's remarks and sent a memorandum to the government. But many, including Jon Henkin, secretary and one of the members of Lord Hardinge's governing council, the next representative of the government, were in favor of stopping all the armed activities of the Swadeshi movement by canceling the partition of Bengal. In 1911, Lord Hardinge's plan was approved by the Secretary of State for Bengal after the Indian delegation had asked Secretary to abolish the Partition of Bengal and to move the Indian capital from Calcutta to Delhi. As part of this approval, on 12 December 1911, the Indian capital was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi and the Partition of Bengal was abolished by a special historic proclamation of Emperor George V of England. According to the emperor's proclamation, Dhaka-Rajshahi, Chittagong-

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<sup>287</sup>Harun-or, Rashid, *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh, Bangal Muslim League and Muslim Politics (1906-1947)*, pp. 22.

<sup>288</sup> Shila, Sen, *Muslim politics in Bengal (1937-1947)*, 2nd. Edition (New Delhi, India, 1976), p. 53.

<sup>289</sup> Abdul, Hamid, *Muslim Separatism in India: A Brief Survey, 1858-1947.* 1st. Edition (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 70.

Calcutta, that is, West Bengal was formed by the merger of Bangaladesh or Bangladesh Presidency with Calcutta as its capital. Partition of Bengal was repealed from Pahela in 1912. The Hindu members of the Congress were satisfied with the repeal of the Partition of Bengal and hailed it as a success of their long movement and praised the British government for the move.<sup>290</sup> Nonetheless, the Muslims of Bengal were discontent with the move as Muslims had benefited from improving economic and educational conditions due to the partition of Bengal. Between 1906 and 1921, in just a few short years, the number of Muslim students in educational institutions increased by 35%, Dhaka, the capital of East Bengal, was becoming a big city like Kolkata and Dhaka's prosperity was increasing. New trade and commerce developed here, Muslims were employed more in government service than before. Other areas of Muslim inhabited Bengal like Chittagong, Rajshahi, Jessore and other areas started improving but the trend of development stopped after the partition of Bengal. The high level meetings of the government were to be held in Dhaka and as part of the administrative activities many government offices and courts were set up in Dhaka. Through this office court many new positions were created for the people of Bengal, thus increasing its prosperity, but everything came to a halt due to the declaration of abrogation of Partition of Bengal in 1911.

As a result of the abolition of the Partition of Bengal, the Muslims of Bengal and all throughout the subcontinent became disillusioned with the British government. Leaders of the Muslim League, including Nawab Wakar-ul-mulk, Nawab Salimullah Nawab Nawab Ali Chowdhury, strongly condemned the government's announcement and issued separate statements. An emergency meeting was held at Ahsan Manzil in Dhaka under the leadership of Nawab Salimullah and Muslim leaders decided on their next course of action. Salimullah was the most shocked by the abrogation of the Partition of Bengal. He was rejected by the British government as ACI and called it a garland of bribes and insults. The first annual session of the Muslim League was held in Calcutta on March 3, 1912, where Muslim leaders discussed the abolition of the Partition of Bengal before the nation. Speaking on the occasion, Salimullah blamed the British for the partition of Bengal but expressed satisfaction over the relocation of the capital from

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<sup>290</sup>Ibid, p. 88.

Calcutta to Delhi as it would benefit the Muslims of Punjab and Sindh.<sup>291</sup> In his speech, he criticized the Congress and Hindu leaders, calling them hotheaded, intolerant and fanatical. Originally, the government had bowed to the indigenous terrorist movement and decided to cancel the partition of Bengal in order to weaken the government, defeat it and diminish the respect and influence of the government.

As a result of this biased move by the British, Muslims protested against the government in an orderly and systematic manner, without resorting to any form of violence or militancy. The abolition of the Partition of Bengal later led to a change in the leadership of the Muslim League.

#### **3.1.4. The Middle Class Led by the Muslim League**

After the partition of Bengal in 1912, differences of opinion started among the members of the Muslim League. The old leaders of the organization as well as the new leaders wanted to maintain a policy of compromise with the government, among whom Dhanbari Nawab Ali Chowdhury and Comilla Shamsul Huda are particularly noteworthy. Many of these older leaders were appointed members of the working council of the governors of Bengal and Assam, which led them to negotiate with the government to balance the future of Muslim politics. Besides, Salimullah, the main leader of the Bengal Muslim League, was disappointed with the administrative decision of the government and retired from direct politics due to various reasons including physical illness.<sup>292</sup> On the other hand, due to the policies and decisions of the government, the young leaders of the League lost faith in the government. These educated Muslim youths were vehemently opposed to the old leaders' approach and were in favor of moving away from the policy of cooperation with the government.

During this crisis, a session of the Bengal Muslim League was held in Dhaka on 13 April 1912 and a new leader was elected for the league where the youth was of paramount importance. At that time Abul Kassem Fazlul Haq, an emerging leader of the young generation of Bengal, was elected the first president of the Muslim

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<sup>291</sup>Sharif Uddin, Peerzada, “*Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents(1906-1947)*”, p. 231.

<sup>292</sup>Martuur, Rahman, *From Consultation to Confrontation: a Study of the Muslim league in British Indian Politics, 1906-1912*, (London: Luzac, 1970), pp. 237-242.

League.<sup>293</sup> Under his leadership, the leaders of the League were more enthusiastic about becoming a political movement and he became a symbol of hope and aspiration of the Muslim youth. Under the influence of new leaders, the party moved away from its old strategy of compromising with the government and adopted a policy of revolutionary action. Originally, Muslims from that time onwards included the demand for autonomy through communal cooperation. They tried to coordinate with the Central All India Muslim League and the Bengal Muslim League to meet the political challenges following the abolition of Partition. The revolutionary organization of the Bengali leaders was approved and encouraged by the central organization. In 1912, at the Central Working Annual Session of the organization in Calcutta, it was decided to increase the number of party members and to expand the program.<sup>294</sup> Other organs loyal to the party took various steps to make the organization more active and pragmatic. In order to make the party more modern progressive and to change the constitution, various committees were formed with the top leaders which later played an important role in changing the constitution of the party.

Fazlul Haq took steps to reach out to the common people of Bengal through the public welfare activities of the Muslim League and to create opportunities for the entry of deserving people from the common people for various positions in the organization.<sup>295</sup> In 1913 he was elected a member of the managing council of Bengal from the Dhaka division and expressed sympathy for the peasant workers and the people in his election speech. Through these steps, he gained immense popularity among the common people of Bengal and became the leading Muslim leader of Bengal.<sup>296</sup> He was a member of the Governing Body and the leader of the League Criticism began and continued for a long time. He alleged that the government was repeatedly breaking its promise to the

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<sup>293</sup> Abul Kassem Fazlul Haq was born in Barisal in 1883. He was also known as Sher-e-Bangla. He has been actively involved in politics since 1912. From 1906 to 1911, the Muslim League was led by expeditions, but later the middle-class educated class came to lead the organization, with Fazlul Haq at the top. He was elected a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1913 and played an important role in politics for almost forty years. He contributed much to the popularity and success of the Muslim League of Bengal. Through his visionary role, the Muslim League played a significant role in the communal harmony of Bengal. Khan, Md. Enamul Haque, *Serebanglaak Fazlul haquea bong Bangler Muslim league*. (Khan, Md. Enamul Haque, *Sher-e-Bangla Ake Fazlul Haque and Muslim League of Bengal*), New Edition, Dhaka: Khoshroj Kitab Mahal Limited, 2020, p. index).

<sup>294</sup> Matiur, Rahman, "From consultation to confrontation: a study of the Muslim league in British Indian politics, 1906-1912", pp. 240-241.

<sup>295</sup> M. A. Rahim, "History of Muslims of Bengal 1857-1947", p. 176.

<sup>296</sup> Md. Enamul Haque, Khan, *Sher-e-Bangla Ake Fazlul Haque and Muslim League of Bengal*,

Muslims and above all he demanded autonomy for Bengal. He demanded compensation from the government for the Muslims for canceling the partition of Bengal and called on the government to provide a larger budget for Muslim students in the education sector. Under the leadership of Fazlul Huq, the Muslim League became a strong institution and later played a role in national formation.

### **3.1.5. The Role of the Muslim League in the Formation of National Unity**

After 1913, the new leaders of the Muslim League, especially youth like Fazlul Huq, emphasized the importance of Hindu-Muslim cooperation for the welfare of Muslims, development of the country in the true sense of the word and tackling the government's strategy. According to them, Hindu-Muslim unity will be strengthened and the independence movement of the subcontinent will be strengthened on one platform and the government will be forced to grant autonomy.<sup>297</sup> Fazlul Haq was originally a member of the Congress despite being the leader of the League for the purpose of bridging the gap between Hindus and Muslims with this larger objective in mind and he regularly attended the meetings of the Congress. He attended the Provincial Annual Session of the Congress held at Midnapore in West Bengal in 1914 and was elected President and spoke on the importance of establishing Hindu-Muslim unity. From the time of World War I onwards, he made the greatest efforts to establish Hindu-Muslim unity and on this occasion, he continued to communicate and meet with many Hindu leaders. British involvement in World War I weakened their position in the Indian subcontinent, leaving the region's leaders optimistic about autonomy.<sup>298</sup> At that time not only Fazlul Huq but also top leaders of the Muslim League like Barrister Abdur Rasool and many others gave importance to the Muslim Hindu Unity. When the Muslim and Hindu communities expressed their political agendas for autonomy, the process of bridging the gap between the Muslim League and the Congress began.

The Sixth Annual Session of the Central Muslim League was held in Delhi in 1913 where Central Muslim League leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Congress leader Sarojini Naidu addressed a meeting of the League. Thus, the initial stage of compromise

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<sup>297</sup>J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society; Twentieth-Century Bengal*, 1st. Edition (University of California, 1968), p. 64.

<sup>298</sup> Siraj Uddin, Ahmed, *Sher Bangla AK Fazlul Haque*, 4th. Edition (Dhaka Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 2015), pp. 43-44.

between the League and the Congress was completed. The eighth annual session of the Muslim League was held in Bombay in 1915, with Mazharul Haq as its president. During this time the leaders of the two parties made various plans to establish unity. Among the leaders of this session were Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Abul Kalam Azad, Abdur Rasulland Singh.<sup>299</sup> The two organizations agreed to submit a joint plan to the British government regarding the future constitution of India. The Muslim League formed a committee as a prelude to the drafting of the constitution of India.

Leaders of both communities had long sought a compromise between the Muslim League and the Congress on India's future constitutional plans. As part of this effort, the leaders held several preparatory meetings in Calcutta in 1915. Subsequently, a joint annual session of the Congress and the League was held in Lucknow on 29 and 30 December, 1916, but the venue was different. At this time there was a constitutional agreement between the Congress and the League now known as the Lucknow Agreement.<sup>300</sup> The agreement provided for a separate voting system for Muslims and protected minorities in provincial assemblies. In those provinces where Muslims were a minority, they were given the opportunity to be more represented. The Muslims of Bengal and Punjab, however, were more numerous but their representation was reduced, thus creating a compromise between the Muslims and the Hindus.

The Muslims of Bengal had to sacrifice a lot for the establishment of Hindu-Muslim unity because the Muslims, despite being a majority, had fewer seats or representatives. Dhanbari Nawab Nawab Ali Chowdhury, one of the founding leaders of the Muslim League, was disappointed over this agreement and many more influential members of the League saw it as a defeat. In protest of the agreement, Nawab Ali Chowdhury resigned from the Muslim League and joined the Central National Mohammedan Association. The treaty was opposed, but in 1917, at the annual session of the Bengal Muslim League, the Lucknow Treaty was supported and ratified.<sup>301</sup> The treaty was followed by a rivalry between the conservatives and progressives in the Muslim League in Bengal and for several days there was instability in Bengal politics. There was disagreement among the top leaders of the league over the deal, which made it a

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<sup>299</sup> J.H. Bloomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal*, p. 124.

<sup>300</sup> Enamul Haque, Khan, *Sher-e-Bangla Ake Fazlul Haque and Muslim League of Bengal*, p. 18.

<sup>301</sup> Chandiprasad Sarkar, *The Bengali Muslims: A Study in Their Politicization, 1912-1929*, (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi & Company, 1991), p. 47.

challenge for Fazlul Haq to lead the party. In this situation, he was compelled to reconstitute a committee to regain the seats in the Bengal Legislative Assembly. The Bengal Provincial Muslim League and other organizations demanded 50 seats for Muslims from the Bengal government but it did not materialize. The government passed a reform law which found that the number of Muslim members in the Bengal Legislative Assembly had been allocated to 40. Muslims constitute 52% of the total population of Bengal, but only 40% of the seats had been allotted for Muslim delegates, which they saw as a defeat. However, many analysts believe that the leaders made such a decision in the larger interest. Although Hindu-Muslim relations were somewhat damaged due to this election, relations were later restored through the Bengal Pact.

### **3.1.6. Bengal Pact and Hindu-Muslim Unity in Bengal**

The politics of the subcontinent from 1916 to 1923 witnessed an intense period due to important political struggles like Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement. This meant that the joint activities of Hindus and Muslims in Bengali politics were not highlighted much at that time. But when political stability was established in 1923, again the leaders of the League and the Congress played a role in establishing unity among the Bengali community. During this time, many veteran leaders of the Congress, including Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Fazlul Haq, Hossain Shaheed Sarwardi and many others, talked about re-establishing unity.<sup>302</sup>Chittaranjan Das (the President of the Congress) had differences of opinion with other members of the Congress when it came to establishing unity between Hindus and Muslims, which led him to resign from the Congress in 1922 and form a separate party called Swaraj Party.<sup>303</sup>His party gained a majority in the Bengal provincial elections in a very short time and thus this party became the representative of the Hindu community in Bengal.

After winning the Bengal provincial elections, Mr. Das discussed the rights of Muslims in various programs and included the issue of Muslim rights in his political agenda.<sup>304</sup>After the establishment of the Swaraj Party, he enthusiastically reached a

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<sup>302</sup>Abu Mohammad Delwar, Hossain, *BangladesherItihas (History of Bangladesh 1905-1971)*, (Dhaka University Publications 2006), p. 60

<sup>303</sup>Harun-ur-Rashid, *"The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh, Bangal Muslim League and Muslim Politics (1906-1947)"*, p. 22.

<sup>304</sup>Chittaranjan Das was able to realize that Hindu-Muslim cooperation would be beneficial to both communities and recognized the fair rights of Muslims. (Chitta Ranjan Misra, Das, Chitta Ranjan, in

unanimous decision with Fazlul Haq of Bengal for Hindu-Muslim unity. The historic Bengal Pact was later drafted in April 1923 by Fazlul Haq and his efforts, which was also approved by the committee of the Bengal Provincial Congress on 16 December 1923. The terms of the agreement were as follows:

1. Representation in the Bengal Legislative Assembly will be determined by election on the basis of population through separate constituencies.
2. The proportion of representation in local councils will be 60% of the majority community and 40% of the minority community.
3. Fifty-five percent of government jobs will come from the Muslim community. As long as that ratio is not reached, Muslims will get eighty percent of the posts and Hindus will get the remaining twenty percent.
4. No law or decision which is contrary to the interests of that community can be presented without the consent of 75% of the elected representatives of that community.
5. Musical processions cannot be performed in front of mosques.
6. No legislation will be enacted in the legislature on the need for food and efforts will continue to be made to bring about reconciliation between the two communities outside the legislature. Cows should be slaughtered in such a way that it does not hurt the religious sentiments of Hindus. No interference can be made in slaughtering cows for religious purposes.<sup>305</sup>

Due to the Bengal Pact, the Muslim community received special privileges, while communal riots between Hindus and Muslims ended and political and economic stability was established. The treaty created a bond between the Hindus and the Muslims and it became a means for Muslims to move forward. Following this agreement, the Swaraj Party won a landslide victory in the Bengal general election, with Hindus winning 75 per cent and Muslims 50 per cent. League leader Fazlul Haq was sworn in as Bengal's education minister and served for some time. When the Calcutta City Corporation was elected in 1924, the Swaraj Party-backed group won by a landslide. Chittaranjan Das was elected mayor of the Calcutta City Corporation and

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Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh, Online Edition, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003, [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Das,\\_Chitta\\_Ranjan](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Das,_Chitta_Ranjan), Accessed 28/3/ 2021.

<sup>305</sup> Abu Mohammad Delwar, Hossain, "*Bangladesher Itihas (History of Bangladesh 1905-1971)*," p. 64.

Sorwardi was appointed deputy mayor as the Muslim representative. Under the terms of the Bengal Pact, quota-based facilities for Muslims in various jobs, including government, were increased, as in the case of the Calcutta City Corporation, 25 Muslim officers were later appointed.<sup>306</sup>

When the top leaders of the Muslim League and the Swaraj Party signed the Bengal Pact for the development of Bengal, a section of the middle class and educated Hindus in the Congress opposed the agreement. The Bengal Pact was sharply criticized and opposed not only by the Hindus of Bengal but also in the sessions of the All India Congress.<sup>307</sup> In addition, Hindu-backed newspapers in Calcutta were widely critical of the Bengal Pact, most notably the Ananda bazar (Influential newspaper of the time). The agreement was also opposed by several prominent Hindu intellectuals in Calcutta, including Surendra Nath Banerjee and Shyamsunder Chakraborty. The Hindu terrorist group also put pressure on Mr. Das. The agreement was initially criticized by a number of Muslim leaders, including Syed Ismail Hossain Siraj of Sirajganj. He did not trust the Hindus and was not interested in any argument with them. But among the elites and zamindars of the Muslim League, several Muslim leaders, including Wazed Ali Khan Panni, supported the Bengal Pact. Through the Bengal Pact, the Muslim League and the Swaraj Dal gained immense popularity in Bengal and they took joint action for the welfare of Bengal. The alliance was advancing by resisting opposition and conspiracies in various quarters but the Bengal Pact's activities came to a standstill in 1925 with the death of Swaraj Dal chief CR Das.<sup>308</sup> A number of leaders later took over the leadership of the party but could no longer appeal for Hindu-Muslim unity like the Bengal Pact. Although the Muslim League conducted political activities jointly with the Hindus, there were different views within the Muslim League itself. Later, the Congress canceled the session of the Bengal Province, saying that the Bengal Pact was unnecessary. Most of the Muslim intellectuals were in favor of the partition of Bengal and the Muslim League, but some intellectuals were against it, among whom Abdur Rasool was particularly notable.

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<sup>306</sup>J. H. Broomfield, *“Elite Conflict in a Plural Society; Twentieth-Century Bengal,”* p. 52

<sup>307</sup>Ibid, p. 176

<sup>308</sup> Sharif Uddin, Pirzada, *“Foundations of Pakistan: All-India Muslim League Documents, 1906-1947,”* pp. 231-236.

### 3.1.7. Muslim League and Abdur Rasul

Despite being Muslims, some intellectuals had opinions contrary to the mainstream. Notable among them was Barrister Abdur Rasul who was well known as a Bengali nationalist and liberal.<sup>309</sup> He joined politics centering on the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and was a supporter and member of the political ideology of the Congress in politics.<sup>310</sup> He became acquainted with the political views of the Indian Congress while studying in London, where he spent a long time with the pro-Congress Bengalis. He was directly involved in politics by opposing the partition of Bengal. He was a staunch opponent of the partition of Bengal despite a large section of Muslims being in favor of the partition of Bengal. He emerged as a leader when the anti-partition movement started the Swadeshi movement and he gave regular speeches to strengthen the Swadeshi movement.<sup>311</sup>

From 1905 to 1909, Abdur Rasul spoke on hundreds of Swadeshi movements and Congress programs, such as on October 20, 1905, at a rally in Calcutta in front of tens of thousands of people, emphasizing Hindu-Muslim unity. Over time he became important in Congress politics, at one point becoming a member of the policy-making committee of the Bengal Congress. In 1906, he presided over the annual conference of the Bengal Provincial Congress in Barisal, one of the largest regions of Bengal. The annual conference was attended by many top leaders of the Congress and regional leaders like Arvind Ghosh and the poet Rabindranath Tagore. On this occasion Abdur Rasul spoke in opposition to the partition of Bengal and blamed the British for the partition of Bengal especially the then British representative to India Lord Curzon. He termed the British as short-sighted traitors and analyzed the partition of Bengal as a way to destroy Hindu-Muslim unity. He vowed never to accept the partition of Bengal and warned the government that the resistance movement would continue against the

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<sup>309</sup>This talented intellectual and politician of Bengal was born in 1872 in a Muslim zamindar family of Brahmanbaria. In 1888, he went to London for higher studies. In 1892, he passed the entrance examination from King's College, London and in 1896 he passed BA from St. College, Oxford. In the same year, he passed BA from Middle College as the first Bengali. (Wakil Ahmed, *Unishotoker Banglar Muselmaner chinta O chatoner dhara, (The Thought and Consciousness of Bengali Muslims in the Nineteenth Century)*, p. 109).

<sup>310</sup> Syed Murtaza, Ali, *Mujtaba Katha* (About Mujtaba) first published, (Dhaka: Usthoprokas, 2017), p. 22

<sup>311</sup>Tabedar, Rasul Bakul, *Barrister Abdur Rasul: Jibon o karmo (Barrister Abdur Rasul: Life and Work)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: UsshoProkashon, 2003), p. 67.

decision. He called upon the people of Bengal to form a movement against the partition of Bengal, especially the youth and students to protest against the decision of the British government and urged the Muslims to join the movement.<sup>312</sup> The Swadeshi movement was carried out in Bengal as a step in the anti-partition movement which gave Abdur Rasul a first-class leadership seat. He supported all the activities of the Swadeshi movement, as according to him the Partition of Bengal would hamper the educational development of East Bengal and it was a major obstacle to public awareness and a united movement against the British. He repeatedly urged the Muslims of East Bengal to support the Swadeshi movement and avoid a partition of Bengal.<sup>313</sup>

During the period 1905-1909, the government filed cases against the leaders and activists of the Partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement. In 1909, the British government filed a terror case against Arvind Ghosh, an influential leader of the Swadeshi movement, accusing him of involvement in the Alipore bombing.<sup>314</sup> Barrister Rasul and *Deshbandhu* Chittaranjan Das fought a legal battle to get Arvind Ghosh released from the Calcutta court. Thus, he continued the legal battle against the British ruling class.<sup>315</sup> Despite being a Muslim, the leaders of the Muslim League had doubts and suspicions about him and there was a great deal of frustration among the general Muslim community. His actions had a detrimental effect on the Muslim community. He continued to gain recognition among ordinary Muslims as being under the influence of the Congress and the Hindu community. Wakil Ahmed said about Abdur Rasul's Congress and the politics of partition of Bengal: "Abdur Rasul did not support the partition of Bengal, he saw it as a conspiracy to weaken the Hindu-Muslim peace and to undermine the national consciousness, for which he was condemned by the selfish people of the time."<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>312</sup>The Bengali Sunday 15 April 1906. Quoted in Rasul bokul, Tabeder, "*Barrister Abdul Rasul: Jibon o Karmo (Barrister Abdul Rasul: Life and Work)*," p. 52.

<sup>313</sup>Abdullah, Muhammad. "*Nawab Salimullah: Jiban-o- Karma. (Nawab Salimuallah: Life and Works)*," p. 34.

<sup>314</sup>Arvind Ghosh was known as one of the leaders of anti-British nationalist movement and was an educator and journalist. He is considered as one of the organizers of Swadeshi movement. Later in life he wrote 38 books propagating Hinduism. (Ram dulal Roy, in *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Online Edition (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003), [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Ghosh,\\_Aurobindo](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Ghosh,_Aurobindo), Accessed 27/12/ 2021.

<sup>315</sup>Syed Mortuza Ali The Pakistan Observer Dhaka 1968, see in, Rasul, Bakul, "*Barrister Abdul Rasul: Jibon o karmo (Barrister Abdul Rasul: Life and Work)*," p. 56.

<sup>316</sup>Wakil Ahmed, "*Unishotoker Banglar Musulmaner chinta O chatoner dhara, (The Thought and Consciousness of Bengali Muslims in the Nineteenth Century)*," p. 109.

Apart from being a member of Congress or a leader of the Swadeshi movement, he was also known as a successful and influential lawyer in the Calcutta court and always supported the social service and nationalist movement.<sup>317</sup> He also gained recognition in society by waging many legal battles against the oppressed peasants and journalists and the oppressive zamindars of Bengal. Although he himself was a member of a zamindar family, in many legal cases he took the side of the oppressed against their zamindars. Mohammadi, one of the best newspapers of the time, filed a defamation and harassment case against Maulana Akram Khan, the editor of Mohammadi, after a series of investigative reports against the oppression of peasants by zamindars in Dinajpur. When a complaint was lodged in the name of the newspaper by the Calcutta High Court, Maulana Akram Khan appointed Barrister Abdul Rasul as their lawyer on behalf of the newspaper. He fought the case in the Rasul Kolkata court and was able to get a verdict in favor of the Mohammadi newspaper.<sup>318</sup>

Abdur Rasool realized the importance of the newspaper while studying abroad for the purpose of public awareness and in the spirit of independence. Abdul Kashem, Mujibur Rahman, Abdul Halim Ghaznabi and some of his contemporaries started publishing the weekly English magazine "The Muslim" on December 21, 1906. Initially, Abul Kashem was the editor of the newspaper, but after a while he moved to another newspaper and gave the responsibility of editing the magazine to Mujibur Rahman. Abdur Rasool and Abdul Halim Ghaznabi bore all the expenses including for publication, but when Abdul Halim Ghaznabi left the newspaper a few days later, he took full responsibility of the newspaper himself. The number of magazines published by Muslims at that time was very small among which only The Muslim was published as an English magazine, making it popular among the highly educated and middle class of Bengal. He used to write on various topics, including regular editorials, to convey the

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<sup>317</sup> Abdur Rasul returned to Bengal after completing his studies and joined the law profession of Calcutta Court in addition to being employed as a part time teacher in Calcutta University. During his time as a part-time teacher of international law at Calcutta University, he shared his thoughts on Bengali nationalism with the young educated community. He made a name for himself in the teaching profession and gained popularity among the educated youth who sought employment in the law department of Calcutta University. However, the Governor-General, representing the British government, had a negative attitude towards his nationalist views, which led to the government not approving him. (Rasul bokul, Tabeder, "*Barrister Abdul Rasul: Jibon o Karmo (Barrister Abdul Rasul: Life and Work)*," p. 45.

<sup>318</sup> Akhtar Uddin Chowdhury, Healy, *Atiterkotha (Speaking of the past)*, 1st. Edition (Dinajpur: 1971), p. 22.

attitude of the aristocracy of Bengal to the government through this magazine.<sup>319</sup> The Muslim newspaper had been working to create public awareness for a long time after his death and later Mujibur Rahman took full responsibility of the newspaper.

As the size of the paper grew further in 1923, the paper became a large limited company and was joined by Maulvi Wazed Ali Khan Panni,<sup>320</sup> who was later associated with the magazine for a long time. The magazine began publishing every other day in 1920 to increase its popularity and became a daily newspaper in 1927. The paper long inspired the people of Bengal in anti-British movements and played a major role in expressing neutral and independent views. The formation of communal harmony played a special role in establishing unity especially among Hindus and Muslims. The magazine patronized writers from both Hindu and Muslim communities and encouraged young writers to publish. The editor of the paper, Mujibur Rahman, worked equally for Hindu-Muslim harmony. For this, Wazed Ali Khan, one of the owners of the newspaper at that time congratulated Panni Mujibur Rahman on the occasion of the 21st year of the newspaper. He described the paper as a champion for its groundbreaking role in Hindu-Muslim unity.<sup>321</sup>

Abdur Rasul was one of the most enlightened and cultured figures among the young Indian Muslims.<sup>322</sup> He felt the responsibility to aid the political progress of the Muslims of Bengal when the British government partitioned Bengal and reunited West Bengal and East Bengal by law in 1911, thus marking transformation moment in his political philosophy. After 1911, he was heavily involved in the politics of the Muslim League. From 1911 to 1918, i.e. before his death, he successfully played a responsible role in the politics of the Muslim League.

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<sup>319</sup> Mohammad, Abdullah, *Bangladesher Das Disari (Ten Directions of Bangladesh)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Islamic foundation, 1991), p. 38.

<sup>320</sup> Maulvi Wazed Ali Khan Panni was known as a social worker and politician. He built several educational institutions in different parts of Bengal with the help of his family. He was a member of the Indian Congress. He was imprisoned for a long time by the British government for joining the Khilafah and Non-Cooperation Movement. The educational institutions established by him are still imparting knowledge in Bangladesh. (Khan, Muhammad Mojlum. *The Muslim heritage of Bengal: the lives, thoughts and achievements of great Muslim scholars, writers and reformers of Bangladesh and West Bengal*. Kube Publishing Ltd, 2013, pp. 321-322)

<sup>321</sup> Mohammad, Abdullah, "*Bangladesher das disari (Ten Directions of Bangladesh)*" p. 33.

<sup>322</sup> *Who's Who in India*, Literature (1928), part. VII, (The Literary Year Books Press Ltd. 67 Dale Liverpool, 1897), pp. 128.

This organization played a major role in the liberation movement of the Muslims of the subcontinent. Like the Muslim League, it contributed to the development of Dhaka University and Muslims' education. The founders of the Muslim League, not as a counterpart to the Congress, were motivated to embark on a journey to protect and defend their rights. The Congress, founded in 1885, failed to represent the entire community of the Indian subcontinent, creating a formal political platform for Muslims to defend their own interests and present their demands to the government.

### **3.2. Dhaka University and Role of Muslims in its Establishment**

During the six years of partition of Bengal (1905-1911), there was considerable progress in the education of the Muslims of Bengal. At the beginning of the 20th century, several educational reforms took place before the partition of Bengal in 1905. In 1901, the colonial government allocated ten lakhs of rupees for the development of the educational system, as a result of which the number of schools in Bengal increased manifold in a short time in 1905.<sup>323</sup> Muslims have been demanding reform of the education system long before the partition of Bengal. Although the government ignored the demands of the Muslims for a long time, it finally took steps to improve the education system in 1904. The Indian representative of the British colonial government passed the University Act in 1904.<sup>324</sup> In the early stages, the government supported secular educational institutions, of which schools were one. Besides, one of the government's main objectives was to make Muslims proficient in English because English was essential in employment. After massive changes in the administrative system of Bengal in 1905, the presence of Muslims in educational institutions increased significantly from 1907 to 1912.<sup>325</sup> A government survey showed a 53 percent increase in the number of Muslim students, which the government considered a success. Educational institutions for Muslims also increased significantly during this period, with the total number of educational institutions increasing by 12.6, 15.2 and 1.9 per cent, respectively, until 1911. In the big districts of East Bengal, like Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna, many educational institutions were established because the Muslims were very

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<sup>323</sup> General Report on Public in Bengali 1903- 1904, Calcutta, 1908, p. 8

<sup>324</sup> Indian University Act, Calcutta, 1904, Rules and Orders of Education Department, 4th. Edition 1908, Calcutta, pp. 60-80.

<sup>325</sup> West Bengal State Archives (Hereafter WBSA), F/8-R/16 2, Government of Bengal, Home Department, Report on the Progress of Education in East Bengal and Assam for the Years 1907-12. p. 32.

conscious of education.<sup>326</sup> During this time, the system of teaching the Urdu language in madrasas was strengthened, resulting in Urdu spreading widely in educational institutions and society within a brief period. Apart from education, the administrative division also developed the marginal peasantry, especially those living under Hindu zamindars. After the partition of Bengal, the government paid particular attention to the agricultural sector and took many necessary steps for its development. The government took extraordinary measures to develop agricultural land in various central districts of East Bengal and allocate cash as loans to Muslim farmers.<sup>327</sup> As a result of the administrative division of Bengal, the Muslims of East Bengal were making significant progress in political and social development and education. Nevertheless, in 1911, the abolition of the partition of Bengal, like all other subjects, caused a significant loss to the Muslims in education, frustrating ordinary Muslims and angering their leaders.

### **3.2.1. Struggle to Establish Dhaka University**

Due to the political situation and administrative changes after 1911, Muslim intellectuals became quite concerned about the educational progress of Muslims in East Bengal. The leaders exerted political and social pressure on the colonial government to establish a university in Dhaka to compensate the Muslims of East Bengal. However, since 1982, one of the best intellectuals of Bengal, Syed Amir Ali, has been demanding the establishment of a modern educational institution in the Bengal region.<sup>328</sup> At this time, organizations like Al-Islam and Islam Prakhakar, along with intellectuals and political leaders, campaigned to favour such institutions. On January 31, 1912, Lord Hardinge, the representative of the then government, visited Dhaka, the Viceroy of India, during which several Muslim leaders, including Fazlul Haque and Nawab Abdul Latif, strongly demanded the establishment of a university in Dhaka.<sup>329</sup> After the Morley Minto Reforms (1909), the colonial government in the subcontinent tried to appoint more members of the natives, especially Muslims and Hindus, to the Legislative Council. However, the government blocked this plan due to the educational weakness of the Muslims. During this period, a large educational budget yielded little results, so the

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<sup>326</sup> West Bengal State Archives (Hereafter WBSA), F/8-R/16 2, Government of Bengal, Home, p. 33.

<sup>327</sup> Sarkar, Chandiprasad, *The Bengali Muslims: A Study in Their Politicization, 1912-1929*, 1st. Edition (India: South Asia Books, 1992), pp. 30-33.

<sup>328</sup> Report of Dhaka University Commission, 1912, pp. 12-13.

<sup>329</sup> Abdullah Al, Masum, "*British amale bangler muslim shksha somossa o prosar (Problems and Promotion of Muslim Education in Bengal during the British Period (181-1941))*," p. 115.

government re-evaluated its plans. The socio-political situation in Bengal then prompted the government to introduce a separate electoral system and educational institutions for Muslims. Political leaders, cultural workers, reformers, professionals and all parties of the Muslim community were interested in the University Pratistar. The government was bound to take this demand into special consideration.<sup>330</sup> Lord Hardinge, the representative of the government, was aware of the plight of the Muslims after the partition of Bengal and felt the importance of providing an exchange for peace. He urged the government to accept the Muslim proposal and assured the Muslim leaders. He raised the matter with the influential ministers of the British government, especially the foreign secretary. The government positively accepted the demand of the Muslims as compensation for the partition. Some of the reforms in the education system in Bengal before the partition of Bengal did not benefit the groups much and significantly impacted the community.

After the partition of Bengal, the Government of India felt the need for a central educational institution late. An official announcement on February 2, 1912, stated that a university would be established in Dhaka.<sup>331</sup> In this situation, a field was created for Muslims to establish an international standard university in Dhaka, the capital of East Bengal. The government chose the city of Dhaka to establish the university because it was the centre of East Bengal. It was decided to appoint local and foreign professors for this university and residential arrangements were made for the students. At that time, the top leaders of the East Bengal Muslim League, including Nawab Ali Chowdhury, called for a more significant role for the government in the development of Muslim education. The Muslim League enthusiastically welcomed the establishment of an international standard university in Dhaka, the capital of East Bengal.<sup>332</sup> Many Muslim leaders demanded that the government teach Arabic and Persian in higher secondary schools, including universities.

The government decided to reorganize the education system of East Bengal through Dhaka University. Through the proposed new university, the government tried to

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<sup>330</sup>Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.p 168-197. In Sarkar, Sumit. *Modern India 1885–1947*. Springer, 1989.

<sup>331</sup> Calcutta University Commission, 1917-1919, vol. iv, Calcutta, 1919, pp. 122-124.

<sup>332</sup> Abdullah Al, Masum, “*British Amale bangler Muslim Shksha Somossa o Prosar (Problems and Promotion of Muslim Education in Bengal during the British Period (181-1941))*,” pp. 41-42.

improve the local cultural development of East Bengal, improve education and increase the qualification of students. The school sought to create a conducive environment for developing research and thought among the region's students. Before Dhaka University's establishment, East Bengal people depended on Calcutta University for education. The Government of India realized very well that the University of Calcutta was not enough to improve the educational qualifications of the people of East Bengal.<sup>333</sup> The number of East Bengal students, teachers and syndicate representatives at Calcutta University was sufficiently low to be considered an anomaly. Through the proposed university, the government decided to include technical colleges, engineering colleges and women's colleges in Dhaka, which was an epoch-making step. Although the government agreed to establish Dhaka University, various complications arose, especially since the upper-caste Hindus of Calcutta were quite pessimistic about establishing this university. They had been opposing the establishment of the university from the beginning and created obstacles that were considered one of the obstacles to the establishment of the university.

### **3.2.2. Obstacles to the Establishment of the University**

While Muslims were content with the government's decision to establish Dhaka University, the Hindu leaders could not readily accept the project they had opposed from the very outset. The Hindu elite and intellectuals in Calcutta opposed the establishment of an international standard university in East Bengal, saying that Muslims would progress far ahead in education and economy. The upper-caste Hindus felt that the government was approving a university in East Bengal in order to destroy Indian nationalism and establish Muslim domination over the Hindus.<sup>334</sup> The Hindu intellectuals of West Bengal started strongly opposing it, fearing that establishing a university in East Bengal would diminish the importance of Calcutta University and that uneducated Muslims would become educated and equal to Calcutta. All the Bengali Hindu leaders and intellectuals, including Rabindranath, were strongly opposed to establishing a university in Dhaka; even the Hindus of East Bengal were against the

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<sup>333</sup>Abdullah Al, Masum, *British Amale bangler Muslim Shksha Somossa o Prosar (Problems and Promotion of Muslim Education in Bengal during the British Period (181-1941))*, pp. 303-306.

<sup>334</sup>Sheikh Masum, Kamal, *Dhaka Bisshobidlalai Protishiter Bipokker Rajnithi o Tatkalin Bangosamaj (Politics and Bengali society at that time were against the establishment of Dhaka University)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Dhu Publication, 2019), p. 58.

establishment of Dhaka University. Against the establishment of Dhaka University in 1912, among the big cities of East Bengal, protests were held in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Kumilla, Medinipur led by leading Hindu leaders.<sup>335</sup> Ashutosh Mukherjee, VC of Calcutta University, a relative of famous poet Rabindranath, was the most opposed to the establishment of Dhaka University among the Hindu leaders of West Bengal. Ashutosh Mukherjee submitted 18 memoranda to the Indian representative of the colonial government to cancel the decision to establish Dhaka University.

On 16 February 1912, a group of Hindu leaders led by Rasbihari Ghosh, a well-known lawyer from Calcutta, met the Viceroy and expressed concern over the establishment of Dhaka University.<sup>336</sup> The delegation alleged that the establishment of Dhaka University was tantamount to the internal division of Bengal. They further claimed that most of East Bengal's Muslim population were farmers who would not benefit from the university's development. Despite their objections, Lord Harding notified Vice-Chancellor Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee of Calcutta University that a university would be built in Dhaka. Lord Harding promised the visitors that the government would not make any efforts to redistribute Bengal and said that the new institution would be a residential campus that would be open to everyone.<sup>337</sup> The opposition of the Hindu intelligentsia was not the hurdle in implementing the plan for the new university, as there remained several complex legal and material issues. Although the government had approved the establishment of Dhaka University, there was an economic crisis at the time, which meant the government was not inclined to intense expenditure, raising uncertainty over the plan. The university, however, eventually overcame these obstacles.

### **3.2.3. Activities Related to the Establishment of University**

The Central Colonial Government of India, under the direction of the British Government, in a letter dated 4 April 1912, requested the representative of Bengal to submit a plan with a financial budget. Accordingly, in a resolution dated 27 May 1912, the Government of Bengal appointed a 13-member Working Committee (Nathan

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<sup>335</sup>Emaz Uddin, Ahmad, *Serestoprobondho, Dhaka bisshobiddalay: Itihaserbissiriyokaddhay (Best Essay, University of Dhaka: A Forgotten Chapter of History)* (Dhaka: Shikar Publications, 2002), p. 26.

<sup>336</sup> Calcutta University Commission, 1917-1919, p. 122.

<sup>337</sup>Sirajul, Islam, *Dhakabisshobiddalayeratitdinerkotha (Dhaka University's past days)*, Saptahikbichitra, 8th year, issue 45, 1980, p. 29.

Committee, 1912) headed by eminent London barrister Robert Nathan to formulate a plan for Dacca University.<sup>338</sup> European, English, Indian and Hindu Muslim community leaders were also included in this committee. Among the English was GW Kuchler, who served as Director of Public Instruction, WAT Archbold, Principal HR James and CW Peak of Presidency College. Advocate Dr. from the civil society of Calcutta. Rashbehari Ghosh was. From the Muslim community, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, Shamsul Ulama, Nawab Sirajul Islam, and Abu Nasr Muhammad Waheed were members of the committee. Anand Chandra Roy was a committee member on behalf of the zamindar community. DS Fraser served as the committee's coordinator for a long time with success. It was best known as the Nathan Commission, which formulated a preliminary plan for establishing the university.<sup>339</sup> The new committee made ready efforts to establish Dhaka University as a full-fledged residential university and included other major colleges of Dhaka city to run under this university. However, some of the other colleges outside the city of Dhaka were exempted from the scope of this university so that the university could concentrate on its educational activities uninterruptedly. The Nathan Committee tried to set the pace today by setting up sub-committees to implement the university establishment plan. Within a year, they were able to prepare a full report. But even after so much progress, the work of establishing the university was stopped due to various problems.

During the First World War (July 28, 1914 - November 11, 1918), the British postponed the establishment of universities due to the effects of the war, political unrest and global economic depression.<sup>340</sup> However, at the end of the World War, Muslim leaders began to pressure the government to establish Dhaka University again. On March 20, 1917, Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury again raised the demand for the establishment of a university in the Indian legislature and immediately demanded the passage of the university establishment bill. All the Muslim leaders supported Nawab Ali Chowdhury in the Legislative Assembly,<sup>341</sup> which forced the government to

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<sup>338</sup>Mohammad Azizul, Haque, *Bangladeshe Muslim Shikkhar Itihas abong Smosshah (History and Problems of Muslim Education in Bangladesh)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Bangla Academy: 1969), p. 75.

<sup>339</sup>M. A. Rahim, "*The History of the University of Dacca*", pp. 8-12.

<sup>340</sup> Haque, Mohammad Azizul, "*Bangladeshe Muslim ShikkharItihasabongSmosshah (History and Problems of Muslim Education in Bangladesh)*," p. 45.

<sup>341</sup>M. A. Rahim, "*The History of the University of Dacca, (Dacca: University of Dacca, 1931)*", p. 10.

consider the matter. The government assured the Muslims that establishing universities would be done quickly after the war.

The Calcutta University Education Commission was formed in 1917 under the leadership of renowned educationist Michael Sadler for the development of the education system of the subcontinent. This commission took various steps to improve the quality of education in the schools, colleges and universities of the Bengal Presidency and they recommended the formation of a special education committee for each. The commission advocated the deregulation of all Indian higher education institutions by the government, allowing the institutions to enjoy autonomy. The interest of this commission was maximum for Dhaka University Pratista, and they made intense demands. Michael Sadler supports the restructuring of Muslim education following the country's social, political and religious environment to improve the education of Muslims in East Bengal. The commission recommended the construction of an advanced self-contained Muslim college in Dhaka, the capital of East Bengal, in addition to a separate residential university.<sup>342</sup>

The Nathan Committee's report and the Calcutta University Commission's report were significant for the Dhaka University Bill's passage.<sup>343</sup> After the Dhaka University Bill was fully drafted, the Government handed it over to the Calcutta University Senate for scrutiny. The Bill was scrutinized by nine members of the Calcutta University senate, in which Nawab Ahsanullah was present as the only Muslim member. Some members of the Calcutta University senate criticized and opposed this Bill, but Nawab Ahsan Ullah favoured it and strongly demanded its passage. Finally, the Calcutta University Senate recommended the Bill to the Government on 20 December 1919 for approval. On the whole, the Government of India sent the Bill to the Indian Legislature on 12 February 1920 for consideration and the learned members of the Legislature voted in favour of the Bill on 18 March and it became an Act. The British Government's representative in India, the Governor General, approved the Dhaka University Act on

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<sup>342</sup>Suresh Chandra Ghosh, *The History of Education in Modern India 1757-2007* (Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 1995), pp. 145-147; Shah, *In Search of an Identity: Bengali Muslims 1880-1940*, 102; See more: India Office Record and Pvt Papers, British Library (IOR), F/V/L/PJ/6/1140, The Proposal for a University at Dacca, February 5, 1912, p. 15; The Dainik Basumati, Report on Indian owned English Newspapers in Bengal, September 2, 1915.; See Shah, *In Search of an Identity: Bengali Muslims 1880-1940*, 102-3.

<sup>343</sup> M.A. Rahim, "*The History of the University of Dacca*," pp. xiv.

23 March 1920 and thus all the formalities were over. Dhaka University officially started its first activities under this Act. Finally, after nine long years of waiting, Dhaka University was established in 1921, which was much expected after many struggles.<sup>344</sup>

Sarkar was the first VC of Dhaka University, a famous academician of the time and a former academician of London University. PJ Hartog was appointed. Dr PJ Hart also served as a member of the Calcutta University Commission for a long time. He had considerable prior experience and insight into the education system of the subcontinent. He was elected Vice Chancellor for five years and performed his duties efficiently. He was assisted by an advisory council whose members were mostly Europeans. Dhaka University officially started its operations on 1st July 1921; the university was established on 600 acres of land in the heart of Dhaka city, the capital of East Bengal. In the initial stage, the university had three faculties under which 12 departments were run. The three faculties are Arts, Science and Law. The departments under this faculty are Economics and Political Science, Philosophy, Chemistry, Mathematics, Arabic and Islamic Studies, Physics, Persian and Urdu, History, English, Education, Sanskrit and Bengali and Law. At that time, the most qualified teachers were employed here, totalling 60 and 877 students studying in the primary stage university.<sup>345</sup> A separate hall was constructed for the Muslim students of Dhaka University to solve the student accommodation crisis.

In the first two years of its establishment, the university gained immense popularity among students, with many students applying for admission. Between 1922 and 1924, the number of students in this educational institution increased significantly. The number of students in medical and engineering departments also increased, but the number of students in elementary humanities departments stayed the same at the expected rate. However, the students had considerable interest in the humanities faculty and the law department. The science department was popular with the students, while the humanities departments were less attractive to the students. In the residential

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<sup>344</sup> M.A. Rahim, "*The History of the University of Dacca*," pp. xiv- xv.

<sup>345</sup> A. F. M. Abubakar, Siddique, *Bangler Muslim Chatonai Dhaka BisshoBbidalay* (Dhaka University in the Muslim Spirit of Bengal), p. 47

halls of the university, there were various training arrangements for the students under the extra curriculum.<sup>346</sup>

Through this Act, the Government brought a significant change in the education system of East Bengal. Through this Act, the Government constituted Education Boards under which high schools, colleges and technical education institutions were managed.<sup>347</sup> Through this Act, the Government expanded the scope of Dhaka University by including the city's famous Jagannath College with the university. Through this Act, the Government first established Salim Ullah College and later Muhammadan Intermediate College; in these colleges, the Government arranged to teach Islamic education, Arabic, Urdu and Persian languages. However, Muslim students and students from other communities were open and Muslim students were prioritized.<sup>348</sup>

This large institution of East Bengal was not established overnight and was the result of a concerted effort by all parties. The university achieved perfection by solving socio-political and economic problems. Initially, the Indian government was forced to establish the university as an imperial compensation for the Muslims to undo the partition of Bengal. The government sanctioned their demands and religious education to calm the Muslim movement. However, this colonial government policy further increased joint problems in the subcontinent as this education policy widened the divide. When they ruled communally in the subcontinent, communal sentiments were strengthened through this policy to fuel nationalist movements. Education of all communities, including Hindus and Muslims of East Bengal, was regulated by the Dhaka University Act. Although the Act was aimed at Muslims, all classes of people benefited. By passing this Act, admissions were recognized and seats were reserved for Muslims in various educational institutions. Before 1920, most of the barriers to entry of Muslim students in many educational institutions in Bengal were overcome and Muslims were given preference in most colleges in East Bengal. Dhaka University played a unique role in the academic training of the people of East Bengal.

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<sup>346</sup>WBSA, Government of Bengal, University of Dacca, Annual Report for 1922-23, MSS EUR E221/65; BL, Government of Bengal, Rules for students of the Jagannath Hall, Dacca University, 1928,

<sup>347</sup>WBSA, Government of Bengal, Education Department, Proceedings of the Government of Bengal, Proceedings, August 1920, Proceedings No: 73, File No: 8-R-1(1); In, Shah, pp. 102-3.

<sup>348</sup>Ibid, pp. 104-5.

Along with the struggle to establish Dhaka University, the Muslims of the subcontinent did another important movement known as the Khilafat movement. From the end of World War I to 1924, Muslims took a tough stand against the colonial government through the Khilafat movement, which is considered one of the most important chapters in the Muslim history of Bengal.

### **3.3. Khilafat Movement: Development of Muslim Unity and Consciousness**

One of the most influential events in the national life of the Muslims was the movement that took place in the Indian subcontinent from the time of World War I to 1924 centered on the Ottoman Caliphate. The Khilafah movement centered on the Ottoman Sultan because Indian Muslims saw the Ottoman Sultan as a symbol of the unity of the Muslim world. The issue of the Caliphate and the Sultan was very touching for the Muslims of India, as the Ottomans the only independent sultanate that had survived on the world map, with which the Muslims had a very close bond.<sup>349</sup>The Sunni Muslims of India accepted the Ottoman Caliph as the leader of the Muslim world and considered him a symbol of the Muslim world. The question of Khilafat had two fundamental aspects, one religious and the other political.<sup>350</sup>In addition to the Turkish defeat in the Balkan Wars of 1912, European powers had long been hostile and conspired against the Ottomans, the special leader of the Muslims, which upset Indian Muslims. In 1914, when the Ottomans took a stand against the British in the First World War, the Muslims of India felt stuck between the two as Muslims were a part of the British Indian Army. Muslims were in a psychological crisis in the aftermath of World War I.<sup>351</sup>In the aftermath of World War I, the government used a variety of tactics to appease the Muslim people, including trying to reassure them about Turkey, but the Muslims were always skeptical of the British rulers.

#### **3.3.1. Revolutionary Programs and Activities**

In the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's defeat at the end of World War I, Britain and its allies decided to split the empire into several parts, leaving the Muslims of the

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<sup>349</sup>Shafique Ali, Khan, "The Khilafat Movement." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 34, no. 1 (1986), pp. 33.

<sup>350</sup>The Indian Annual Register, Vol. III (1919), Mitra, H. N. (Ed), p. 67,

<sup>351</sup>Abul Kalam, Shamsuddin, *Otit diner Sirithi (Memories of Past Days)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka, Khosrow Kitab Mahal, 1968), p. 57.

subcontinent worried about the security of the Caliphate, Sultan and Muslim holy sites. After the Sepoy War, the government kept the Muslims at bay. Therefore, instead of direct confrontation, the Muslims tried to form a constitutional protest movement. Many leaders in the Khilafat movement were led by Mohammad, Ali, Shawkat Ali. M A Ansar, Abul Kalam Azad, Mehedi Hasan, Maulana Akram Khan, Fazlul Haq were particularly notable.<sup>352</sup> The Khilafat Committee was formed at the end of 1919. The head office of this committee was established in Bombay but the Khilafat Committee was formed in almost every major city including the northern part of India. The Central Khilafat Committee was chaired by businessman Chhotan Seth and the general secretary was Maulana Shawkat Ali.<sup>353</sup> In 1920 the leaders of the Khilafah Committee made the first proclamation and formed a fund to assist the Ottoman Sultan. Fundraising was first started from Delhi but later funds were collected from all over India. The Nawab of Rampur, Begum of Bhopal, Dr. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan and many others cooperated extensively besides rich people, including Mia Chatani of Bombay, Omar Sobhani, Sheikh Abdullah Harun of Karachi and Sheikh Jamal of Madras.<sup>354</sup> The first summit of the caliphate committee was held in Bombay in 1919 and later in Delhi. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad presided over the Bombay ceremony, at which it was decided to celebrate Khilafah Day across the country.<sup>355</sup> Khilafat Day was welcomed by the people of India and at that time famous scholars of the subcontinent called on the government to reach a peaceful agreement with Turkey. But the colonial government did not respond to the call of the Muslims and they continued the activities against the Turkish Caliphate due to which the Muslims of the subcontinent formed a strong movement against the occupying government.

### **3.3.2. Diplomatic Efforts of Khilafat Committee**

The Khilafat Committee had adopted a policy of putting pressure on the colonial government as part of the strategic program of their movement. The envoys met with

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<sup>352</sup>Sharif, al-Mujahid, "The Khilafat Movement." *Pakistan Horizon*, Second Quarter 1986, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 81-83.

<sup>353</sup>Khursheed Kamal, Aziz, *The Indian Khilafat Movement, 1915-1933: A Documentary Record*, (Pak Publishers, 1972).

<sup>354</sup> M. Moniruzzaman, "Upo mohadeser musلمان varot-pak-bangladesh (*The Muslims of the subcontinent is Indo-Pak-Bangladesh*," p. 300

<sup>355</sup>K. Kemal, Aziz, *Hint hilafet hareketi, (1915-1933)*, (Yay. Haz: Necip Taylan, 2014), İstanbul: Mahya Yayınları p. 333

the chief of the Indian government and asked for the protection of the Turkish sultan, but the chief did not promise the Muslims but advised them to go to London. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad also said that he was in favor of going to London: "I was of the opinion that these methods of begging petitioning, waiting in deputation could not be of much avail, we had to try to find some means of exerting direct pressure."<sup>356</sup>

At one stage of the movement, committee members initiated direct dialogue with the central British government in London. A special session of the Khilafat Committee was held in Delhi on 23 and 24 June 1919 where Ali Vrataday proposed to send a delegation to London and the decision was taken.

At the same event, it was decided to boycott England's products and to challenge the victory celebrations of the First World War. A delegation of the Khilafat Committee visited London in February 1920, headed by Mohammad Ali and represented by Abul Kalam Azad. They had a direct meeting with the British Prime Minister. He called on the Prime Minister to protect the Turkish sultan as the leader of the Muslim world and to keep the Holy Places in Syria, Iraq and Palestine under Turkish rule. But the British prime minister flatly rejected the claim, saying the Arab independence would remain intact.<sup>357</sup> The members of the delegation did not receive any assurances from the British government that Turkey would retain full control of its territory. Lastly, the delegation sought the security of Turkey and proposed the formation of a Turkish Arab Federation under the Sultan, but the British government did not accept it.<sup>358</sup> Representatives of the Indian subcontinent's government, fearing dire consequences for breaking promises made to Muslims, have repeatedly warned the London government.<sup>359</sup> Although the delegation returned empty-handed from London, they were not disappointed but continued the Khilafat movement with double enthusiasm.

### **3.3.3. Hindu-Muslim Unity and Joint Efforts**

Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the All India Congress, started a non-cooperation movement against the government in 1920 in the wake of the false assurances of

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<sup>356</sup>Dinanath Gopal, Tendulkar, *Mahatma life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, 1st. Edition (India, 1960), p. 344

<sup>357</sup>Mushirul, Hasan, *Nationalism and communal politics in India, 1916-1928*. (South Asia Books, 1979), p. 56.

<sup>358</sup>Mushirul, Hasan, *Nationalism and communal politics in India, 1916-1928*, p. 57.

<sup>359</sup>The Indian Annual Register, (1919), p. 67.

Muslims in the First World War, the Rowlatt Act,<sup>360</sup> the imposition of martial law in Punjab, arrest warrants and jail-fines.<sup>361</sup> At the end of World War I, he repeatedly demanded the government to establish autonomy for the Indian subcontinent, but the government refused and continued its repression. In this context, he called on the people of India to refrain from all forms of cooperation with the government.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was very experienced in politics, called upon the leaders of the Khilafat and the Congress to fight against the government in a united manner.<sup>362</sup> But Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the then president of the Muslim League, opposed his proposal, alongside many other Congress leaders including Motilal Nehru, Arshi Das, Vijay Sen. But later, in the greater interest of the country and the nation, the leaders of both parties expressed their views in favor of conducting a cooperative movement.<sup>363</sup> The session of the Muslim League was held in Nagpur, North India in 1920 and was presided over by Dr. Ansari. The meeting confirmed the Muslim League's participation in the non-cooperation movement. Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement was approved at a meeting of the All India Khilafat Committee in Madras on 17 April 1920.<sup>364</sup> Thus, after a long time, the Congress and the Muslim League jointly started a movement against the government.

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<sup>360</sup> The colonial government passed the Rowlatt Act in March to curb nationalist movements in the Indian subcontinent. Through this law, the government gained the power to detain any suspect without trial for a maximum of two years. Political leaders of all communities, including Hindus and Muslims, opposed the Act and later the movement became more intense. See more: <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/rowlatt-act-and-jallianwala-bagh-massacre>, Access, 22/11/2022.

<sup>361</sup> During the Khilafat movement, Gandhi appeared in the politics of the Indian Congress and became a top leader. Politically, Gandhi was a visionary leader who led the leaders of the Khilafah movement to instruct their followers to seek advice from Gandhi while he was in captivity. Ali Vrataday was aware of Gandhi's political activities and foresight in 1915 and they were quite enthusiastic about Gandhi. (Khaliqzaman, Choudhry, Pathway to Pakistan, 2nd. Edition, Lahore: Longmans, Pakistan Branch, 1961, p. 33.)

<sup>362</sup> Government repression increased after 1918, Many Congress leaders and activists were in jail at the time, especially in the Punjab region where repression was rampant. However, all these repressions did not deter the Congress from the movement, but Gandhi focused on the non-cooperation movement at that time. (Report of the Thirty-Fourth Session of the Indian National Congress, (held at Amritsar on the 27th, 29th, 30th, 31st December 1919 and 1st January 1920, Amritsar: gauge press, 1922, p. preface).

<sup>363</sup> Gandhi called on the Hindus to change their minds and cooperate in the Khilafat movement. He said, if there are any Hindus here who have come with that idea in their mind, they should discard it because any help the Hindus will offer to the Muslims at this time will be purely on the basis of their national and moral obligations, it should be without any consideration. The Turkish cause is based on justice; we will support it. (Moniruzzaman, M, "Upo mohadeser musلمان varot-pak-bangladesh (The Muslims of the subcontinent is Indo-Pak-Bangladesh o", pp. 298-299).

<sup>364</sup> Muhammad, Abdullah, *Banglai Khilafat - Asohojog Andolon (Khilafah-Non-Cooperation Movement in Bengal)*, 1st. Edition (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1996), p.13.

The second summit of the Khilafat movement was held in Delhi in 1920 and was attended by top leaders of the Congress including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Madan Mohan. The third day meeting of the same conference was chaired by Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>365</sup> He later published the Manifesto of the Non-Cooperation Movement with the views of the Muslim League Caliphate Committee and the top leaders of the Congress. At that time, when the terms of Turkey's treaty with the Allies were published, a special joint venture of Hindus and Muslims, organized by the Khilafat Committee in 1920, held a special rally in Allahabad to protest. This was followed by a one-day *hartal*<sup>366</sup> and a third caliphate day, in which Hindus and Muslims jointly participated.<sup>367</sup> Like other parts of the Indian subcontinent, the activities of the Khilafat movement in Bengal were significant and its influence was considerable. Along with the Muslim community of Bengal, Hindus also participated in the Khilafat movement which became a universal movement in Bengal.

#### **3.3.4. Khilafat Movement in Bengal**

Shortly after the establishment of the Central Khilafat Committee in 1919, the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Committee was established in Bengal with Mujibur Rahman as its secretary, Abdur Rauf as its president and Maulana Akram Khan as its general secretary. The headquarters of the Committee was established at Calcutta, the capital of Bengal and its branches were extended to other districts of Bengal.<sup>368</sup> The Khilafat Committee was established on 3 March 1920 in Dhaka and its temporary office was established at Ahsan Manzil, the residence of Nawab Salim Ullah. It also established permanent offices in various parts of Bengal, including North Bengal and South Bengal, where the leaders of the Muslim League and the Congress worked together. The Muslim leaders of Bengal made important contributions to the central caliphate movement of the subcontinent and at the same time the activities of this movement were conducted extensively in Bengal as well.

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<sup>365</sup> Khursheed Kamal, Aziz, *"The Indian Khilafat Movement, 1915-1933: A Documentary Record,"* p. 113.

<sup>366</sup> A term used in the Gujarat region of India meaning strike. A general strike by workers and sex against the government is known as hartal. See more: <https://www.britannica.com/event/hartal>.

<sup>367</sup> Azmi, Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*, 1st. Edition. (Brill Academic Pub, 1997), pp. 193-194.

<sup>368</sup> Mohammad, Abdullah, *Banglai Khilafat - Asohojog Andolon (Khilafah-Non-Cooperation Movement in Bengal),* p. 57.

From 1920 onwards, all sorts of programs of Khilafat movement started to be implemented in Bengal. In Bengal, the Congress and the Muslim League jointly implemented various programs and the offices of the Congress were used as temporary offices of the Khilafat movement for the non-cooperation movement. Many Hindu leaders took part in the Khilafat Committee of Bengal, among them were Bipin Chandra Pal, Chittaranjan Das, Shri Chandra Chattopadhyay, Poet Mukunda Das, Haripada Biswas Ghosh, Saral Kumar Dutt, Ranjan Gupta and Nagendra Biswas.<sup>369</sup> Funds were raised all over Bengal as announced by the Central Caliphate Committee. Movements were conducted in rural areas and different cities of Bengal. Hindus and Muslims of the village took part in the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movement together. Not only the politicians but also the religious leaders especially the imams of the mosques took part in this movement and they called upon the whole Muslim nation to join the Khilafat movement.<sup>370</sup> Rallies and demonstrations took place on 19 March 1920, the largest in the country, but the largest was in Tangail, North Bengal, where more than 50,000 people attended, including people from both Hindu and Muslim communities.<sup>371</sup>

According to the decision of the members of the non-cooperation and caliphate committee, teachers and students took part in various programs including boycott of class-examinations in the educational institution. Fazlul Haq, the leader of the Muslim League, was against the boycott of educational institutions because, according to him, the Muslims of Bengal had long been backward in education. At various events in Dhaka, Khilafat and Swaraj Party<sup>372</sup> leaders suggested the closure of educational institutions, but Fazlul Haq advised students not to boycott educational institutions during his rallies.<sup>373</sup> He could not agree with some of the programs of the Khilafat movement and some of the policies of the non-cooperation movement. Fazlul Haq's argument in particular regarding education was that the students of the educational institutions run by the people of Bengal in the form of tax had their own right to

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<sup>369</sup>Sufia, Ahmed, "Muslim community in Bengal: 1884-1912," p. 45.

<sup>370</sup>Hasan, M., 1981. Religion and Politics: The Ulama and Khilafat Movement. *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 903-912.

<sup>371</sup>Mohammad, Abdullah, "Banglai Khilafat - Asohojog Andolon (Khilafah-Non-Cooperation Movement in Bengal)," pp. 61-68.

<sup>372</sup> In 1922, Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party with the aim of achieving autonomy. This organization boycotted the 1919 Act. In 1923, the party achieved great success in the Central Legislative Assembly elections. (Hossain, Abu Md Delwar, *Bangladesher Itihas 1905-1947 (History of Bangladesh)*, 1st. Edition, Dhaka: University Publication, 2008, pp. 101-105.)

<sup>373</sup>ASM, AbdurRab, *Sher-e-Bangla A k Fazlul Haque*, (Dhaka: kotha publication, 1993), pp. 53-57.

education which should be accepted.<sup>374</sup> It was somewhat difficult for the Hindu-Muslim leaders to coordinate the programs and activities of the Khilafat movement, but prominent and visionary politicians established compromises among themselves for the greater good of the country. Leaders and activists from different levels of Bengal participated in the Khilafat movement but Maulana Akram Khan played the most important role among them through his well-organized leadership, the Khilafat movement was accelerated.

### **3.3.5. Khilafat Movement and Maulana Akram Khan**

Maulana Akram Khan, one of the top leaders of the Bengali Khilafat movement, made relentless efforts to establish unity among the Muslims during the movement, trying to bring together leaders of different ideologies.<sup>375</sup> In order to bridge the gap among the Muslim leaders, he contacted many leaders of the time, among whom were Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haq, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Abdul Alim and Muhammad Shahidullah was one of them. In order to strengthen the bond between the Muslims in Parbati, he established Anjumane-Ulama-Bangla with the scholars. This organization was the mouthpiece of the Muslim AlimSamay of Bengal and was instrumental in uniting the Muslims of India during the First World War. He had meetings with many scholars to resolve differences of opinion on religious matters and organized discussion meetings with members of different sects.<sup>376</sup>

From the very beginning he felt the need for a strong media for the progress of backward Muslims. He went on to meet the challenge of establishing a common platform for those who are intellectuals in the Muslim community. Akram Khan tried his best to publish a magazine but he did not have enough money.<sup>377</sup> He sought financial help from the wealthy Muslims of Calcutta to publish the magazine but failed. He later came to his birthplace Burdwan and sought money there but failed. In 1903, he

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid, pp. 57-58.

<sup>375</sup> Maulana Muhammad Akram Khan was one of the few intellectuals who led the nation with foresight and prudence during the Muslim crisis in Bengal. His role in the Muslim Awakening was outstanding. He was a journalist, social reformer, writer and Islamic scholar. He was instrumental in improving Muslims' intellectual development and his thoughts were instrumental in bringing about a fundamental change in Muslim society at the time. (*Maulana Akram Khan*, Ed: Abu Jafar, (Dhaka: Khos roj kitab mahol), p. Preface).

<sup>376</sup> Abu Jafar, "*Maulana Akram Khan*", p. 22.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

started publishing a monthly called 'Muhammadi' in collaboration with Haji Abdullah, a Bangladeshi British oil trader. The revolutionary life of Maulana Akram Khan started through Mohammadi newspaper. Akram Khan skillfully edited the newspaper and due to his sincere efforts and foresight, the monthly Mohammadi became a weekly newspaper. He became the owner of the magazine in 1904 and the publisher of the magazine was Munshi Karim Box. The first issue of the weekly Mohammad was published from Calcutta. The first issue was 500 copies, the second issue published 400 copies and the price was reduced from the 4th issue.<sup>378</sup> Mohammedi Patricia (Newspaper) played an important role in the Muslim Awakening and Khilafat Movement in Bengal as well as contributing to the realization of Muslims' social and political rights.

The Hindu newspaper founded by Raja Rammohun Roy had been making hateful and irrational allegations against Muslims for a long time. A large section of young Muslim writers, through the monthly Mohammedi, refuted and rationally responded to the allegations made by Hindu magazines. Various columns were published in the editorials of the newspaper to encourage Muslim youth to acquire knowledge. The newspaper played a neutral role in presenting various demands of the Muslim community to the British government. Akram Khan was a staunch supporter of Pan-Islamism. He tried to spread the idea of Pan-Islamism throughout Bengal through this magazine.<sup>379</sup> The weekly Mohammedi was published in Bengali and Urdu in these two editions. The Bengali language was originally promoted here. Through this magazine the intellectual practice of intellectuals in Bengal was encouraged. Through the paper, Bengali-speaking Muslims were able to present their independent views to the government.<sup>380</sup> The paper was published from Dhaka after 1949 when the British expelled them from the Indian subcontinent.<sup>381</sup> In this paper he discusses the theory of Pan-Islamism. The Mohammedi newspaper played a revolutionary role in the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movement.

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<sup>378</sup> M, Anisuzzaman, *Muslim Banglensamoikpotra, (Muslim Bengal Periodicals (1831-1930))*, (Dhaka: 1989), p. 12.

<sup>379</sup> S.M. Ikram, *Indian Muslims and Partition of India*, 1st. Edition (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Dist., 1995), p. 315.

<sup>380</sup> Mohammad Akram, Khan, *Sangbadikotai Bangli Musulman (Bengali Muslims in journalism (Calcutta: Eid issues, 1939))*, p. 168.

<sup>381</sup> M, Anisuzzaman, "*Muslim Bangler samoik potra, (Muslim Bengal Periodicals (1831-1930))*," p 12

In 1914, at the beginning of the First World War, Akram Khan published a magazine called *Al-Islam*. It was a monthly magazine, first published on May 3, 1915, from Calcutta, its publisher was Muzaffar Ahmed and its editor was Akram Khan. Maulana Moniruzzaman was the assistant editor of the Islamic newspaper and he was the acting editor from the third year.<sup>382</sup> *Al-Islam* was the spokesperson of the Anju man-Ulama-Bangla organization. The magazine was popular among Muslims all over Bengal and it spread to every corner of Bengal, especially in Dhaka and its Calcutta-centric influence was noticeable. The magazine regularly published articles on various important topics including Muslim history, heritage, religion, patriotism, society and culture.<sup>383</sup> Famous writers of the time used to write various articles in the magazine. However, this magazine was not suitable for the general public and was mainly for the educated class. The magazine acted as a mouthpiece for the Muslims of Bengal in the Khilafat movement and various inspirational writings of scholars, ulama and intellectuals were regularly published here which made the movement more dynamic. Maulana Akram Khan played a leading role in the Khilafat movement by introducing the Muslims of the region to their origins during the agitation. He repeatedly hinted that Muslims have a traditional past from which they could easily re-establish themselves with inspiration. He focused on the problem of developing the neglected superstitious Muslim society of Bengal. He played an important role not only in the Bengali Muslim Renaissance but also in the development of the consciousness of Bengali Muslims on a larger scale.

The path of the Khilafat movement was not smooth but dangerous enough. Though it was not ultimately successful, it was an important movement for the people of the subcontinent. The Muslims of the Indian subcontinent considered the Ottoman Caliphate as their international leader and believed that the destruction of the Caliphate meant the destruction of Islam. However, many have called the caliphate movement a separatist movement, especially Hindu intellectuals in Calcutta and a few significant British writers. Their argument was that based on this movement the Muslims later came up with the idea of isolating themselves from the subcontinent.<sup>384</sup> The Khilafah and the Non-Cooperation Movement put tremendous pressure on the economy of India, especially Bengal and this impacted the budgets of 1921 and 1922. The local

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid, p. 136.

<sup>383</sup> Syed Mujtaba, Ali, *Amaderkalerkotha (Our Time)*, (Chittagong: Usthoproকাশoni, 1968), p. 111.

<sup>384</sup> M, Hasan, “*Religion and Politics: The Ulama and Khilafat Movement*”, pp. 103-109

government administration was concerned about the economy of Bengal, but the government took various steps to address the crisis.<sup>385</sup> On 23 December 1919, the British government sent a royal message to the people of India wishing them prosperity, in which the government pledged political independence to India.<sup>386</sup> Although the movement was not successful, the British government, under pressure from the protesters, accepted many things. It was during this time that Muslims merged with the doctrine of Pan-Islamism to embrace international Islam as an important Islamic tradition and in this way, they were encouraged to unite. The Muslim political leaders of the subcontinent, social reformers, human rights organizations, religious communities, teachers, students, the general public and all groups worked together to resist the British and came together under the banner of Khilafat movement which was one of the best contributions of this movement.<sup>387</sup> For a long time after 1758, the Muslims pursued a policy of compromise with the government, but through this movement centered on the Ottoman Caliphate, the government stopped its friendly relations with Muslims and for which the British colonial rulers were responsible. Through this movement, the Hindus and Muslims of this country came together against the conspiracy of the British government on the question of international rights and dignity. Although the movement failed in the literal sense, it did not fail in the larger sense. The mass uprising that resulted from this movement strengthened the later freedom struggle.

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<sup>385</sup>The report, East India (progress and condition). 1921, London, India Office, 1922, pp. 121. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/ptid=mdp.39015074875231&view=1up&seq=2&skin=2021>)

<sup>386</sup>The Indian Annual Register, Vol. 1 (1919), Mitra, H. N., (ed), p. preface.

<sup>387</sup> Khurshid Kamal, Aziz, "*The Indian Khilafat Movement, 1915-1933: A Documentary Record*," p. 137.

## CONCLUSION

From the Battle of Palashi in 1757 to the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, Muslims resisted the British East India Company and waged armed movements. The results of this struggle did not go in favor of the Muslims, although the British suffered some losses, the Muslims could not defeat them or drive them out of the country. During this hundred year of movement, the Muslims had fallen behind economically and politically from the rival Hindu community. Even as a nation it became impossible for them to survive. In such a situation, in the context of the plight of the Muslim nation after 1857, some intellectuals of that time were worried about the future of the Muslim nation. That is why the Muslim intellectuals then took an epoch-making step and through which intellectual movement was made to bring back the backward Muslim nation to the main stream.

After the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, the attitude and plans of the British Government changed drastically and they brought about significant changes in the governance of the Indian subcontinent which facilitated the Muslim advance. As part of the government's new plan, on August 2, 1858, the British Parliament passed the "Government of India Act" which stripped the East India Company of all powers, ending its tyrannical rule. Queen Victoria approved the inclusion of India under the direct rule of the British Raj and assumed the title of Empress of India. Along with restructuring the administrative system of the new subcontinent, the capital was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. The shift of the capital reduced the influence of upper-class Hindus and was considered a success for Muslims. At the same time, the British made a drastic change in their approach to various issues in the subcontinent. A number of measures were taken to prevent rebellion, including a policy of non-interference in religious affairs. Along with liberalism in social and economic fields, the activities of Christian missionaries were observed by a section of English conservatives. The government adopted a more liberal moral policy towards the Muslims of the subcontinent. In order to properly manage British affairs in the subcontinent, the British emphasized on improving the quality of education for Muslims. At that time the government adopted a special policy on language in education. As some other people, including Muslims, objected to learning English and reading and writing the language, the government looked to address the

issue. The Governor-General set up a commission to translate school books into vernacular languages and the books were quickly translated into vernacular languages. Due to this decision of the government, the Muslims gained a lot of religious freedom as well as an opportunity to fight against the Christian missionaries.

The main goals of the movement of Muslim intellectuals were self-awareness, modern education, economic, social development and development of political consciousness. The Muslims made two fundamental changes in their future plans: to initiate activities in modern education and to adopt a policy of general compromise with the government and to avoid all forms of armed resistance. These steps of the intellectuals were timely through which the entire Muslim nation moved forward. A major obstacle to modern education and reconciliation with the rulers was the fatwa called "*DarulHarb*". Muslim intellectuals solved this problem through the Meccan scholars and they showed great skill in doing so. In the light of the new approach, the Muslim intellectuals paid special attention to the education system and thereby strengthened the root-level foundation of the Muslims. In the 19th century, when the entire world order was changing, Muslims worldwide were lagging behind in education. In particular, the Muslim areas under colonial rule were far from educated and the same picture was seen among the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. In such a situation, interest in modern education among Muslims in the subcontinent was a timely step. Muslim intellectuals emphasized the importance of English language and modern education and called for modern education for all Muslims. They adopted a pragmatic approach to make the nation aware of the need for modern education. As a result, Muslims became interested in the practice of modern science and they again focused on the practice of knowledge. The British government welcomed this move of the Muslims generously and thus they adopted a policy of reconciliation with the Muslims.

The intellectuals who led the intellectual movement of Bengal were highly educated. They were very talented from childhood and very successful in their careers. They were much more known and acceptable to the Muslim community, especially the Muslim youth of Bengal followed them. They received religious and modern education due to which they were able to face the challenges of modern times. Due to extensive involvement in teaching, administration and judiciary, they gathered diverse experiences. Most of these intellectuals-maintained relations with high-ranking officials

of the government. Due to which they were able to grasp the system of the colonial government well and understood the reasons for the backwardness of the Muslims of Bengal at that time. They thoroughly studied and researched various contemporary problems of the Muslim community including educational, cultural, economic and social and tried their best to solve them. They campaigned extensively for religious education as well as modern education for the Muslims of Bengal. They were able to convince Muslims that superstition had infiltrated Muslim society due to distance from modern education, science and civilization.

Educational institutions founded by Muslim intellectuals carried out considerable research on educational policy. These institutions played an important role in teaching the students in their mother tongue. These institutes arranged for the translation of books by international scholars in various fields, including history, geography and sociology, into their mother tongue. Through the various activities of the institutions, Muslim students got the opportunity to acquire knowledge and science not only in the domestic but also in the international environment. Through this institution, Muslim students got the idea of practicing knowledge like European students. They played the role of skilled organizers through which they were able to influence the youth. They published several academic articles, books and magazines to spread the intellectual movement. They wrote essays and books in Persian, English, Urdu and Bengali to benefit all classes of Muslims. Through these registers, books and magazines, clear guidance was given to the Muslim community, due to which the Muslims benefited greatly and became aware. The intellectuals encouraged many poets and writers to play a role in the Muslim awakening, which led to the emergence of many young poets and writers who played a role in social reform. The intellectuals tried to convey the correct message about Islam not only to the native people but also to the Europeans through writing. Writers and scholars of the Western world were greatly influenced by their writings, from which they gained a clear understanding of Islam, especially of the Muslims of the subcontinent. A few writers were inspired by researching the history of Islam to present the glorious history of Muslims to the ordinary Muslims of the subcontinent. They criticized the government's failed policies for the economic backwardness of Muslims through writings and advised the government to be aware. The government was influenced by the writings of Muslim intellectuals.

During the Muslim rule, ordinary Muslims had the opportunity to receive free religious, social and up-to-date education, which was an advantage. But it was not only for Muslims education was open to all communities. Colonial rulers cut off public funding of the education system and subsequently treated education as a commodity. At that time, all communities were given the opportunity to receive a modern education in return for money but only upper-caste Hindu community members were able to receive modern education. However, Muslims have been running their religious and traditional education system with their own funds for a long time. But due to the fact that Muslims are economically backward, it was very difficult for them to receive expensive modern education even after receiving their traditional education. Lower-caste Hindus and Muslims were deprived of modern education due to their economic weakness. After 1858, Muslim intellectuals worked tirelessly for extensive development in various fields, including the establishment of separate educational institutions for Muslims and the provision of scholarships to Muslim students. Earlier, the Muslim society managed the education system with its own funding, but later, with the efforts of the Muslim intellectuals, the Muslims were able to get government patronage. Before 1857, only the Hindu community got the full cooperation of the British, but later on, with the efforts of the Muslim intellectuals, the marginalized Muslims were also able to get various forms of patronage, which was one of the most successful aspects of the intellectual movement.

The establishment of Dhaka University was identified as a major contribution to the intellectual movement. Due to the economic crisis, the Muslims were lagging behind in the field of education due to which there was an absence of middle class among them and thus the Muslims also had a leadership vacuum. Dhaka University plays an active role in the development of the Muslim middle class in East Bengal, the main creator of the class that emerged in the subcontinent called Bengali Muslims in the mid-twenties is the student society of Dhaka University. Since its establishment, Dhaka University has played an important role in the intellectual movement of the Muslims of East Bengal and has made an unprecedented contribution to the development of social and political leadership.

Muslim intellectuals created a number of socio-political organizations in which the general public, the educated class and the conscious politicians were united on the same

platform. Many members of these organizations travelled almost all over Bengal and spread the awareness of Muslims and spread the field of revival. The organizations gained the trust of the common people by doing public welfare work along with political activities. The organizations played a special role in obtaining various opportunities and benefits from the government for deprived Muslims. The organizations created considerable pressure on the British government. Organizations developed competent leadership to deal with neighbouring communities in rivalry. Due to the adoption of organizational methods, the Muslims at one stage raised the demand for autonomy. Through these organizations, intellectuals created a channel of communication between Muslims and the British government and as a result, the government became aware of the rightful rights of Muslims. Through the political and diplomatic initiatives of the intellectuals, the situation began to turn in favour of the Muslims and by exploiting this, the Muslims greatly strengthened their position. They organized many dialogue meetings between the government and Muslim civil society through which the distance between the government and the Muslims decreased. They were able to convince the British government that the development of India was not possible without the Muslims due to which the government took various steps to improve relations and cooperation with the Muslims. The intellectuals influenced the government and many laws that were against Muslims were withdrawn by the government at their request. On their advice, the government enacted many laws related to the social and religious affairs of Muslims which were positive for Muslims. Christian missionaries were religiously and culturally misleading the marginal-level Muslims in the remote areas of Bengal, while Muslim intellectuals as well as some reformers countered the conspiracies of the Christian missionaries through their activities. Due to various measures taken by the reformers, the common Muslims were saved from de-culture and strengthened through Islamic culture.

Muslim intellectuals organized discussions many times to improve relations not only with the government but also with leaders of other communities in India, due to which the understanding of Muslims with other communities became easier. They organized programs to deal with various inter-religious issues which paved the way for establishing religious tolerance. Their activities have fostered harmony and coexistence among different communities, which has benefited the community as a whole. Muslim

intellectuals showed universalism in making laws for the people of the subcontinent. Along with men, the activities of Muslim women intellectuals propelled this movement. They came out of the contemporary boundaries and went beyond the conventional trend and thought of exceptions. Women intellectuals campaigned extensively to raise the social status of Muslim women, provide them with modern education, grant them independence, amend inheritance laws and ban polygamy. They made women aware through regular writings in pamphlets, in their efforts women were encouraged towards education and made aware of their responsibility. Although separate women's organizations were not formed at that time, women participated in the reform movement under the leadership of men. The development of women was considered as one of the greatest successes of the movement of the time because the role of women in social movements was very important.

Like all other movements in the world, the intellectual movement of Bengal Muslims had several limitations. This movement greatly influenced the urban population but did not reach much to the rural Muslim population. Economic backwardness and an underdeveloped communication system are one of the biggest reasons behind the non-participation of rural Muslim society in educational programs, intellectual exercises and other activities. The intellectuals made earnest efforts to improve the education of the Muslims in rural society but illiteracy was one of the obstacles that could not be easily overcome. After the partition of Bengal, the differences in political opinion between the old and new leaders of the Muslim political organizations became complex and became a limitation of the intellectual movement.

The intellectual movement of Muslims is very important for understanding British colonial rule and Indian Muslim nationalism in India including Bengal. This intellectual movement of Bengal is also known as a modern movement in the history of the subcontinent. The intellectuals played an important role in shaping the ideology of nationalism among the Muslim educated class of Bengal. Before the 20th century, the majority of urban and rural Muslims were controlled by the Hindu middle-class educated class. But as a result of the intellectual movement, Muslims gained self-reliance. As a result of the activities of the leading intellectuals of Bengal, the despair among the common Muslims was removed and they became optimistic about the future. The Muslim community took up the pen instead of arms which was a major success of

this movement. The intellectual movement led by Muslim intellectuals played a significant role in the overall development of Muslim society. As a result of intellectual practice, Muslims became politically aware, which later created a strong position for Muslims in national politics.



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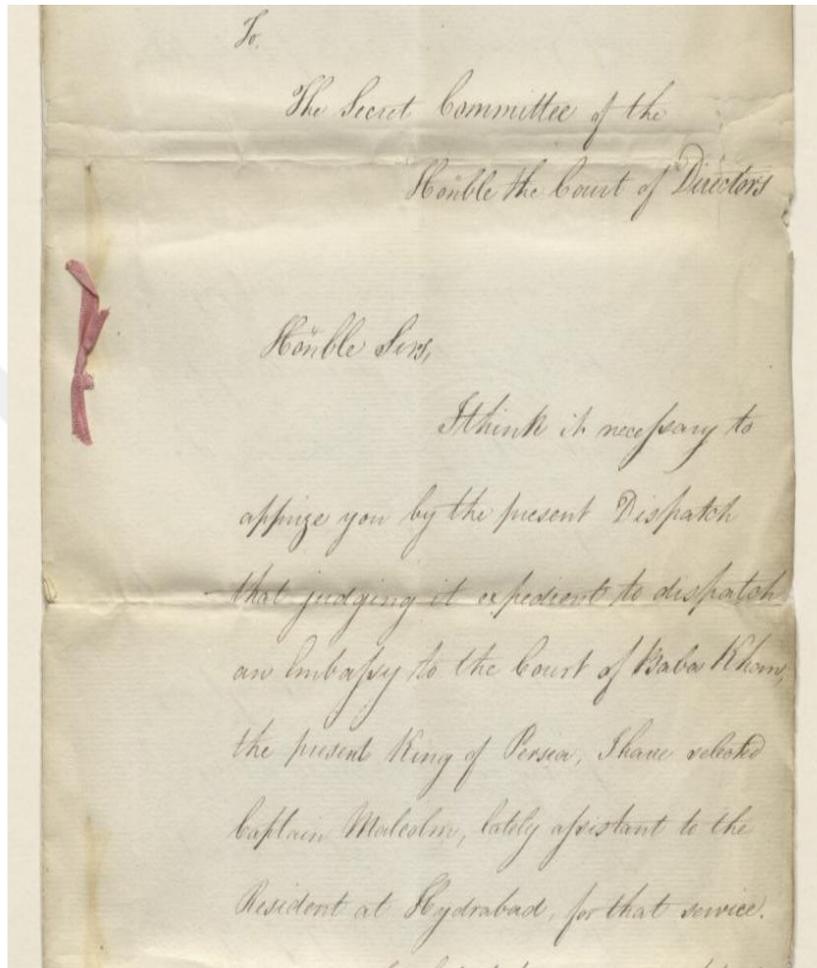
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## APPENDIX

**Appendixes1:** Copy of a Letter from Lord Mornington, Governor-General of Bengal, to the Secret Committee

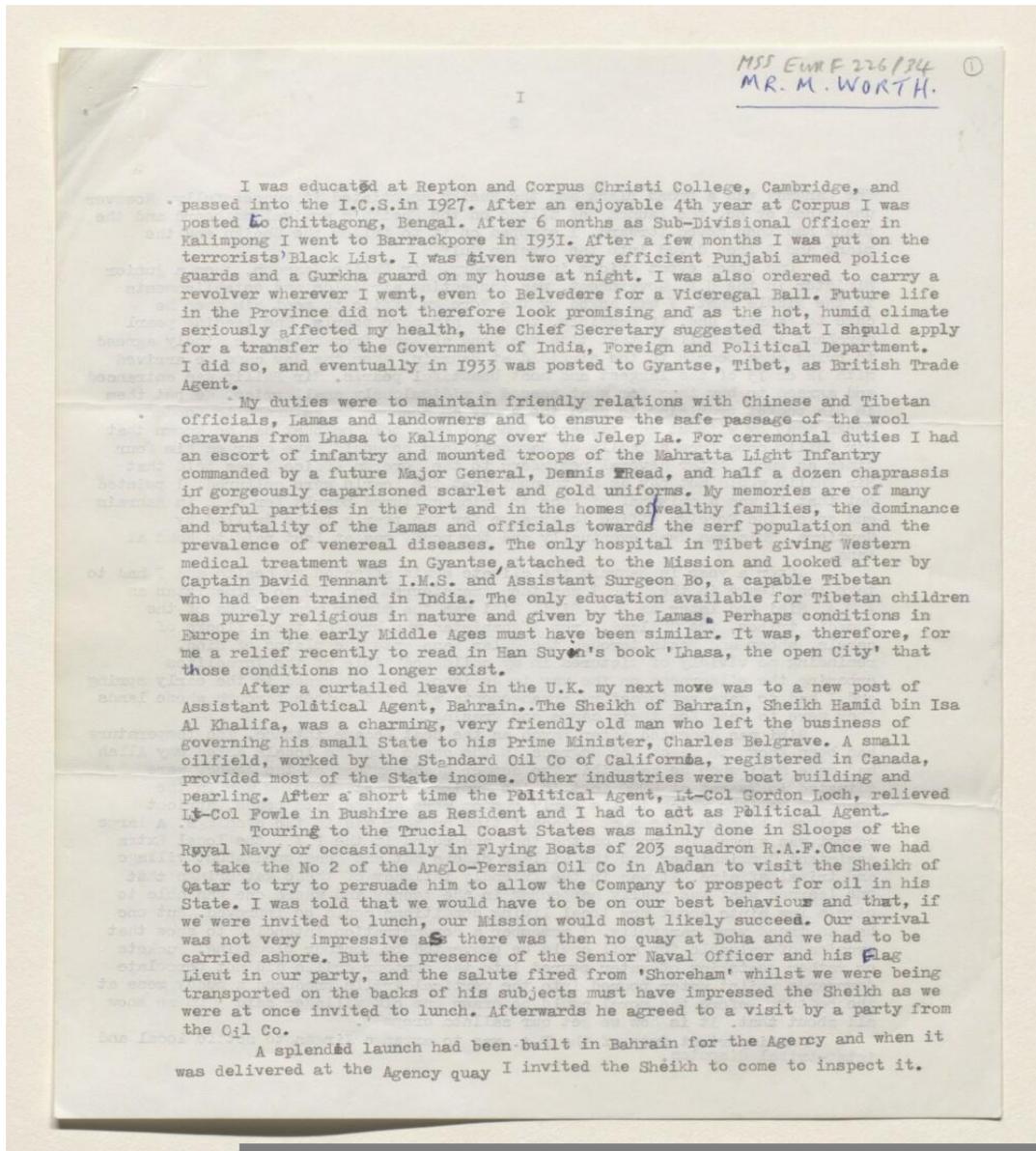


To  
The Secret Committee of the  
Honorable the Court of Directors

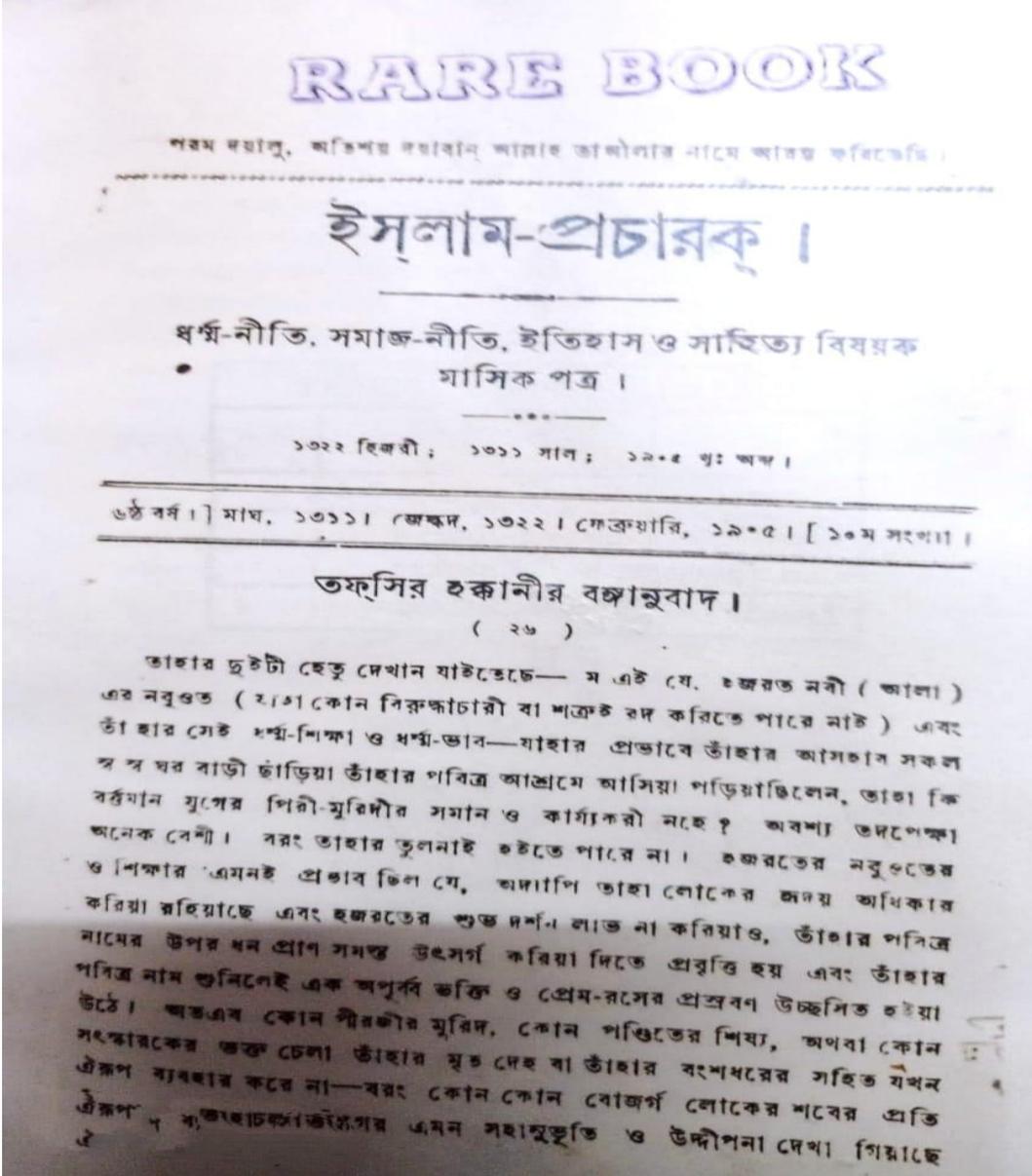
Honorable Sirs,

I think it necessary to  
apprize you by the present Dispatch  
that judging it expedient to dispatch  
an Embassy to the Court of Wabs Whom  
the present King of Persia, I have selected  
Captain Malcolm, lately Assistant to the  
Resident at Hyderabad, for that service.

Appendix 2: Mss Eur F226/34 (Memoirs of Meredith Worth, (1905-93))



Appendix 3: Islam Procharock (Newspaper)



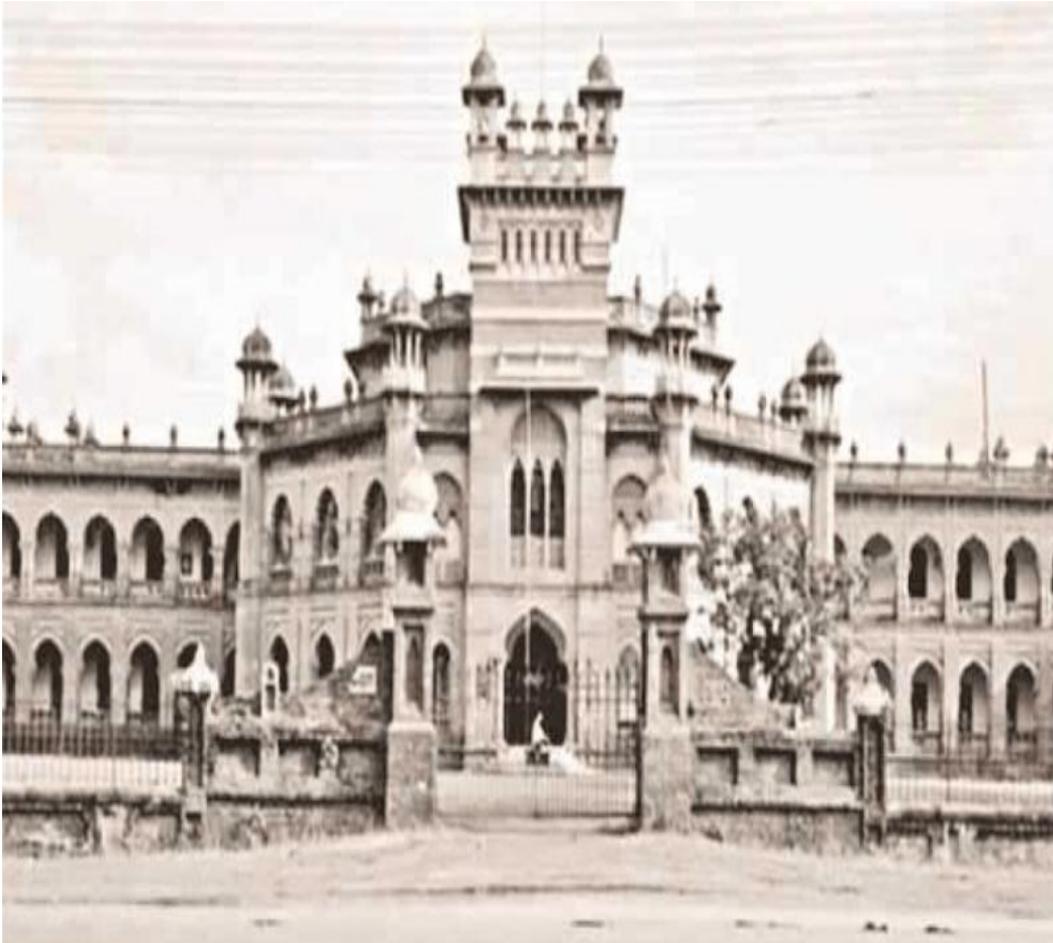
**Appendix 4: Salimullah Khan Bahadur (1871 – 1915)**



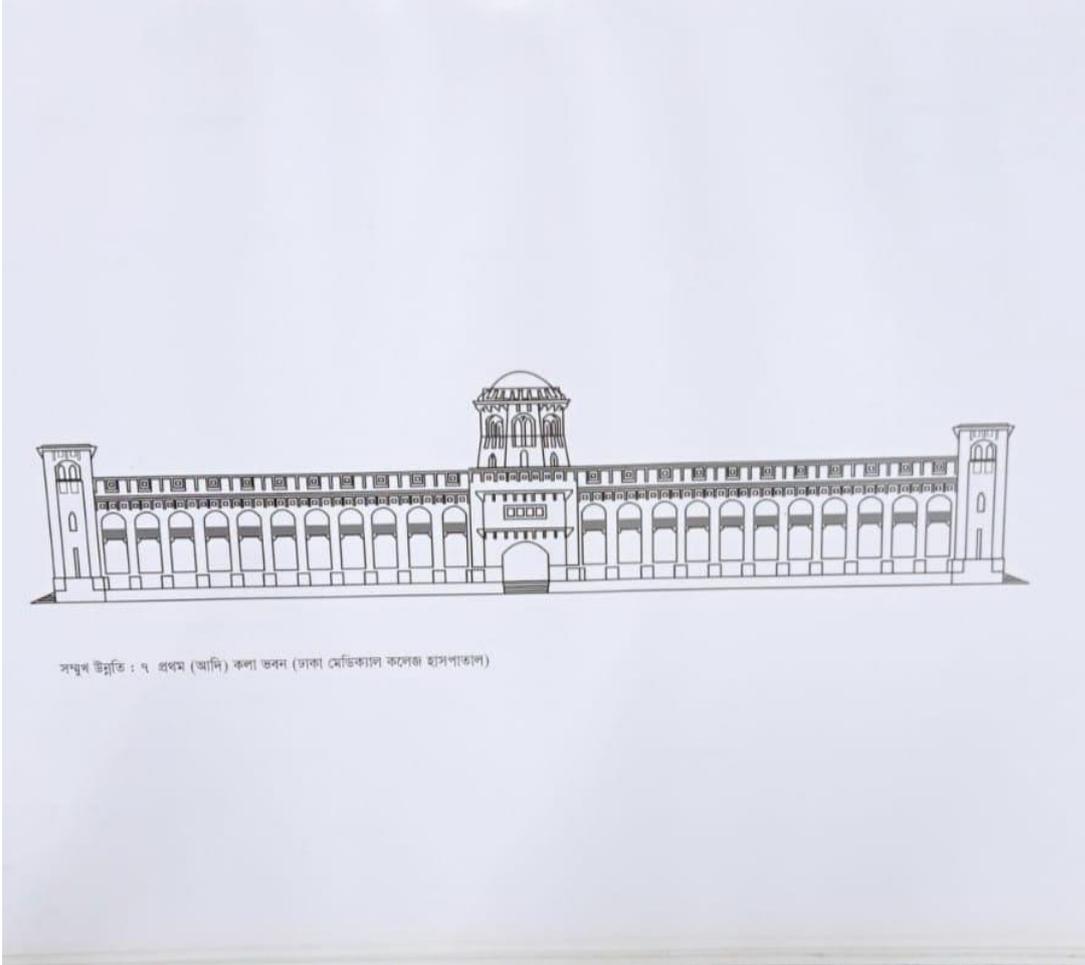
**Appendix 5:** Khan Bahadur Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury CIE ((29 December 1863 – 17 April 1929)



**Appendix 6: University of Dhaka, 1921**



**Appendix 7: Kala Bhavan, Dhaka University, 1921 (Dhaka University Central Library)**



**Appendix 8: The first committee during the establishment of Dhaka University**  
(Nathan Committee 1912)



**Appendix 9:** Abul Kasem Fazlul Huq, popularly known as Sher-e-Bangla (Lion of Bengal)



**Appendix 10: Nawab Abdul Latif Khan Bahadur (1828-1893)**



**Appendix 11: Munshi Mohammad Meherullah (1861-1907)**

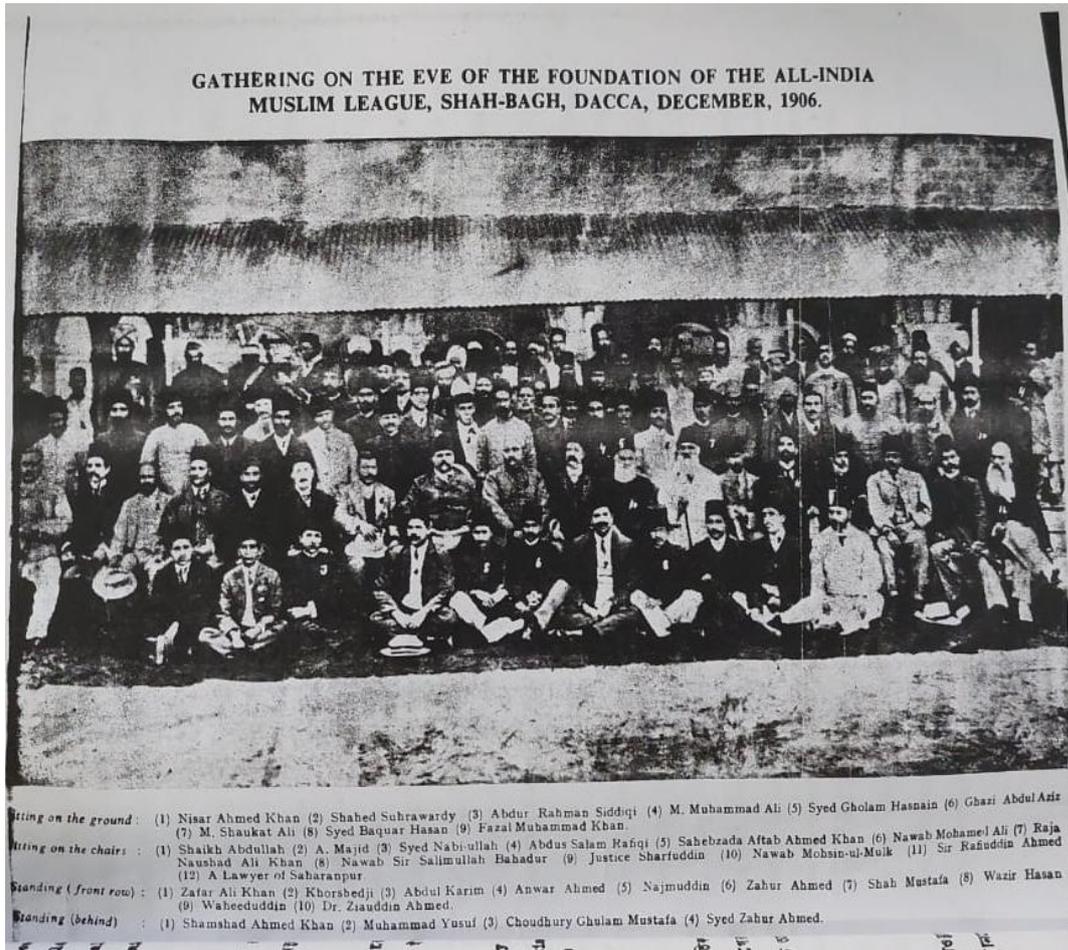


**Appendix 12:** Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932)





Appendix 12: Founding conference of All Indian Muslim League in Dhaka in 1906



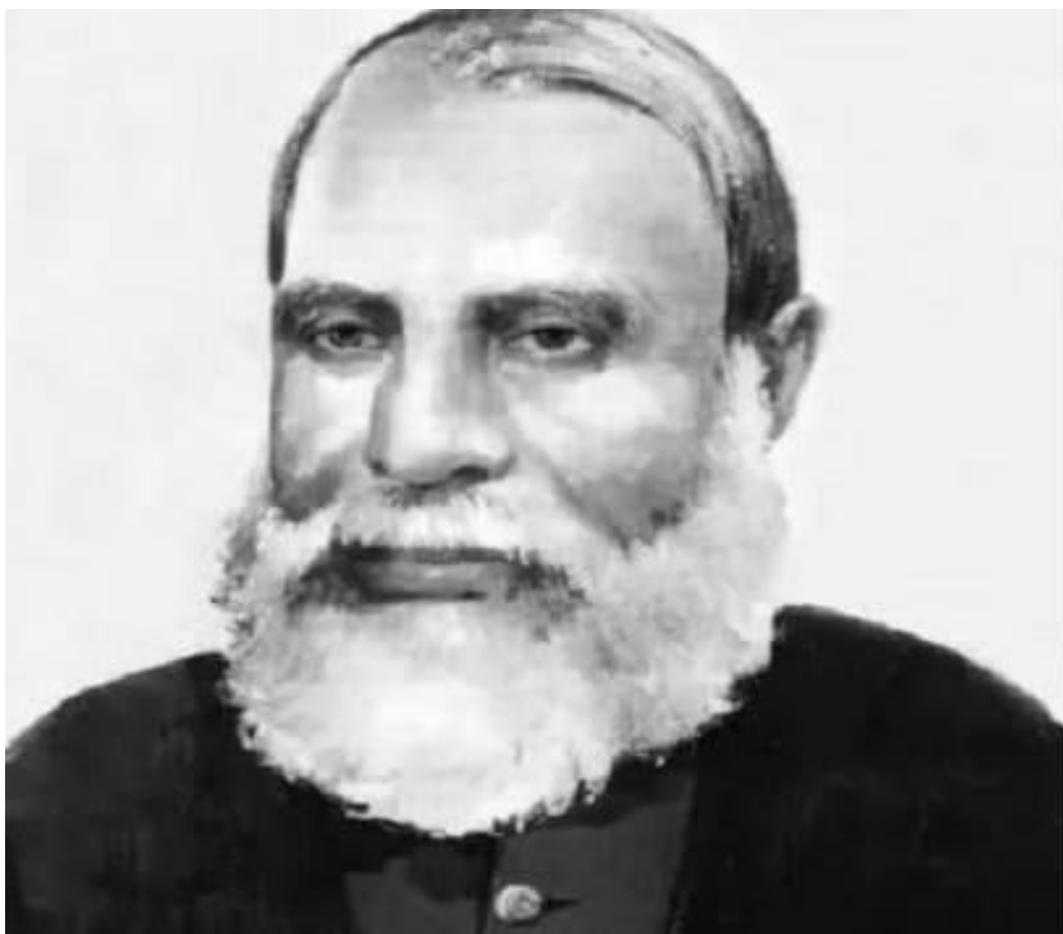
**Appendix 13: Barrister Abdur Rasul**



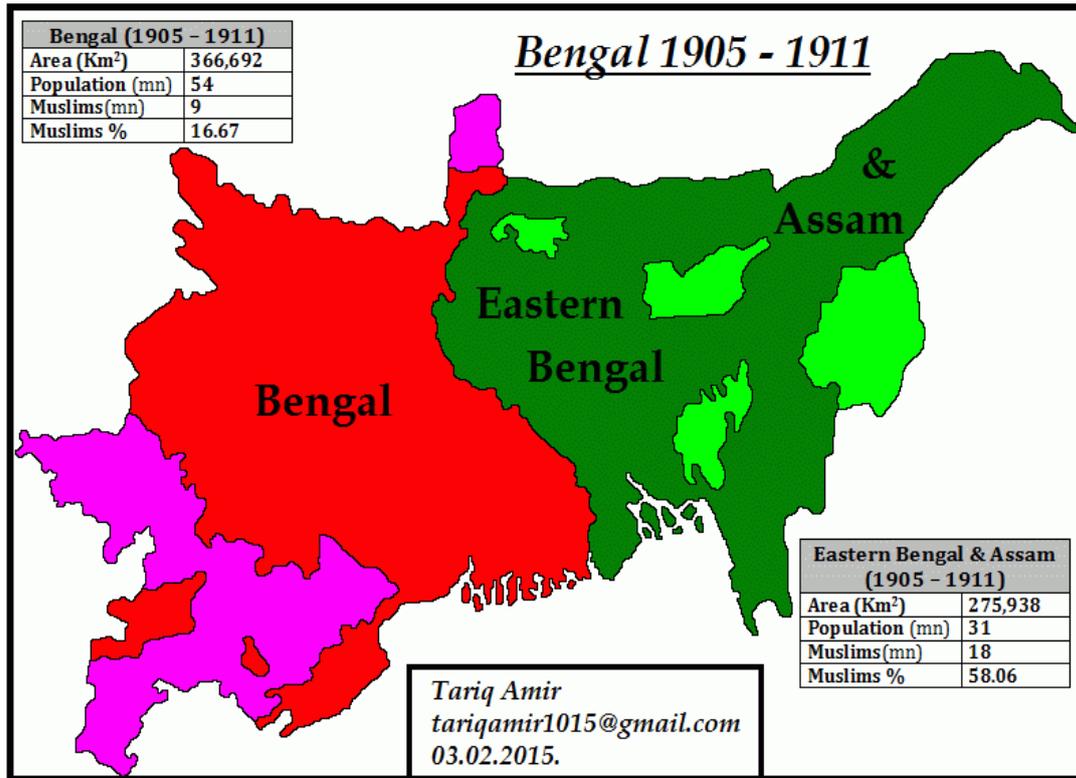
**Appendix 14: Syed Amir Ali (1849-1928)**



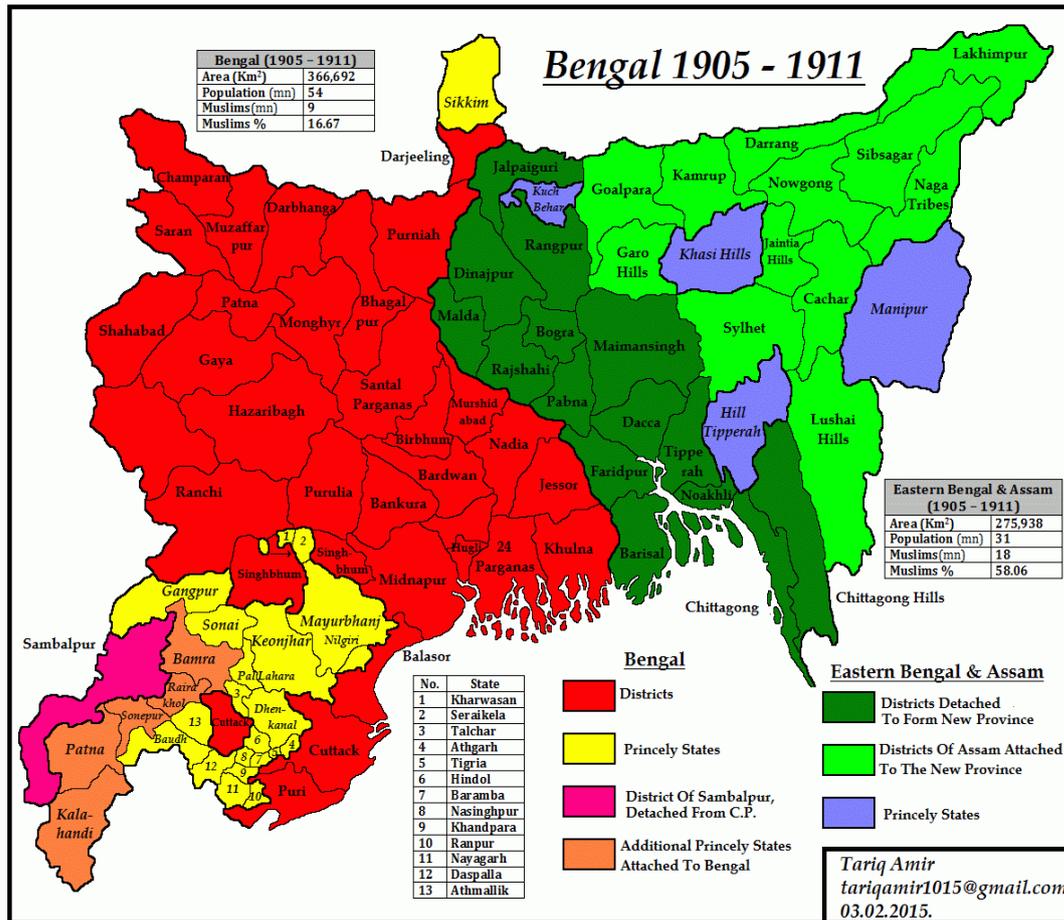
**Appendix 14: Mir Mosharraf Hossain (1847-1912)**



**Appendixes 15: Administrative map of Bengal after the partition of Bengal**



**Appendix 16: Actual map of Bengal during the period after the partition of Bengal (1905-1911)**





## CURRICULUM VITAE

<b>Full Name: Abdulla AL MAHMUD</b>	
<b>Education Information</b>	
<b>Undergraduate</b>	
<b>University</b>	University of Dhaka
<b>Faculty</b>	Faculty of Arts
<b>Department</b>	Islamic History and Culture
<b>Master's Degree</b>	
<b>University</b>	University of Dhaka
<b>Faculty</b>	Faculty of Arts
<b>Department</b>	Islamic History and Culture
<b>Program</b>	MS
<b>Articles and Papers</b>	
<p>1. Abdulla al Mahmud. (2022). The role of the Turkish Muslims in the socio-cultural formation of Bengal during the sultanate period (1204-1525). Sinop Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi. <a href="https://doi.org/10.30561/sinopusd.1015988">https://doi.org/10.30561/sinopusd.1015988</a>.</p> <p>2. Abdulla al Mahmud. (2022). Impact of English East India Company's revenue and trade policy in Bengal: in the context of the great famine. ASOS Journal. <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/ASOS.65048">http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/ASOS.65048</a>.</p>	