

Bengal Muslims in Search of Social Identity 1905-47

DHURJATI PRASAD DE

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Preface

The study of twentieth century Bengal, though a much traversed field has neither ceased to arouse special interest nor exhausted the possibilities for further research. The main purpose of this work is to make an indepth study of the Muslim psyche, caught in the whirlwind of changes taking place in different strata of the Bengali society and culture during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

The emphasis, herein, is on the fact that during the first four decades of this century, more specifically between 1905 and 1947, the Muslims of Bengal, particularly the middle class, prevaricated and vacillated as to the right course of action—to find out its cultural alignment. Already during the late nineteenth and the early part of twentieth century a new phase of cultural awakening coupled with a religious one, which has been discussed by other scholars had been quite discernible and contributed to the initiation of the process of search for identity. But with the start of the twentieth century while the social as well as political leadership came decidedly in the hands of the nascent middle class the process had not only been accentuated but also assumed a linguistic-cultural character creating favourable conditions to the growth of a distinct pattern. The attempt herein has, therefore, been made to explore and analyse the interplay of socio-cultural forces which had been unleashed by the quest.

In my discussion I have made least reference to political vicissitudes which during the aforesaid period had become a topic of detailed discussion by other scholars. Further, to make my study sociologically viable, I depended more on literary sources like contemporary Bengali tracts, brochures, booklet and books as well as on magazines, newspapers and periodicals than on political

sources. In this connexion I express my gratitude and gratefulness to my supervisor Dr. Hossainur Rahman, to Prof. Francis Robinson of New College, Cambridge, evaluator of my Ph.D dissertation and to Prof. Anisuzzaman, Head of the Bengali Dept. University of Dhaka for their guidance and valuable suggestions. I also express gratitude to the staff and employees of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta; National Library, Calcutta; Sri Chaitanya Library, Calcutta and Bangladesh High Commission Library, Calcutta for allowing me to examine a number of books, brochures and magazines. I also express my intense respect and gratefulness to Syed Abdur Rahman Firdousi for allowing me to have access to his private library at Murshidabad, Gokarna which contains valuable books and magazines. My mother's inspiration was a guideline to me and valuable suggestions and assistance from my wife Dr. Mani Kuntala De, Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Pali, Calcutta University, had enabled me to complete this work. Lastly, I express my indebtedness and gratitude to all those people who provided assistance and suggestion for betterment of this work.

Dhurjati Prasad De

Glossary

<i>Ashraf</i>	: Aristocrats
<i>Atrap / Ajlaf</i>	: People of low origin
<i>Ashul al hadith</i>	: Hadith as a source
<i>Ahl al-ray</i>	: Experts
<i>Alem</i>	: Scholar; theologian
<i>Bahas</i>	: Debate
<i>Bende mataram</i>	: Lit. Salute to Motherland; the opening of a song by Bankimchandra Chatterjee used as a national song by groups of politicians and revolutionaries
<i>Baul</i>	: A sect of mendicant singer
<i>Brata</i>	: Colloquial form for local Hindu religious nicities
<i>Behast</i>	: Heaven
<i>Dar-ul-Islam</i>	: Land of Islam
<i>Dar-ul-harb</i>	: Country under the rule of infidels
<i>Dar-ul-Efta</i>	: Office from where religious decrees are passed
<i>Dar-ul-Ulum</i>	: School of higher Islamic studies
<i>Dehatatva</i>	: Study of body, a philosophical term
<i>Dojakh</i>	: Hell
<i>Dewan</i>	: An officer of the court or of the revenue department
<i>Dhuti</i>	: A piece of cloth worn by the Bengali Hindus
<i>Ejma</i>	: Consensus of opinion
<i>Ekrarnama</i>	: Deed of agreement

<i>Fatwa</i>	: Religious decree made by a competent authority
<i>Fakir</i>	: Muslim mendicant
<i>Ferishta</i>	: Angel
<i>Gomasta</i>	: Agent; an officer of the Zamindar or feudal lord engaged in the collection of revenue
<i>Hukka</i>	: A particular instrument for smoking, a base of water through which tobacco smoke is drawn, often made of coconut shell
<i>Iswar</i>	: The Almighty
<i>Istahar</i>	: Notice
<i>Janmajanmantar</i>	: This life and the next
<i>Jamait-al-Ansar</i>	: Party of Ansars or volunteers
<i>Kiyas</i>	: Analogical deduction
<i>Kansa</i>	: Brass alloy
<i>Kabuliyat</i>	; Acknowledgement of a payment
<i>Khajanchi</i>	: Treasurer or cashier
<i>Laxmi</i>	: Goddess of wealth in Hindu pantheon
<i>Qaom</i>	: Nation; people; community
<i>Mufti</i>	: Authorised person to issue religious decrees
<i>Murshidi</i>	: A type of folk song pertaining to a spiritual guide or principle
<i>Marfati</i>	: A type of Islamic mystic folk songs
<i>Mukallida</i>	: Bind followers of authority
<i>Mollah</i>	: Lit. a learned man, used to denote a practitioner of Islamic religious learning; often a man of religion in villages
<i>Momin</i>	: Faithful
<i>Moaben</i>	: Explicit

<i>Mutazila</i>	: A particular sect in Islam which earned its reputation for rationalism
<i>Moulvi</i>	: A religious scholar
<i>Millat</i>	: Community
<i>Mukhtar</i>	: Attorney; agent
<i>Mangalghat</i>	: The holy vessel
<i>Mazhab</i>	: A sect or religious order in Islam
<i>Naib</i>	: Deputy; Agent
<i>Punthi</i>	: Lit. a manuscript; refers to Bengali literature before the establishment of the printing press; sometimes printed poetical works with an abundance of Perso-Arabic words and matters of Perso-Arabic literature which were produced in the 18 & 19 century.
<i>Parban</i>	: Day of festivity of the Hindus
<i>Pital</i>	: Brass
<i>Pir</i>	: Spiritual guide
<i>Padma</i>	: Lotus
<i>Roza</i>	: Compulsory fasting for a Muslim adult
<i>Sura</i>	: A chapter of the Quran
<i>Shariat</i>	: Religious code of conduct in Islam; Muslim religious law
<i>Shab-i-barat</i>	: A particular religious ceremony taking place 15 days before Ramzan; the night in which allotment for the coming year is believed to be decreed.
<i>Shia</i>	: Sect faithful to Hazrat Ali
<i>Sunni</i>	: Sect faithful to four Imams
<i>Sangathan</i>	: Organisational movement initiated by the Arya Samajists
<i>Serishtadar</i>	: Record-keeper; sort of a herd ckerk

<i>Shastra</i>	: Hindu scripture
<i>Shree</i>	: Goddess of learning in Hindu pantheon
<i>Satyagrahi</i>	: Political cadres putting faith in Gandhiji's movement of non-violence
<i>Sarafati</i>	: Nobility
<i>Suddhi</i>	: Religious purification movement
<i>Tawheed</i>	: Unity of God; belief in such unity
<i>Tanzeem</i>	: Organisation
<i>Tabligh</i>	: Propagation
<i>Tamuddini Azadi</i>	: Cultural freedom
<i>Tahasildar</i>	: Collector of revenue, rent or tax
<i>Ulema</i>	: Scholars of Islam
<i>Umma</i>	: Followers of Prophet Muhammad
<i>Vaishnava</i>	: A particular religious order akin to Hinduism
<i>Waj (waz)</i>	: Religious sermon
<i>Yavan</i>	: Sankrit word meaning an infidel
<i>Yama</i>	: God of death in Hindu Pantheon
<i>Zakat</i>	: Alms given as prescribed by Islam

INTRODUCTION

The 19th century revival movement among the Muslims, particularly of Bengal, cannot simply be ignored as a religious outburst. One has to recognize its socio-political significance too. The movement initiated profound changes in the religious ideology and social mores among the Bengal Muslims who so far had remained 'docile and apathetic'. The spread and intensity of Muslim fury against the alien Britishers was undoubtedly a fact to be reckoned with. Actually, such instance of protest and defensive movement led by the ecclesiastical leaders coming to the rescue of decadent temporal power and to protect the faith had been witnessed repeatedly during different phases of Islamic history. In case of India particularly, while the hollowness and inertia of Mughal rule as against the spread of British power and influence became increasingly evident, the Wahhabi and Faraizi movements among the Muslims gained support and momentum. Apart from rendering the Muslims conscious of a communal solidarity, it instilled a kind of fear in the hearts of the British, who after the traumatic experiences of 1857, were apprehensive of any trouble that could be detrimental to their interest. The book *Indian Mussalman*, written by Hunter at the behest of Lord Mayo, to portray the grievances of the Muslims, not only contained words like 'fanatics', 'traitors', 'sedition' and 'revolt' to signify the nature of Wahhabi revolt but also categorically declared that 'the British government could no longer shut its eyes to the existence of a great treasonable organisation within its territories'.

Besides being a document of British hatred and hostility towards Muslim mass upsurge, Hunter's book remained as an instance of skillful British manipulation of Muslim sentiment. A chapter entitled, *The Wrongs of the Muhammedan under British Rule*, sympathetically brought to the fore different types of grievances sustained by Muslims and promised to look after the interests of the small class of educated Muslims, particularly in Bengal, who had for long been discriminated against by their Hindu counterparts. In a way, Hunter's presentation was a kind of moral support given to the later British policy of extending educational and employment opportunities to the Muslims, thus facilitating the growth of a small educated Muslim class in Bengal. It paid much dividends. Instead of putting the British into trouble through armed resistance, this class pursued a policy of cooperation and collaboration with them. In fact, this shift of attitude found its expression through Abdul Latif's declaration of India as *Darul Islam* as against the declaration of *Darul Harb* by the erstwhile Wahhabi rebels. The support the British had lent to the Aligarh Movement was due not so much to the need of creating an effective counterpoise against Indian nationalism but more to the fears of British officials regarding fanaticism and anti-foreign mentality among the section of Indian Muslims whom Peter Hardy had described as the 'pre-industrial lower middle class'.

However, from the second half of the 19th century the importance of English education and the need of employment opportunities under changed circumstances came to be felt by the Muslim aristocrats of Bengal. Thus Abdul Latif and Syed Ameer Ali, the pioneers of Muslim Bengal, and their associates, apart from extending their support to the British rule, launched a full-fledged movement of reorganising and modernising the Muslim society through the acceptance of English education. But they could not shake off their old prejudices and remained rather apprehensive of the baneful impact of English education which might undermine their religious sense. The most important aspect of the *Ashraf*-led movement was that in spite of its emphasis on English education and to some extent modernisation¹, it failed to assume the character of a wholesome reform that could have

a significant impact on the Muslim masses. Undeniably, their attempts were aimed at protection of Muslim interest and amelioration of their grievances, but the scope of the movement was severely handicapped since the attitude, up-bringing and cultural lineage of the reformers had restricted them within their closed *Ashraf* or aristocrat circle. The movement actually acquired a thoroughly elitist character from its very inception and it held out promises of broader pastures for the few who were rich and highly placed in the contemporary Muslim society.² The social status of the invitees during the annual get-together of Latif's Literary Society, its pomp and grandeur, the amount of money spent, and the presence of high English officials including the Viceroy indicated beyond doubt the elitist character of the movement. It also revealed a basic attitude of the promoters and organisers who kept the audience amused with new scientific and technical inventions, earned praise for their energy, initiative and urge for modernisation, but at the same time, gave vent to an ill-concealed apathy towards those hapless innumerable Muslim masses scattered all over the vast areas of rural Bengal. They lived in the dark world of ignorance, remaining quite unconscious of the ideas, designs and philosophy as well as activities of their city and town-bred leaders. On the whole, the movement basically remained restricted within a specific social perimeter, and its gains were monopolised by a particular elite group.

So far as liberalism was concerned the *Ashraf*-led movement did not mark any progress. The *Ashrafs* actually accepted the system of education—the benefit of English learning—a promise for more jobs, but they clearly failed to identify themselves with the spirit of the system i.e. the liberal ideas of the West on which the entire edifice of social development should have been built. Neither among the Abdul Latif group of aristocrats, nor among the newly educated Ameer Ali, group, respectively, termed as 'old elite' and 'new elite' by N. Karim³ was there any discernible attempt to initiate a truly progressive movement. Abdul Latif, despite putting more emphasis on learning of English, persistently made appeals to the government not to do away with the system of Madrasa education, nor did he support the idea of

abolition of Arabic and Persian, regarded as essential Islamic languages. In his paper entitled : *On the Present Condition of the Indian Mohammedans and the Best Means for its Improvements*, submitted to the government on 28 February 1883, Abdul Latif remarked that most of the Muslims used to consider the governmental system of education harmful as it could debase characters of young boys since it contained no provision for learning of Arabic and Persian. Twice during his career, Abdul Latif as a member of the Text-Book Committee of the Calcutta University, expressed his displeasure with portions of text books which contained un-Islamic thoughts and ideas. Even a comparatively liberal like Syed Ameer Ali, who was a thorough-bred westernised person, resented the changes effected by the British in the Muhammadan legal system, especially the abolition of the post of *Kazi-ul-Kurzat* and *Mufti*, who were traditional expounders of Muslim laws. In his opinion, the traditional religion-based system of Muslim justice in India should not be modified, not even for the sake of modernisation. Ameer Ali viewed the attempts of reforms by High Court and Privy Council, which considered the perpetuity of Muslim *Wakf* law entirely unrealistic and quite incompatible with the modern sense of justice, as a blatant attack upon the traditional social and religious norms of the Muslims.

The *Ashraf* exclusiveness projected itself sharply in its attitude towards language and culture. Fazle Rubbee, the Dewan of the Nawab of Murshidabad, emphasised in the book, *Origin of Muslims of Bengal*, on foreign descent of the Bengal Muslims. This appeared to be the essence of *Ashraf* outlook. Apart from leaders like Nawab Abdul Latif, Syed Ameer Ali and their associates, a large section of rural *Ashrafs*, the Sabirs of Rangpur, the Ghaznavis of Delduar, the Chowdhurys of Dhanbari, Mymensingh, the Suhrawardys of Midnapore, preferred Urdu and English to Bengali to underline their *Sharafati* and exclusiveness as well. The deliberations held either in *Anjuman-i-Islam* in Calcutta in early fifties of the 19th century⁴ or during the sixties in Abdul Latif's Literary Society were conducted either in Arabic, Persian or Urdu to the exclusion of Bengali. Even Syed Ameer Ali and his Central National Muhammadan Association

(CNMA), which evinced comparative liberalism, did not mark any significant departure from the cultural outlook of Abdul Latif's 'old elite' group; they rather wanted to make Urdu the vernacular of all groups of Bengali Muslims. In fact, the entire *Ashraf* or aristocrat group stubbornly refused to be identified with anything local. Neither in cultural heritage nor with regards to language did the *Ashrafs* of this region express their readiness to acknowledge their Bengali identity, and it surprisingly remained a permanent *Ashraf* feature all through the rest of the decades. As early as 1872, Moulvi Obaidullah Al-Obaidi Suhrawardy observed that women of some higher classes of Mussalmans of lower Bengal, especially of western districts, were so obsessed with their foreign descent or *Sharafati* or aristocracy that they disliked to dine at the same table with the ladies from families of indigenous origin.⁵ Almost after a century, a sociological survey of a few Dhaka aristocrat families conducted by Abdul Majed Khan in 1958 revealed that 'the social exclusiveness of these families was retained in the languages spoken in the family. The language in all cases were Persian and Urdu'.⁶ This sort of attitude not only isolated the *Ashraf* leaders from the Muslim masses but also stood in the way of coming to effective leadership position. Thus, this small coterie of urban, Urduophile aristocrats who made an attempt to articulate the grievances of the educated section failed to bring about any meaningful change in the society.

However, recent research has revealed that the growth of an educated land-holding or service-holding professional middle class was most uneven among the Muslims. Unlike the Uttar Pradesh urban Muslims who could retain their social and economic hold through the possession of land in large amounts and the retention of Urdu, the Bengal Muslims, the majority of whom were rural poor and illiterates, could not form a viable middle class. When compared with the Hindu society, this phenomenon came to be considered the most important drawback of the Bengali Muslim society.

However, the spread of education along with few important changes in the socio-economic sphere brought into existence a new educated and professional middle class whose upward thrusts

challenged and eventually replaced the *Ashraf* position. The impetus given to Muslim education by the *Ashraf* leaders, particularly Abdul Latif and Syed Ameer Ali, was of immense value and importance. The government's special efforts aimed at removing the educational disparity between the Muslims and the Hindus initiated in 1870-71 lasted through the eighties and nineties and saw a growing demand for modern education among the Muslim masses. Azizul Haq⁷ pointed out that between 1871 and 1881 the increase in number of Muslim students in different categories of educational institutions in Bengal was 9.4%, while another statistics showed an increase of 13% between 1882-83 and 1912-13. Although there existed some amount of initial hesitation in accepting education in secular institutions that lacked facilities for religious training and a consequent rush in *Makhtabs* and *Madrassas*, there were perceptible signs of a growing demand for modern education in some form. Circumstances like the spread of jute cultivation followed by rise in jute prices and the resultant prosperity and the lure of job opportunities under the British clearly strengthened the demand. The affluence brought about by jute cultivation enabled particularly the farmers of Eastern Bengal, a predominantly jute producing area, to send their wards to schools to obtain some education that offered a hope not only of a change in social status but, if circumstances were favourable, a government job now regarded as a respectable occupation. In certain cases economic and financial strains led to the acceptance of modern education.

The Calcutta University Commission in its report⁸ pointed out that a number of Muslim families in Eastern Bengal were forced to send their sons to schools due to their growing inability to support them from the income derived from land. The object was to provide some formal education that might help them finding employment leading to an easing of financial pressure on the family. All those factors, therefore, helped to swell the ranks of the educated Muslims. The majority of them belonged to a social hierarchy which did not come under the definition of *Ashraf* or artistocrats. In their bid to secure educational and employment opportunities they had often

outgrown *Ashraf* efforts and ultimately, wrested the mantle of leadership from the latter.

Unlike the Hindu middle class, which had a long tradition, a solid structure and a well-defined area of operation, the new Muslim middle class, as Dr Habibullah⁹ has pointed out, was structurally weak and lacked strength. Interestingly, this structural weakness was the symptom of an absence of ideological barrier to social mobility. Thus, an ordinary Muslim by virtue of his high official post or possession of wealth could establish himself as an aristocrat while an aristocrat may lose his rank on losing his wealth. Moreover, social mobility due to Islamic egalitarianism facilitated a kind of intra-sectional movement.

During the last few decades of the 19th century, the *Ashraf* fever caught the society and a brisk upward mobility became very pronounced as the lower order attempted to get entry into the *Ashraf* hierarchy. The census commissioner Gait, around 1901, expressed his surprise at the sudden increase in the number of the claimants who sought admission into the category of Shaikh alone. Many such claimants were formerly known as *Atrafs*. In Gait's opinion, they had only recently begun to claim this appellation.¹⁰ But surprisingly, there was no organised opposition from the *Ashrafs* towards these large-scale upward mobility by way of appropriation of the appellations traditionally used by the *Ashrafs*. The *Anjumans* too showed little or no signs of resistance to this development. For example, initially opposing it in 1901, during the next census in 1911, the government allowed the lower order among the Muslims, i.e. *jolahs* and *kolus*, to assume the much desired appellations of Shaikh and Pathan. This development, while on the one hand, signified brisk social mobility and Islamic identity as well, on the other hand initiated a process under which a new middle class recruited from various social hierarchies began to replace the old *Ashraf* leadership. The trend was further facilitated by marital alliances between the affluent middle class and the impoverished *Sharifs* which, in Delwar Hossain's opinion¹¹, became widespread, bringing about a consequent eviction of the *Ashrafs* from power.

Thus, by the turn of the century, the Bengali Muslim society witnessed the emergence of a middle class which by virtue of its growth and origin developed an outlook quite distinct from that of the erstwhile *Asharf* leaders. However, the socio-cultural background of the claimants could not be denied nor was there any sharp break with the local culture. Unlike the *Ashrafs*, while remaining keenly conscious of their Islamic identity, these newly upwardly mobile groups retained their language of expression as Bengali with a strong sense of attachment to local cultural values in their submerged consciousness. The social and educational background of the members of this class contributed to the distinctiveness of their outlook. A recent survey ¹² shows that during the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, twenty-four leading personalities of Muslim Bengal like Mir Mossarrat Hossain, Mohammad Naimuddin, Abdul Hamid Khan Yusufji, Kaikobad, Munshi Meherullah, Mohammad Reyazuddin Ahmed, Shaikh Abdur Rahim, Kazi Imdadul Haq, and Begum Rokeya were either reformers, writer-educationists, or preachers. Twenty-three of them, with the exception of Munshi Meherullah, who came from a rather poor family belonged to families of small or medium landholders or service holders. They themselves were professional people holding posts of teacher, estate manager, mukhter, munsif, sub-registrar or jute farm manager, thus forming a solid phalanx of a professional middle class. Further, a statistics of the list of Muslim graduates of Calcutta University (the Calendar for the year 1929, Pt. II, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1932, published by the University of Calcutta) between 1861 and 1905 shows that the majority of them graduated from colleges like Presidency, St. Xaviers, Beharampore, Rippon, Hooghly, Dhaka, Patna, Ravenshaw, and Rajshahi where they most probably had pursued secular education with some kind of acquaintance with the Bengali language. The result was that they could hardly escape the influence of their vernacular. Anisuzzaman ¹³ in his recent studies has shown that the Bengali Muslim litterateurs of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries had taken recourse to a chaste Bengali as their medium of expression, and their literary style and command over language had reached such a perfection that

sometimes they were mistaken as Hindu writers. Such was the case of Mir Mossarraf Hossain, the doyen among the early Muslim writers whose work *Ratnavati* earned high acclaim for its literary qualities at the *Calcutta Review*, the journal doubted whether its author was a Hindu under a Muslim pseudonym. The editor of the renowned Hindu conservative journal, *Sadhana*, was in high praise of *Mahaswasan* of poet Kaikobad for its high literary quality. Remarkably, this new class was more keen to bring about communal harmony, which appeared to be an all-India phenomenon. Francis Robinson¹⁴ has shown that during 1912 the Muslim League was captured by a group of young men belonging to a professional middle class who, apart from ousting the old aristocracy from leadership, attempted to make 'some kind of accommodation with the nationalist Hindus.'

The emerging Muslim middle class which opposed the Hindu middle class dominance in the field of education and employment and resented anti-Muslim attitude as evinced in the writings of Bankim or others, also called for mutual cooperation among the Hindus and the Muslims. Several instances are available where they had asked Hindu writers like Dakshinaranjan Mitra Mazumdar, Nikhilnath Ray, Ramapran Gupta and Girish Chandra Sen to contribute to their magazines, invited *Bramho* preachers to preside over Muslim religious congregations and published magazines and periodicals like *Ahmadi*, *Kohinoor* and *Nabanoor* with the avowed aim of establishing communal harmony. On the whole, the emergence of a middle class during the late 19th century and the first few decades of the 20th century, as distinct from the revivalist reformers or *Ashraf* leaders, was an important and significant development.

Rashid Al-Faruki¹⁵, in a very interesting analysis, has shown that between 1900 and 1930 almost all Bengali novels by Muslim authors faithfully reflected the emergence of this new middle class and attempted to establish an ethos and a set of values typical of it. Faruki, based on his study of novels, divided the contemporary Bengali Muslim middle class into four categories, namely, land-based middle class which could not wholeheartedly forsake feudal values; advanced middle class who despite their dependence on land and

having feudal origin was more progressive than the former; the purely professional middle class; and the affluent peasantry scrambling to the position of middle class. Thus, a number of powerful writers like Kazi Imdadul Haq, Muhammad Nurul Haq Chowdhury, Mohammad Abdul Hakim, Kazi Abdul Wadud, Nurunnesa Khatun (*Bidya Binodini*) and their works like *Syed Saheb*, *Pallisangsar*, *Abdullah*, *Gariber Meye*, *Azad*, *Anwara*, *Swapna Drishta* etc., not only registered the process of growth of this particular class but also sought to establish new values. For instance, the novel *Pallisangsar* of Mohammad Abdul Hakim depicted the life of an affluent peasant Giasuddin who established marital relation with an impoverished *Ashraf* family and was elevated to the position of a middle class *bhadralok*, while Kazi Imdadul Haq in his novel *Abdullah* glorified the character of a money-lender which violated Islamic sensibilities.

The emergence of this new middle class underlined important changes in the Muslim society. Although both the revivalists and the *Ashrafs* achieved considerable amount of success in forging a religious cohesiveness and forming communal solidarity, none of them put forward any meaningful programme of reform under which the Muslims of Bengal could establish themselves as a distinct social and cultural entity. The traditionalist-fundamentalist controversy of the late 19th century in the Bengali Muslim Society sharpened the Islamic sense of the community as a whole, but the question remained as to how far this rejuvenated sense or consciousness contributed to the growth of cultural distinctiveness. Neither did the *Ashraf* leadership achieve any success since their abnegation of Bengali language and culture, insistence on a foreign origin and, above all, the splendid isolation which they maintained from the common Muslim masses had made them more a liability than a necessity. The middle class leadership of later years rightly observed: "the *Ashrafs* bereft of religious education are scums of the human society."¹⁶ Hence the *Ashrafs* failed to provide any guideline to the newly emerged educated middle class for whom the nationalist upsurge and renaissance among the Bengali Hindus appeared as examples to be imitated. Plenty of references to national awakening or *jatiyo utthan*

had been made by several Muslim writers, authors and intellectuals, a good many of whom suggested various ways for social, religious, political and cultural revival, and a number of organisations and societies were started to give effect to the programme. But none could put forward any effective solution. The Muslim mind oscillated between an elevated sense of Islamic identity and Hindu cultural domination, which they thoroughly resented. Amidst these two mutually irreconcilables the educated Muslim middle class of the 20th century, who steered the cultural movement, could hardly find any means to establish their cultural exclusiveness, which was neither to be dominated by the non-Bengali Muslim culture as represented through Urdu nor to cringe before the dominant Bengali Hindu pattern. Although the rest of the 20th century until partition, this search for identity, therefore, remained the principal preoccupation of the community. The quest eventually assumed different characters and shapes with manifestations in areas of social behaviour, cultural attitude, and even in politics. In the course of these developments differences of opinion and understanding emerged, even divergent courses were suggested, but despite all diversities and distractions the principal note remained the assumption of a particular cultural form. The succeeding chapters therefore present an attempt to elucidate the story of the Bengal Muslims' battle for survival against so many odds.

Notes

1. Sambad Provakar stood witness to the facts that Abdul Latif's Muslim Literary Society undertook to present a few current and modern technical inventions and chemical experiments to broaden Muslim outlook.
2. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1855-1947*, Madras, 1986, p. 78.

- 12 *Bengal Muslims in Search of Social Identity 1905-47*
3. Abul Khair Nazmul Karim, *The Modern Muslim Political Elite in Bengal* (Unpublished Doctoral thesis), the University of London, 1994.
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Chapter 1

MOVEMENT OF IDEAS

The Wahhabi and the Faraizi movements exercised considerable influence on the minds of the Muslims of Bengal. The leaders of the uprisings might not have turned *Darul harb* into *Darul Islam*, but their efforts succeeded in rending the Muslim mind asunder on the religious issues. A furious controversy arose over what to do or not to do about the socio-religious life of the Muslims of this province, which had developed many syncretic tendencies. The debate went on unabated for nearly two decades while a flurry of religious activities during the late 19th century turned out to be the most remarkable development of the period. Neither did the fundamentalist-traditionalist controversy¹ cease to exist nor was there any dramatic change in the life of an average Bengali Muslim. But the entire episode of conflict and confrontation gave birth to a sharp sense of separate Islamic identity—an overzealous respect for the faith.

The change in the social scene, when the 19th century rolled into the 20th century, was marked by the emergence of an educated middle class who, apart from taking control of the social regeneration movement, added a new dimension—an intellectual fervour—to the controversy. More specifically, debates and polemics regarding the socio-religious life of the Bengal Muslims henceforth were couched in different terms. The discussions became more academic and intellectual than theological. The new initiative in social and religious action came from three distinct groups; first, orthodox, clinging to the basic form of Ulema-ridden Islam; second, the moderate revisionists,

trying to create a *modus vivendi* between the orthodox ideology and a radical position; and third, the radicals who, on the whole, gave a novel and a most fascinating connotation to Islam.

Interestingly, a few of the contemporary magazines and periodicals functioned as mouthpieces of different groups. For example, while *Islam Procharok*, *Islam Darshan*, *Ahle Hadith*, *Al-Islam*, *Din-Duniya*, *Shariat*, *Masjid* and the like presented the orthodox viewpoint, *Mohammadi* championed the moderate opinion. *Sikha*, *Jagoran*, *Moslem Bharat* and *Saogat* preached radical ideas in support of a more rational outlook. However, it would be wrong to assume that each of these different categories of opinions formed single, cohesive and well-integrated groups. Intra-sectional squabbles, allegations and counter-allegations on theology, Islamic norms and social behaviour became distinctive features of their movement.

The Orthodoxy

The movement of ideas among different orthodox sections produced a growing consciousness amidst the community. The majority of the Muslims in Bengal belonged to the Sunni *Majhab* which was further divided into two major sub-sections, i.e. Hanafi and Mohammadi. The Hanafis were named after Abu Hanifa and grew out of the main body of the ancient school of Kufa and observed the ancient school of Basra too.² The principal feature of this sect was that it owed allegiance to four Imams and accordingly was further divided into four sub-groups like Hanafi, Shafe'i, Maleki, and Hanbali. A Hanafi could owe allegiance to any one of the schools of opinion.³ Basically any difference hardly existed between the Hanafis and the *Pirs*. In fact, the *Pirs* often called themselves Hanafis and the Hanafis too did not altogether discard *Pirism*.⁴ The Mohammadis, on the other hand, were more fundamentalist. They held the same view as early *ashab al-Hadith* or *Ahle Hadith* as opposed to *ahle ray*. They did not hold themselves bound by *taklid* or obedience to any of the four recognised Imams of *fikha* schools, but considered themselves free to seek guidance in matters of religious faith and practice from the authentic traditions which, together with the Qur'an was in their view the only

dependable guide for true Muslims. Actually, *Ahle Hadith* or *Mahammadis* wanted to go back to early-day principles and to restore the original simplicity and purity of faith and practice. Emphasis was therefore put in particular on the reassertion of *tawhid* or the unity of Allah and the denial of occult power and knowledge of the hidden things (*ilm al-ghayb*) to any of his creatures. This involved a rejection of the miraculous powers of saints and of the exaggerated veneration paid to them and marked the Muhammadi's thorough aversion to *Pirism*. They also made every effort to eradicate customs that might be traced either to innovation (*bida*) or to Hindu, or other non-Islamic systems. In all this, their reformist programme bore a striking resemblance to that of the Wahhabi of Arabia; and, as a matter of fact, their adversaries often nicknamed them Wahhabis, an appellation which they repudiated on the ground that their tenets were not derived from the Arabian Wahhabis who were themselves *mukallids* in the sense that they followed the opinions of Ahmed Hanbal in legal matters.⁵

The most striking feature of socio-religious life of Bengal Muslims during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was perhaps the conflict between Hanafis and Muhammadi's over some religious trifles. The principal one centred round the performance of *Namaz*, particularly regarding *Rafa Yadin*, *Rekat* and *Juma*.⁶ Besides this, the last word of Sura Fateha, whether it should be *Dallin* or *Jallin* created a lot of controversy between the two.⁷

The Muslims of this province rallied round each of their favoured sects and this theological debate eventually began to dominate their social relations. Interestingly, the Hanafi-Mohammadi conflict did not remain confined to the rural masses. The educated middle class took up the controversy and launched organised campaigns against each other. Even a few periodicals and magazines were published to highlight the respective points of view claiming superiority over the others. Thus magazines like *Akhbare Islamia* from Karotiya (Tangail) and *Ahamadi* from Delduar appeared as spokesmen respectively, of Hanafi and Mohammadi. While two renowned periodicals like *Sudhakar* and *Procharak* of Calcutta and *Hanafi* of

Mymensingh were exponents of Hanafi ideologies, *Mohammadi* edited by Maulana Akram Khan initially supported the Mohammadi viewpoint. Apart from these periodicals a number of books, booklets and brochures like *Insaf Arthath La Majhabider Dhokabhanjan*, *Estate Akhr Johar* (1891), *Rafa Yadin* (1896), *Radde La Majhabi* (1897), *Sayefal Momenin* (1815), *Samsamal Maoahedin* (1887) presented the spectacle of a sectarian conflict.⁸

Within the first two decades of the 20th century the conflict between the Hanafi and the Mohammadi became more pronounced and mutual attacks and allegations became more organised. While the Mohammadis established *Anjumane Ahle Hadith* and began publishing *Ahle-Hadith* magazine as their mouthpiece, the Hanafis of Bengal rallied round their organisation *Anjuman Wayezine Hanafia Bangala* and hurled abuses upon their Mohammadi opponents through their journal *Islam-Darshan*. It was the trio of Muhammad Babar Ali, Muhammad Abdul Kashim and Mohammed Efazuddin who fought against the attack of the Hanafi exponents while the charges of Hanafis centred round few religious nicities.⁹ The man who spearheaded the Hanafi attack against the Mohammadis was possibly Ruhul Amin. A devout disciple of Abu Bakr, the *Furfura Pir*, this overzealous preacher of the Hanafi *Majhab* brought forth several books and booklets like *Karamate-Ahamadia*¹⁰, *Tasaof Tatva*¹¹, *Fatwa*¹², *Saekatal Moslemin*¹³, *Hanafi Fekahatatva*¹⁴, *Kameyal-Mobtadeyin*, *Fi-Radde Cheyanatal-Momenin*,¹⁵ *Borhanel Mokalledin*¹⁶, *Grame Juma*¹⁷, *Bagmari Fakirer Dhoka Bhajan*¹⁸, and *Ibtalol-Batel*¹⁹, during the first two decades of the 20th century. Apart from raising a bulwark against Mohammadi onslaught, the writings marked his attempts to vindicate the Hanafi position in Bengal. The Mohammadis did not sit idle either. *Ahle-Hadith*, the monthly magazine of the *Anjumane Ahle Hadith Samiti*, under the leadership of Muhammad Abdul Hakim and Muhammad Babar Ali, devoted all its energy and attention to denigrate the Hanafi faith.²⁰ In one of his editorials, Babar Ali bluntly accused the Hanafis of perpetrating all sorts of torture and crime upon the persons of Hanafi faith, ranging from expulsion from Masjid to physical assault. Babar Ali even

mentioned an incident that after the death of an old Mohammadi at Panigobra in 24-Parganas, Ruhul Amin, the Hanafi exponent, refused to perform *janaja* (burial prayers and offer).²¹

Interestingly, one way to counter the opposition's attack was to convene a *bahas* or religious debate, which became quite a common event in the last quarter of the 19th century.²² But the point of difference between the 19th century *bahas* and the 20th century ones was that the latter were more organised and received patronage from a motley group of urban or semi-urban elite. Thus two gentlemen, Muhammad Omar Ali Molla and Ahmad Ali Karigar from Balihatta, Pandua, in a desperate appeal made on 22 Agrahayana 1323 BS²³ to the editors of *Ahle Hadith* sought protection of the *Anjuman* from the reign of terror let loose by Hanafi leaders like Solayman Mian, Jabu Mian, Yusuf Mian, and Ibrahim Karigar, who had been putting pressure on local Mohammadis to profess Hanafi faith. Instead of taking recourse to self-mobilisation they preferred to summon the urban leadership to bring succour to them. Equally interesting was the thoroughness with which those religious debates were carried on. In several cases, well before the holding of *bahas*, an *Ekrarnama* or a contract was made between the two rival parties to avoid future complications. Apart from the venue and fine, the *Ekrarnama* contained an undertaking that the vanquished would profess the faith of the victor.²⁴ Brochures or booklets like *Radde Hanafi O Majhab Darpan*²⁵ or *Taharima O Idayenal Machayel Chahi Hucchabuto Dhalayel*²⁶ by Munshi Muhammad Habiluddin not only contained clarifications of Mohammadi principles but also launched attacks upon the Hanafi school. Even a Mohammadi like Maulana Akram Khan, the editor of *Mohammadi*, was not spared for his liberalism (Appendix1).

Remarkably, sectarian clashes and controversies among different orthodox groups did not last long. Within the early twenties of this century, the heat began to cool off, excepting a few sporadic incidents like Pabna controversy of 25 April 1923 during which the District Magistrate and the DSP of Pabna town had a trying time to soothe ruffled feelings between the Hanafis and the Mohammadis.²⁷ On the

whole, the orthodoxy of the Bengali Muslims in the 1930s did not come out in the form of *bahas*, even though the values they entertained came into conflict with the moderates and more with the radicals who wanted to effect changes in socio-religious plane.

The Moderates

Initially, the fight started between the die-hard orthodox and the moderate revisionists over some basic and familiar issues like *Purdah*, fine arts, usury (Appendix 2) and widow remarriage. The point to be settled was whether all those practices had the sanction of Islam (*Jayez*) or not (*Na-Jayez*). Among all the issues *Purdah* became a hot one which attracted the attention from a large section of people, ranging from village *mollahs* to highly educated and sophisticated thinkers and social workers. The *Purdah* was an essential Islamic social practice prevalent among all sections of the Muslim women-folk, but its erosion among them was profusely regretted by a section of social reformers and thinkers who clamoured for its reimposition, and advocated stringent restrictions on the free movement of women²⁸ (Appendix 3). Thus a number of writers like Alauddin Ahmed, Muhammad K. Chand, Ismail Hussain Shiraji, Muhammad Golam Hossain, Ebne Maez, S.A. Al-Mausavi, Naoser Ali Khan Yusufji, and Khairunnesa Khatun, advocated *Purdah*, ridiculed and sometimes admonished those thinkers or reformers who opted for laxity²⁹ (Appendix 4).

But ideas of the orthodox section never went unchallenged. The most vehement attack against the orthodox ideology came from one lady, Begum Rokeya, the sole exponent of Women's Liberation Movement, who raised a voice against male domination. The most important work of Rokeya was *Motichur* in which the authoress advocated higher education for the Bengali Muslim women.³⁰ Surprisingly enough, Rokeya never went against the idea of *Purda*³¹, but she protested against the rigidity with which it was practised among the Muslim women. In fact, the idea of giving unbounded freedom to women so that they might lead a public life that was revolting to their sense of Islamic religious sanction. Even Maulana

Akram Khan, the editor of *Mohammadi*, a spokesman of the moderate section, had taken the members of the *Bangiyo Parishilan Samity*, the Muslim Youth Organisation, to task for organising a musical soiree at the University Institute Hall, Calcutta, in which some Muslim girls were supposed to perform dances.³² Still he had the good sense to oppose the *Fatwa* of the *Jamayate Ulamaye* ostracising those youths either from the organisers or from the audience.³³ However, taking the cue from Rokeya other thinkers and writers like Abdus Salam, Mrs M. Rahaman, Yarikul Alam, Abdul Karim, Moulvi Abdur Rahman, Taifur, Sufia Khatoon, Afzalunnesa, Amina Khatoon, Abdul Muzaffar Ahmed, Kazi Imdadul Haque, and Fatema Khanam had turned the solitary attempt into a concerted movement.³⁴ In April 1921, Muslim Bengal witnessed the emergence of the first women's magazine, *Annesa*, edited by Begum Sufia Khatoon.

The controversy over *Purdah* was not the sole instance of the polarisation of the Muslim population. Issues like music or singing and painting of pictures and portraits saw a fairly large number of intellectuals furiously debating over the question whether those had religious sanction or not. On two particular issues, the orthodox came into conflict with the moderates: first, regarding the sanction of playing music or singing songs in Islamic religion and, second, about the religious sanction bestowed on drawing pictures, specially portraits. The question of music was hotly debated. Music had always been a sensitive issue for the Muslim masses that had caused a number of communal clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Music, according to the orthodox, was unreligious. Through a number of articles, scattered in contemporary Muslim magazines and even in religious congregations, the orthodox Muslims strove to prove that in Islam singing, dancing and painting, specially portraits, were against the religious sanction. As far back as 1905, Mohammad Reazuddin Ahmed and Mozammel Haque, two exponents of social reforms, decried the ways of a few Muslim zamindars of Dhaka, Calcutta and Murshidabad, who enjoyed and patronised dance and music by

nautch girls.³⁵ Their voice was echoed during the second decade of the 20th century when writers like Ruhul Amin, Muhammad Abdul Hakim, and Maulana Afsaruddin Ahmed began to implore the Muslims to consider dancing and music as entirely un-Islamic³⁶ and painting without religious sanction. Thus Mohammed Efazuddin, one of the contributors to *Ahle- Hadith*, a Muslim monthly magazine, expressing the orthodox view point, made a trenchant attack on the editor of *Mohammadi* for publishing an advertisement depicting a bicycle rider³⁷ while the editor of the magazine, *Banga-Noor*, questioned the ulterior purpose of the editor of the magazine, *Noor*, Munshi Ismail Hossain Shiraji who, on the front cover page of the first issue of the magazine, published a picture of an equestrian.³⁸ Even the literary works could not escape the scrutiny of the orthodox, who found fault with those which were supposed to contain un-Islamic traits. For example, the famous poet Kaikobad, *alias* Mohammad Kazeem Al Qureshi was taken to task for his work *Mahashmashan*, which according to Munshi Reazuddin Ahmed and Sayed Emdad Ali (*Nabanoor* editor) contained ideas and words highly objectionable to Islamic belief.³⁹ Even S. Wajed Ali was warned by the editor of *Islam Darshan*, Abdul Hakim, not to violate *sharia* laws, since in a story titled *Tara*, which was published in *Islam Darshan*, Wajed Ali narrated a romantic episode between a Muslim boy Jalil and a Hindu girl Tara, who parted from each other with a kiss.⁴⁰

The orthodox invectives did not go unanswered. Soon brochures, articles and booklets were published to combat orthodox ideas. The most remarkable of such a lot came out in 1903 from Kakina, Rangpur, when Shaikh Fazlul Karim published a booklet called *Asbat Us-Chamau ba Chamau Tattva*. Although the book was aimed at opposing the logic of one Moulvi Abdul Lateef of Kakina who preached exclusion of singing from all Islamic activities, in general, it was a treatise in favour of music or singing.⁴¹ But the most powerful and intelligent argument in favour of retaining fine arts specially dancing and music was put forward by Maulana Akram Khan, the editor of *Mohammadi*, the doyen among the moderates.⁴² In a serial called *Chitrakala-o-Islam*⁴³, buttressed by authentic references from the

Qur'an and other Islamic religious texts, Akram Khan tried to prove that there existed no apparent or real clash between Islamic religious doctrine and drawing of pictures. Akram Khan's critique of the orthodox became more trenchant when he, in the form of a serial, published a number of articles under the heading *Samasya-o-Samadhan* in the *Mohammadi*. Akram Khan closely scrutinised the socio-religious malady of the Bengal Muslims and carefully categorised them to draw popular attention. The list which he presented contained six principal maladies regarding usury and its sanction in Islam, music, painting and sculpture, *Purdah*, and *Majhab* giving birth to disunity, and claim to aristocracy rendering the society polarised.⁴⁴ Ideas expressed in the serial, which later came out in a book form, was considered a bulwark of the moderates against all sorts of orthodox positions. At the same time, it was a strong reprimand against radical licentiousness. Akram Khan had a dual purpose in initiating a debate on social reform through these articles. First, he urged the *ulemas* and *mollahs* not to tarnish the image of Islam by ignoring *Ezma* and *Kiyas*. He held them responsible for the present stagnation of the Muslim society through their opportunistic attitude, ignorance of the true spirit of the Scripture, superficial observance of social and religious niceties, blind faith in the written words together with a strong and rigid attitude to any kind of reform and their love for ceremonialism, which had confused the masses. Instead of deriving their inspiration from the express and positive declarations of the Qur'an they had derived them from the legal—religious books of Islam with which contemporary Bengal was flooded.⁴⁵ Second, he reprimanded the radicals for their attempts to belittle the religion of Islam by subjecting the creed to change through individual interpretations of it. Islam as a faith and doctrine, in the eyes of Akram Khan, was supposed to be an eternal and an all-prevailing omnipotent force, beyond the reach of any individual interpretation. He squarely blamed the schoolmen of Islam in Bengal whose obduracy and ceremonialism had rendered it a socially immobile force, taking advantage of which the rebel or the radical section was ready to denigrate it.⁴⁶

During the second half of the twentieth century Bengal witnessed the phenomenon of Bengal Muslim intellectuals giving different interpretations to Islam to turn it into a socially dynamic force. While moderates like Akram Khan or radicals like Abul Hossain, or Kazi Abdul Wadud looked forward towards a reformed and rejuvenated Bengali Muslim society based on values and principles helpful for development and modern scientific thinking, orthodox like Dewan Shamsuddin Nitpuri and Abdul Hamid clung to obscurantism and patristic attitude and denied the fact that exigencies of the situation demanded a thorough analysis of the Qur'anic *suras* and *sharia* and the basic texts of Islam to make them accommodative to change. This inflexible attitude of the orthodox clashed with the ideas of the moderates. But the moderates, on their part, wanted to keep reform in harness, lest it should violate the sentiment of the common Muslim masses and, as such, was opposed to the radical point of view hostile to the idea of any piecemeal change. The radicals wanted to present Islam in a new garb, to highlight the philanthropic appeal in Islam rather than as a sectional religion serving the purpose of a developing minority and fighting a losing battle with a powerful Bengali Hindu middle class. These complexities and intersectional, sometimes intrasectional, clashes make a fascinating study of the Bengali Muslim socio-religious behaviour and thinking.

It all started with the concept of infallibility ingrained in the traditional interpretation of Islam. That Islam or Islamic sanctions had unquestioned and unequivocal supremacy over human conscience was the basic and pet idea of the orthodox. Inquisitiveness was considered to be an impiety and an unforgivable sin and any spirit of inquiry was strangled to death. Every religious sanction, however out of date, or however outrageous, must be accepted *bila kaifa* without why or wherefor. This concept of the orthodox, although not in consonance with the true religious spirit of Islam, had been their guiding force. During the late 19th and the early 20th centuries or even earlier, while Muslim Bengal was locked into conflict over various modes of reforms, the veracity of the particular faith was never questioned. The chequered history of Islam in Bengal witnessed

many changes, but no one dared touch the core of the Islamic faith, to give a significant explanation of the tenets of the faith, to provide it with a hominocentric philosophy, and, above all, to establish the human qualities of the divine character of the apostle Muhammad (SM), the most chosen one of Allah. For these reasons even during the second decade of the 20th century a well-known literati like Shaikh Habibur Rahaman *Sahitya Ratna* could comment, 'every Muslim must have faith in the basic tenets of Islam whether he understands or not. This unflinching belief is called *iman*.'⁴⁷ Again, in his presidential address to the Sirajganj Conference (1919) of the *Anjuman-e-Wayezine*, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury categorically stated religion (*Gayeb O Lahut*) and knowledge (*Sahadat O Nasut*) formed two completely separate domains and one should not encroach upon the boundary of the other which would be highly undesirable and unethical if human knowledge attempted to probe into the mysteries of the religious world.⁴⁸

Maulana Akram Khan, as a person of modern outlook, was against the orthodox contention, but at the same time he could not accept the viewpoints of the radicals who wanted to reduce religion to pure logic and in a veiled way perhaps supported anthropomorphism. His reforming zeal was half-way between modernity and traditionalism, since he was in a constant fear of losing the support of the Bengali Muslim masses, who might not favour a sharp departure from the accepted form of Islam. The radicals on the other hand, drawing inspiration from the celebrated *Mutazilites*, took recourse to rationalism directed towards restoring analytical reasoning among Bengali Muslims to help them break the bondage of Islamic *Fatwas* and bring about a significant change in the socio-religious outlook.

In the holy Qur'an the supreme value of learning and science has been properly accredited.⁴⁹ This particular Qur'anic idea gained an intellectual explanation after being carefully nurtured by a group of the 8th-9th century Arab thinkers and philosophers known as *Mutazilas*⁵⁰ who gave birth to a new science called *Ilm-ul-Kalam* or the science of reason.⁵¹ This legacy of Mutazila thought was carried on by the 20th century Bengali thinkers like Kazi Abdul Wadud, Abul

Hossain and Kazi Imdadul Haque to a logical conclusion, i.e. the doctrine of emancipation of the intellect, making the breach with the orthodox and the moderates thorough and complete.⁵²

The Radicals

The idea of the radicals materialised in 1926 in Dhaka when they founded the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* and published *Sikha* as its mouthpiece.⁵³ The novelty of approach among the *Sikha* group was that they preached the doctrine of emancipation of intellect with fervour and traced its origin partly to the middle eastern thinkers and partly to the basic folk culture of Bengal. Kazi Abdul Wadud, thus, pointed out three principal causes leading to the emergence of the cult of emancipation of intellect. First, he argued that orthodox Islamic doctrines had little influence on the common Muslim masses of Bengal and they spontaneously reacted with disfavour when attempts were made to impose the religious sanctions of Islam on them. Second, the Muslims of Bengal had been more influenced by the catholicity of the folk culture and philosophy of Bengal than by the Islamic scriptures.⁵⁴ Third, the movement for emancipation of the intellect among the Hindu intellegentsia had deeply influenced the Muslim counterparts. Abdul Wadud in this connection drew attention to *Shesh Prasna*, a novel by Sarat Chandra.⁵⁵ His position was that it would be futile to try to train the Muslim masses of Bengal in *shariah* while ignoring the basic element of folk culture enriched by *Baul*, *Sufi*, and *Vaishnav* philosophy among the illiterate Bengali Muslims.⁵⁶ In fact, the fundamental element present in Abdul Wadud's thought based on humanism and liberalism ran contrary to the idea of obscurantism present in the common version of Islam. Akram Khan had made a bold step forward, but in Abdul Wadud's judgement this mission did not emanate from any pious wish to thoroughly reform Islam, but was under duress. While a kind of social dynamism had been breaking the century-long staganation of thought and taboos among the Bengal Muslims, Akram Khan made half-hearted attempts to reform Islam by making a show of protest against the *Fatwas* of *Mollahs* for the exclusion of dance, music and painting

from their cultural life in the name of keeping religious sanctity.⁵⁷ Abdul Wadud challenged Akram Khan by making a trenchant attack on his ambivalence by publishing (1333 BS) a collection of articles called *Naba Paryaya* in which the most controversial one was *Sanmohito Mussalman*⁵⁸ where Abdul Wadud raised an extremely controversial issue—the character of the Prophet (SM) to find out the human qualities possessed by him. He pointed out that as long as the schoolmen of Islam, the *mollahs*, worshipped Muhammad (SM) as an idol instead of paying respect to the stupendous task he had chosen to realise the power and munificence of Allah, they ignored the basic struggle he waged althrough his life. Most importantly, the *Mollahs* made almost no allowance for the fact that any individual possessing the same qualities as Muhammad (SM) could attain his position or surpass him through prolonged and painstaking efforts.⁵⁹

The reason for this phenomenon—this hopeless lack of rationality with which canons were invented, theories started, traditions disocvered and glosses were put upon the words of Muhammad (SM) utterly at variance with their spirit was that the religious scholars were not ready to allow the slightest deviation from the *Shariah*. They abandoned their judgement absolutely to the interpretation of men ‘who lived in the ninth century and could have no conception of the necessities of the twentieth’.⁶⁰ Abdul Wadud was joined in his battle against those moderate revisionists, whom he termed as ‘Rational *Shariatist*’⁶¹ by his compatriot Abul Hussain, Professor of the Dhaka University.⁶² Hussain faithfully echoed Abdul Wadud’s voice and gave a novel interpretation to Muhammad (SM)’s words, *Takhalakkuhu-bi-Akhlakillahu*, by which Muhammad (SM) asked his followers to create the attributes of Allah within themselves. Hussain pointed out that by those words Muhammad (SM) had given a veiled suggestion to his followers to attain the qualities of his own individuality and, if possible, to surpass him.⁶³ To establish the truth of inevitable social change among the Muslims through a process of rationalisation, Hussain soon published three very important articles named *Nishedher Birambana*⁶⁴, *Adesher Nigraha*⁶⁵ and *Fikha Phoebea*⁶⁶, which created a stir among the revisionists.

Wadud and Hussain's ideas sounded far-fetched to the rest of the educated Muslims. Their viewpoint was soon challenged and the first volley was fired by Akram Khan. The emergence of the *Sikha* group and the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* was already not favoured by the moderates who thought that they patronised licentiousness in the name of reform. This particular attitude was expressed in a number of highly critical articles published in *Soltan* and *Mohammadi* hurling abuses.⁶⁷ Abdul Wadud gave a fitting reply to all these invectives when, on 30 November 1927, he published a letter in *Dainik Soltan* making a trenchant criticism of Akram Khan's *magnum opus*, the *Mostafa Charit*, which he found to be insignificant and fruitless.⁶⁸ Abdul Wadud, a liberal humanist, opposed the 'Rational *shariatists*' position that Muhammad (SM) was *Khatemunnabe-in* which meant he was Allah's last Messenger and possessed in him all required qualities of unimpeachable character. He pointed out that it was the prime error of the moderates that they ignored the basic human qualities of Muhammad (SM), placed him in a superhuman position and idolised him.⁶⁹ At the same time, he resented their attempt to brow-beat the *Sikha* group and finding fault with it. He reminded them that the period of unimaginative and irrational thinking was over.⁷⁰ Not alone in the evaluation of the character of Muhammad (SM), Abdul Wadud implored the entire Muslim society to be rationalistic and asked it to judge all the socio-religious problems with the aid of this sign and to raise a protest against clericalism.

Initially, Abdul Wadud's idea was protested in an article named *Dhristatar Parakashtha* which came out in *Mohammadi*⁷¹, but the major thrust came from Akram Khan in a serial named *Nabaparyaya Na Nabaparya* in *Mohammadi*, that challenged Abdul Wadud's basic ideas.⁷² The serial indicted him and his co-thinkers of insisting that the English educated Muslim youth held views opposed to traditional ideas and ceremonies.⁷³ In a fitting reply to Akram Khan's critique of Abdul Wadud, his comrade Abul Hossain soon published an article, *Sab-Janta* in the radical magazine *Jagaran*. Here, Hossain's attack on the moderate revisionists was more pungent than that of Abdul

Wadud. He stressed the utility of reason and freedom in exploring the depth of social problems of the Bengal Muslims.⁷⁴ Hossain admitted that the reason was that the Muslims, especially those of Bengal, had failed to come out of the charmed circle of The Qur'an and Hadith⁷⁵ and had thus become oblivious of the basic fact that Islamic religion and its tenets should be made subject to changes in accordance with the social transformations.⁷⁶ Hossain maintained that it was not Wadud who alone wanted to bring about a qualitative change in the Islamic religion. Both of their concern was with a change in the attitude of the religious doctors and a section of social reformers so that they could accept modernism and evaluate all the important issues, including the Qur'an with the aid of their intellect.⁷⁷ He, however, categorically stated that he was not holding the Qur'an in any kind of disregard. He only wanted the Bengal Muslims to evaluate the Qur'an in a new light and shed their dogmatism.⁷⁸

Hossain's explanation, which was a sort of apology, was readily accepted by Akram Khan. In a hastily prepared editorial in *Masik Mohammadi* Akram Khan freed them of all charges of impiety and irreligiousness due to the fact that they accepted the authority of the Qur'an and Hadith.⁷⁹ However, Akram Khan was not spared. This time he, along with the editor of the *Mussalman* Moulvi Mujibar Rahman Khan, another protector of the faith, had to face a fusillade of fire from S. Ahmad Ali, the editor of *Jagaran*, an adjuvant of *Sikha*.⁸⁰ The principal charge hurled against them was the perpetuation of dogmatism. He pointed out that time was already over to deliver patristic sermon against knowledge and rationality, the formula which they prepared for solving all the issues that had become obsolete, and they should remember that the Bengal Muslim Society had been undergoing a new renaissance which the so-called 'atheists' of Dhaka had initiated.⁸¹ In fact, the controversy continued unabated, infused with the spirit of inquiry which the *Sikha* group had initiated, and continued to strike a discordant note in the ears of those revisionists.

Maulana Akram Khan, in spite of being anti-radical, had grown some kind of rapport with the lawyer-turned-writer S. Wajed Ali.

Cambridge-trained barristar S. Wajed Ali did not actually belong to the *Sikha* group nor did he share the views of that group. But even though Wajed Ali and the stalwarts of the *Sikha* group were clubbed together, a nuanced difference existed between the two. The former stressed the unequivocal acceptance of the role of reason in human effort and the idea of the free individual as the seat of reason, yet he was, to a certain extent, a believer in the faith that the Qur'an, as containing the words of Allah, should be left unaltered and unchallenged. The latter, on the other hand, were thoroughbred rationalists ready to go to any extent to bring about changes requisite for social mobility. As a thinker, Wajed Ali was unique by himself. He was far from the bizzare ideas of the orthodox, and yet could not move in unison with the moderate revisionists, and kept a splendid isolation from the Dhaka intellectuals. He got visions entirely of his own and held quite radical concepts in favour of change and reform. As an epistemologist, Wajed Ali had accepted the truth of *Muslehatul Wakt* or the necessities of time, and never failed to appreciate the urgency of the need for changes in socio-religious norms to make them more accommodative to social mobility.⁸² In fact, Wajed Ali gave a direction to the anti-*Mollah* campaign of the Dhaka intellectuals not only by condemning them⁸³ or by patronising the Muslim youths taking part in cultural activities on which the *Mollah* and Maulvi had imposed bans but by distinctly pointing out their mockery and weakness leading to erosion of their influence on the society.⁸⁴

Wajed Ali attacked those *Mollahs* for their opposition towards everything which went against the fundamental concept of Islam. In an eloquent article entitled the *Need of Protest against Mohammadan Orthodoxy* published in the *Forward*,⁸⁵ Wajed Ali sharply criticised a contributor who in the *By the way* column of the *Mussalman*,⁸⁶ had condemned the spending of money in a 'wasteful manner' by the majority of Muslims during *Shab-i-barat* festival, particularly the rejoicing, which came into conflict with the idea of Islamic austerity. Wajed Ali clearly pointed out that the leaders of the community, particularly those religious doctors had grievously erred and had possibly been continuing the same mistake in putting unnecessary

restrictions in the way of young persons trying to get a little fun out of their monotonous life. In doing this they were not only injuring the young persons but were also injuring the great religion in whose interests they pretended to wield the moralistic iron sceptre.

Upto a certain extent both S. Wajed Ali and the Dhaka intellectuals moved conjointly, but when the question of interpreting the Qur'an appeared, Wajed Ali begged to differ. It was a declared principle of the Dhaka intellectuals that, depending on the primacy of the development of radicalism, they wanted to determine the course of social development by presenting a thoroughly rationalistic connotation of the Qur'an, and, in this project, they included the holy Book—its dogma, rituals and philosophy. Wajed Ali's opinion was that such an all-embracing effort to explore the Qur'an might entail consequences that would jeopardise the very faith of Islam. Religion, Wajed Ali pointed out, contained two very important aspects. An intellectual aspect, which might be called philosophy, and a practical aspect which could be called dogma, that included the rituals or outward observance. This intellectual aspect was ultimately transformed into faith and had its genesis not in reason but in instinct. Following the celebrated philosopher Henri Bergson, Wajed Ali wanted to drive home the point that faith was the ultimate truth which should not be evaluated by reason, since reason might serve as a powerful obstacle against the recognition of truth, masking anxiety by a quest for certainty, perpetuating illusion by elaborate rationalisation.⁸⁷ Wajed Ali's position was, however, remarkably different when he referred to the need for modulation of religious niceties in accordance with the social requirements. In fact, herein he was a staunch Mutazilite, reposed his faith on the ideas of Abu Hanifa who prescribed the use of *Qiyas* or inferential reasoning to modernise Islam.⁸⁸

S. Wajed Ali's contention was not wholeheartedly accepted by the moderates on behalf of whom Akram Khan put forward a critique in *Masik Mohammadi* which partly denigrated it and partly extolled.⁸⁹ Akram Khan was sharply critical of Wajed Ali where he was against the Qur'an. Otherwise he appreciated Wajed Ali's idea of initiating

reforms within the framework of the Qura'nic sanction. S. Wajed Ali, however, gave a ready reply to Akram Khan's charge by simply reintroducing the idea that change in religious niceties was imperative for ensuring social awakening among the Bengal Muslims,⁹⁰ and that he was quite serious about the introduction of rationalism while evaluating Islam. Of course, he reserved his opinion regarding the true spirit of the religion which he saw as a matter of individual choice out of the purview of any sort of controversy.⁹¹ In S. Wajed Ali one finds a remarkable combination of two apparently contradictory ideas; an earnest belief in the sovereignty of reason with a deep trust in the Islamic philosophy and in the personality and teachings of Muhammad (SM). This dual characteristic of his ideas, particularly his unique and unflinching faith in religion, had endeared him to revisionists like Akram Khan who could not perceive anything beyond the accepted principle. For this reason the powerful Mohammadi group had preferred to make rapprochement with the 'atheist-rationalist' like S. Wajed Ali, rather than with the 'atheist-Revolutionary' like the Dhaka intellectuals.⁹² What made the Mohammadi-S. Wajed Ali alliance feasible, largely contributed to the divergence of opinions between S. Wajed Ali and the Dhaka intellectuals. The Dhaka intellectuals had already gained reputation of being thoroughbred rationalists who opted for complete analysis and understanding of the Qur'an and teachings of Muhammad (SM) in a scientific spirit. S. Wajed Ali was an equally staunch believer in the cult of reason but differed with the Dhaka intellectuals on the issue of religious philosophy. A die-hard theist, he failed to reconcile himself with the idea of subjecting the Qur'anic principles to scrutiny and analysis, nor could he tolerate any departure from the accepted version of Islamic philosophy in which Allah has been presented as an omnipotent force beyond the conceivable limit of human knowledge.

Soon this difference of opinion grew into a literary duel between the two. It started with the publication of an article *Taruner Sadhana* by Abul Hossain in the monthly *Saogat*.⁹³ There the author implored the Muslim youths, the students in particular, to cultivate knowledge, to get rid of old religious superstition and values, and to follow the

ways of Rammohan, who held cultivation of knowledge and humanity in high esteem. Spiritualism divorced from materialism, Hossain held, was unable to enrich human life, hence the religion which did not take cognizance of the realities of life was futile.⁹⁴ Wajed Ali replied ridiculing Hossain in an article in the *Mohammadi*.⁹⁵ The rebuttal came from Kazi Motahar Hossain, a *Sikha* radical, in the form of an article also published by *Mohammadi*. Taking the cue from S. Wajed Ali, one protagonist of the *Mohammadi* group, Nazir Ahmed Chowdhury, through his article *Bangali Mussalmaner Sahitya Sadhana* castigated Motahar Hossain as well as Abul Hossain for their preachings which provoked the Muslims to ignore the glorious past of Islam, which should always remain a source of inspiration for them.⁹⁶ Moreover, he pointed out that this group of pseudo-intellectuals had not only made alliance with the Hindus, but were also eager to debase and defame Islam.⁹⁷

Drift Towards Segregation

This intellectual debate went unabated for decades and the outcome was remarkable. Initially, the radicalism of the Dhaka intellectuals registered success. In the face of every odd, the 'young lions' of the *Sikha* group succeeded in establishing the Al-Mamun club at Burdwan House of the Dhaka Muslim Hall in 1929, which achieved spectacular success in liberalising the outlook of the Muslim students.⁹⁸ Al-Mamun was in fact the chief of the Mutazilites. Simultaneously, several anti-*Purdah* leagues sprang up in different student hostels of Dhaka University.⁹⁹ This anti-*Purdah* League, along with the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj*, extended support to Fazilatunnesa, the remarkable Bengali Muslim lady who had become the first of her community to become a post-graduate in Mathematics.¹⁰⁰

But protests soon came from a powerful quarter. The most damaging criticism against the *Sikha* radicals came from the editor of the *Mussalman* who pointed out that a Muslim should always abide by the fundamental doctrines of Islam. 'What is required of him is a belief in the unity of God, in a life after death, in the day of

judgement, in the Holy Qur'an being the word of God revealed through Muhammad (SM) and in Muhammad (SM) being the last Prophet.' 'One who disputes', he pointed out, 'any of the doctrines at once ceases to be a Muslim, though he may be a very noble and honest thinker or though he may have a highly admirable moral character.' Now among the English-educated Mussalmans of India, a section (Sikha group), in the editor's opinion, through their writings and speeches had been showing that they were either agnostics or sceptics, or that they did not subscribe to one or the other of the cardinal doctrines of Islam. 'It will only be honest on their part to declare their views in a straightforward manner and to say that they have seceded from Islam'. The categorical opinion of the editor was that 'Islam has absolutely no room for such heterodoxy and unbelief'.¹⁰¹

It had further been pointed out that the cover picture of the magazine *Sikha*, which depicted a Masjid containing an open Qur'an with a flame next to it, revealed the ulterior motive of the *Sikha* infidels—it was to burn down the holy book (Appendix 5). The antagonists almost indicted them of sacrilege and the editor of *Sikha*, Kazi Motahar Hossain, had to offer an explanation that the flame actually indicated the flame of knowledge, which was lit by the renaissance and the purpose of the *Sikha* group was to enable the Muslim mind to comprehend the new interpretation of the Qur'an and Masjid in a new light.¹⁰²

It is a point to ponder that why a group like the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* which offered stubborn resistance to orthodoxy, reinstated rationalism against irrationalism, resisted obscurantism, patristicism, and sacerdotalism with commendable courage, failed to draw support from a sizeable section of the educated Muslims against those moderate revisionists, who, being perpetually haunted by the idea of desecration of religion, had reduced renaissance into revivalism. The answer may be sought in the socio-economic order of the day. In two very remarkable articles published in a British magazine, Syed Ameer Ali, one of the most prominent leaders of Muslim Bengal, pointed out that the conspicuous absence of an

educated middle class had held back the development and progress of the Muslim society in Bengal.¹⁰³ But whatever might have been the reasons of the delayed growth of this particular class among the Muslims of Bengal from the late 19th century, particularly from 1870, when the government took special efforts to remove the educational disparity between the Muslims and the Hindus by introducing several measures including introduction of English education among them, a significant change occurred leading to the growth of a viable educated middle class.¹⁰⁴

Upto the beginning of the 20th century, the growth of this particular class was moderately steady and a sense of competition with their counterparts in the Hindu community regarding educational and employment facilities had been slowly emerging, leading to the growth of a political solidarity and communal separatism.¹⁰⁵ A fillip was given to the growth during the partition days between 1905 and 1912 by the British policy-makers, who in their haste to break the Hindu *bhadrolok* domination, extended considerable educational and employment facilities to that class.¹⁰⁶ The result was that within few years there emerged in Bengal an independent Muslim political elite whose claim to distinctiveness could not be denied.¹⁰⁷

An excellent opportunity to develop cohesiveness among this section was obtained when they got political and constitutional training through participation in legislative politics and subsequently became the unquestioned leaders of a vast section of Muslim peasants and the working class. This process was further accentuated by their economic and educational superiority and a sense of equality and unity among all the cross sections of the Muslim community provided by Islam. However powerful might have been the thrust of the popular movements by the Muslim peasantry during the twenties or earlier, the agitations were always spearheaded by the ubiquitous middle class.¹⁰⁸

The problem with the *Sikha* group was that, they, in spite of being highly Islamic in views, could not provide sufficient theory that could have helped the Muslim middle class, or supported a symbolism that

could be a viable weapon in their hands to fight against the equally strong symbolism of the Hindu religio-political overtures. For this reason a large section of the Muslim intelligentsia with visions of reform could not wholeheartedly accept the ideology of the *Sikha* group, nor did they come to their rescue while they came under heavy fire.

It was an obvious fact that the prospects of better education and larger share of employment dominated their thinking more than the useless, high-sounding, and emotive ideology of the Dhaka intellectuals. Moreover, they strongly felt that if they shunned religious symbolism, they would definitely lose cohesiveness and would cease to exist as a community. This overpowering anxiety of losing a socio-political identity had spurred the intelligentsia of the Bengal Muslim community to discard liberalism and cling to symbolism with all earnestness. One of the stalwarts of the *Sikha* Group, Kazi Motahar Hossain, in his reminiscence had referred to those days when the *Maulanas*, lawyers, and government servants veered round *Masik Mohammadi* in their fight against a minority of free-thinking intellectuals who rallied round *Saogat*.¹⁰⁹ In fact, right from the Wahhabi Movement up to the Khilafat, both the urban and the rural Muslims of this region relied heavily on religion which, although initiating some sectarian clashes among them, on the whole produced a unique solidarity, an *entente cordiale* among all the sections.¹¹⁰

This feeling of brotherliness became stronger from the nineteen-thirties when competitive struggle among the job hunters and privilege-seekers, both Hindus and Muslims, became keener than ever. Another important socio-economic feature was intra-sectional rivalries. A continuous upward thrust from the lower strata of the society prevailed, either to dislodge or to reach equal status with the advanced class, who, by virtue of its positional advantage, had monopolised all the privileges.

In 1921, the census superintendent of Bihar and Orissa referred to a 'Pan-Ahir' Movement which had grown over a vast portion of North-East India, from Punjab to Bengal. Not only did the protagonists of

the movements, the members of the *Gopa Jatiya Mahasabha* aspire for a higher *Kshatriya* status, they also resented deprivation of privileges. And this movement was typical of what was going on among other castes like the *Kurmis*, *Kahars* and *Dhanuks*. In Bengal proper too, the higher caste Hindu *bhadroloks*, who actually formed the middle class intelligentsia, had to resist determined push from below. On 19 October 1938, the Barbers' Association of Bengal held a grandiose conference at Hazra Park, Calcutta, demanding to the Bengal government that a seat should be reserved for their caste in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, adequate employment facilities should be extended to them and Calcutta Corporation was to be requested to make proper arrangement for extending facilities of free studentship towards them.¹¹¹ Almost simultaneously, a letter appeared in the editorial of the *Statesman* from a member of the *Mahisya* community, who pointed out that in Bengal the *Mahisyas*, who formed 5% of the entire population, had been deprived of all educational and employment facilities. The writer demanded that the member of his community should be given a larger share of government jobs.¹¹² Similar movements had raised their heads among the underprivileged in the Muslim community, who resented the monopolisation of all privileges by a powerful and influential minority, dominating the Muslim social, political, and economic scenes. Thus, on 21 May 1939, the Shias in the Bengal ministry and the Sunnis of Lucknow, a few days later, made a demand to the government to reserve posts for them.¹¹³ But the most vociferous protest came from a neglected section of the Muslim community, the *Momins*, who in a conference at Muzaffarpur on 11 May 1939, demanded government jobs in numbers proportionate to their presence in the Muslim community.

In the face of such persistent upward thrust, the privileged sections, neither among the Muslims nor among the Hindus, could afford to remain passive and resilient. For their own survival, both the sections of each community had to evolve ways and means to protect their own interests. Moreover, the inter-communal clashes between the Hindu and the Muslim *bhadroloks* over opportunities

and privileges had generated a crisis which neither community could ignore. Under these circumstances, the need was to unite against all sorts of opposition, be it within or without the community. The only viable way to exhibit communal or sectional solidarity was to lean heavily on religion which could produce an instant sense of unity and cohesiveness. For the Muslims therefore the doctrine of Islam with its culture and its tenets came to their rescue, while for the Hindus religious nationalism contributed to the growth of an immense enthusiasm and energy among the dedicated youths who ultimately turned into national heroes. Being rather a handicapped community, the Muslims of Bengal considered religion and religious symbolism as their only succour. It was, in fact, a strange motive which affected Muslims of every stratum, from peasant-artisan groups that had mobilised successfully based on religion from the Wahhabi days to the highly ambitious Muslim middle class intelligentsia of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who wanted to achieve their own ends with a religio-political solidarity. In fact, the overpowering sense of religious solidarity which grew out of a survival crisis was so strong that even an intellectual like S. Wajed Ali could say 'in this non-Muslim state like India for centuries we consider the Masjid as our fortress'.¹¹⁴

From this sense of self preservation emanated a feeling of separation and exclusiveness which dominated the Muslim socio-political thinking. The trend was not quite new since decades ago the Bengal Muslims had been toying with the idea of a separate identity,¹¹⁵ but during the twenties and thirties due to Muslim participation in politics it got a positive direction and shape. Guided by this impulse, the Muslim intellectuals of Bengal advocated isolation from the mainstream of the Bengali culture. Sensing a danger of cultural cringe under the more powerful and dominating Bengali Hindus, they preferred to stand apart and to carve out their individual cultural zone where they could establish their religious solidarity with more ease and least outside interference. In fact, inspired by this idea of creating a rival culture, a literati like Mohammad Ahabab Chowdhury *Bidya Binod* in a serial named

Kulturer Larai (Struggle for Culture),¹¹⁶ earnestly advocated the introduction and cultivation of Arabic and Persian by the Bengal Muslims. Some time later, in an extremely acrimonious debate during the budget session of the Bengal Legislative Assembly over grants to Calcutta University, one Muslim M. L. C. Syed Mustagaswal Haque, squarely blamed the 'Hindu Calcutta University' of de-Moslemising the Muslim youths, who had almost lost their cultural identity through training according to a highly Hinduised curricula. These charges along with the *Padmas* and *Sree* controversy in which intellectuals of both the communities were locked exhibited the intensified confusion and dilemma of the Muslim intellectuals, who could neither accept the liberal connotation of Islam as represented by a minority of intellectuals like the *Sikha* group, nor could they vouchsafe the doctrinaire attitude of a powerful section, who actually dominated the social, cultural and political arena of the Bengal Muslims. The most unfortunate yet significant fact was that amidst this prevarication, the Muslim mind slowly and sub-consciously drifted towards ultimate and total segregation from the cultural mainstream of Bengal.

Notes

1. See for detailed discussion: Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906*. op. cit., Ch. 3.
2. Encyclopaedia of Islam edited by B. Lewis, V.I. Menage, C.H. Pellate and J. Schacht. Vol. 3, London, 1971, p. 162.
3. Dr Wakil Ahmed, *Unish satake bangali mussalmaner chinta-chetanar dhara*, Dhaka, 1983, p. 55.
4. Ibid. p. 81.
5. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, op. cit., pp. 259-60.

6. *Rafayadin* is a particular physical posture involving raising of arms during *Namaj* which the Muhammadis performed while Hanafis did not; *Rekat* is a cycle of performance involving *Ruku* and *Sajda* during *Namaj*. While Hanafis were in favour of twenty-three *Rekat*, Muhammadis insisted on eleven and, lastly, Hanafis preferred recitation of four *Rekat Akherijohar*, along with special Juma *Namaj*. On the other hand, Muhammadis were in favour of two *Rekat* Juma apart from *Sunnat Namaz*.
7. Ismail Hossain Shiraji, *Molla Charitra. Islam Procharak*, September-August, 1903. p. 369.
8. Wakil Ahmed, op. cit., p. 87.
9. *Islam Darshan*, 2nd yr., 6th issue, Aswin 1328 BS, *Shariat-Samkalan*, pp. 222-24.
10. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Karamate-Ahamadiya*, 1st ed., 24 Parganas, P.O. Taki, Narayanpur, pp.1-104.
11. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Tazaof Tatva*, 1st issue, 1327 BS, 24 Parganas, pp. 1-350.
12. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Fatwa*, 1st ed., 1327 BS, Nadia (Ahamadbagh), pp. 1-6.
13. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Saekatol Moslemin*, 2nd ed., 1329 BS, 24 Parganas, P.O. Taki, Narayanpur, pp. 1-287.
14. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Hanafi Fekah Tatva*, 1st ed., 1330 BS, 24 Parganas, P.O. Taki, Narayanpur, pp. 1-288.
15. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Kameol Mobtadeyin Fe Radde Cheyanatal Momenin*, 1st ed., 1327 BS, Calcutta, pp. 1-192.
16. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Borhanel Mokalledin*, 1st ed., 1321 BS, Calcutta.
17. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Grame-Joma*, 1st ed., 1330 BS, Calcutta, pp. 1-60.
18. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Bagmari Fakirer Dhoka-bhanjan*, 1st ed., 1329 BS, Calcutta, pp. 1-59.
19. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Ibtalol Batel*, 1st. ed., 1330 BS, Calcutta, pp. 1-70.
20. Ahle Hadith, 1st yr., 4th issue, *Paush*, 1322 BS, p. 143.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

22. Rafiuddin Ahmed, op. cit., pp. 74-82.
23. Ahle Hadith, 2nd yr., 3rd issue, *Agrahayan*, 1323 BS, p. 138.
24. Ahle Hadith, 3rd yr., 5th issue, *Magh* 1324 BS, pp. 237-38.
25. Munshi Mohammad Habiluddin, *Radde Hanafi O Majhab Darpan*, 1st. ed., 1332 BS, Calcutta, pp. 1-24.
26. Munshi Mohammad Habiluddin, *Taharima O Idayenal Macchayel Chahi Hucchabuto Dhalayel*, 1327 BS, Calcutta.
27. *The Mussalman*, 4 May 1923.
28. *Islam Darshan*, 2nd yr., 6th issue, *Aswin*, 1328 BS, pp. 233-37: *Bibidha Prasanga*– *Islam O Stri Swadhinatar Adarsha*; *Islam Procharak*, 5th yr., 3rd-4th issue, pp. 87-88; Ebne Mae-z, *Bangabibhag O Swadeshi Andolan*; *ibid*, 7th yr., 5th issue, *Aswin*, p. 249: S. A. Almusavi, *Abanati Prasanga*; *Nabanoor*, 2nd yr., 6th issue, *Aswin*, 1311 BS, pp. 275-79: Naosher Ali Khan Yusufji, *Ekei Ki Bale Abanati*; *Nabanoor*, 2nd yr., 7th issue, *Kartik*, 1311 BS, pp. 327-30: Khayerunnessa Khatoon, *Amader Sikshar Antaraya*; *ibid*, 2nd yr., 8th issue, *Agrahayana*, 1311 BS, pp. 368-71: *Islam Darshan*, 2nd yr., 4th issue, *Sharavana*, 1328 BS, p. 124: *Alochana*–*Aswabhabik Stri Swadhinata*.
29. *Islam Darshan*, 3rd yr., 7th issue, *Chaitra*, 1329 BS, pp. 260-261 M. Idris: *Purdah Phank*; *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 3rd issue, *Paush*, 1334 BS, p. 145, Mohammad Akram Khan, *Islame Narir Marjada O Adhikar*; *Islam Darshan*, 2nd yr., 6th issue, *Aswin*, 1328 BS, p. 237, Mohammad Abdul Hakim; *Islam O Stri Swadhinatar Adarsha*.
30. Mrs R. S. Hossain, *Motichur* (1st part), 1314 BS, Calcutta; *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 3rd issue, *Paush*, 1334 BS, p. 165: Mrs R. S. Hossain *Rani Bhikarini*; *Masik Mohammadi*, 4th yr., 8th issue, *Jaishtya*, 1338 BS, pp. 609-14: Mrs R. S. Hossain, *Dhansher Pathe Bangiya Mussalman*. This article was read in the Annual Conference of the Managing Committee of Sakhawat Memorial School, 8 March 1931; *Jingasa*, 1st yr, 3rd issue, *Kartik*, 1387 BS, pp. 311-28, Golam Murshid, *Aitihyer Sange Aposh - Begum Rokeayar Nari Mukti Bhabna*.
31. Mrs R. S. Hossain, *Motichur*, op. cit., *Borka*, p. 78.
32. *Masik Mohammadi*, 5th yr., 12th issue, *Aswin*, 1339 BS, pp. 873-75: Editor– *Nacher Majlis, Alochana*.

33. *Masik Mohammadi*, 5th yr., 12th issue, Aswin, 1339 BS, Editor—Chitrer, Anyadik, p. 876.
34. *Sahachar*, 1st yr, 6th issue, Asara, 1329 BS, pp. 421-26; Abdus Salam, *Stri Siksha*, ibid. pp. 490-91; Mrs M. Rahaman, *Motichur Samalochana*, *Shahachar*, 2nd yr., 3rd issue, Chaitra, 1329 BS, pp. 137-40; Mrs M. Rahaman, *Purdah*, *banam Prabanchana*, *Shahachar*, 2nd yr., 4th issue, *Baishak*, 1333 BS, pp. 221-23; Mrs M. Rahman, *Narir Katha*, *Shahachar*, 8th issue, 2nd yr., *Bhadra*, 1330 BS, pp. 460-64; Tarikul Alam, *Nabya Turkite Nari Pragati*, *Sahachar*, 2nd yr, 12th issue, *Paush*, 1330 BS, pp. 707-11; Abdul Karim, *Nari*, *Shaurav*, 1st yr., 3rd and 4th issues, *Sravana-Bhadra*, 1332 BS, pp. 55-60; Moulvi Abdur Rahman, *Moslem Ramanir Sikhya Naipunya*; *Saogat*, 6th yr., 10th issue, *Baishak*, 1336 BS; Abdul Mozaffar Ahmed, *Abhibhasan*; *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baishak*, 1325 BS, p. 66; Kazi Imdadul Haque, *Sarger Jyoti* (Book Review), *Jagaran*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baishak*, 1335 BS, pp. 20-22; Miss Fazilatunnesa, *Muslim Narir Jagaran*, *Jagaran*, 1st yr., 2nd issue, *Jaishthya*, 1335 BS, pp. 50-51; Miss Fazilatunnsa, *Nari-Jibane Adhunik Sikshar Aswad*, *Jagaran*, 1st yr., 3rd issue, *Asara* 1335 BS, pp. 100-1003; Fatema Khanam, *Prathamik Siksha O Mussalman Samaj*.
35. *Islam Pracharak*, 7th yr., 7th issue, November 1905, p. 298; Editor & Mojammeel Haque, *Amader Adhayapatan*.
36. *Islam Darshan*, 1st. yr., 6th issue, Aswin, 1327 BS, pp. 252-7; 1st. yr., 7th issue, *Kartik*, 1327 BS; 1st. yr., 8th issue, *Agrahayan*, 1327 BS, p. 357; Mohammad Ruhul Amin, *Gita O Badya Haram Haibar Praman*; *Islam Darshan*, 5th yr., 4th issue, *Magh*, 1332 BS, pp. 125-28; Mohammad Abdul Hakim, *Alochana-Islam O Sangeet*, *Islam Nur*, 1st. yr., 2nd issue, *Phalgun*, 1332 BS: Editorial.
37. Ahle Hadith, 2nd yr., 9th issue, *Jaistha*, 1324 BS, p. 407; Mohammed Efajuddin, *Alem Samaj*.
38. *Bango-Nur*, 1st. yr., 6th issue, *Baishak*, 1327 BS, Editor *Anubikishan*.
39. *Islam Darshan*, 1st. yr., 5th issue, *Bhadra*, 1327 BS, pp. 208-09; 1st. yr., 6th issue, Aswin, 1327 BS, pp. 272-73; Munshi Reyajuddin Ahmed, *Mahasmashan Kabbyer Bhumikay Islamer Abamanana*.
40. *Islam Darshan*, 5th yr., 7th issue, *Baishak*, 1333 BS, S. Wajed Ali, B A (Cant'b) Bar-at-Law, *Tara*, pp. 268-71.

41. Shaikh Fazlul Karim, *Asbat-us-chamau ba Chamau Tattva*, Kakina, Rangpur, 1903.
42. Maulana Akram Khan, the most vociferous among all the moderate intellectuals, dominated the Muslim socio-political scene of Bengal for almost two and a half decades during the early 20th century. Born on 7 June 1869, in the Hakimpur village of Bashirhat sub-division of the district of 24 Parganas, Akram Khan had his early education in Kulsana Madrasa under the supervision of Maulana Neamatullah. Afterwards he joined the Calcutta Madrasa. Having passed the Final Madrsa Examination, Akram Khan, in collaboration with Maulana Mahammad Abbas Ali, brought out *Mohammadi*. Initially, it came out as weekly (1903). Later from 1927, *Mohammadi*, as a monthly periodical, established itself as a prominent one. The magazine, in fact, became the platform from where Akram Khan fought against the orthodox, on one hand, and lashed out against the radicals, on the other. See also M. Abdur Rahman, *Manishi Maulana Akram Khan*, Calcutta, 1980.
43. *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr, 8th issue, *Jaistha*, 1337 BS, pp. 561-63; 3rd yr, 9th issue, *Asar*, 1337 BS, pp. 685-91; 3rd yr, 10th issue, *Sravana*, 1337 BS, pp. 722-28; 3rd yr, 11th issue, *Bhadra*, 1337 BS, pp. 818-21; 3rd yr, 12th issue, *Aswin*, 1337 BS, pp. 883-86; Akram Khan, *Chitrakala O Islam*. In the serial Akram Khan pointed out that it was not only Bengal that had been rocked by this picture controversy but also the northern and central Indian Muslim intellectuals were locked in a similar battle among themselves over the issue. It was the famous Maulana Chirag Ali who, for the first time, referring to the Qur'anic Surah XII and XIII tried to prove the point that drawing of pictures had the sanction of the Holy Scripture. The next important step was taken by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who brought out an illustrated magazine named *Al-Helal*, replete with all sorts of portraits. Azad in this respect was jealously supported by Maulana Sayed Solayman Nadvi who in his treatise *Ma-aref* (Sep. -Oct., 1919) made a scholarly discussion on the issue and proved beyond doubt that drawing of pictures, specially portraits, and the Islamic sanctions were not incompatible. Nadvi's point was, however, accepted without any criticism. Akram Khan resented the furore raised by the Bengal Maulvis over the issue which had been settled once for all by their north Indian counterparts).

44. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr, 9th issue, *Asar*, 1335 BS, pp. 522-27; 1st yr, 10th issue, *Sraavan*, 1335 BS, pp. 593-97; 1st yr, 12th issue, *Aswin*, 1335 BS, pp. 715-20.
45. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr, 9th issue, *Asar*, 1335 BS, 1st yr, 1st issue, *Kartik*, 1334 BS, pp. 2-3.
46. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr, 9th issue, *Asar*, 1335 BS, 1st yr, 1st issue, *Kartik*, 1334 BS, p. 2-3.
47. *Islam Darshan*, 5th yr, 1st issue, *Aswin*, 1332 BS; Shaikh Habibur Rahman (Sahitya Ratna) - *Islam O Andha Biswas*, p. 9.
48. *Bango Noor*, 1st yr, 3rd issue, 1326 BS, pp. 89-93.
49. *Surah-ul-Alak* Qur'anic Surah XCVI, quoted in *Spirit of Islam* by Syed Ameer Ali, Ch. ix, p. 361, London, 1955.
50. The founding father of the Mutazilites or *Ahl-ul-Itiz-al*, i.e. dissenters was one Abu Huzafa Wasil bin Ata Al-Ghazzal. He was born in 83 A H (690-700 AC) and died in 139 A H (798-99 AC). For a brief discussion on Mutazilite Philosophy see Syed Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam*, op. cit., Ch. ix, p. 414, appendix, p. 493.
51. *Spirit of Islam*, Ch. x, op. cit., p. 415
52. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Swaswata Bango*, 1358 BS, Calcutta, *Path O Patheya*, pp. 223-31; *Bangali Mussalmener Sahitya Samasya*, pp. 322-32; *Bulbul, Baishak*, 1334 BS; Abul Hossain, *Muslim Culture O Uhar Darshanik Vitti; Jayati*, 1st issue, *Baishak*, 1337 BS; Abul Hossain, *Al-Mamun*.
53. *Bangiyo Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, 88th yr., 2nd issue, *Sraavana-Aswin* 1388 BS; Dhurjati Prosad De, *Muslim Sahitya Samaj O Buddhir Mukti Andolan*, pp. 11-19.
54. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Samaj O Sahitya*, Calcutta, *Aswin*, 1341 BS. He referred to an excerpt from *Jnayna Saagar*, a medieval *Punthi*, in which the Muslim poet made the following utterances through Hazrat Muhammad (SM).

মোর পরে পয়গম্বর না জন্মিবে আর ॥

মোর পরে হইবেক কবি ঋষিগণ ।

প্রভুর গোপন রহে বদ্বিবেক মন ॥

শাস্ত্র সব শুনে কবি ভাবে ডুখ দিয়া ।

প্রভু প্রেমে প্রেম করি রহিব জুড়িয়া ॥

55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.; *Sikha*, 1st yr, 1st issue, *Chaitra*, 1333 BS, *Bangali Mussalmaner Sahitya Samasya*, pp. 28-37; *ibid.*, Abdul Kader, *Bangalar Lokasangeet*, pp. 43-48.
57. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Samaj O Sahitya*, op. cit. p. 33.
58. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Swaswata Banga*, op. cit.; *Sammohita Mussalman*, pp. 394-401.
59. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Swaswata Banga*, op. cit.; *Sammohita Mussalman*, pp. 394-401.
60. Ibid.; Ameer Ali *Spirit of Islam*, op. cit., Ch. 2. p. 184.
61. *Soltan*, 30 November 1927; Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Protest*.
62. *Parichaya*, 52nd yr., 5th issue, *Agrahayan*, 1389 BS, December 1982: Dhurjati Prosad De, *Bangalar Chinta-nayak Abul Hossain O Muslim Sanskriti*, pp. 15-42.
63. *Tarun Patra*, *Jaishthya*, 1332 BS, Abul Hossain, *Satya*.
64. *Abhiyana*, 1st yr, 1st issue, *Bhadra*, 1333 BS, Abul Hossain, *Nishedher Birambana*.
65. *Shanti*, 4th yr, 8th issue, *Aswin*, 1336 BS, Abul Hossain, *Adesher Nigraha*.
66. *Saogat*, 6th yr., 2nd issue, *Bhadra*, 1335 BS, Abul Hossain, *Fika Phobia*.
67. *Soltan*, 16 November 1927, *Dhakar Tarun Dal*.
68. *Soltan*, 30 November 1927, Abdul Wadud's letter; Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Swaswata Bango*, *Bad-Pratibad*, op. cit, p. 404.
69. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Swaswata Bango*, *Bad-Pratibad*, op. cit, p. 406.
70. Ibid.
71. *Saptahik Mohammadi*, 9 December 1927, *Dhristatar Parakashtha*.
72. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 5th issue, *Falgun* 1334 BS, pp. 272-76; 1st yr. 6th issue, *Chaitra*, 1334 BS, pp. 346-52; 1st yr, 7th issue, *Baishak*, 1335 BS, pp. 393-99; Mohammad Akram Khan, *Naba Paryaya Na Naba Parya*.
73. Ibid. p. 351. 'We have no objection if Kazi Sahib wants to face us in the field.'
74. *Jagaran*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baishak*, 1335 BS, pp. 36-40; 1st yr., 2nd issue, *Jaishthya*, 1335 BS, *Sab-Janta*, pp. 80-85.
75. *Jagaran*, 1st yr., 4th issue, *Sravana* 1335 BS, Abul Hossain, *Kaifiyat*, p. 171.

76. *Jagaran* , 1st yr., 2nd issue, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
77. *Jagaran* , 1st yr., 2nd issue, op. cit., pp. 83-85.
78. *Jagaran* , 1st yr., 2nd issue, 1335 BS, *Kutch Nei Jantaa*, pp. 85-88; 1st yr, 3rd issue, *Asar*, 1335 BS, pp. 133-35; *Jagaran* ,1st yr., 4th issue, 1335 BS, op. cit., pp. 171-76; *ibid.*, p. 173; *ibid.*; *Jagaran*, 1st yr., 4th issue, 1335 BS, op. cit., p. 176.
79. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 11th issue, *Bhadra* 1335 BS, *Alochana*, *Abul Hossainer Kaifiat*, pp. 709-10.
80. *Jagaran*, 1st yr., 4th issue, *Sravana* 1335 BS, op. cit. *Alochana-Mussalmaner Humiki*, pp. 162-65.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 163
82. S. Wajed Ali, *Jibaner Shilpa*, Jhautala Road, Calcutta, *Sahitya*, p. 25, (Presidential Address to the Calcutta Conference of the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Sammelam*, 1939).
83. S. Wajed Ali, *Bhabiswater Bangali*, Calcutta, 1344 BS, *Premar Dharma*, pp. 87-97; *Bharatbarsha*, 1st pt. 31st yr, 4th issue, *Aswin* 1353 BS, *Sufibader Udarata*, pp. 308-10; S. Wajed Ali, *Jibaner Shilpa*, op. cit., pp.25-26, *Tarun O Prabin*, p. 108; *ibid.*, pp. 174-79.
84. S. Wajed Ali, *Jibaner Shilpa*, op. cit., pp. 25-26, *Tarun O Prabin*, p. 108. *Nirdosh Amod Promod O Mussalman*, pp. 142-44.
85. *Forward*, 14 March, 1926, p. 10.
86. *The Mussalman* , 27 February 1926.
87. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 11th issue, *Bhadra* 1335 BS; S. Wajed Ali, *Dharma O Samaj*, pp. 649-59; S. Wajed Ali, *Jibaner Shilpa*, op. cit. pp. 1-52.
88. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 11th issue, op. cit., p. 654.
89. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 12th issue, *Aswin* 1335 BS, *Akram Khan Alochana - Dharma O Samaj*, pp. 773-75.
90. S. Wajed Ali, *Jibaner Shilpa*, *Qur'aner Bakhya*, op. cit, p. 265.
91. S. Wajed Ali, *Jibaner Shilpa*, *Qur'aner Bakhya*, p. 265-66.
92. *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 11th issue, 1335 BS, op. cit., p. 654; *Akram Khan, Bichar O Alochana* , pp. 711-12.
93. *Saogat*, 6th yr., 12th issue, *Asar* 1336 BS, *Abul Hossain, Taruner Sadhana*.

94. Ibid.
95. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Samaj O Sahitya, Amader Katha*, op. cit., pp. 43-49. *Mohammadi, Paush* 1336 BS.
96. Ibid.; *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr., 9th issue, Nazir Ahmed Chowdhury, op. cit.
97. Ibid.
98. *Bangiya Sahityo Parishad Patrika*, 88th yr., 2nd issue, op. cit. p. 16.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. *The Mussalman*, 27 April 1928, p. 3.
102. *Sikha*, 2nd yr. 1928, proc., p. 24.
103. *Nineteenth century*, August 1882, October 1906, Syed Ameer Ali, *A cry from Indian Mussalmans & an Indian retrospect and comments*.
104. B. B. Misra, *The Indian middle class, their growth in modern times*, Oxford, 1961; Rafiuddin Ahmed, op. cit. ch. 3.
105. Ibid.
106. Richard Paul Cronin, *British Policy and Administration in Bengal, partition and the New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam*, Calcutta, 1977.
107. J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural society*; 20th century Bengal, Oxford, 1968; Rajat Kanta Roy, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875-1927*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1984.
108. Sumit Sarkar, *Popular Movement and Middle Class Leadership in Late Colonial India: Perspective and Problems of a History from Below*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, S. G. Deuskar lectures on Indian history, 1980; Partha Chatterjee, *Bengal 1920-1947, The Land Question*, Vol. I), CSSSC Monograph 4, Calcutta, 1984.
109. Kazi Motahar Hossain, *Nirbachita Prabandha.*, op. cit., p. 16.
110. Rafiuddin Ahmed, op. cit., ch. 3.
111. *Shanibarar Chithi*, 11th yr, 10 issue, *Sravana* 1346 BS; Harendra Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Sampradayik Bantoarar Parinam*, pp. 612-13.
112. Ibid.
113. *Shanibarar Chithi*, 11th yr., 10th issue, *Sravana* 1346 BS; Harendra Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Sampradayik Bantoarar parinam*, p. 614-17.

114. *Masik Mohammadi*, 4th yr., 4th issue, *Magh* 1337 BS; S. Wajed Ali, *Nanar Bari*, p. 247.
115. Rafiuddin Ahmed, op. cit., ch. 3.
116. *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr, 10th issue, *Sravana* 1337 BS, Mohammad Ahabab Chowdhuri, *Culturer Larai* , pp. 733-36.

Chapter II

FORMATION OF ASSOCIATION AND ORGANISATIONS

At the start of the 20th century the panorama of the social scene of the Muslims of Bengal opened up with a definite quest for social consolidation. The trauma of disarray and disunification, frustration and exploitation, which they had experienced as a community during the preceding century due to their non-participation in the socio-economic mainstream of contemporary Bengal, had not only rendered them wise but also galvanised them into action resulting in the growth of association catering to the socio-political need of the time. A new generation of professional middle class, who had slowly been emerging to social prominence, now came to the helm of affairs and began to dominate. During the last quarter of the 19th century, with the government's special impetus to the growth of Muslim education along with a remarkable change in *Ashraf* attitude in favour of western education and other agro-economic factors, helped increase the number of educated Muslims and contributed to the creation of a sub-elite group with a remarkably different outlook and attitude from their predecessors.

The 20th century thus witnessed the emergence of a lesser elite who, unlike their predecessors, could think beyond the periphery of their own parochial interest. The disorganised socio-religious movement initiated during the late 19th century

by the village *Mollahs* in conjunction with a handful of influential political elite henceforth began to take a definite shape in their hands. Thoughts and theories were introduced, more money was pumped in, and what was more important, a group of Bengali Muslim middle class intellectuals began to give serious thoughts to carry out a thoroughly practical programme of revivalism and reform. The result of such an attempt was the creation of the *Islamic Mission Samity*.

Assertion of Identity : The Beginning

Throughout the second half of the 19th century the Bengal Muslim intellectuals fought a series of battles against Hindu 'maliciousness' and Christian missionary propaganda. Attempts of a few writers and preachers in this respect were laudable¹, but those isolated attempts could not hold good against mounting pressure from the two other communities. Hence a comprehensive plan of counter-attack was chalked out by Mohammad Muniruzaman Islamabadi, a self-styled preacher of repute. In an article published in *Islam Pracharak*, the preacher argued that the need of the hour was to set up an Islamic Mission.² Truly speaking, socio-political bodies called *Anjumans* affiliated to their parent organisations like the *Central National Mohammadan Association* (CNMA) or such others in Calcutta had already come into existence in all the major towns of Bengal like Barisal, Birbhum, Burdwan, Chittagong, Comilla, Faridpur, Jalpaiguri, Khulna, Mymensingh, Noakhali, Pabna and Rajshahi.³ But whatever might be their socio-political aim, those organisations essentially acted as pressure groups to serve and protect the interest of a few and to focus attention on the issues concerning the urban elite class.⁴ There were, however, a few organisations which were less mundane in approach suggested ways for a general well-being of the Muslims. Thus, in January 1891, an organisation called *Anjumane Hemayate Islam* was formed in the town of Rajshahi. In its inaugural session attended by

Muslim notables from Rajshahi, Murshidabad and Malda suggestions were put forward to restore the lost glory, the *Qaom* of the Muslims, to find out ways (*Koseda*) for honest living (*Halal Ruji*) and to find out ways for education of the Muslim boys.⁵

But Muniruzzaman's idea of Islamic mission was rather a different one. He wanted to train a band of itinerant professional preachers, who would be duty-bound to highlight different aspects of the Islamic religion. Like many of his contemporary reformers, Muniruzzaman had a very poor opinion of the traditional preacher like *Moulvis* and *Mollahs* who, at the close of the 19th century, roamed in thousands over the countryside of Bengal. Their petty factional squabbles, innumerable *fatwas*, ignorance of scriptures, self-seeking mentality and, above all, unorthodox teachings and syncretic ideals, which tended to undermine Islam, made them undesirable elements in the social body. So Muniruzzaman thought that to get rid of them a well-organised propaganda machinery should be evolved, which would not only restore the lost glory of Islam in Bengal but also cater to the need of a modern-day Muslim to strike a balance between tradition and modernity. Muniruzzaman, therefore, suggested the opening up of a mission, preferably in Calcutta, along with a mission fund which would financially support the enterprise. In his opinion, the prospective members of the mission should be influential people possessing a clear understanding of the contemporary social, political and religious problems. A number of salaried trainers or teachers upon whom the onus of training a young preacher would be placed was called for. The mission would certainly have a library well-stocked with magazines on different topics and languages and also a good collection of history books. Regular classes should be held and *madrassa*-trained qualified persons would be given lessons on philosophy and science to make them competent preachers.⁶ Muniruzzaman, while commenting on the administration of a

mission, apart from other things, maintained that the missionaries should be given a consolidated salary for their services to be met by the money accruing from the subscriptions raised by the missionaries themselves. Apart from this, the missionaries would maintain tour diaries like government inspectors based on which they would prepare their salary bill. He also put forward a proposal of setting up a national press and a mission newspaper which would publish religious books and tracts, and inform readers of the social activities of the mission.

Muniruzzaman's dream ultimately came true and Muslim Bengal witnessed the birth of the *Islam Mission Samity* in a grandiose meeting held under the presidentship of the famous pleader Moulvi Wahed Hossain, BL, on 23 *Chaitra* 1310 BS (1904) at the town of Rampur-Boalia in Rajshahi district.⁷ The mission in unequivocal terms made the following declarations: firstly, it would fight against the propaganda campaign of the Christian missionaries; secondly, it would publish a number of religious tracts; thirdly, attempts would be made to set up religious institutions in different parts of Bengal to restore faith among the ordinary Muslims; and, fourthly, propagation of Islam would be given the highest priority.⁸

To materialise this programme the following plan of action was adopted:

1. Publication of booklets in simple Bengali on religion and to arrange their free distribution;
2. Publication of a magazine (*Islam Darshan* or *Muslim Dharma*) as a mouthpiece of the mission for free distribution;
3. Appointment of salaried missionaries, who would undertake preaching in different parts of Bengal;
4. Sending of preachers and missionaries to dark corners of the country where the rays of Islam had not penetrated;
5. To translate religious books on Islam into Bengali;

6. Establishment of contacts and connections with *Anjumans* and such other bodies scattered in different parts of Bengal; and
7. Setting up of a national library for the benefit of the preachers, speakers and missionaries.

Establishment of the Islam mission by the enthusiastic reformers was indicative of a community's religious consciousness, but they at the same time were alive to the desire of creating something substantial which would help establish cultural pre-eminence and an educational-cum-literary arena exclusively for the Muslims. To strengthen their solidarity the reformers tried to give a new orientation to their educational system in Bengal; a new approach in tune with the idea of reform and development emerged to take into serious consideration its scope and limitation, utility and applicability. The programme related to educational improvements had its two aspects—one institutional, the other theoretical. While the theoretical aspect tried to define the language policy as well as the cultural link in relation to the society, the institutional aspect of the programme began to get a definite shape with the establishment of bodies like *Bangiya Sahitya Bishayayini Mussalman Sabha* in 1899 with cooperation and patronisation from persons like Nawab Syed Ali Chowdhuri Khan Bahadur, Syed Ameer Ali, Nawab Sir Syed Shams ul-Huda, Nawab Baharuddin Haidar and S. Hossain, Bar-At-Law, Moulvi Abdul Hamid BA, Moulvi Abul Kasem and other.⁹

Within few years the insitutional movement gained a viabilty, with the development of an exclusive education club for the Bengal Muslims. In this connection it is important to note that the social regeneration movement which had already been started in different parts of northern India, particularly at Lahore, Karachi, Aligarh, and Lucknow where Muslim education societies and new pattern of Arabic Madrasas were already in the offing, had a tremendous impact upon the Bengal reformers for whom the North Indian venture was a moral

booster. It triggered off sharp debates among them to find out the best means of ensuring educational progress. Eventually, in the annual conference of the Calcutta Mohammedan Union on 15 February 1903, a proposal to establish the Bengal Provincial Education Society exclusively for the Muslims was accepted unanimously and it was decided that for mobilisation of opinion an appeal, in the form of a pamphlet in English, should be distributed in different districts of Bengal.¹⁰ The organisers succinctly stated both the direct and indirect aims of the *society* in the following terms:

- The *Society* would, through holding of conference, try to make the Muslims realise their degradation;
- It would organise symposia in different mofussil towns to stress the need of education;
- The *Society* would try to rouse the interest of the general Muslim masses towards science, literature and Western ideas;
- It would suggest means to remove obstacles to the spread of education;
- Steps would be taken to extend financial assistance to poor Muslim students;
- The *Society* would try to find out ways so that a feeling of cooperation could grow among Muslims.¹¹

Apart from the projected aims, the organisers of the *Society* made their purposes known. Firstly, the *Society* would aim to establish one residential college for the Muslims to learn languages like Persian, Arabic, Urdu, English and Bengali and study subjects like religion and ethics, apart from other necessary ones. Secondly, it would also try to open a translation department which would translate the old Persian and Arabic works on history, geography, science and, specially, on religion into simple Bengali. Thirdly, the task of the *Society* would also be to collect all available books on the religion of Islam. Fourthly, the samity suggested proper steps towards

development of female education. Fifthly, under the initiative of the *Society*, the educated and trained Moulvis would be sent to different parts of Bengal to serve the dual purpose of explaining the aims of the *Society* and imparting religious education to the masses.¹²

The establishment of a Provincial Education Society was a laudable attempt at self assertion, the instance of which galvanised into action similar smaller bodies which until then were inactive and dormant. New ones also came into being in areas where they were absent. One example of it was the *Chittagong Mussalman Siksha Sabha* which was established in 1899, but ceased to function within a few years of its birth. The Provincial Education Society was a kind of impetus to the Chittagong reformers.¹³ The Chittagong Society was not the sole example of this kind. Many other societies professing similar ideals sprang up in Assam and different parts of East Bengal and elsewhere, and began to organise symposia and debates on various aspects of Muslim education. The first conference of the *Bangiya Pradeshi Mussalman Siksha Samity* (Bengal Muslim Education Society) was held with much jubilation at the Rampur-Boalia town of Rajshahi district in the month of March 1904.¹⁴

Among the plethora of resolutions taken during the conference, emphasis was put on the establishment of education fund, technical school, publication of text books catering to socio-religious needs of the Muslim boys, and the need of female education.¹⁵ To perpetuate the results of their endeavour, the reformers welcomed the idea of setting up exclusive boarding houses for the Muslim students. In fact, in a few districts of Bengal some such houses had already sprung up and started functioning. In most of the cases the initiative and financial responsibility were taken up by individual elites or by a group. For instance, at Barisal, the Bell Islamia Boarding for the Muslim students came into being through the support and assistance from persons like Moulvi Hemayetuddin Ahamed,

B.L., a famous pleader of the locality, Moulvi Mohammad Fazeel, an ex-Police Inspector, and by the District Magistrate and Collector of Barisal, Beatson Bell. The same was the case with the Islamia Boarding House of Chittagong and Rampur-Boalia Boarding House of Rajshahi which owed their growth and development to the respective contributions of Moulvi Abdul Aziz, a famous pleader and the Sub-Registrar Moulvi Mirza Mohammad Usuf Ali.¹⁶ Those isolated efforts soon formed a pattern of an organised movement with attempts undertaken to establish such institutions in other parts of Bengal. Thus in Kusthia and Faridpur districts of eastern Bengal meetings were organised at the initiative of the editor of *Islam Procharak*, Reyazuddin Ahmed, who, in cooperation with some local *Samaj Hitoishi bhadralok*, planned to open a boarding house at Kushtia and to turn a portion of the 'Farid Palace' into such a necessary institution. Even in Pabna and Jessore, preparations were afoot to turn the existing small houses into big and impressive ones, the idea being to establish boarding houses in almost every provincial headquarter of Bengal.¹⁷

Language and Identity

The formation of the *Bangiya Mussalman Siksha Samity* had set the ball rolling. Within a few years of its establishment, similar *samities* mushroomed in Bengal with identical interests in different parts of rural and mofussil Bengal. Several educational seminars and conferences registering increasing concern of the educated elites regarding the proper form of Muslim education were initiated by them.¹⁸ Although a plethora of topics like the need of religious education, making of text books catering to Muslim interest, modernisation of *Makhtabs*, greater importance to Urdu, teaching of English in *Madrasahs* and better training for the *Mianjees* had been discussed and debated with much enthusiasm, but the most controversial yet the most important one was perhaps the

cultivation of Bengali language in view of its increasing social utility and demand.¹⁹ The issue had attracted many and earned the displeasure of a few, yet it had a profound impact on most of the educated Muslims of Bengal, who disclosed their feelings not only in *samity* conferences and seminars but also in different contemporary periodicals and papers.²⁰ Apparently, a kind of hesitation existed in accepting Bengali. There was a lurking fear that cultivation of Bengali to the exclusion of Urdu and Arabic would lead to gradual erosion of Islamic identity.²¹ But the most dominating impulse was perhaps their survival. Out of this basic demand a thorough learning of Bengali became more essential. This feeling found expression in a letter of Moulvi Abdul Karim, Inspector of Schools, Chittagong, to the editor of the *Mussalman* where he made the point clear by saying— “What I meant was that Urdu should be taught only as a language, that history, geography, mathematics and similar subjects should be taught through the vernacular of a province. ... This I think ... is rather a policy of self-preservation. Because for want of an adequate knowledge of the vernacular the Mussalmans of Eastern Bengal can neither obtain most of the remunerative posts, nor adopt most of the lucrative professions which have become the monopoly of those who possess a thorough knowledge of Bengali. Unless a Muhammedan boy acquires in his school career a fair knowledge of the vernacular, he cannot afterwards become a *mohrir*, *gomasta*, a *tahsildar*, or a *mukhter*.”²²

This seemed to be a very practical realisation, but had some religious and cultural aspects of the problem too that caught their attention. The revival of Islamic culture during the second half of the 19th century initiated by the Wahhabi and Faraizi movements and perpetuated by the efforts of the village Mollahs, called for a more intimate acquaintance with scriptures which in most cases were written in Arabic and Urdu unintelligible to most of the Muslim masses of Bengal. It was, therefore, necessary to translate them into Bengali.²³

With the advent of the 20th century, the idea that for thorough Islamisation learning of Bengali was essential was fully accepted by the educated Muslims. Abu Mohammad Ismail Hossein Shiraji, one of the early reformers, poetically described how the Mollahs and Moulvis used to make themselves ridiculous by lecturing in a grotesque Bengali language interspersed with unintelligible Urdu and Arabic words while delivering religious sermons or conducting *Wadj*. In most cases their sermons fell on deaf ears and served little purpose of Islamising the rural masses, who could understand nothing but pure Bengali language.²⁴ Shiraji's observation came to be supported by the action of the senior students of the Arabic Department of the Calcutta Madrasa who submitted a memorandum on 16 December 1917 to the Director of Public Instruction in protest against the imparting of lessons in Urdu and requested making Bengali the medium of instruction. They pointed out that religious preaching would be totally unsuccessful in making contact with the masses unless it was done in Bengali.²⁵

Apart from this, from the 20th century onwards the fear of a dominant Hindu culture engulfing the cultural entity of the Bengal Muslims was carefully nurtured. Dedicated reformers like Reyazuddin Ahmed, the editor of *Islam Prohcharak*, viewed with distaste the efforts of scholars like Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad, who tried to establish the cultural and religious synthesis of Hindus and Muslims with the help of the works and philosophy of mediaeval *Muslim Vaishnava* poets like Kanu Fakir, Sayid Sultan, Sayid Murtuza and Sayid Ainuddin. But Reyazuddin's opinion was that such attempts to establish a link with Hindu cultural traits might undermine the Islamic culture and religion.²⁶ Most remarkable yet most reasonable observation was made by Mohammad Akram Khan, the editor of *Masik Mohammadi*. In his presidential address during the third session of the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Sammilan* at Chittagong Akram Khan justified the formation

of a separate socio-cultural institute like the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* of later years. He pointed out that while the Muslim literati used to participate in conferences of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad*, they usually had the feeling of losing their identity amidst a surfeit of lectures, literary programmes highly cloyed with Hindu taste and ideals. For this reason, the formation of an exclusive institution like the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* was necessary in the extreme.²⁷

Unfortunately, during the last decades of the 19th century and the earliest part of the 20th century neither the institutions nor the contemporary reformers treated Bengali as a language with any fondness. The two early organisations like the Mohammadan Literary Society of Nawab Abdul Latif and the CNMA of Syed Ameer Ali had little inclination towards Bengali.²⁸ Although they initiated a movement for upward mobility and religious revivalism, they failed to retain racial and linguistic identity or Muslim exclusiveness. Nawab Abdul Lateef, the doyen among the reformers, was well-versed in Bengali and could fluently converse in the same,²⁹ but his literary society deliberations were never carried out in Bengali; Urdu, Persian and English were the pet languages.³⁰ In 1893, Calcutta witnessed the emergence of another institution named Mohammadan Literary Academy under the secretaryship of A.H. Abul Hamid. But, unfortunately, this institution too carefully shunned Bengali.³¹ It was not before the 20th century that the Bengali Muslims could build up an institution of their own to help cultivation of Bengali and contribute towards the nurturing of a Bengali cultural heritage.

Attempt towards this direction could first be discerned with the establishment of the *Bangiya Sahitya Bishayini Mussalman Samity* during 1860 at Calcutta at the initiative of Dhanbhai Zamindar, Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury.³² This was followed by the formation of the *Kohinoor Sahitya Samity* at Pangsha, Faridpur, in 1905 at the initiative of Mohammad

Raoshan Ali Chowdhury.³³ But those two were not competent enough to create a sense of exclusiveness which the Bengal Muslims hankered for, nor could these isolated efforts of a few enthusiastic individuals fairly represent the dimension of social consciousness; hence the need of a broad-based institution accommodating divergent opinions was felt and accordingly the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* was born on 4 September 1911 at the initiative of a few intellectual stalwarts.³⁴

The *Samity* aimed to effect a 'national awakening' of the Bengal Muslims through the creation of an exclusively Muslim literature or national literature, which could be aptly used as a lever of the community's development.³⁵ To concretise this plan, the *Samity* held out the following objectives:

1. Cultivation of the Bengali language for its development amongst the Bengali Muslim Society;
2. Translation into Bengali of the scriptures and works of history written in Arabic, Persian and Urdu;
3. Preservation of old Muslim Bengali literature;
4. Collection of the biographies of *pirs* and *walis* in different parts of Bengal and getting them published;
5. Collection of materials for the creation of a 'national history' for the Muslims of Bengal including the narrations of ancient Muslim aristocratic families of Bengal;
6. To facilitate wide circulation of monthlies, weeklies and other magazines among the Bengal Muslim society;
7. Encouragement of the Bengali Muslim authors to produce good books; and
8. Establishment of communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims in the field of literature.³⁶

As a matter of fact the *Samity* became a rendezvous for the educated few who began to play a very prominent role in the reform movement. During its early years the members of the *Samity* were mostly intellectuals in a broad sense like teachers,

lawyers, and journalists.³⁷ The two principal forums for their ideas were the publication of magazines and the holding of conferences in different parts of Bengal. The first mouthpiece of the *Samity* was a quarterly known as *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika* which made its debut in *Baishak* 1325 BS (June 1918) under the illustrious editorship of Mohammad Shahidullah and Mohammad Mojammeel Haque.³⁸ When the *Sahitya Patrika* ceased to exist after six years, it was succeeded by the *Sahityika* (Jan 1927). The conferences and meetings held under the auspices of the *Samity* were equally important in registering the view of the members and patrons.³⁹ The plethora of articles published in the magazines and topics discussed in conferences projected the increasing concern of the reformers regarding social upliftment. The diversity of topics, ranging from the impact of Islam on mediaeval Bengali literature to highly sensitive issues like usury in Muslim society and women's liberation were indicative of the broadening perimeters of the liberal attitude.⁴⁰ Although there were some initial hesitation in accepting views which ran contrary to scriptures, on the whole the entire gamut of discussions which usually followed the readings of papers in the seminars, clearly indicated the earnestness of the Muslim mind in trying to get rid of a doctrinaire attitude and obscurantist ideals. For instance, in one of its literary seminars held in 1326 BS (1919), when Abul Hossain in his article *Sud O Reba* tried to justify the taking of interest, a practice not supported by scriptures, in the perspective of the development of modern banking system, he was supported by the President Mohammad Shahidullah himself.⁴¹ Three years later, in 1329 BS (1922), Moulvi Eakub Ali Chowdhury presented a paper entitled *Hazrat Mohammader Shaktilabh O Manaber Adhikar* (Acquiring of Power by Hazrat Muhammad and Human Rights) in which he tried to humanise rather than deify the divine character of Hazrat Muhammad (SM). He was given complete support not only by the President of the session, Moulvi Abdul Karim, but also by Dr Lutfur

Rahman, Khan Bahadur, Moulvi Syed Lateef and the *Samity* secretary Mozammel Haque.⁴²

The most significant achievement of the *Samity* was perhaps the impetus it had given to the cultivation of Bengali language. In appreciation of its contribution, Moulvi Mujibar Rahman Khan, the editor of the *Mussalman*, stated that 'the establishment of the *Bangiya Muslim Sahitya Samity* is an indication that Mussalmans of Bengal, especially the younger generation, are now quite awaked to the necessity of not only cultivating their vernacular but of trying to shape the Bengali language in a manner suited to their special needs and requirements.'⁴³ This spirit of exclusiveness which the *Samity* fostered earned it the reputation of a premier cultural institution of Muslim Bengal. Although its chief aim was to vindicate the position of Bengali against all odds, yet there was a basic difference in their outlook which had been very categorically expressed by Syed Emdad Ali in his comment that in order to effect the awakening of the Bengal Muslims, a separate literary tradition should be built up whose exclusiveness would depend on the degree of Islamisation of the Bengali language.⁴⁴ The *Samity* thus eventually took a position opposing the urduphiles and for the vernacularists. As a mark of their protest, the eminent members and intellectuals like Syed Emdad Ali, Moulvi Gulam Mustafa and Moulvi Mohammed Wajed Ali opposed the ideas of Abdul Majid, who advocated the induction of a large number of Arabic and Persian words to the exclusion of Bengali words of Sanskrit origin, to impart a true Islamic colour to the vernacular of the Bengal Muslims. The members went against this kind of polluting the Bengali language and rather stressed enriching the Bengali language with Islamic ideas. In other words, it was not the form, rather the spirit, which they argued should bear the Islamic imprint.⁴⁵ The most decisive and important step in this respect was taken on 5 August 1926, when at a meeting held at M.L. Jubilee Institution at Calcutta a resolution was

passed thanking the Calcutta University for adopting Bengali as the medium of instruction at the Matriculation standard, although, at the same time, the University authorities were asked to allow freer use of words of Arabic and Persian origin in the Bengali language.⁴⁶ Eventually, on 20 August 1932, the Executive Committee of the samity came forward to explain its position on the issue and adopted the following resolutions:

- ‘1. This meeting of the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* congratulates the Calcutta University on its introduction of vernacular as the medium of instruction up to the Matriculation standard and hopes it will be introduced as the medium of higher studies also;
2. The *Samity* requests the Calcutta and Dhaka Universities to take proper and immediate steps to ensure an adequate representation of Islamic culture in the Bengali text books prescribed by them for schools and colleges in the Presidency;
3. The *Samity* also requests the provincial Text Book Committee to make provision for an adequate representation of Muslim culture in the Bengali text books prescribed by them;
4. The *Samity* requests the Director of Public Instruction to appoint a large number of Muslim members to the Provincial Text Book Committees intended for Primary and Secondary Schools in Bengal;
5. The *Samity* requests the authorities of the Calcutta University to make a study of early and mediaval history of Islam compulsory in all college courses;
6. The *Samity* considers Bengali as the common mother language of the Hindus and the Muslims; hence no hindrance to be put to the spontaneous use of Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and English words; and
7. The *Samity* condemns those Hindus who have started mischievous propaganda to oust Islamic words from

Bengali literature which is the common form of both the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal.'⁴⁷

The *Samity*, along with a considerable number of Muslim intellectuals, was emotionally attached to the Bengali language, but an inner sense of exclusiveness urged them to remain separate. Hence, in spite of being cordially invited by the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* to initiate a joint literary programme, the *Samity* shrank back and preferred to remain aloof.⁴⁸

The most important contribution of the *Samity* was the inculcation of a new sense of regeneration which the new intellectual elite group had been contemplating but could not give vent to. The *Samity* and its well coordinated programme helped them to speak out for a particular brand of social thinkers who succeeded the group of erstwhile intellectuals like Syed Ameer Ali and Nawab Abdul Lateef, for whom Islamisation was far more important than preservation of intrinsic cultural entity of the Bengali Muslims. The *Samity* on its part tried to make both ends meet; while Islamisation became its key policy, it did not remain oblivious to the necessity of building up an image of a separate socio-cultural identity of the Bengali Muslims which would no longer be dominated by the Hindus.

Society, Religion and Identity

While the *Samity* was busy with protecting the cultural front, in other areas of socio-religious activities, different organisations, sometimes with conflicting views, worked to create an identity. The formation of *Anjumans* and similar other organisations during the last quarter of the 19th century was a very important step in that direction.⁴⁹ The trend continued into the 20th century. During the early years of the 20th century, Bengal witnessed the mushrooming of associations and *Anjumans*, particularly in western Bengal, catering to the social needs of

the Bengali Muslims. Thus, associations like *Anjuman-i-Ittefaqul Islam*, *Anjuman Moinul Islam*, 24-Parganas Mohammadan District Association, *Anjuman Muzakerai Islamia*, *Anjuman-i-Mussalman Magrabi Bangla*, Young Men's Moslem Society, *Anjuman Khawateen Islam*, Mohammadan Ladies Association, *Anjuman-i-Urdu-i-Bangla*, Mymensingh Moslim Students Association, and Bengal Muslim Journalists' Association were established in Nadia, Murshidabad, Malda, Birbhum, Calcutta and 24-Parganas to accentuate the process.⁵⁰ Those associations and *Anjumans* might have had some oblique yet conflicting political views, but socially they had identical interests and considered that through general improvement of education an all-round development could be achieved.⁵¹ But in most of the cases those *Anjumans* were highly localised and, due to paucity of funds or proper backing, could not undertake any extensive programme which could have effectively Islamised the masses or brought to them the benefit of education. The influence of the CNMA was already at a considerably low ebb while the *Islam Mission Prochar Samity* which fought almost single-handed had outgrown its vitality and energy. In this context the need for a broad-based organisation which could take up the greater task of social responsibility and religious reform was urgently felt. The need of the hour in this case was provided by four major institutions, namely, *Anjuman Wayezene Hanifiya Bangala*, *Anjuman Ulama*, *Anjuman Ahle Hadith Bangla* and *Anjuman Sufiyae Bangala*.⁵² Basically, those institutions were highly religious and represented conflicting socio-religious views. With the exception of the *Anjuman Ulama*, which was an organisation of the Ulemas, the other three organisations representing three different religious schools practically dominated the entire socio-religious scene of the Muslim Bengal.

The *Anjuman Wayezene Hanifiya Bangala* was the organisation of the Sunni Muslims of Bengal who were the followers (*Mukalleds*) of Imam Abu Hanifa. This Hanafi

Majhab or the school of religious law named after Abu Hanifa al-Numan al-Thabit grew out of the main body of the ancient school of Kufa and absorbed the ancient school of Basra too; but due to 'adventitious reasons' Abu Hanifa and his school became the main target of the traditionalists (Ahl Al-Hadith) in the attack against the use of subjective opinion (*ray*) in religious law.⁵³ In Bengal also there was no exception to the phenomenon and the most incriminatory attack against the Hanafi school came from the Ahl-i-Hadith sect which formed the *Anjumane Ahl-i-Hadith Bangala*.

As an organisation the *Anjumane Wayezene*, which drew support from a large and influential group of Hanafi intellectuals and businessmen, was strong enough to counter the Ahle-Hadith onslaught, but its chief aim was to truly Islamise the Muslims. With this end in view, to initiate social reforms, it set out a programme of religious preaching among the Muslim masses of Bengal.⁵⁴ To put its ideas into practice the policy makers of the *Anjuman* put emphasis on two basic objectives: one was the creation of branch *Anjumans* in different parts of Bengal and the other was the appointment of professional and honorary preachers.⁵⁵ Two types of branches of the *Anjumans* were decided upon, one dependent and the other independent. While the independent *Anjumans* would have a greater degree of autonomy in matters of publication of reports and spending of money compared to the dependent ones, both would be affiliated to the principal city office in Calcutta.⁵⁶ It also introduced gradations in the rank of preachers. Along with envisaging a group of salaried professional preachers, it also considered appointing a team of honorary or *Lillah* preachers.

Much stress was put on high moral character of the preachers and also on knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. At the same time, great importance was placed on their knowledge of Bengali and the capacity of delivering religious lectures in that language.⁵⁷ Thus apart from preaching, they had also instructions to facilitate the establishment of *Maktab*,

Madrassa and *Masjid*, raising of voluntary funds, and founding of rural courts which would settle all sorts of social and religious disputes among village Muslims.⁵⁸ According to the veteran reformer Habibur Rahman, the *Anjuman* was expected to restore *tawhid* from the corrupting influence of *shirk* and *bid'at*.⁵⁹ And with this end in view, *Islam Darshan*, the monthly, was brought out as the mouthpiece of the *Anjuman* in 1920 in the Bengali month of *Baishakh* under the editorship of Abdul Hakim.⁶⁰ The chief aim of this periodical was to launch a full-fledged war against heterodoxy, particularly against those radicals like Nazrul Islam or moderates like Kaikobad, who in their lectures, imparted unorthodox ideas akin to Hinduism.⁶¹ The magazine and its illustrious editor not only brought the erring literati to books but also raised a bulwark against all un-Islamic practices by publishing a particular section entitled *Masala Talab*, a sort of question-answer, to make the Muslim masses more knowledgeable on correct Islamic ways and practices, as also to forewarn them against any kind of Hindu influence.⁶² To prove its ability as a keeper of Muslim conscience, the magazine issued categorical instructions to followers of the *Hanafi Majhab* to remain ever cautious in their Khilafat cooperation with the Hindus, since in certain respects, like the uttering of slogans of *Bande Mataram*, wearing of Gandhi cap, basically a Gujrati Hindu cap by the Khilafati volunteers, Hindus and Muslims alike, and giving slogans like victory to Gandhi (*Gandhi Ki Jai*), the Muslim participants might put their Islamic identity at stake.⁶³

The editor of *Islam Darshan*, on behalf of the *Anjuman*, made clear the point that on issues like cow-sacrifice, which was highly religious, the Muslims could not obviously come to any sort of compromise that might jeopardise their own socio-religious interest, while the *Anjuman* Standing Committee in its meeting held on 29 September 1920 at the residence of Nawab Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury took a resolution against the *fatwa* imposing ban on cow-slaughter.⁶⁴ In fact, to

perpetuate Islamic identity, the *Anjuman*, apart from issuing instructions through *Islam Darshan*, took up a programme of sending missionaries in different parts of Bengal who not only took part in converting the infidels into Islam but preached sermons among the rural Muslims to make them aware of the doctrine of Islam, particularly of the Hanafi school of thinking.⁶⁵

In all practical purposes the aims and objectives of the *Anjumane Wayejene* was to produce an all-around development of a society faced with different types of problems endangering its very existence. The truth was realised by another major socio-religious organisation which chalked out almost an identical programme, but with quite a different attitude and outlook, endeavouring to give succour to a different group of Muslims holding socio-religious views quite opposite to the Hanafis. The *Anjumane Ahle Hadith Bangala* as a nascent organisation of the Ahle-Hadith sect known also as Mohammadi did not hold any remarkably separate outlook regarding social reforms and vindication of the faith from that of the *Anjumane Wayejene*, but it held out quite an exclusive religious view which urged them to try to go back to first principles and to restore the original simplicity and purity of faith and practice. Accordingly, emphasis was laid in particular on the reassertion of *tawhid* or the Unity of Allah and the denial of occult power and knowledge of hidden things (*ilm al-ghayb*) to any of His creatures.

Whatever might have been the points of difference with the Hanafis, the *Anjuman Ahle Hadith Bangala* was as serious about the upliftment of the Mohammadis as the *Anjumane Wayejene* was regarding the Hanafis. And it asked the Mohammadi brethren to wake up from the slumber and undertake development works. To be very much meaningful in their action the *Anjuman Ahle Hadith*, apart from taking up a thorough programme of Islamisation, seriously contemplated to eradicate all syncretic tendencies so far crept into socio-religious practices of the Bengal Muslims.⁶⁶

Whatever might have been the success or failure of the *Anjumane Ahle Hadith*, the sincerity of its attempts could never be missed by the Bengal Muslims for whom religious revival was as essential as modernisation. For this reason, particularly for a more pragmatic course of Islamisation, the need of religious preaching with a modern outlook was felt with more urgency.

From this realisation ultimately an exclusive organisation of preachers and religious doctors entitled *Anjuman Ulema* took its shape under the secretaryship of the illustrious editor of *Masik Mohammadi*, Maulana Mohammad Akram Khan, assisted by Mohammad Maniruzzaman Islamabadi.⁶⁷ Among the aims and objectives of the *Anjuman Ulema*, almost identical with those of *Anjuman Wayejene* and *Anjuman Ahle Hadith*, there were two exceptions: one was to modernise the *Alems* (religious leaders) who had been educated in traditional ways and give thorough religious education to the modern youths and, the second, was to establish one *Dar-ul-Efta* under *Dar-ul-Ulm* to increase the number of *Alems* and preachers.⁶⁸ The *Anjuman* did not throw open its membership to all categories, in fact it was reared up as a closed circle consisting of two types of *Alems*:

- Those who were proficient in Arabic as well as acquainted with Islam. In cases of religious disputes their decisions would be esteemed; and
- *Moabens* or selected patrons whose decisions on other than religious issues would be honoured.⁶⁹

To prove its ability as a social organisation with high potency, the *Anjuman Ulema* soon deputed its preachers to different parts of Bengal⁷⁰ and in a series of conferences at Patia and Satkania thana, under the then Chittagong sub-division, held on 28, 29 and 30 *Chaitra* 1325 BS and 1 *Baishakh* 1326 BS (1899) consecutively, the *Anjuman* adopted a number of resolutions for social reforms. Among the resolutions passed,

the most important ones, apart from establishing *Maktab* or *Madrassas* and creation of *Baitul Mal* fund, were eradication of all un-Islamic usages, declaring *Namaj*, *Roza* and *Jakat* as compulsory and introduction of cooperative movement in Muslim villages.⁷¹ In fact, some un-Islamic socio-religious usages like child marriage, dowry system, celebration of social ceremonies like marriage and others with much pomp and grandeur which could be attributed to Hindu influence, were resented by all who cared for Islam. It was even viewed with horror that how casteism in the form of *Ashraf-Atraf* discrimination had reduced Islamic egalitarianism to a mere namesake. As regards the economic oppression suffered by the Muslim peasants and labourers, the *Anjuman* rightly pointed out that unless and until they could be saved from the clutches of the money-lenders, mostly Hindus, no substantial reform, social as well as economic, could be carried out. Hence a suggestion for establishing a basic cooperative system in the form of *Dharmagola* was put forward, with the aim of extending loans without interest to the Muslim peasants when they would be put into distress.⁷²

The unique feeling of solidarity which the *Anjumans* helped to generate was further buttressed by the *Khilafat* movement of 1919-20. Although the *Khilafat* Movement registered a short span of Hindu-Muslim amity superimposed by the Muslim internationalism, still, for the Muslims of Bengal or elsewhere, the *Khilafat* agitation was obviously an exercise in solidarity and consolidation. Between 1919 and 1920, Bengal witnessed a number of *Khilafat* meetings in different parts of the province⁷³ with the definite aim of providing moral and financial support to the *Khilafatists* in India and abroad. The enthusiasm and earnestness rose to such a pitch that in a *Khilafat* meeting of the Burdwan Mohammadan Association held at Burdwan Bangsagopal Town Hall on 28 January 1920, an ordinary *Tasbih* was sold twice and fetched a price of Rs 255. A pair of ordinary spectacles with case was sold six times and fetched a total price

of Rs 310. A poor peon presented his *dopatti topi* worth about an *anna* only to the Khilafat committee at the meeting. This was put to auction then and there and was purchased for Rs 12. The costly collection at the meeting amounted to about Rs 300 and the unrealised sale proceeds of the articles sold amounted to Rs 800 which was sent forthwith to the Khilafat fund.⁷⁴

In all probability, the Khilafat provided a political lesson to the rather apolitical Muslim masses of Bengal through the medium of religion but, at the same time, it roused the sharp religious feelings of the community who since the *Wahhabi* days could not rally round a cause and take a definite anti-British stand.⁷⁵

The *Khilafat* days were however numbered with the emergence of communalism which affected all levels of political and social process. Within a very short period the two communities drifted apart from each other. While the separation brought about a set back in a joint socio-political venture of both the Hindus and the Muslims, it strengthened respective communal aspirations and unity. Among the Hindus the communal feeling was overtly expressed in *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* movements and among the Muslims it manifested itself through the creation of *Tanzim* and *Tablig* overtures.

Suddhi was a sort of social reform movement undertaken by Swami Sraddhananda of *Arya Samaj* aimed at taking back the border-line Muslims into the fold of Hinduism, particularly the *Arya Samaj*.⁷⁶ While the *Tablig* movement was started by Maulana Muhammad Ilias to checkmate the advance of the *Arya Samajists*.⁷⁷ Consequently, the *Tablig* of northern India found its passage into Bengal and, around 1927, the Bengal Provincial *Tablig* Committee was formed under the secretaryship of Moulvi Abul Hayat who, along with Moulvi Aftabuddin, sub-editor of *The Light*, Lahore toured a number of villages in the districts of Burdwan, Howrah, Bishnupur, Bankura, and Midnapore to make an on-the-spot study of the impact of the *Suddhi* Movement on the Muslims of the locality.⁷⁸

Another organisation that effectively cast its influence over Bengal was the *Tanzeem* (effort) Association of Dr Safiuddin Kitchlew, a counterpart of the *Sangathan* (organisation) Movement of the Hindus headed by Lala Lazpat Rai.⁷⁹ Dr Kitchlew, an ex-noncooperator of the Punjab, created this platform to fight back the thrust of *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* and, with this end in view, he called for organisation of Muslim volunteer corps, schools, charitable institutions, and even banks.⁸⁰ In Bengal, the appearance of the *Tanzeem* and its foster father Kitchlew not only rejuvenated the disillusioned *Khilafatists* into action but largely helped unite all diverse elements under one banner of Islamic solidarity and rally round *Tanzeem*.

On 18 May 1926, Bengal witnessed the formation of the Bengal *Tanzeem* Committee⁸¹. The chief aim of the organisation was to organise the Muslims of Bengal on a purely non-political and non-sectarian basis and to rebuild the economic, social and spiritual life of the community on strictly constructive lines so as to safeguard Muslim interest and retain communal self-respect.⁸² Apart from this, the association put emphasis on the establishment of unity and solidarity among the Muslims of all classes and views by propagating general principles and ideals of Islam and insisting upon religious observances, and congregational daily Friday prayers and encouraging *Tablig*. The most remarkable aspect of the *Tanzeem* Movement in Bengal was that not only did it take religio-moral revival into consideration but a thorough programme of socio-economic upliftment including technical training in agriculture, industries and mechanics, cooperative sale and supply, sanitation and public health, party and family arbitration, creation of Indian Muslim Workers Home was chalked out.⁸³ Thus, *Tanzeem* stirred the Muslims of mofussil and rural Bengal. The hectic tour undertaken by Kitchlew in eastern and northern Bengal, the warmth of felicitations extended to him, participation of all categories of Muslim political leaders and

social reformers, irrespective of political views, mushrooming of *Tanzeem* Committees in different places like Sirajganj, Bogra, Dhaka, Chittagong, Madaripur, Faridpur, Bashirhat, Dinajpur, Comilla and Barisal were a pointer to the enthusiasm with which the Bengal Muslims greeted it.⁸⁴ The Central *Tanzeem* Committee, as an initial step towards reform and rejuvenation, started Qur'an class in its city office at Calcutta to train the preachers, while stalwarts like Maulana Abdur Rauf Danapuri, Maulana Mohammad Akram Khan, Maulana Shayequeul Ahmed Osmani, Hakim Naser Ahmed and Maulana Ruhul Amin offered to act as teachers.⁸⁵

The Tanzeemites, as true followers of Islam, were in favour of communal harmony and therefore on certain political and socio-religious issues like joint electorate, procession with music before mosque and joint programme with *Hindu Sabha* they were in favour of rapprochement with the Hindus.⁸⁶ But there remained a majority among the supporters and sympathisers for whom *Tanzeem* did not appear as a succour but obviously a solidarity exercise, a platform from where ideals of exclusiveness of the community could be preached very effectively. For this reason, while Kitchlew and Moulvi Abdul Karim in their speeches expressed opinion in favour of joint electorate and asked their co-religionists not to make a furore over music played in front of mosques for the sake of maintaining communal harmony, strong protests were made. A meeting of the CNMA not only took a resolution repudiating the views of Kitchlew as expressed on 11 June 1926 at a meeting in Mymensingh⁸⁷ but also the Dhaka District *Anjuman*, at a meeting held on 16 July, 1926, took a decision to disassociate itself from the *Tanzeem* Movement.⁸⁸

For all practical purposes, the *Tanzeem* and the *Tablig* raised to counter the forces of *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* were effectively used by Muslims to unite themselves. The *Khilafat* and *Swarajist* movements were a jolts to them and brought about political dismemberment causing a cleavage in Islamic

solidarity. At this juncture, the *Tanzeem* definitely provided a very good point around which all categories of Muslim thinkers, reformers, social workers and politicians could rally.

In Bengal, movements like *Tanzeem* and *Tablig* had an intellectual aspect which needs to be mentioned. The establishment of the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* in the early twenties was a remarkable step in the intellectual progress of the Bengali Muslims, who began to be dimly conscious of the Bengali identity, apart from their Islamic cultural heritage. The *Samity* did not preach anything which could jeopardise the sense of unity. Its efforts rather gave a fillip to the unity movement by striking a balance between orthodoxy and liberalism. The initial aim of the *Samity* was to preach consciousness and within a very short period, the *Samity* was turned into a veritable platform of those litterateurs who pushed aside liberalism and staged competition with the Bengali Hindus in the literary field to establish superiority and to retain exclusiveness of the community.⁸⁹

At this juncture, an association called the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj*, came into being which was sharply different from others in respect of outlook and attitude. The organisation was the brain-child of a few free-thinking intellectuals among whom there had been a handful of Hindus.⁹⁰ According to Abul Hossain, the editor of *Sikha*, its mouthpiece, the aim of the *Samaj* was declared to be the cultivation of thought which he found essential in building up an exclusive world of Bengali Muslim literature.⁹¹ But intrinsically, the *Samaj* and its founders raised a *jihad* against misknowledge, obscurantism and orthodoxy amidst the Bengali Muslim society.⁹² To reach this goal the society or *Samaj* made emancipation of intellect their key word and the inspiration they drew from Rabindranath, Rammohan, Kamal Ataturk, Sadi, Hazrat Muhammad (SM), and the Mutazilites (those celebrated 7th century school of Arab philosophers under the leadership of Imam Abu Hanifa) and lastly from the mystic cult of the sub-

alterns of Bengal.⁹³ To be specific, the catholicity of approach which became the remarkable trait of the *Samaj* and its followers had manifested itself in the absence of doctrinaire outlook towards religion and the presence of a freedom of thought.

The *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* which was more a reforming body than a mere literary club, thus began to think *de novo* a programme of reform in which the so-called religious zeal was absent. In fact, the reformers wanted to bring about an intellectual freedom in the life of the Bengal Muslims. To reevaluate the intellectual inheritance of Islam, it was necessary, they felt, to obtain emancipation of intellect which was a legacy of *Mutazalite* ideas and *Sufistic* philosophy as manifested in the Bengali thoughts and ideals of the Bengal sub-alterns. Considering the degree of orthodoxy and intensity of traditional belief, the idea was bold enough to stir into action only a handful of intellectuals who proclaimed themselves 'Kemalists' and brought into their fold a very small number of Hindu intellectuals who shared their views. Kazi Abdul Wadud, Abul Hossain, Abdul Kader, Kazi Motaher Hossain and a few others were those enthusiasts at whose initiative the *Samaj* was officially established on 19 January 1926, at Dhaka, under the able guidance of the erudite scholar Maulana Mohammad Shahidullah.⁹⁴ The principal aim of the *Samaj* was the cultivation of thought and to create yearning for knowledge and, to achieve this, it pledged to unite all sorts of wisdom and knowledge, ancient or modern alike, irrespective of caste or creed.

If the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* was a step behind liberalism, the *Samaj* was a step forward. This nascent organisation was a most glorious feather in the cap of the intellectuals. During a particular period the *Samaj* could influence the Muslim youths towards a distinct line of thinking. The papers usually presented and discussed during different seminars of the *Samaj* were indicative of the non-partisan, non-communal and intellectual attitude of the readers and listeners

alike and, at the same time, manifested the growing concern of the reformists for the revival of good senses of the community. Thus papers like *Satkara Paitallish* by Abul Hossain, *Sammohita Mussalman* by Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Bahai Dharma* by Abul Fazal, and *Adesher Nigraha* by Abul Hossain not only whipped up the Muslims into consciousness but articles like *Satkara Paitallish* which criticised the government's policy of concession towards the Muslims in matters of job opportunities, rendered them appreciative of self-sufficiency instead of being dependent on government patronisation.

Like the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity*, the *Samaj* could not be sustained long nor could it draw much support from the majority of the educated class due to its ultra-radical viewpoints. But, for a certain period, the *Samaj* held good its influence and its impact on a particular section of the society was recognizable. In the opinion of Kazi Motaher Hossain, the editor of *Sikha*, three distinct results were achieved by the *Samaj* during its short span of existence. Firstly, it was at the *Samaj's* initiative that *Purda* among a section of the Bengal Muslims had come to lose much of its stringency as was proved by a handful of Muslim women who frequently attended the *Samaj* conferences. Secondly, in the field of music which was considered to be un-Islamic, spectacular achievement was gained while the Muslim students of the Dhaka University Muslim Hall sang songs in the Conference which earlier were performed only by the Hindu students.⁹⁵ Thirdly, the most important development was that the *Samaj* could express its views without any opposition and that was almost impossible some time ago.

For the time being the *Dhaka Samaj* could create an impact on the Muslim intelligentsia and not a far too liberal paper like the *Star of India* branded it as a very important literary organisation of the Muslim free thinkers. The strength of its influence could be felt when the contemporary Muslim community witnessed the formation of different clubs and

associations which kept afloat the ideals of liberalism. Thus within a few years of the publication of *Sikha*, another liberal magazine, *Jagaran*, came out at the initiative of Abul Hossain under the editorship of M. Ahmed Ali from Dhaka Satranga Islamia Press.

Among the Muslim students the emancipation of intellect movement created considerable enthusiasm. Infused with the liberal ideals of the Dhaka Literary Association, the young members of the *Sahitya Samaj* around the year 1929 established the *Al-Mamun Club* after the name of the Mutazalite leader Al-Mamun at the Burdwan House of Dhaka Muslim Hall.⁹⁶ Simultaneously, to give credence to the notion of women's liberation, as conceived by the *Samaj* in condemnation of *Purda*, the Anti-*Purda* Leagues were established in different students blocks of the university which extended ovation to an erudite Muslim lady Fazaltunnesa, who secured a post-graduate degree in mathematics.⁹⁷ To crown it all, at the start of 1927 (2 January), Bengal witnessed the formation of the *Bangiya Muslim Mahila Samity* under the Presidentship of Bibi Nurunnessa Khatun, *Sahitya Swaraswati*, *Bidya Binodini* of Sreerampore which adopted the following resolutions unanimously:

- The Bengal government should be moved to earmark a portion of the sum allotted to the budget for the spread and advancement of female education among the Muslim;
- The Director of Public Instruction be moved to set up one Muslim Girls Middle English School in the headquarters of each sub-division of Bengal;
- Branch *Samities* should be formed in every district and sub-divisions of Bengal for the advancement of Muslim female education; and
- A monthly, under the editorship of Zanoor Ahmed and Rakibus Sultana, be published immediately under the management of Moulvi Syed Nazra Mohim Hossain.⁹⁸

The views of the *Bangiya Muslim Mahila Samity* came further to be supported by another liberal organisation, namely, the *All-Bengal Muslim Young Men's Association*, which in its first annual conference held with much fanfare at Burdwan on 11 September 1927, resolved to take important steps to register its concern for a meaningful programme of reform that would enable the society to be competent enough to march towards progress.⁹⁹ Within a short period the association could spread its influence effectively and a number of its branches sprouted up in different parts of Bengal like Calcutta, Bogra, Chandpur, Feni and Noakhali, which not only emphasised retention of Islamic identity but also went decidedly against *Purda* and *Mullaism* and in favour of Women education.¹⁰⁰

Taking the cue from the *Moslem Young Men's Association* (MYMA), there appeared in the social scene more youth organisations like *All-Bengal Muslim Students' Association* under the Secretaryship of S. Hossain¹⁰¹, *Progressive Young Muslim Federation*¹⁰², *Islam Mission of Baharampore*¹⁰³ and to the horror of the few orthodox, 'pseudo-Muslim' societies like *Friends of Muslims*¹⁰⁴ with its mouthpiece *Muslim Suhrid*¹⁰⁵, *Bangiya Sahitya Samsad*¹⁰⁶ later turned into *Bangiya Parishilan Samity*¹⁰⁷, *Omar Khyam Sahitya Samgha*¹⁰⁸, and *Gulistma Sahitya Chakra*¹⁰⁹, which put forward a manifesto of cultural rejuvenation of the Bengal Muslims in a liberal vein. Thus by the thirties there emerged a considerable number of liberal Muslim organisations, which apart from giving an intellectual fervour to the movement brought a sense of attachment to Bengali cultural heritage.

Still it was a fact that orthodoxy died hard. While liberals had been making progress, particularly in indoctrinating an increasing number of Muslims with their new faith, there had been a simultaneous growth of orthodox institutions which put revivalism in the garb of reform, to cast their spell over the *shariah* abiding Muslim populace. An overt manifestation of orthodox ideals thus came on the wake of the *All-Bengal Moulvi*

Association born on 22 July 1932 in Calcutta after a meeting attended by leading Moulvis and presided over by Moulvi Dallilur Rahman.¹¹⁰ Although the apparent object of the Moulvi association was to safeguard and further the interest of the *moulvis* so that they might occupy a position in the community and to increase their utility in the Mussalman community and generally to advance the moral and material welfare of the Mussalmans of Bengal¹¹¹, their very fascination with the name Moulvi and their effort to perpetuate their influence on the society was indicative, to some extent, of the bigotry and obscurantism for which they were held responsible. It is a matter of enquiry, of course, that how far the *Moulvi Association* could secure its position in a Bengali Muslim society of changing values or how far it could penetrate into their intellectual life, but it was a fact that almost to append the task of the Moulvi Association other associations like *All-Bengal Arabic Students Association*¹¹² and *All-Bengal Urdu Association*¹¹³ emerged as a part of counter-reformation movement of a particular group. In the name of propagating Urdu among the Bengal Muslims and to save them from being demuslimised under the unrelenting pressure of the Hindu cultural influence, these associations surreptitiously fanned bigotry and orthodoxy and blocked the way of the progressive Muslim thought and liberal movement which so far had gained a considerable dimension.

From Exclusiveness to Nationalism

Whatever might have been the trend of the movement indicating the existence of a maze of conflicting opinions regarding social progress it must be admitted that among the Bengal Muslims of the first three decades of the 20th century, the emerging associations and organisations were indicative of a growing sense of exclusiveness. By late thirties the political scene of Bengal became clouded by the embittered relations between Hindus and Muslims as communities who vied with

each other for every sort of privilege—social, economic and political. In this process of identifying one's own communal zone, the importance of associations and organisations was much emphasised to highlight the rationality of demands. While among the Hindus the *Hindu Mahasabha* and similar organisations conjured up a dream of *Akhanda Bharatbarsha*, illustrated by the Hindu papers and journals like *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Modern Review*, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, *Prabasi*, *Bharatbarsa*, *Basumati* and *Sanibarar Chithi*. These papers were almost on a warpath against the literary pollution of the Bengali language by the Muslims in the form of frequent use of Arabic and Persian words among the Muslims of Bengal. An equal zeal to establish an exclusive cultural identity could be discerned which brought into force a political idea of a separate Muslim homeland like Pakistan. During the twenties and early thirties, among the Bengal Muslims, the idea of a separate entity was nurtured with much fondness, but it failed to get a definite shape due to lack of a political orientation. While during late thirties this idea of exclusiveness got a political shape through the 1940 Lahore Resolution, the Bengal Muslims along with their co-religionists in other parts of the country, began to toy with the idea of a separate homeland. It became obvious at that point that Hindus and Muslims were no longer two communities with different cultural moorings within the framework of an Indian polity, but they were to remain territorially separated. This realisation of a separate homeland with a very different cultural entity ultimately led to the formation of *Purba Pakistan Renaissance Society* (PPRS) and *Purba Pakistan Sahitya Samsad* in Culcutta in August 1942.¹¹⁴

The major point of difference between other sundry socio-cultural organisations and the PPRS was that the *Society* very candidly advocated the necessity of a separate homeland as a prerequisite to the cultural freedom of the Muslims. Although more political in its tone than the *Dhaka Samaj*, the Renaissance Society, taking its cue from the former, held afloat

fundamentalists, began with divesting Islam of syncretic tendencies or raising counter-propaganda campaign against the Christian and the Hindu missionaries.

Thus the early *Islam Mission Prochar Samity*, along with the later *Anjuman Ulamaye Bangala*, *Anjuman Hanafaye Bangala*, *Anjuman Ahle Hadith e Bangala*, *All-Bengal Moulvi Association* and *All-Bengal Urdu Association*, all those socio-religious organisations apart from taking up a programme of educational reform, had in their mind a broader plan of social rejuvenation in Islamic ways. In certain cases, instances showed that pressures from without, jeopardising their very socio-religious existence, had goaded the Muslims to mobilise. Such was the case of the *Anjuman Islamia Bankura* which was born on 13 August 1928 when the day before a Hindu procession not only disturbed the *Mughrib* prayer but posed a threat to the Muslim community of Bankura.¹¹⁹ In a way the *anjumans* and other social organisations under the influence of the fundamentalists at that time presented an interesting parallel to the movement organised by the *Deobandis* of northern India under *Jamait al-Ansar* and *Nazarat al-Ma'arif al-Quraniya* or the *Firnagi Mahal* exponents like Maulana Abdul Bari who aimed at increasing the religious and cultural awareness of their co-religionists. Although in northern India those Ulama dominated organisations gradually became more politically active and anti-British, providing a fertile seed-ground for the later Khilafatists, their counterparts in Bengal though lacking in anti-British posture did emphasise on the solidarity and exclusiveness of the community like the former. In major cases those organisations provided a good platform both for the Ulama and the western educated Muslims who could work conjointly for reform and create a pattern for future operations.

Significantly, the organisational efforts of the liberals in this respect did not lag behind. Although the liberal organisations like the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* or the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* of Dhaka did not have much popularity due to their intellectual approach or rather inability to cater to the

demands of the Muslim populace, they were equally zealous in propagating the socio-cultural exclusiveness of the Bengal Muslims. The *Samity's* emphasis on the cultivation and glorification of the Muslim past, publicity of a whole band of Muslim writers and authors, the attempt to create a separate literary model for Bengal Muslims with the judicious use of Arabic and Persian words and, lastly, the refusal to merge with the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* all these indicated the social awareness of the *Samity*. Even the inculcation of the doctrine of emancipation of intellect by the *Dhaka Sahitya Samaj* and their constant effort to highlight the liberal and rational aspect of Islam was in a way an attempt to vindicate the superiority of Islam so far looked down upon by the Bengali Hindus as one of bigotry and obscurantism.

The liberals' efforts were unrelenting in this respect. The societies and organisations which sprang up following the birth of the *Dhaka Sahitya Samaj*, even the publishing houses like *Muslim publishing House*, *Mohammadi Book Agency* which started a movement of creating Muslim literature for Bengal, put forward a pattern of social mobilisation. And the most important thing about these networks of organisations and societies was not whether they were traditional, modern or liberal, but that they provided structure within the Muslim community which was parallel to the socio-religious superstructure of their Hindu big brothers and while question of a separate identity arose the long tradition of organisational movement provided a reason to remain alien and different.

Notes

1. The most important tract in favour of cow slaughter and against Hindu interference is *Agnikukkut*, Calcutta, 2 *Baishakh* 1309 BS by Fakkir Abdullah Bin Ismail Al-koreshi Al-Hindi. Munshi Meherullah and Shaikh Jamiruddin were two self-styled preachers who fought against Christian missionaries. Particularly, Meherullah's fight against Christian missionaries in Pirojpur of Barisal 21-23 *Aswin* 1298 BS, Ranaghat, Jessore and Noakhali was remarkable. See Shaikh Habibur Rahman *Sahitya Ratna*, *Karmabir Munshi Meherullah*, Calcutta, pp. 39-127; Shaikh Mohammad Jamiruddin *Vidya-Vinod Sreshtha Nabi Hazarat Muhammad O Padri Dhonka Bhanjan*, Rajshahi, 1323 BS, pp. 13-42; *Krishtiya Bandhab*, June 1982; Rafiuddin Ahmed, Chap. 3, op. cit.
2. *Islam Pracharak*, 5th yr., 9th and 10th issues, September and October 1903: Mohammad Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, *Islam O Mission*, pp. 354-56.
3. Rafiuddin Ahmed, Chap. 6, op.cit.
4. Ibid.
5. Kazi Abdul Mannan, *Adhunik Bangala Sahitye Muslim Sadhana*, Dhaka, 1969, pp. 256-66.
6. *Islam Procharak*, 5th yr., 9th and 10th issues, op. cit.
7. *Islam Procharak*, 6th yr., 1st and 2nd issues, *Jaishthya* 1311 BS. A report on *Bangiya Islam Mission Samity* by Raoshen Ali Chowdhury, pp.14-16.
8. *Islam Procharak*, 6th yr., 1st and 2nd issues, *Jaishthya* 1311 BS. A report on *Bangiya Islam Mission Samity* by Raoshen Ali Chowdhury, pp. 14-16.
9. Mozammel Haq, *Jatiya Foara*, *Jaishthya* 1319 BS, Nadia.
10. *Nabanoor*, 1st yr., No.4, *Sravana* 1310 BS, Calcutta: Mirza Abul Fazal, *Pradeshik Mussalman Shiksha Samity*, p. 156.
11. *Islam Procharak*, 5th yr., No. 9 and 10, July-August 1903: Moulvi Wahed Hossain, *A Report on Bangiya Pradeshik Mussalman Shiksha Samity*, pp. 330-336.

12. *Islam Procharak*, 5th yr., No. 9 and 10, July-August 1903: Moulvi Wahed Hossain, *A Report on Bangiya Pradeshi Massalman Shiksha Samity*, pp. 330-336.
13. Appeal published on behalf of the *Chittagong Mussalman Shiksha Sabha* in *Islam Procharak*, 5th yr., July-August, 1903 p., 310.
14. *Islam Procharak*, 6th yr., 1st and 2nd issues, May-June, 1904, pp. 74-79.
15. Ibid.
16. *Islam Procharak*, 4th yr., 9th and 10 issues, 1902: Ebne Mauz, *Mussalman Boarding Ba Chhatrabas*, pp. 321-28.
17. Ibid.
18. *The Mussalman*, 11 January 1907, *Report on All-India Muhammadan Education Conference held at Dhaka in January 1907*, p.6; *The Mussalman*, 12 April 1907: *Report on Barisal Mohammadan Education Conference held in March 1907*, p. 6; *The Mussalman*, 24 April 1908: *Report on Fourth Mohammadan Educational Conference of Bengal held at Purnea on 18 April 1908*: p. 5; *The Mussalman*, 22 May 1908: *Report on Mymensingh Muslim Educational Conference held on 18 April 1908*: p. 8; *The Mussalman*, 21 April 1911: *Report on Provincial Muhammadan Educational Conference, East Bengal and Assam, held at Rangpur on 15 April 1911*: p. 5; *The Mussalman*, 13 October 1911: *Report on Provincial Mohammadan Educational Conference, Bengal, 6th session held at Calcutta Town Hall, 5-7 October, 1911*: pp.1-5; *The Mussalman*, 20 October, 1911: *Report on District Mohammadan Educational Conference, Mymensingh, held at Karotiya on 15 and 16 October 1911*: presided over by the Nawab of Dhaka, p. 5; *The Mussalman*, 1 December 1911: *Report on Educational Conference of Anjuman-i-Mussalman Mograbi Bangala, held on 27 November 1911 at Burdwan Town Hall*, p. 9; *The Mussalman*, 9 August 1912: *Report on the Seventh Session of the Anjuman-i-Ittefaq-e Islam, Nadia, held on 21 July 1912 at Panjor Kazipara, Chakdah*, p. 3; *The Mussalman* 13 April 1917: *Report on Bengal Presidency Mohammadan Educational*

Conference, held at Barisal on 7 and 8 April 1917, pp.2-3; *The Mussalman*, 4 January 1918: *Report on All-India Muhammadan Educationl Conference*, held in Calcutta on 3 January 1918: p. 2; *The Mussalman*, 24 May 1918: *Report on Malda Mohammadan Educational Conference*, 5th session held on 11 and 12 May 1918 at Model Madrasa, English Bazar, p. 7; *The Mussalman*, 17 and 24 January 1919: *Report on Bengal Presidency Mohammadan Educational Conference*, Chittagong Session, held on 28 Dec. 1918, pp.2-3; *The Mussalman*, 9 April 1920: *Report on Bengal Presidency Mohammadan Educational Conference*, Dinajpur session, held on 2 and 3 April 1920, p. 7: *Proc. of the Bengal Provincial Mohammadan Educational Conference* held at Chittagong town on 18 and 20 April 1930 and published by Moulvi Jalaluddin Ahmed, Secretary, Chittagong Mohammadan Education Society, Calcutta, 25 July 1930; Mohammad Sultan Alam, Secretary, *Aims and Objectives of the Anjumane Wayezene Hanafia Bangala*, Calcutta, 1920; *Islam Procharak*, 7th yr., 8th issue December, 1905; *Report on East-Bengal and Assam Provincial Mohammadan Educational Conference*, pp. 329-30.

19. Ibid.

20. *Islam Procharak*, 6th yr., 1st and 2nd issues, May and June 1904: Aftabuddin Ahmed, *Bangiya Mussalmaner Shiksha*, pp. 72-73; 3rd issue July 1904, pp. 97-103; 4th issue, August pp.159-160; 5th issue, September, pp. 179-180; 6th issue, October, pp.235-237; 8th issue, December, pp.296-301; *Islam Procharak*, 7th and 8th issues, 24 December, 4th year, 1902: Abu Mohammad Ismail Hossain Shiraji, *Matribhasa o Jatio Unnati*, pp.243-46; *Islam Procharak*, 9th and 10th issues, 4th yr., op.cit.; *Islam Procharak*, 1st issue, 5th yr., January 1903: Abdul Karim, *Yoga Kalandar*, pp.21-25; *Islam Procharak*, 1st issue, 5th yr., 1903: Aftabuddin Ahmed, *Banglabhasa O Mussalman*, pp.35-37; *Nabanoor*, 1st yr., 2nd issue, *Jaishthya* 1310 BS: Moulvi Imdadul Haq, *Amader Shiksha*, pp.43-48; 1st yr, 3rd issue, *Asara* 1310 BS, pp.95-97; 1st yr., 3rd issue 1310 BS: Munshi Mohammad Ismail Hossain, *Sahityashakti O Jati*

Sangathan, pp.108-112, Abdul Karim *Bangabhasaye Mussalmani Sahitya*, pp.113-15; 1st yr., 4th issue, *Sravana* 1310 BS: Abdul Karim, *Prachin Mussalmani Geetamala*, pp.122-25; 1st yr., 5th issue, *Bhadra* 1310 BS: *Kenachit Marmahaten Hita Kamina*, *Mussalmaner Prati Hindu Lekhaker Atyachar*, pp.167-71; 2nd yr., 2nd issue, *Jaishthya* 1311 BS: Abdul Karim, *Bangabhasa o Sahitye Mussalmani Probbhab*, pp.55-59; 2nd yr., 4th issue, *Sravana* 1312 BS: pp.154-59; *Kohinoor*, 3rd issue, 5th yr., *Asara* 1312 BS.

21. Ibid
22. *The Mussalman*, 11 January 1907, p.6.
23. Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1817-1906*, Chap. III, p.92, op.cit.
24. *Islam Procharak*, 4th yr., 7th and 8th issues, 24 December 1902, pp.243-46, op.cit; Shiraji also wrote a satirical poem opening a disparaging attack on the *Mollahs* and *Moulvis*, See also *Islam Procharak*, 6th yr., 4th issue, August 1904, p. 160, op. cit.; 5th yr., 1st issue, January 1903, pp. 35-37, op. cit.
25. *The Mussalman*, 8th March 1918, p.3.
26. *Islam Procharak*, 5th yr., 1st issue, 1903, pp.21-22, op. cit; see also Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya, *Bangalar Vaishnab Bhabapanna Mussalman Kabi*, Calcutta University, 1962; Abdul Karim (edt.), *Prachin Punthir Bibaran*, 1st part, 1st and 2nd issues, *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad*, Calcutta; Sukumar Sen, *A History of Bengali Literature*, Calcutta Univesity, 1935; *Sahitya*, *Falgun* 1310 BS; Abdul Karim, *Nutan Mussalman Vaishnav Kabi*, p.664; *Prabartak*, *Kartik* 1337 BS; Jatindra Prosad Bhattacharya, *Purba Mymensingher Baul Sangeet*, p.616.
27. *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, 1st yr., 4th issue, *Magh* 1325 BS, p. 303.
28. Rafiuddin Ahmed, Chap IV. op.cit.
29. *Reis and Rayyat*, Saturday, July 15 1893.
30. Kazi A. Mannan, p.63, op. cit.

31. *Dhaka Viswao Vidyalay Patrika*, 12th issue, December 1980: Wakil Ahmed, *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity*, pp.137-65.
32. Ibid.: Mozammel Haq, *Jatio Foara*, op. cit.
33. Ibid.
34. *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baisakh*, 1325 BS, p.72; The Mussalman, 8 September 1911, p.8 (After a meeting held in the house of Moulvi Abdur Rahman at Anthony Bagan Lane, Calcutta. *The Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* was formed on 4 Septmber, 1911 to accelerate the cultivation and growth of Bengali language. The initiative in this regard was taken by intellectuals like Moulvi Maniruzzaman, Moulvi Mohammad Shahidullah, M.A.B.L., Moulvi Mohammad Mozammel Haq, BA, Chowdhury Mohammad Eyakub Ali, Hatem Ali Khan and Moulvi Ahmed Ali. Shahidullah was selected the first Secretary of the Samity).
35. *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, 1st issue, 1st yr., p.1. op. cit.
36. *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, 1st issue, 1st yr., pp.74-75. op. cit.
37. Ibid., pp. 75-76; Wakil Ahmed, op. cit.
38. *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, 1st issue, 1st yr., pp.75-76; Wakil Ahmed, op. cit; Azharuddin Khan, *Mohammad Shahidullah Sahitya Sadhak Charitmala*, *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad*, Culcutta, *Sravana* 1388 BS.
39. *Masik Mohammadi*, 4th issue, *Baisakh* 1348 BS, p.324. The *Samity* during its existence held seven major conferences which were not very regular:

Conference	Period	Place	President
1st	1912	Calcutta	Ekinuddin Ahmed
2nd	1917	Calcutta	Mohammad Sahidullah
3rd	1918	Chittagong	Mohammad Akram Khan
4th	1928	Bashirhat	Mohammad Maniruzzaman Islamabadi
5th	1932	Calcutta	Kaikobad
6th	1939	Calcutta	Abdul Karim
7th	1943	Calcutta	Syed Emdad Ali

40. *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, 1st yr., 2nd issue, *Sravana* 1325 BS, Mohammad Eakub Ali Chowdhury, *Manabataye Hazrat Mohammad*, pp. 79-87; 1st yr., 4th issue, *Magh* 1325 BS, pp. 332-38; 4th yr., 1st issue, *Baisakh*, 1328 BS; M. Lutfar Rahman, *Urdu o Bangla Sahitya*, pp.15-18; 4th yr, 2nd issue, *Sravana* 1328 BS: Abul Hossain, *Banglar Balshi*, pp.86-87; 4th yr., 3rd issue: Sri, *Pashchatya Sabhyatar Aota*, pp. 164-65; Mrs. R.S. Hossain, *Endishilpa*, pp.190-91; Ibid, Abul Hossain, *Krishi Biplaber Suchana*, pp.218-28; 4th yr., 4th issue, *Magh* 1328 BS: Abul Hossain, *Krishaker Artanad*, pp. 292-305; 5th yr, 2nd issue, *Sravana*, 1329 BS: Golam Mostafa, *Islam o Rabindranath*, pp. 103-111; 5th yr., 3rd issue, *Kartik* 1329 BS: Abul Hossein, *Krishaker Artanad*, pp. 212-14, 5th yr., 4th issue, *Magh* 1329 BS; Sufia Khatun, *Bangala Sahitye Anudarata*, pp.278-79; 5th yr., 1st issue, *Baisakh* 1330 BS: Naosher Ali Khan Yousufji, *Bange Afghan Paribar*, pp. 59-62; ibid, M. Ansari, *Mussalman Samayiki*, pp. 75-78; *Sahityik*, 1st yr., 3rd issue, *Magh* 1333 BS, Golam Maola, *Islam o Lalitakala*, pp.94-5; 1st yr, 4th issue, *Falgun* 1333 BS: Abul Hasanat, *Jabeh o Balidan*, pp. 143-46; 1st yr., 7th issue, *Jaishthya* 1334 BS: Abdul Majid, *Islam o Baishnab Dharma*, pp. 258-59.
41. *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, *Magh* 1326 BS, op. cit.
42. Ibid, 5th yr., 3rd issue, 1329 BS, pp. 247-48.
43. *The Mussalman*, 22 March 1918, p.4.
44. *Sahityik*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Aghrahayana* 1333 BS, Syed Emdad Ali, *Sahityiker Kamana*, p.2.
45. *The Mussalman*, 5 February 1926; *Prabasi*, 25 pt., 2nd Vol., 5th issue, pp. 739-40.
46. *The Mussalman*, 13 August 1926.
47. *The Star of India*, 5 September 1932, p.7; *The Mussalman*, 21 August 1932, p.10; 23 August 1932, p.7.
48. *The Mussalman*, 29 December, 1932, p.8.
49. R. Ahmed, Chap. vi. op. cit.

50. *The Mussalman*, 27 January 1911, p.3; *ibid*, 10 March 1911, p.8; *ibid*, 24 March 1911, p.8; *ibid*, 28 April 1911, p.5; *ibid*, 30 June 1911, p.3; *ibid*, 9 August 1912, p.3; *ibid*, 15 December 1916, p.7; *ibid*, 20 April 1917, p.7; *ibid*, 8 June 1917, p.6; *ibid.*, 7 March 1919, p.3.
51. *Ibid*.
52. Sahebjada Muhammad Sultan Alam (Attorney at-Law), Secretary, *Anjamane Wayezene Hanafia Bangala*: Aims and rules of *Anjamane Wayezene Hanafia Bangala*, 1327 BS: Calcutta; *Islam Darshan*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baisakh*, 1327 BS: *Al-Islam*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baisakh*, 1322, BS: *Ahle Hadith*, 3rd yr., 12th issue, *Bhadra* 1325 BS; *Masjid (Hanafi)*, 1st yr, 1st issue, *Baisakh* 1324 BS.
53. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. by B. Lewis, Vol.1. Manage, C.H. Pellat and J. Schacht, London, 1971, p.162.
54. Aims and Rules of the *Anjamane Wayezene Hanafia Bangala*, op. cit., p.1; *Islam Darshan*, 1st yr., 10th issue, *Magh* 1327 BS, p. 479.
55. Aims and Rules of *Anjumane Wayezene Hanafia Bangala*, op. cit., pp.1-2; *ibid.*, pp.9-16.
56. *Ibid*.
57. Aims and Rules of the *Anjumane Wayezene Hanafia Bangala*, op. cit., pp. 10-11; *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
59. *Islam Darshan*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baishakh* 1327 BS, op. cit., p. 29.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
61. *Islam Darshan*, 1st yr., 5th issue, *Bhadra* 1327 BS, pp. 208-09; 1st yr., 6th issue, *Aswin* 1327 BS, pp. 272-3: Munshi Reyazuddin Ahmed, *Mahasman Kavyer Bhunikaye Islamer Abamanana*; *Islam Darshan*, 3rd yr., 2nd issue, *Kartik* 1327 BS, pp. 82-3; 3rd yr., 1st issue, *Aswin* 1329 BS, pp. 16-19.
62. *Islam Darshan*, 1st yr., 3rd issue, *Asara* 1327 BS: *Masala Talab*, pp. 142-43; 1st yr., 5th issue, op. cit., pp. 236-38; 4th yr., 3rd

issue, *Aswin*, 1331 BS, p. 123: Masala Mimansa (In this section of the issue while Moulvi A.F.M. Abdul Majid, Police Sub-Inspector, Balurghat, Dinajpur, asked for opinion on Life Insurance, he was given answer in the negative and Life Insurance was branded as *haram*); 4th yr., 9th issue, *Chaitra*, 1331 BS: *Masala Mimansa*, pp. 354-56; 3rd yr., 3rd issue, *Agrahayana* 1329 BS: *Fatwa Talab*, pp. 131-32.

63. *Islam Darshan*, 2nd yr, 6th issue, *Aswin* 1328 BS, pp. 202-06; 2nd yr., 11th issue, *Falgun* 1328 BS: pp. 401-08; 3rd yr., 11th issue, *Sravana* 1330 BS: pp. 409-14; 4th yr., 5th issue, *Agrahayana*, 1331 BS, pp. 168-77.
64. Ibid, pp. 121-23; *Islam Darshan*, 1st yr., 9th issue, *Paush* 1327 BS, pp. 430-31 (*The Anjuman* strongly opposed the stricture of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation imposing ban on cow slaughter within its jurisdiction. It distributed Urdu and Bengali leaflets among Calcutta Muslims urging them not to listen to the request); *Islam Darshan*, 1st yr., 6th issue, *Aswin* 1327 BS, (Report on the meeting of the *Anjuman* Standing Committee), pp. 186-87.
65. *Islam Darshan*, 1st yr., 3rd issue, op. cit., p. 143; 1st yr., 4th issue, *Sravana* 1327 BS, p.192; 1st yr., 5th issue, op. cit., p.240; 1st yr., 9th issue, op. cit., pp. 430-31; 2nd yr., 5th issue, op. cit, p.200; ibid, p.143; *Islam Darshan*, 2nd yr., 5th issue, *Bhadra* 1328 BS: p.200; op. cit., 1st yr., 4th issue, op. cit. (In 1920, at the initiative of the *Anjuman* one junior Madrassa was established by Moulvi Faizuddin at Patnur village under Rajshahi district. While at Enayetpur village situated 16 miles south off Calcutta efforts were made to establish another under the auspices of the *Anjuman*); *Islam Darshan*, 3rd yr., 10th issue, *Asara* 1330 BS (Proc. of the 6th Annual conference of the *Anjuman*), pp.400-06; 4th yr., 9th issue, *Chaitra* 1331 BS (Proc. of the 7th Annual conference), pp. 345-47.
66. *Ahle Hadith*, 3rd yr., 12th issue, *Bhadra* 1325 BS, pp. 549-52; 1st yr., 4th issue, *Paush* 1322 BS, p. 143; *Ahle Hadith*, 1st yr., 3rd issue, *Agrahayana* 1322 BS, pp. 102-07; 1st yr., 7th issue,

Chaitra 1322 BS, pp. 314-20 (A meeting under the auspices of the *Ahle Hadith*, *Anjuman* took place on 30 *Falgun* 1322 BS at Paikora village of Lalgola Division of Murshidabad to facilitate the establishment of a Madrassa; *Ahle Hadith*, 2nd yr., 2nd issue, *Kartik* 1323 BS, pp. 93-95 List of preachers of the *Anjamane Ahle Hadith*.

Birbhum (Ambhua)	Maulvi Abdur Rahman
Murshidabad (Devinagar)	Maulvi Esmail
Murshidabad (Kuchgiria)	Maulvi Sharif Ahmed
Satkhira (Rasulpur)	Maulvi Bamin Khan
Dinajpur(Lalloag)	Maulvi Abdur Rahman
Dinajpur (Salikkuri)	Maulvi Abdullah
Dinajpur(Khansama Hasempur)	Maulvi Jainal Abedin
Dinajpur (Chirir Bandar)	Maulvi Abul Fazal Mohammad
Moniruddin	

Ahle Hadith 2nd yr., 9th issue, *Jaishthya* 1324 BS, pp. 421-22; 2nd yr., 11th issue, *Sravana* 1324 BS: pp. 505-08; 2nd yr., 12th issue, *Bhadra* 1324 BS: pp. 566-67; 3rd yr., 2nd issue, *Kartik* 1324 BS, p. 90; 3rd yr., 5th issue, *Magh* 1324 BS, pp. 229-230.

67. *Al-Islam*, 4th yr, 10th issue, *Magh* 1325 BS: The rules and objectives of the *Anjamane Ulama*, pp. 254-56.
68. *Al-Islam*, 4th yr, 10th issue, *Magh* 1325 BS: The rules and objectives of the *Anjamane Ulama*, pp. 254-56.
69. Ibid.
70. *Al-Islam*, 4th yr., 5th issue, *Bhadra* 1325 BS, pp. 273-276 List of preachers of the *Anjumane Ulama* —

Moulvi Fazlur Rahaman, Calcutta; Munshi Ebrahim Hossain, Assam, N. Bengal, Nadia; Moulvi Eshak, Birbhum; Moulvi Abdul Karim, Chittagong; Moulvi Lutfur Rahman, Jessore, Khulna, Faridpur; Moulvi Sadat Hossain; Moulvi Sayid Abdul Majid, Tippera; Moulvi Ahmed Hossain, Dhaka, Gauhati; Moulvi Fazlul Haq, Rangpur; Khondkar Ahmed Ali, Mymensingh.

71. *Al-Islam*, 5th yr., 3rd issue, Asara 1326 BS, pp.156-62; 5th yr., 6th issue, Aswin 1326 BS, pp.299-308; 5th yr., 8th issue, Agrahayana, 1326 BS, pp. 425-36; 5th yr., 9th issue, Paush 1326 BS, pp. 488-91.
72. Ibid.
73. *The Mussalman*, 14 February 1919 (Khilafat meeting held at College Square, Calcutta on 9 February 1919), p.5; *The Mussalman*, 14 February 1919, p.5 (Khilafat meeting held at Chittagong Islam Association on 2 February 1919); *The Mussalman*, 6 February 1920 (Burdwan Khilafat meeting on 28 January 1920), p.3; *The Mussalman*, 5 March 1920 (Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference held at Town Hall, Calcutta on 1 and 2 March 1920), p.3; *The Mussalman*, 12 March, 1920 (Khilafat Meeting at Chittagong, reception to Saukat Ali, on 7 March, 1920), p.5; *ibid.* (Khilafat meeting at Furfura, Hooghly, held on 5 March 1920), p. 6; *The Mussalman*, 19 March 1920 (Khilafat Conference at Howrah on 14 March 1920), p. 3; *ibid.* (Khilafat conference at Basirhat town on 13 March 1920), p. 5; *The Mussalman*, 7 May 1920 (Khilafat meeting at Nehalpur, Basirhat), p.3.
74. *The Mussalman*, 6 February 1920, p.3.
75. Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement, Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilisation in India*, Oxford, 1982.
76. Gail Minault; *The Khilafat Movement, Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilisation in India*, Oxford, 1982. See for details Kenneth W. Jones *Communalism in the Punjab: The Arya Samaj contribution*; Lala Lazpat Roy, *A History of the Arya Samaj*.
77. Spencer Lavan, *The Ahamadiya Movement, A History and Perspective*.
78. *The Mussalman*, 22 April 1927, p. 5; 29 April, 1927, p. 10.
79. Gail Minault, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
80. Gail Minault, *op. cit.*, p. 194
81. *The Mussalman*, 21 May 1926.

82. *The Mussalman*, 4 June 1926; *The Moslem Chronicle*, 11 June 1926, p.28.
83. Ibid.
84. *The Mussalman*, 11 June 1926 (*Tanjeem* meeting held on 8 June, 1926 at Paltan Ground Dhaka *Tanjeem* meeting at Chittagong on 4 June 1926; *Tanjeem* Committee formed at Bogra on 24 May 1926; *The Mussalman*, 23 July 1926 (Tanjeem meeting held at Madaripur on 17 July 1926); *The Mussalman*, 6 August 1926 (*Tanjeem* Committee formed at Palang, Faridur, on 13 June 1926); *The Mussalman*, 21 October, 1927, p. 9 (*Tanjeem* Committee formed at Basirhat); *The Moslem Chronicle*, 11 June 1926, p. 22 (*Tanjeem* meeting at Mymensingh held on 11 June at the behest of the *Anjuman-i-Islamia*); *The Mussalman*, 4 June 1926; *The Mussalman*, 2 July 1926.
85. *The Mussalman*, 19 August 1927, p. 9; *ibid*, 29 July 1927, p.8.
86. *Forward*, 16 June 1926; *The Bengalee*, 16 June, 1926.
87. *The Moslem Chronicle*, 8 June 1926, p. 42; *ibid*, 2nd July 1926, p. 59.
88. *The Mussalman*, 23 July 1926.
89. *Dhaka University Journal*: Wakil Ahmed, *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity*, op, cit.
90. *Shikha*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Chaitra* 1333 BS, p. 21.
91. Ibid., *Prakashaker Nibedan*.
92. Ibid., *Barshik Bibarani*, p 21.
93. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Bangalar Jagran*, op. cit., pp. 194-96.
94. *Shikha*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Barshik Bibarani*, op. cit.
95. *Shikha*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Barshik Bibarani*, op. cit.; *Star of India*, 15 April 1935, p. 7.
96. *Saogat*, *Chaitra* 1347 BS; Abdul Kader; *Abul Hussener Chintadhara*; *Samkalpa*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baishak* 1361 BS; Abul Fazal, *Buddhir Muktibad O Abul Hossein*.
97. *Samkalpa*, 1st yr., 1st issue, 1361 BS.

98. *The Mussalman*, 7 January 1927, p. 14. Members and reformers present: Jamila Khatoon, Shamsunnesa, Mahmooda Khatoon, Mahera Banu, Mobarak Akhtar, Hosneara, Shahzadi Begum, Maimoona Khatoon, Mrs Z. Ahmad, Mrs D. Ahmed, Mrs Omaruddin, and Mrs G. Ahmad.
99. *The Mussalman*, 16 September 1927, pp. 12-13. Proceedings of the All-Bengal Muslim Young Men's Conference held at Burdwan, 11 September 1927.
100. *The Mussalman*, 19 October 1928, pp.6-7. Proc. of the All-Bengal Muslim Young Men's Conference, 2nd session held on 13 and 19 October 1928 at Albert Hall, Calcutta, under the Presidentship of Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah); *The Mussalman*, 28 February 1931. Proc. of the Chandpur Muslim Youth Conference held on 22 February 1931 at Purana Bazar, Chandpur, under the Presidentship of Mr S. Wajed Ali, B A (Cant. b), p. 2; *The Mussalman*, 28 February 1931, p.3 Proceeding of the 3rd Annual General meeting of the Young Men's Islamic Association held on 25 February 1931 at Islamic Free Night School, Khidderpore, Calcutta; *The Mussalman*, 23 August 1929, p. 11, (Proceeding of the meeting of the Young Men's Muslim Association held in the evening of 15 August 1929 at Bogra Zilla School Compound); *The Mussalman*, 4 April 1931, p.7. (Proc. of the Feni Young Men's Moslem Association held on 21 and 22 March 1931 under the guidance of Khan Bahadur Moulvi Abdul Karim. In the conference a resolution was adopted that women's education should be made *farz* for parents of every Muslim girl); *The Mussalman*, May 1931, p.6. Proceeding of the meeting of Noakhali Young Men's Association held on 21 April 1931 under the Presidentship of Khan Bahadur Moulvi Abdul Karim of Comilla).
101. *The Mussalman*, 17 October, 1931, p.6.
102. *The Mussalman*, 12 November, 1931, p.7.
103. *The Mussalman*, 16 January, 1932, p.2.
104. *The Mussalman*, 11May 1928, p.7 (Letter to the Editor from Mohammad Azhar, Assansole, dt. 5/5/28).

105. Ibid.
106. *The Mussalman*, 29 August 1931, p.2. The first anniversary meeting of the *Bangiya Sahitya Samsad* was held at the Muslim Institute Hall, Calcutta, on 26 August 1931. President: Wahed Hossein, B.L.; Advocate; Patrons: Mrs Zoha (Fazilatunnesa), Mr S. Zaman, Chartered Accountant, A. Quasem, Bar-at-Law, Prof. Kazimuddin, Dr Qudrat-i-Khuda, D.Sc., Prof. T. Zamaail, Prof. Naziruddin, Prof. Akram Hossein, Prof. Benoy Sarkar, Prof. Siddiqui, Khan Bahadur Yusuf, Poet Jasimuddin and Golam Mustafa.
107. *The Mussalman*, 23 August 1932, p. 2 (On 12 August 1932, a meeting was held in the house of Dr T. Ahmed at Dharmatolla in which the *Bangiya Sahitya Samsad* was reconstructed and renamed as *Bangiya Parishilan Samity*. The aim of the Samity was to cultivate and promote literature, music, fine arts, and physical exercise among the Muslims of Bengal. A provisional committee was formed composed of Kazi Nazrul Islam, Captain D. Ahmed, Dr T. Ahmed, Dr R. Ahmed, Dr Kudrat-i-Khuda, D.Sc., Mrs S. Zaman, Prof. Kazimuddin, M.A., Dr Hamid, Mrs Fazilatunnesa, Mrs R. Ahmad, Mr Nazrul Islam, M.A., B.T., Mr Abdul Quadir, Abdul Majid, Kazi Habibullah and Mr Mujibar Rahman.
108. *The Mussalman*, 23 April 1933, p. 7. (*The Omar Khayam Sahitya Samgha* was formed in a meeting held on 21 April 1933 at the *Beduin* office, 36, Upper Circular Road, Calcutta. Patrons: Sahdat Hossein, M. Rahman, Mahfuzur Rahman Khan, Wajid Ali Khan, Md. Kasem (Ex-editor, *Abhijan*, Dhaka, A. N. M. Haresuddin, (Editor, *Juger Alo*), Ashraf Ali Khan (Ex-Editor, *Daily Soltan*.)
109. *Gulistma*, 1st yr, 1st issue, 1939 BS.
110. *The Mussalman*, 13 August 1932, p. 6.
111. Ibid.
112. *The Mussalman*, 13 September 1932, p.7 (The 1st session of the Bengal and Assam Arabic Students Association took place on 10

September 1932 at Albert Hall, Calcutta, under the Presidency of Maulana Akram Khan).

113. *The Star of India*, 24 October, 1935, p. 8; *The Mussalman*, 4 July 1933, p.9. The All-Bengal Urdu Association had its birth in 1921, but its first session was held on 2 July 1933 under the Presidentship of Mr S. Wajed Ali, B.A. Cant'b at Calcutta).
114. *Dainik Azad*, 30 August 1942.
115. *Masik Mohammadi*, *Sravana* and *Bhadra*, 1351 BS: (Presidential speech of Abul Kalam Samsuddin in the Conference of the Renaissance society).
116. *Morning News*, September 1942. p.4: Abul Kalam Samsuddin, *Atit Diner Smriti*, Dhaka, 1968.
117. Abul Kalam Samsuddin, *Atit Diner Smriti*.
118. Rafiuddin Ahmed, op. cit.
119. *The Mussalman*, 24 August 1928. p.7.

Chapter III

COMMUNITY AT THE EXPENSE OF LANGUAGE: CONFUSION OF IDENTITY

The linguistic choice of the Bengali Muslims during the start of the 20th century tilted towards Bengali. Although the spirit of separativeness was very much present, the majority of the Bengali Muslims decidedly was in favour of the vernacular i.e. Bengali, and accepted it as the vehicle of their cultural consciousness. But the trouble started when the acceptance was not unequivocal. The ambivalence persisted and there still were an influential few who could not reconcile themselves to the idea of making Bengali their cultural language. It may be recalled in this connection that as early as 1862 Nawab Abudl Lateef had put forward a very interesting formula on language issue for those who found Urdu to be the basic determinant of Islamic culture. The Nawab proposed that among the Bengali Muslims, Bengali should be retained as a language for those of lower origin, while Urdu should be kept alive by the Asarf.¹ The 20th century Urduphiles of course did not dare repeat the Nawab's formula since Bengali got universal acceptance but their categorisation of language into religious or national language, and literary language was no less interesting. It all emanated from a strong religious feeling. Naosher Ali Khan Yusufji, who was a pioneer in making a sociological study of the Bengal Muslims, observed with concern that 'from the moment a

Muslim boy of this province gives up the study of Arabic, Persian and Urdu and takes to Bengali he invariably loses his national and religious identity'.² Yusufji's feeling was shared by many great litterateurs of Muslim Bengal. Mir Mosarraf Hossein in his autobiography categorically ascribed the reasons of downtroddenness of the Bengali Muslims to the refusal to study the scriptures and laxity in pursuing national education.³ For all practical purposes, national education meant cultivation of Arabic and Persian, the two important vehicles of Islamic ideas and theology, considered as an absolute necessity. Aftabuddin Ahmed in a lengthy serial in *Islam Procharak* tried to convince his readers of the importance of cultivating Arabic and Persian for the sake of religion and for retaining the *Mussalmani*,⁴ while a very powerful writer, Munshi Abu Mahammad Ismail Hossain Shiraji considered the study of those languages extremely necessary because they gave a semblance of separate identity in addition to high degree of religious ideas.⁵ Hence the conclusion drawn by Reyazuddin Ahmed, the best known among the early reformers, was that 'Bengali although the mother tongue of the Muslims can never be considered the cultural or national language of the Bengali Muslims'.⁶ He, therefore, felt that many words and phrases denoting Islamic culture and sentiment should be incorporated into the Bengali language to give it an Islamic tinge.⁷ Actually there had been three clear considerations behind this attitude of the contemporary social reformers. First, strong religious sense debarred them from contemplating Bengali as the national language of the community. Second, there had been a lurking fear of losing the much vaunted Islamic identity which would be devoid of all its meaning if Bengali could be accepted as a medium of expression to the exclusion of Arabic, Persian and Urdu. And a third important factor was the concern for Islamic brotherhood.

Urdu or Bengali—The Formation of an Ambivalence

But the decision in accepting any one of these languages as the vehicle of Islamic ideas was not unequivocal. While in certain quarters there was a prevalent idea that Urdu should be cultivated for maintaining Islamic unity throughout India, there had been a few who were thinking ahead and had given their choice in favour of Arabic as the scriptural language and as a far more important factor contributing to the formation of an international Islamic brotherhood. One of the exponents of the latter school was Akram Khan who, in course of his Presidential address to the third Bengal Muslim Literary Conference, categorically opined that only Arabic could be accepted as the national language of the Muslims and Bengali could be given no higher place than vernacular. The theory in support of his view was that Muslim nationalism or feeling of nationalism could not be kept confined within the limits of dynasty, profession or any particular country. Actually that feeling emanated from a kind of religious fidelity and the sense that entire Muslim society of the world formed a single whole, a Pan-Islamic brotherhood for whom no other local language than Arabic could be treated as the national language.⁸ Akram Khan's views were echoed in a paper submitted to the Third Bengal Muslim Conference by Mohammad Wajed Ali. The author gave quite a different interpretation to the word 'nation', which delineated in proper Islamic terms, tended to bring forth a conception of Islamic brotherhood transcending all barriers of country, creed, or caste. Therefore, if Bengali be made the national language of the Bengal Muslims, it would obviously undo the conception and the Islamic link with the international brotherhood. In this case the author's suggestion was that Muslims of Bengal should take to the language of the Qur'an i.e. Arabic, which was the true national language of the Muslims all over the world.⁹

The earlier expounders of Islam were not particularly fastidious in their selection of language as an appropriate carrier of the Prophet's ideas. In the *Fikh Akbar II*, Art. 24, it has been explicitly stated that 'it is allowable to follow scholars in expressing qualities

of Allah in Persian.¹⁰ The word 'Persian', according to the famous expounder Abul Muntaha, meant any language other than Arabic,¹¹ while Iman Gazzali, in course of making further clarification, said that it actually implied Turkish and even all other languages.¹² Actually, the early expounders could well understand that devotion without understanding was useless, hence the famous Imam Abu Hanifa considered 'recitation of namaz and khutba or sermon lawful and valid in any language'.¹³ Even his disciples Abu Yusuf and Mohammad held that 'When a person does not know Arabic, he may validly offer his devotion in any other language'.¹⁴ What they basically meant was that to signify Islamic identity, it was not uniformity in language that was essential, rather unity of idea and conformity in devotion.

For the Bengal Muslims of the early 20th century, the need of conformity in devotion did of course dawn in their mind but there was still a greater and a more cogent reason that why should the practice of reciting prayer in Arabic be maintained or why should Urdu not be dispensed with. It was because of the fact, in the language of Ameer Ali, 'that both Arabic and Urdu maintain the unity of sentiment throughout the Islamic world. And wherein lies more strength than unity?'¹⁵ The aim of the reformers was, therefore, to educate their co-religionists in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, apart from English and Bengali, but the most remarkable thing was that none among them could deny the fact that Bengali was their mother tongue.

However, the idea of categorizing the language of Bengali Mussalmans into national and vernacular soon invited criticism from the rationalists who found it altogether absurd and preposterous. The editor of *The Mussalman* ridiculed the ideas of the *Arbiwallahs* by pointing out that 'Arabic is of course the language of our Scriptures, but to say that it is the national language of the Muslims is to show an erroneous conception about the word nation.'¹⁶ The most prominent among the critics was Abdul Karim *Sahitya Bisharad* who had already devoted his precious hours to restore the basic form of Muslim Bengali

literature from the labyrinth of mediaeval *Punthis*, and was endeavouring to prove that Bengali of today was nurtured by the Muslim literati of yesterday.¹⁷ Abdul Karim launched a two-pronged attack. First, he ridiculed the idea of a distinction between cultural language and vernacular, and suggested that until the Muslims of Bengal accepted their vernacular as their cultural language, there remained no scope of their cultural survival.¹⁸ Second, he maintained that structurally the form of Bengali of the Mussalmans should differ from Bengali of the Hindus, and in developing that structure the Muslim literary persons of today, instead of making a senseless import of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words to infuse Islamic sentiment, should expectantly look to the treasures of *Punthi* literature which would serve as the basic ground work.¹⁹ He was basically a liberal who believed that Hindus and Muslims should cooperate in building up the literary structure and even went to the extent of calling some mediaeval Muslim creators of *Vaishnava* literature as Vaishnavites, which invited a sharp rebuke from the editors of *Islam Procharak* and *Nabanoor*.²⁰

The cue from Abdul Karim was taken up in a chorus. A number of writers, editors, intellectuals and people from different walks of life expressed their opinion in favour of Bengali to make it amply clear that Muslims of Bengal should immediately start cultivating their vernacular and mobilise their entire effort and energy in building it up as the literary medium of the community.²¹ Apart from this, learning of Bengali appeared to be essential for a few practical reasons. As early as 1888, Shaikh Abdus Sobhan, in his interesting book, *Hindu Mussalman*, sought to forewarn the Muslim Zamindars of Bengal against the machination of Hindu *Amlas*. While he declared in no uncertain terms that for the Muslims, Bengali should not be considered as their national language.²² At the same time, he implored those handful of Muslim landholders to be enterprising in their efforts in learning Bengali and help their children to learn Bengali.²³ Abdus Sobhan's cogent reasoning was that the inability to read and write Bengali had obviously deprived the Muslims of opportunities to get the posts of *Naib*, *Dewan*,

Khazanchi and *Serestadar* in the *Zamindari Serista* which was monopolised by the Hindus. What is more, the lack of a knowledge of Bengali had also made them defenceless against the unethical practices of the Hindu employees of the *Serishta* who normally kept their accounts in Bengali.²⁴ Almost an identical view was reiterated by a renowned educationist Moulvi Abdul Karim, Inspector of Schools, Chittagong a decade and a half later. In an illuminating letter written to the editor of *The Mussalman* he described how he tried to impress the fact upon the delegates of the All-India Muhammadan Education Conference in Dhaka in January 1907 that knowledge of vernacular for Muslim boys of Bengal was essential. He emphatically stated that Urdu should be taught only as a language while history, geography, mathematics and similar subjects should be taught through the vernacular of the province, and knowledge of Persian was not necessary for the Mussalmans of East Bengal.²⁵ It was not only in matters of economic development or social importance that ignorance of Bengali or an enforced ban on learning of Bengali would prove disastrous, but it was undesirable in the field of religion too. In a memorandum dated 16 December 1917 submitted to the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, a large number of senior students of the Arabic Department of Calcutta Madrassa made a clear statement that 'in Calcutta Madrassa education is imparted through the medium of Urdu which is German to us, and Bengali which is the mother tongue of an overwhelming majority of boys has altogether been exiled.' Urdu could not be used to preach to a Bengali speaking masses. Moreover, ignorance of Bengali in religious instruction destroyed relation with the masses. It was therefore their appeal that the Director of Public Instruction should see that 'under the reformed Madrassa scheme, Bengali be made compulsory and Professors be required to explain Arabic passages to those whose mother tongue is Bengali in their vernacular, both in junior and senior classes, and Urdu may remain an optional subject for them.'²⁶

Barring those sporadic efforts the most organised campaign in popularising Bengali among the Muslims was launched by the

Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity, the principal duty of which was 'cultivation of the Bengali language and literature and shape it in a manner that, like the Bengali Hindus, the Bengali Mussalmans too can call it their own'. Long before the emergence of the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* a band of literati popularly known as the *Sudhakar* group during the last quarter of the 19th century formed a nucleus of resistance against the Urduphiles in support of Bengali.²⁷ Subsequently, a number of organisations like *Bangiya Sahitya Bishayini Mussalman Samity*, *Jessore Khulna Siddikia Sahitya Samity*, *Faridpur Shahitya Samity*, *Al-Haq Samity*, *Al-Helal Sahitya Samity*²⁸, some prior to *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* and a few succeeding it, emerged as expressions of Bengal Muslims' cultural solidarity. But none among them could excel *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity*, in tenure and popularity. The basic point which the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity*, emphasised was creation and cultivation of an exclusive pattern of Muslim Bengali literature.²⁹ It had not only topped the list of eight objectives of the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* but, in a number of subsequent conferences, this view had been forcefully reiterated.³⁰ Even regarding the acceptance of Bengali, the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* expressed its unambivalent attitude which got clear articulation in Kaikobad's Albert Hall speech in which he stated that 'the destiny of the Mussalmans of Bengal will be fulfilled through the achievement of the Bengali literature which is their own ... It is now too late in the day to affirm that Bengali is the mother tongue of the Muslims of Bengal. The few fossils who are still dreaming of Urdu forget that their days are gone and acting against a clear law of nature and that will not profit them in any way'.³¹ The poet not only felt that Bengali should be the one common language for both the Hindus and the Muslims, the two sister communities of Bengal, but also its cultivation was necessary for the development of national, social and cultural faculties of the Muslims.³²

The *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity's* view in favour of Bengali found its resonance in the opinion of the *Muslim Sahitya*

Samaj. This Dhaka based Samaj which 'became the centre of a unique intellectual movement'.³³ was far more radical than any other existing organisations of Muslim Bengal, and its doctrine of emancipation of the intellect struck a chord of rationality in evaluating all problems of the society.³⁴ On the question of language the Samity gave its clear verdict in favour of Bengali.³⁵ Even an intellectual debate on the issue was initiated by the doyens of the Samaj like Kazi Anwarul Quadir, Kazi Abdul Wadud, Abul Hussain, Kazi Motahar Hossain and Abul Fazal. Among the thinkers, Anwarul Quadir was highly critical of the *Ashrafs* who were social leaders among the Bengali Muslims, and whose apathy towards Bengali and undue fascination for Urdu, diminished considerably the literary creativity of the Muslims and rendered them unable to conceive effectively their cultural moorings with the Bengali Society.³⁶ Abdul Wadud was equally critical of the *Urduwalas* but, at the same time, offered a creative formula which could provide a definite solution to the Bengali Muslims having an ambivalence in their choice between Bengali or Bengalised Urdu. This most gifted writer among the Bengali Muslim literati earnestly implored his co-religionists to take into serious consideration the *Marfati* literature as a model. Basically, this brand of literature which thrived on *Murshidi* songs, *Baul* songs and subaltern philosophy of *Dehatatva* offered a true expression of Muslim popular culture.³⁷ Abdul Wadud thought not only the form but also the spirit of the literature should be imbibed as the genre by Muslim writers who would like to create a pattern.³⁸

The Urdu-Bangali controversy did not actually perturb Abdul Wadud since he thought it to be a passing phase and expressed his conviction that the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia would soon get over their confusion and wholeheartedly participate in the cultivation of Bengali. What he earnestly longed for was the making of a true Muslim Bengali literature which, apart from portraying the Bengali Muslim life, would give birth to a literary pattern distinct from the Hindu one.

Formation of *Mussalmani* Bengali

With the acceptance of Bengali as the vernacular and the most acceptable literary medium of the Bengali Muslims the chapter on the language problem did not come to a close. It took different turn with time. The linguistic dilemma of the community now veered round two basic questions—first, what should be the future shape of Bengali and, second, if Urdu could be accommodated in the literary pattern of the Bengali Muslims as an expression of Islamic identity. In both the cases, Hindu attitude was a determinant factor.

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries the curious hybrid called *Mussalmani Bangla*, which made indiscriminate use of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words, had been discarded by the educated Muslims and the new generation of writers like M. M. Hossain, Kaikobad, and Mozammel Haq, who started writing by the eighteen seventies, began to produce their works in chaste Bengali. In every respect their works were hopeless mimicry of Hindu writers. The format, style, shape, even religious beliefs expressed through their works were so similar to their Hindu counterparts that sometimes confusion arose regarding authorship. Mir Mosarraf Hossein's *Jamidardarpan* took its inspiration from Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nildarpan*.³⁹ While Kaikobad blindly followed the style of Hemchandra and Nabin Chandra⁴⁰, Ismail Hossain Shiraji, despite his anti-Bankim stance, could not escape the influence of the literary maestro.⁴¹ Kaikobad's *Mahasmashan* was a literary work of great merit. Thematically it was Islamic, based on the episode of the third battle of Panipat in which Muslims struck a victory against the Marathas, but abundance of classical Sanskrit adjectives and Hindu mythological allusions had rendered the work a copy of Nabin Sen's *Troi*.⁴² Such was the case of Ismail Hossain Shiraji, author of *Adab Kayada Siksha*⁴³ in which he asked his co-religionists of Bengal to take to true Islamic ways of the Turkish Muslims. But his literary style as exposed in another of his work, *Sangeet Sanjibani*, was highly Sanskritised.⁴⁴ Most interesting of all was a tract named *Bishuddha Khatnama*, a guide to Islamic letter writing. Its author Shaikh Jamiruddin, the famous preacher,

wrote the tract to remind the Muslims of proper Islamic ways of letter writing. He even instructed his readers not to use *Sree* before any Muslim name but use vocatives like *Pakjonabeshu*, *Arjdoabareshu* and *Meherbaneshu*. These vocatives were all curious admixture of Urdu, Arabic and Sanskrit words. A model letter found within the tract, except for a few Arabic and Persian words, resembled closely the form and spirit of a highly Sanskritised Hindu marriage invitation letter.⁴⁵ (Appendix 6.)

If *Mussalmani Bangla* was refused by the new breed of Muslim intellectuals, so was the highly Sanskritised style. Before the emergence of the Nazrulean variety of Bengali, the entire generation was amidst a wholesome confusion as to the appropriate and acceptable form of their literature. Clearly, the highly Sanskritised or Hinduised style and infusion of Hindu ideas was repugnant to a cross section of intellectuals who immediately lodged angry protests. For example, the most vehement of protests was hurled against the author of *Mahasmashan* poet Kaikobad, who, according to Reyazuddin Ahmed, went decidedly against Islamic *mazhab* by using the very name *Mahasmashan*, denoting the burning place of the Hindus.⁴⁶ While Sayed Emdad Ali criticised him for his *Ganga* hymn and devotional songs on *Kali*, the most popular Hindu goddess⁴⁷, the editor of *Islam Darshan* considering all those aspects, concluded that unless the poet tried his best to get rid of un-Islamic traits, he would not be able to make his place in the world of Muslim national literature.⁴⁸

Actually the concept of national literature or an exclusive Muslim Bengali literature was on the whole not very clear. Among an array of opinions there was a school of thought who opted for liberal infusion of Arabic and Persian words in the Bengali language to give it an Islamic tinge. The editor of the *Islam Procharak* held the view that the Bengali that is the mother tongue of the Muslims of Bengal was not pure Bengali but a sort of hybrid variety called *Mussalmani Bengali* with an admixture of Arabic, Persian and Bengali.⁴⁹ The reason offered for creation of such a variety was cogent enough. *Nur al-Islam*, a periodical from Rajshahi, very aptly pointed out as early

as 1901 that there were some *Mussalmani* words of daily use which found their place in the colloquy of the Muslim populace which could not simply be dispensed with. Further, there were some very important Islamic religious words and expressions which could not be properly translated; hence these must be included in their Islamic form.

Actually, this hyper-sensitivity of the Muslim intellectuals to the language issue was an act of self-vindication under the looming shadow of a Hindu literary and lingual domination. It was the perpetual allegation of the Muslim intellectuals and writers that Bengali as a language belonged to the Hindus. A contributor to *Nabanoor* categorically declared that 'Bengali is the language of the Hindus'.⁵⁰ This sort of attitude of course softened with the passage of time, but it died hard and even in the late twenties established writers like Golam Mostafa made scathing attacks on Hindu dominated Bengali.⁵¹ Abhab Chowdhury found Bengali unsuitable⁵² and Mujibar Raman Khan found the works of Jasimuddin, Nazrul and Shahadat Hossain—the three pioneers of Muslim literary style contaminated with Hindu pagan ideas.⁵³

The entire problem was therefore eloquently discussed by S. Wajed Ali for the consideration and appraisal of the Muslim public. This lawyer turned litterateur in his Presidential speech to the *Bashirhat Bangiyo Mussalman Sahitya Sammilani* pointed out a few difficulties experienced by the Muslim community of Bengal to accept Bengali as their mother tongue.⁵⁴ The basic problem was that the impact of the Muslims on Bengali literature as a whole was not quite discernible uptil then. This phenomenon was related to the philology and word pattern of the Bengali language. Wajed Ali pointed out that the colloquy of the Hindus intrinsically differed from that of the Muslims. While Hindu vocabulary was heavily interspersed with words of Sanskrit origin, abundance of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words could be found among that of the Muslims. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries the Muslim writers *en masse* followed the Hindu style, but with the gradual emergence of cultural individuality the question arose: should the Muslims, while

accepting Bengali as the mother tongue, follow the Hindu pattern or introduce more Arabic, Persian and Urdu words to give expression to an Islamic spirit in their language? The next important suggestion of Wajed Ali related to the use of scientific terms. In his opinion if the Hindu writers could introduce scientific terms from their classical language Sanskrit, so could their Muslim counterparts from their classical language Arabic. The third and the most important aspect of S. Wajed Ali's discussion dealt with a change of Bengali alphabet and this actually constituted the most fascinating part of Wajed Ali's contention.⁵⁵

In a separate article published in *Sahityik* Wajed Ali strongly recommended changes in the Bengali alphabet⁵⁶ (Appendix 7). The novelty of Wajed Ali's suggestion lay in the fact that he proposed to introduce a few characteristic signs of Urdu alphabet into Bengali and thus to bring about a new modulation in the shape of certain Bengali alphabets to facilitate proper pronuciation of Islamic words in the vernacular. He found that the present form of Bengali was not suitable enough to serve the purpose of the Muslims who frequently use Arabic, Persian and Urdu words for their religio-cultural necessity. Now those transferred words from Urdu, Arabic and Persian, not only were often misspelt but also carried entirely different meaning due to the absence of certain syllables in the Bengali language which were to be found in Arabic or Urdu. Considering all those aspects, Wajed Ali proposed the change which, apart from adding a new dimension to the philological and phonetical concept of the Bengali language, would of course help to set a new literary model for future Muslim writers.⁵⁷

Wajed Ali's idea was indeed fascinating, yet there were even a few who went further ahead. Thus an article appeared under the pseudonym *Khademul Islam* in *Al-Islam* which offered a monstrous proposal of writing Bengali in Arabic alphabet⁵⁸ (Appendix 8). The author made the point that if Arabic alphabet could be applied to Bengali language, the pattern would with all certainty attract the Muslim popular attention and sympathy. This idea also found favour with the delegates of the 52nd All-India Muslim Educational

Conference held at Calcutta, on 31 December 1939, and the *Hurful Qur'an Prochar Samity* of Chittagong set afoot programme to popularise the variety.⁵⁹

The idea did not find favour with the majority of the intellectuals. Rather its absurdity was well-nigh criticised by another litterateur of repute, Shaikh Habibur Rahaman *Sahityaratna*. He found the suggestion a clear attempt to put the hands of the clock back. He opined on the contrary that Muslims of Bengal should rather endeavour to familiarise themselves with the language pattern of the Bengali Hindus, although it should be ornamented with judicious use of Islamic words.⁶⁰ The writer pointed out that haphazard and unsystematic use of Arabic and Urdu words in Bengali language, to which some over-enthusiasts had indulged in, would undoubtedly lower the literary standard. He was avowedly against this degeneration and felt that in order to gain a parity with the Hindus in the literary field, the Muslim writers should exercise their efforts in the accepted and familiar form, yet they should remain ever-conscious about the introduction of Islamic spirit. He also addressed the controversy over the use of the word *Iswar* or God by the Muslim writers. In his opinion the Muslim writers should not be so bigoted that they should write *Allah* instead of *Iswar* wherever possible since both the words had identical meaning. Obviously, he was against the use of such words like *Janmajanmantar* (reincarnation of soul) or *Mongolghat* (the holy vessel) which unequivocally conveyed Hindu religious sense.⁶¹ In fact, Habibur Rahman's view was shared by many who thought Islamisation of the Bengali language was prerequisite for a cultural revival, but the process should remain confined either within the attempt to import Islamic words into the language, without seriously affecting the existing shape of the language or bringing in Islamic spirit by making thematical change. A host of other literary personalities like Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, Mohammad Shahidullah, Mohammad Akram Khan, Mohammad Lutfar Rahman, Mohammad Abdur Razzaq, Anwar Hussain, Syed Muztaba Ali, Abul Mazid, Mohammad Abdul Hakim, Rezaul Karim, Abul Kalam Shamsuddin held the identical view.⁶²

Interestingly, the demand for the introduction of more Urdu, Persian and Arabic words replacing the Sanskrit words or expression, was very much alive. Those very people who decried *Mussalmani Bangla* for profuse use of foreign words like Arabic, Persian and Urdu, rendering the language unintelligible, were in favour of a steady and controlled infusion of the so-called foreign words for Islamisation of the language. What they opted for was that without disturbing the structure of the language or introducing an unimaginative change in the language pattern, Islamisation of Bengali should be carried out since it was almost an universal belief that the Bengali of the Muslims basically differed from that of the Hindus in matters of spirit and form while there remained a conviction that since the Bengali language had not been suitably Islamised the Bengali Muslims were yet to become thorough Muslims.⁶³

Under this impression the pioneer cultural institute of the Bengal Muslims, the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity*, in a very important meeting held at M. L. Jubilee Institution, Calcutta on 5 August 1926, welcomed the step of the Calcutta University to adopt Bengali as the medium of instruction in the Matriculation examination, but categorically asked the authorities of the University to allow freer use of words of Arabic and Persian origin in the Bengali language.⁶⁴ The executive committee of the Samity in a subsequent meeting held on 20 October 1932 clarified its stand by adopting the following resolutions:

‘Whereas Bengali is the common mother tongue of the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal, whereas there is much difference in the dialects of the two communities, and whereas for the strength and development of literature coordination of written language is indispensably necessary, this Samity is strongly of opinion that any attempt to stop or otherwise discourage the use of those Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit or English words which have found place in Bengali language for proper and spontaneous expression of different thoughts and culture and which in future literature will be absolutely necessary will seriously affect the vitality of Bengali language.’⁶⁵

Actually, the Samity most prudently did not want to disturb the process of natural and spontaneous development of the Bengali language nor was it in a mood to allow the Bengali Hindus to monopolise the language by ousting the words of Arabic or Persian origin, and this policy of non-intervention which it suggested was re-echoed in many quarters. A group of prominent Muslim intellectuals, writers and editors, namely Kazi Nazrul Islam, Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, Mohammad Habibullah, Abdul Quadir, Muzibar Rahaman Khan, Shamsunnahar, Mohammad Muzaffar, and Abul Mansur Ahmed, in an open letter, sought to draw public attention to the question and unequivocally declared that 'in order to introduce Muslim thoughts and ideas and also for the creation of Islamic atmosphere on the realm of Bengali prose, poetry and fiction, we are in favour of using Arabic and Persian words'.⁶⁶ They further declared that the advent and use of Arabic and Persian words in Muslim literature was not a new phenomenon and almost all renowned litterateurs of Bengal including Bharat Chandra, Krittibas, Rabindranath Tagore, Satyendranath, Mohitlal Mojumdar and Nazrul Islam had used Arabic and Persian words, but the present situation arising out of attempts to change the language either with words of Sanskrit origin or foreign words like Arabic and Persian had created quite an embarrassing situation. This group of intellectuals further, to assuage the fear, made it clear that 'We are avowedly opposed to the introduction of any foreign words without rhyme and reason and thereby create a language of patchwork character. In this connection we shall have also to bear in mind that on the plea of introducing new ideas we must not indulge in welcoming anything grotesque and ugly. For this purpose necessity and sense of beauty only will be our guideline and criterion'.⁶⁷

Mediaeval Punthis and Mussalmani Bengali

While structural, philological and even phonetical change of Bengali was taken into serious consideration, there was yet another group which conceived of Bengal Muslims' national literature in terms of

mediaeval *Punthis*. As a brand of popular or subaltern literature, the *Punthis* have two important and noticeable aspects: one linguistic, the other thematical. Most of the experts including James Long⁶⁸, Blumhardt⁶⁹, Dinesh Sen⁷⁰, Suniti Chattopadhyay⁷¹ and Sukumar Sen⁷² have called the language of *Punthis* as *Mussalmani Bangala* due to the abundance of Arabic and Persian words. While modern scholars like Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan⁷³ considering the presence of both Islamic (mostly Arabic and Persian) and pure Bengali words in the language, branded the variety as *Dobhasi Punthi*. But, actually, the *Punthi* language contained in itself a large number of words of Hindi and Turkish origin other than Arabic and Persian, including Bengali. In view of this fact Anisuzzaman has preferred to call it a hybrid language instead of *Mussalmani Bangala* or *Dobhasi Punthi*⁷⁴. Whatever might have been the *Punthi* nomenclature, the themes which it adopted were highly Islamic in nature. Anisuzzaman in course of classification pointed out that few *Punthis* like *Eusuf-Zolekha*, *Laila-Majnu*, *Benazir-Badre-Manir*, *Hatem-Tai*, and *Gole-Bakauli* by nature of their stories can be called romantic love stories. Under the second category fall those 'communal *Punthis*' like *Ameer Hamza* and *Jangnama* which depict anecdotes of suppression of Kafirs or infidels by the Muslim heroes. There was yet another class which described the exploits of Muslim *Pirs* and *Fakirs* who established their supremacy over the Hindu folk deities after opposition. *Punthis* like *Banbibir Jangnama*, *Kalu Gazi Champabati*, *Lalmohan*, and *Satyapirer Punthi* come under this class.⁷⁵

For those identity conscious reformers of the 20th century, the entire corpus of *Punti* literature of the 17th and the 18th century provided a base for their national literature. The most prominent figure of this school was Abdul Karim *Shahitya Bisharad*. All through his career, this scholar had time and again referred to the immense value of the *Punthis* as forming the basis of the cultural and literary structure.⁷⁶ The point he emphasised was that the *Punthis* constituted the real plebian literature of the Bengali Muslim masses. In his presidential address to the Reception

Committee of the *Bangiya Mussalman Literature Conference*⁷⁷, Abdul Karim pointed out that *Punthi* language was more akin to the colloquy of common Muslims though it contained more foreign elements than the latter. He, of course, admitted that the language of the *Punthis* due to its structural and linguistic defects could not be made the literary language of the modern Muslim writers, but it should be developed and refurbished to be used as a model for the modern writers to show that how Islamic words could be used properly and appropriately.⁷⁸ Abdul Karim's contention found support in the voice of Mohammad Shahidullah⁷⁹ and Akram Khan⁸⁰ who went in favour of *Punthis* and found that *Punthi's* support was necessary for building up the edifice of Muslim national literature. Abdul Majid in one of his articles in *Saogat* even criticised the Muslim intelligentsia for their failure to support the course of *Punthi* literature.⁸¹ He pointed out that a great cultural chasm existed between the Muslim common masses and the educated ones. While the former had been drawing their inspiration from the *Punthis*, which definitely catered to their cultural taste, the educated ones being thoroughly influenced by Hindu idea and Hindu style had completely failed to grasp the importance of the *Punthis*. This could have bridged the gap and helped develop a national literature to the satisfaction of both the common masses and the educated minority.⁸²

The reason for this phenomenon, particularly the cultural gap between the masses and the educated few, had been eloquently discussed by another litterateur of repute, Syed Sajjad Hossain.⁸³ He pointed out that political tumults and vicissitudes of the 18th and the 19th centuries practically put an end to the Muslim upper class domination under whose patronage Bengali literature flourished, nor could they themselves pursue literary vocations. Such literary tradition, as had grown up among them, passed as a bequest to the ranks below, who had comparatively been hit less directly by the political change. They, in fact, gave birth to *Punthi* literature. He further pointed out that changes of this kind as a result of political shifts were not unknown in the history of

literature. For example, the Anglo-Saxon phase in English literature came to an end with the Norman conquest of 1066 AD. The native language was therefore displaced from the court and consequently abandoned by the upper class. Under these circumstances, instead of dying an uncared for death, the language was kept alive by the common people for over two centuries. English won back its rightful place in the national life in the 13th century and the cleavage between the lower and upper strata of the society, one clinging to the native language and the other adhering to the foreign, at last came to a close. In Hussain's estimation something similar happened when the Muslims fell from power in the 18th century. Here, unfortunately, they could never regain what they had once lost. For the literary tradition had, meanwhile, flowed into different channels and developed along new lines. So that when Muslim intelligentsia belatedly woke up they found it impossible to catch up with the march of events. They did not try to revive the older tradition or to see how it survived in the lower ranks of the social hierarchy. They begun instead to blindly imitate the Hindus. The psychological divorce between the intelligentsia and the common people therefore persisted.⁸⁴

Basically, what had drawn attention of the reformers was not the language pattern of the *Punthis*, rather the thematic and ideological aspects of this brand of literature, which represented the proper Islamic spirit. The tales themselves range in type from the purely imaginary to those directly connected with social affairs. But they all have a common Islamic background; for even in the imaginary types, the heroes were mostly historical figures though the exploits ascribed to them have no historical basis whatsoever. Hazrat Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet (SM) appears, for example, as a huge wrestler or a gargantuan giant. Another cycle of *Punthis* has for its hero Hatem Tai of the tribe of Tay noted for his charities. There are others based on the stories of Muslim kings and emperors. Numerous other tales have been woven around places renowned in the history of Islam—Istanbul, Bagdad, Samarkand and Bukhara. But the *Punthi* writers had no idea of the classical unities and the

story starting from one centre might range over a very wide area and ended up at a place least expected. For example, Hazrat Ali or Hatem Tai in numerous *Punthis* had been brought over to India without the slightest compunction and his doings mixed up with those of native heroes. In spite of all these characteristics the *Punthis* represented really Islamic contribution to the Bengali literature which the writings of the educated Muslims did not do. Their background, atmosphere and language were such as the Muslims thoroughly understood.

Even the pages were in the style of Arabic books, arranged from right to left. All those features of *Punthi* might not be accepted, but it must be stressed that the Muslim writers and poets could profit immensely by imbibing the spirit that animated the rich folk literature. It could draw their minds back to their own culture and religion and teach them to seek their inspiration from Islamic sources. For all practical purposes, the *Punthis* would provide a basis as well as inexhaustible materials for a national mythology and national literature for the Muslims, and there rested the importance of the *Punthis*. It would, therefore, be the task of the modern Muslim writers and litterateurs to reinterpret and reconstruct those national legends as per their necessity. Sajjad Hussain in this respect asked the Muslim litterateurs to imbibe the ways followed by Yeats under the Irish revival programme.⁸⁵ The famous poet, to create a pattern of Irish national literature, collected stories from Irish peasants. Similarly, the Muslim poets could do this, but in comparison with their Irish counterparts, the Muslim litterateurs were placed in an advantageous position; while Yeats and his associates had to depend principally on oral tradition, the Muslim writers could draw their materials from a vast and infinitely interesting written literature in the form of the *Punthis*.

Conceivably, all those suggestions and counter-suggestions were indicative of the seriousness of the problem and the prevailing confusion regarding the language issue as well. A lot of experiments to modify the Bengali language under Islamisation programme obviously raised a loud protest from the Hindus who considered

those overtures as attempts to pollute the language. Noticeably, apart from politics, in the social field there existed already a considerable amount of tension between the two communities over various issues during the first few decades of the 20th century. During the late 19th and early the 20th centuries, the tension surfaced over two particular issues: one, education and the other, employment. As a hopelessly outmaneuvered community, the Muslims of Bengal were determined to isolate themselves and at least the educated few were eager to devise a separate system of education both for themselves and for the community at large. The elite's decision, their attitude to Western or modern education coupled with sudden economic affluence buttressed by the government decision to assist the Muslims in their educational activities, all those factors not only brought into existence a separate system of Muslim education but also contributed to the emergence of a new educated middle class who were eager to participate in politics and share in jobs monopolised by the upper caste Hindus.⁸⁶ Many Muslim periodicals and journals, as opinion making bodies, during the first few decades of the 20th century like *Islam Procharak*⁸⁷, *Nabanoor*⁸⁸, *Islam Darshan*⁸⁹, *Mohammadi*⁹⁰, *The Mussalman*⁹¹, *The Muslim Chronicle*⁹², reflecting the middle class view, expressed displeasure with inadequacy of the number of Muslim employees in different government departments and autonomous bodies. A number of meetings and conferences were held to that effect, resolution were passed, protests were made, even Muslim members of the Legislative Council entered into acrimonious debates with their Hindu counterparts to bring parity with the Hindus in respect of jobs and employment opportunities.⁹³

In this respect government policy of concession and reservation played an important role. Whatever might have been the nature of the problem, it got further complicated due to government policy of reservation and concession towards the Muslims in matters of state employment.⁹⁴ Hindus too, in view of rising unemployment and dwindling of income from landed sources, could not tolerate this shift in government policy in favour of the Muslims. Their

resentment was also aired through their periodicals, newspapers and magazines which vehemently criticised the government policy of reservation, concession of education facilities extended to the Muslims. As early as 1880, Dwarakanath *Bidyabhusan*, the editor of the illustrious *Somprakash*, vehemently opposed the Muslim plea to the government for extending financial assistance to their community so as to open an exclusive college for the Muslim boys.⁹⁵ If *Somprakash* articulated Hindu feeling on Muslim educational facilities, there were other Hindu papers and periodicals like *Hitabadi*, *Sulabh Dainik*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Bengali* which stood testimony to Hindu resentment over government employment policy. During the first few decades of the 20th century, the Hindu press represented by *Prabasi*, *Bharatbarsa*, *Basumati*, *Sanibarar Chithi*, *Amrita Bazar*, and *Anandabazar* carried the resentment almost into a battle against Muslim presence in the field of employment and other facilities. In short, within a few decades of emergence of Muslim consciousness, the educated middle class of either community were locked in a battle with each other over facilities and shares of job opportunities.

Thanks to the programme of Islamisation, this urban or semi-urban conflict between the two communities began to percolate down to rural areas, albeit in a different garb. Undeniably, within a basically feudal structure of the Bengali society and economy, the rural masses, who were mostly peasants, had to suffer exploitation at the hands of those feudal lords who were mostly Zamindars and money-lenders. By a stroke of circumstances in heavily Muslim populated areas like northern and eastern Bengal, while the feudal exploiting class consisted mostly of upper class Hindus, the rural masses were predominantly Muslims.⁹⁶ Therefore, when the undercurrent of tension between the original peasant community and the feudal power burst into open conflict, the grievances of the Muslim peasant masses instantly acquired a religious dimension because of the new found commitment to the Islamic way of life.⁹⁷ Ironically, a class war against economic exploitation therefore took the shape of religio-communal conflict of which the educated middle class among

the Muslims and the *Anjumans* had taken advantage to further their own sectional interest. The most important aspect of this movement was that compared to the middle class agitation on education and employment, this movement was widespread, violent and plebian. Secondly, its religio-cultural tone could never be missed. Wahhabi influence combined with the mass Islamisation programme of village Mollahs brought forth a thorough change in religio-cultural outlook of the Muslim peasant-artisan group, who henceforth began to consider with aversion those cases which were connected with Hindu rituals.⁹⁸ For example, in the Bakherganj Muslim *ryot* meeting, held on 26 December 1926, strong protests were made against the oppression of the Hindu Zamindar of Uttar Shahbazpur who forcibly collected Rs 1400 as Durgapuja subscription from the Muslim *ryots*. One Tamizuddin Bepari even alleged that in his *Kabuliat* there was a mention of a *Patha* (he-goat) to be given to the Zamindars every year during the Puja. The meeting which was addressed by the leading Muslim pleaders of Bakherganj implored the government to rescue the Muslim.⁹⁹

Two to three issues like cow-slaughter, desecration of temples, playing music in front of mosques, provided excuses for communal conflicts. Among all the issues the most sensitive and sinister one was related to *Go-Korbani* or cow-slaughter. In 1902, the most vocal of the *Sudhakar* group Mashdahi brought forth a tract named *Agni Kukkut* which was a forceful vindication of Muslims' right to cow-slaughter and, at the same time, a critique of Hindu opposition.¹⁰⁰ Some seventeen years later a tract titled *Go-Korbani* dealing with the same issue written by Moulvi Fazlur Rahman was published.¹⁰¹ Actually there was hardly any change in the outlook and the fact remained that even after a lapse of a decade and a half, the attitude of the Muslims towards the problem did not soften.

All through the later years of the 19th century the issue proved to be a constant source of irritation between the two communities and during the early years of the 20th century, it altogether refused to abate. Even during the Khilafat days, when some sort of rapprochement was reached between the two communities and in

view of the same the Central Khilafat Committee had made an appeal through an *Istahar* to the Muslims of Bengal not to ruffle the feelings of the Hindu sympathisers by indulging in cow-slaughter¹⁰², it instantly provoked strong protests from the section among the community who found it to be an onslaught on their religious practice and behaviour. The infuriated editor of *Islam Darshan* categorically stated that since there existed a clear sanction in favour of cow-slaughter in Hadith and the Qur'an, the Muslim community should not pay heed to any whimsical *Fatwa* of any capricious Maulana. Secondly, the Muslims were not eager to make an *entente* with the Hindus at the expense of their religious beliefs and practices. Any *entente* or understanding with any community resulting in forsaking of religious practices was most undesirable for any Muslim.¹⁰³

The Hindu Opposition

The feeling of cultural antipathy between the Hindus and the Muslims became all the more strong with the commencement of a literary duel between the two communities. Hindu avantgardism in literature and a simultaneous Muslim attempt to Islamise the language precipitated such a crisis which further accentuated the process of isolation. Hindu attitude towards the problem was succinctly put forward by Ramesh Chandra Bandyopadhyay who, in his article, *Maktab-Madrasar Bangala Bhasa* published in *Probasi*¹⁰⁴ took exception to that kind of *Mussalmani Bangala* which, in his opinion, jeopardised the very tenor and structure of the Bengali language. For specific analysis he took for scrutiny two text-books of Madraassa standard, one *Maktab Madrassa* by Mobarak Ali, the other *Maktab Madrassa Siksha* (second part) by Mohammad Shahidullah. Picking up excerpts from these two text books, Bandyopadhyay tried to show that how far the *Mussalmani Bangla* put to use through the text books of twenty seven thousand Madrassas and Maktabas of Bengal had been thoroughly polluting the Bengali language. The author cited few Arabic and Persian words like *Fereshta*, *Dojakh*, *Behesht* as examples and pointed out

that the random use of such words without considering their suitability evidently split the language into two, giving birth to a kind of literary communalism between the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal.

Most striking of all was that even a scholar and philologist like Dr Mohammad Shahidullah in his *Maktab-Madrassa Sikshya* (second part) had resorted to a style of writing heavily interspersed with Arabic and Persian words that made no sense at all. In his opinion, this was a highly calculated move to destroy the Bengali culture and he found behind it the secret hands of pan-Islamism and communalists working. This was actually a question of cultural survival and he summoned the fellow Bengali Hindus to come up and rescue the Bengali language.¹⁰⁵

The *Probasi* article of Ramesh Chandra Bandyopadhyay found a very strong support from the father figure of Bengali literature, Rabindranath Tagore, who viewed it to be a part of the communal game but, he admitted at the same time, that for a healthy growth of Bengali language appropriate use of Arabic and Persian words was necessary.¹⁰⁶ He even cited a few examples to show that how suitable could be some Arabic and Persian words in lieu of chaste Sanskrit words for expression of feelings. Actually, he was a great synthesiser who believed in mutual adjustment between indigenous or Sanskrit words and foreign words like Arabic, Persian and Urdu, but what he resented was the process of unpragmatic and forceful Islamisation of Bengali language which he termed as Arabicism-Persianism (*Arbiana-farsiana*). In his opinion, every Bengali student, be he a Hindu or a Mussalman, should learn and practise undefiled Bengali, but what those *Moulvi Sahebs* had resorted to flaunt their communal identity would not only in the long run spell disaster for Bengali language and literature but also drive a wedge between Hindu-Muslim communal harmony.¹⁰⁷

Neither Ramesh Chandra Bandyopadhyay nor Tagore went unanswered. Maulana Akram Khan, the editor of *Mohammadi*, stepped forward to defend the Muslim stand. In a lengthy article in *Mohammadi*¹⁰⁸, Akram Khan pointed out that culturally the

Muslims of Bengal differed from the Hindus of this province and this cultural difference got expression through their respective use of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit words. Akram Khan's contention was that to retain this cultural individuality those text books of *Maktabas* and *Madrassas* should be written in such a language which got a higher percentage of Islamic or Arabic and Persian words. If the contrary happened, i.e. the text books of the Muslim boys came to be written in so-called Bengali language which definitely contained Hindu religio-cultural ideas apart from Sanskrit words, a great crisis would have been created under which the community might have to face a possibility of cultural extinction. The editor seemed to be agitated over the Hindu claim to literary domination and condemned the attitude of the Bengali Hindu litterateurs and intelligentsia who almost dictated their Muslim counterparts to toe their line.¹⁰⁹

He, therefore, implored that the Muslims should be allowed to follow their own ways in creating the community's literary and linguistic variety, as also to find out a *modus vivendi* between the languages of the two communities. To this end, the editor put forward a formula. First, the Muslims should be allowed to use such Arabic and Persian words strictly accurate translation of which into Bengali was not possible. Second, in Bengali language there were some words which were symbolic of image worshipping and entirely opposed to Islamic ideal. Muslims must not be allowed to use those words. Third, there must be a mutual understanding regarding the use of Arabic and Persian words between the Hindus and the Muslims. While Hindus would not drop those Arabic and Persian words which so far had got acceptance into the Bengali language or had been naturalised, the Muslims as well would not try to incorporate unnecessary Islamic words into their vernacular.

What Akram Khan meant to say was that regarding introduction of Arabic and Persian words in their vernacular both the communities of Bengal, Hindus and Muslims, should practise restraint and be tolerant of each other's demand and the point which, he stressed, was to find out a compromise formula regarding

this issue so that no confrontation or embitterment of communal relation might occur.¹¹⁰ S. Wajed Ali, on the contrary, was uncompromising. In an article published in *Gulistma* he lashed out at Tagore¹¹¹ for his alleged participation in this communal debate that generated ill feelings. He criticised the poet for handing out sermons determining the norms of development and modifications of Muslim Bengali language and literature which he ought not to have done. Wajed Ali referred to it as an uncalled for interference and pointed out that while literary personalities like Tagore had produced their works in a language which had a natural and spontaneous development within the framework of Hindu environment, values and traditions and earned encomium, their Muslim countererparts on the contrary had been castigated for the reason that following the ways of their Hindu big brothers, they endeavoured to build up their vernacular in accordance with the Islamic spirit and ideals.

This type of assertion obviously raised a storm of criticism in the Hindu quarters. Apart from literary giants like Tagore, a number of lesser writers and literary figures expressed their concern with the Muslim demand to modify the Bengali language. A contributor to *Sanibarar Chithi*¹¹², Satya Sunder Das, categorically expressed that what the Bengali Hindus felt for the language the Muslims did not, and the reason for this was not the religious differences between the two communities but rather a deep cultural chasm. He decried the ways in which the Muslims had been indiscriminately putting Arabic and Persian words into Bengali language to the exclusion of words of Sanskrit origin and made it clear that such a variety could never be called Bengali since as a linguistic form, Bengali was more indebted to Sanskrit than to Arabic or Persian. He ultimately came to the conclusion that so long as the Bengali Muslims would feel it a dire necessity to use Arabic and Persian words in the Bengali language, it would transpire that as a community the Bengali Muslims had been unable to absorb their religio-cultural senses within their racial consciousness. Had it been so, they could have expressed the same through their vernacular.¹¹³

There were even some Hindu litterateurs who were as uncompromising as Wajed Ali and preferred to develop the language to the exclusion of the Muslims. Thus a litterateur of repute, Parimal Goswami, in his article in *Sanibarar Chithi* made of forceful assertion that Bengali literature was primarily the creation of the Bengali Hindus, therefore there existed a spiritual link between the Hindus and the Bengali language while the Muslims did not contribute to the development of the Bengali language. Hence they had no sympathy for the same.¹¹⁴ Apart from this assertion, allegations were made from a few who pointed out that this hybrid language called *Mussalmani Bangala*, which was taking shape under the Muslim patronage, would obviously jeopardise the Bengali language and culture.¹¹⁵

Resurgence of Bengali vs Urdu Controversy

Understandably, this kind of hostility had shaken Muslim belief in a dual venture in literary experiments. Apart from straining the communal relations, the barrage of accusations and counter-accusations pushed the bewildered Muslims to a corner where they found themselves isolated and apprehensions grew that if things drifted in a way determined and controlled by the Hindus, their very existence would be wiped out of the social, cultural, and political face of Bengal. Under this circumstance the Muslims chose two ways to extricate themselves from this predicament. First, they formed an uneasy alliance with Urdu and, second, waged an all-out war against the alleged Hindu cultural onslaught. As early as the late 19th century, the Muslims of Bengal had discarded the idea of making Urdu their vernacular. Yet there was a nucleus of a determined and influential group which carried on the old struggle of restoring the rightful position of Urdu in the life of the Bengal Muslims. In fact, the early decades of the 20th century were ringed with the literary duels between the pro-Urdu and anti-Urdu groups, which took new dimension in course of time. Significantly at the 4th Mohammedan Educational Conference of Bengal held at Purneah on 18 April 1908, Syed Abdullah Suhrawardy made an appeal to the

Bengal Muslims to learn Urdu.¹¹⁶ The same was repeated during the 6th session of the Bengal Provincial Muhammadan Educational Conference held at Calcutta Town Hall on 5, 6 and 7 October 1911.¹¹⁷ While in the Barisal sessions of the Bengal Presidency Mohammadan Educational Conference held on 7 and 8 April 1917, the idea was consummated and took the shape of the following resolutions:

- The teaching of Arabic and Persian should begin from Class V instead of Class VII.
- Urdu should be adopted as one of the second languages for all the examinations of Calcutta University for those whose vernacular is not Urdu.
- Bengali and Urdu should be vernaculars alternative to each other for the Junior classes of the Calcutta Madrassa and other Madrassas as well.¹¹⁸

Opinions floated in the Barisal Conference also found strong support in the resolutions of the *Anjuman-i-Urdu*.¹¹⁹

The most remarkable aspect of those demands was a major shift reflected in the attitude of the Urduphiles who in earlier period had launched a war to establish Urdu as the vernacular of the Muslim upper class. But, in later years, the demand was reduced to the level of making Urdu the compulsory second language for all the Muslim students of Bengal, to prop it up as a bulwark against Hindu cultural onslaught.¹²⁰ A forceful vindication of Urdu was made by Badruddin Ahmad, the Assistant Inspector of Schools of Mohammadan Education, Presidency Division. This education officer in a statement submitted to the Mohammadan Education Committee appointed by the Government of Bengal Presidency, the DPI Bengal, W.W. Hornwell, made it clear that the question of Urdu is the question of life and death of Mohammadan education in Bengal.¹²¹ His contention was that the Bengal Muslims were forced to accept Bengali as their vernacular after Persian had been left to die following the downfall of the Mughals, but the problem was that Bengali being a language of the Hindus replete with their

communal ideas, tradition and philosophy, had exercised an evil effect upon the Muslim boys. Yet, he admitted learning of Bengali was essential for the Muslim boys since it happened to be their vernacular and, barring a handful among the community, the majority of Muslims in rural Bengal spoke and understood the language. Besides, learning of their cultural language Arabic, Persian and Urdu with the help of Bengali as the medium was necessary. He even pointed out that among the middle and upper middle class of Bengal Muslims there was an eagerness to learn Urdu for this reason. He, therefore, made those interesting suggestions that Urdu should be made compulsory for all Muslim boys in Bengal and, if possible, *Mussalmani Bangla* which was much closer to Urdu, should be adopted as medium of instruction at the primary level. Apart from this, he emphasised the need of establishing Urdu training schools and preparation of suitable Urdu text books.¹²²

Initially, there arose loud protests from certain quarters who found these contentions preposterous, unpragmatic and arbitrary. Kazi Imdadul Haque, the former-Assistant Inspector of Schools for Mohammadan Education, Dhaka Division, and Headmaster, Normal Training School, Calcutta, in a lengthy article expressed his opinions against Urdu and attempted to refute Badruddin Ahmad's contention.¹²³ In his opinion, Badruddin Ahmad worked under a misconception to hold the view that before Mughal downfall Persian was the *lingua franca* of the Bengal Muslims. On the contrary, 95 percent of Bengal Muslims talked and used their vernacular, hence there was no question of Persian losing influence in Bengal. Moreover, acceptance of Bengali by the Muslims was not a compulsion, rather a matter of free choice which had been attested by the emergence of famous Muslim poets during the middle ages who produced their works in Bengali. Even though Haque subscribed to Badruddin Ahmad's view that Bengali was predominantly a Hindu language which brought Hindu influence upon Muslim psyche, he maintained that it did not constitute a sufficient reason for giving up one's mother tongue and adopt a

foreign language. What was most needed was to bring Islamic ideas into Bengali language, not a changeover to Urdu. Imdadul Haque suggested that not only Arabic and Persian be taught through the medium of Bengali, efficient religious training could also be given through this language. He concluded that for Muslim boys of Bengal, study of vernacular and English was essential while Urdu could be retained merely as an optional second language. He emphasised the need of making Bengali a suitable vehicle of Islamic ideas and literature and finally declared that the changing of a nation's vernacular was little short of physical impossibility.¹²⁴

The debate, however, continued. Badruddin Ahmad in a reply to Imdadul Haque's allegations clearly stated that he was not actually against Bengali and sincerely felt that Bengali should be learnt by every Muslim student of Bengal as their vernacular and for acquiring secular knowledge as well.¹²⁵ But knowledge of Urdu was essential to help the Muslim boys to master Arabic, the language of the Qur'an. By pointing out the importance of Arabic, Ahmad mentioned that the spirit and teaching of religion was one thing while the form and procedure was another. The former could be made universal, but not the latter, otherwise the followers of Islam throughout the world would not have been required to say their prayers in Arabic or conform to uniform procedure in their prayers. He did not, of course, undermine the importance of English and Bengali, but the teaching of those two subjects, to the exclusion of Arabic or Urdu in his opinion, 'would definitely lead to creation of a new generation of Mohammadans disrespectful to their own culture, traditions and ways of their forefathers'. He did not deny that the vernacular of the majority of the Mussalmans of this province was Bengali, but this fact, in his opinion, should not in the least stand in their way of learning Urdu. Finally, Badruddin Ahmad significantly pointed out that the very attempt of late by a section of Muslim litterateurs to introduce a new language called the *Mussalmani Bangala* amounted to a confession on the part of the Mussalmans of Bengal of the important facts that, the Bengali language and literature was not suitable for Mohammadans and that the

Mussalmans could not acquire the same proficiency in the Bengali language as the Hindus naturally did.¹²⁶

Even in this second round of debate, Haque could not share the views of Ahmad.¹²⁷ In his opinion the lack of religious sense and strengthening of Hindu influence on the Muslims were more due to ignorance and neglect of the vernacular than apathy towards Urdu and other Islamic languages. Haque pointed out that if the Muslims could have an access to the Scriptures through vernacular, heresy might have been checked and Hindu influence could be minimised. Further, he did not think Bengali to be an exclusive language of the Hindus. 'The very existence of the *Mussalmani* Bengali warrants', he opined, 'what is Bengali that is suitable and that Urdu is not necessary. But this *Mussalmani* Bengali has become 'ludicrous' through our neglect; and now we want to strangle it with the clutching fingers of Urdu. Had we taken the matter in hand earlier the *Mussalmani* Bengali would not have excited our pity and laughter today. There is yet time. Our aim is to replace it by a purer Bengali with an Islamic turn of thought. *Mussalmani* Bengali, as it stands, is incapable of development, let us develop a Bengali language, as much Islamic as Hindu and embellish it, not only for the masses but for the educated people also. That will be our salvation'.¹²⁸

The debate went on unabated¹²⁹ and the Muslim public opinion got clearly divided on the issue. Meanwhile, the Calcutta University's decision to introduce vernacular as medium of instruction in the matriculation standard intensified the debate adding a new dimension to the problem. A considerable amount of dismay and discontentment existed amidst the Muslim intelligentsia regarding the Hinduisation of Bengali literature and consequent influence on the educational system.¹³⁰ A prominent leader among the social reformers, Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, as early as 1889, mooted a proposal against Hindu apathy towards Muslims in Bengali literature at the Calcutta session of the Muslim Education Conference, which came out in the form of a booklet entitled *Vernacular Education in Bengal*.¹³¹ Taking the cue from the

early reformers, a number of later writers, reformers, and educationists, apart from denouncing this Hindu attitude, sounded an alarm against Hindu influence on the Muslim educational system as evinced from the text books and implored their co-religionists to keep away from this pernicious influence.¹³²

What the Muslim intellectuals were pointing out was not altogether untrue nor the seriousness of the problem could be ignored, but this predicament was not sufficient enough to turn to Urdu as a succour. Yet the condition was so created that the Muslim mind was quite in a fix as to what to do.¹³³ The entire community, therefore, waged a full-scale war against any kind of supposed or real onslaught. The University decision in this regard triggered off a new phase of crisis. The prominent Bengali Muslim leader, Fazlul Haq, in his speech in course of a debate in the Bengal Legislative Assembly on a motion for a supplementary grant to the Calcutta University, highly criticised the step towards vernacularisation of the medium of instruction at the matriculation standard by the Calcutta University, since he believed that Bengali was not the language of the Muhammadans.¹³⁴ On 27 August 1922, a meeting of Muslim students took place at the Muslim Institute Hall, Calcutta, registering their protest against the University decision and expressed the apprehension that the policy would seriously affect Muslim educational interest in Bengal.¹³⁵

Interestingly, the opinions referred to above did not for the time being reflect the majority view, nor did they make any impact upon the Muslim thinking mind. Most of the intelligentsia spurned the contention as most unrealistic and preposterous. Personalities like Mujibar Rahman Khan of *The Mussalman* or the experienced educationists like Abdul Karim and a number of sundry people from different walks of life congratulated the Calcutta University's decision and found this to be a great step towards the development and propagation of Muslim education in Bengal. In a series of articles published in the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*; Moulvi Abdul Karim welcomed the Calcutta University's decision,¹³⁶ pointing out that since the Bengali speaking Muslim

students considered Urdu as a foreign language, an increasing trend existed among them to change from Urdu to Bengali as their vernacular. Referring to statistics he pointed out that while in 1907 among the 266 Bengali Muslim students, a paltry number of 42 (>20%) took Urdu; fifteen years later, i.e. in 1922, among 3811 Muslim students, only 372 students (>10%) took Urdu in the matriculation examination. In his opinion this dwindling number was a pointer to the fact that Bengali Muslim students were clearly against Urdu. He, therefore, opined that any attempt to force the Bengali Muslim students to accept Urdu would be a gross injustice. In a later statement to the press, this veteran educationist further clarified the point and mentioned that both the classes and masses of Bengali Muslims used the Bengali language not only in their conversation but also in their correspondence, records, accounts, and documents. He pointed out that 'apart from the city of Calcutta, where Mussalmans from different parts of India and Muslim countries outside India have congregated together, it is only in a few towns, such as Murshidabad and Dhaka, where perhaps the majority of Mussalmans speak a kind of Urdu'. 'I am not certain', he maintained, 'that there are not even a score of Mussalmans born and bred in Bengal who can speak idiomatic Urdu. Not that Bengali Mussalmans have not the capacity to master Urdu language, but they do not care to learn it as it is hardly of any use in their everyday affair'.¹³⁷

The most interesting part of Abdul Karim's contention was that the phenomenon of this undue fascination towards Urdu among a section of Bengali Muslims could be attributed to the fact that they had no literary language of their own.¹³⁸ Besides, the literature which they cultivated bore the unmistakable imprint of Hindu ideals exercising undesirable influence on their cultural bearing.¹³⁹ The editor of *The Mussalman* made a very pertinent comment in this regard. In his opinion 'What is wanted is to make the language the medium of instruction, not the literature. The Bengali literature may be a Hindu one, but the language is both Hindu and Muslim. What will mythological allusions and reference have to do with the

teaching of geography, history, science and mathematics through the medium of Bengali language?"¹⁴⁰

He, however, took to task those public leaders like Fazlul Haq and Suhrawardy for their advocacy of Urdu and welcomed the University reform by categorically declaring that 'making Bengali the medium of instruction and education is one great reform which the Calcutta University has achieved during the 60 years of its existence' and criticised by saying 'yet by a perverse irony of fate, it is the one great and beneficent reform which is pounced upon for abuse by Moulvi Fazlul Haq, M.L.C. self constituted champion of Muslim culture with the solitary assistance of Mr Wajed Ali of the Bar Library and of nowhere also so far as one can judge.'¹⁴¹ Apart from the editor of *The Mussalman* or Abdul Karim who became vocal in their protest against *Urduwalas*, important leaders like A.K. Ghaznavi, who expressed his opinion in favour of Bengali before the Hartog Committee¹⁴² or ordinary people like Muzaffar Ahmed¹⁴³ and Abdul Hayat¹⁴⁴ were very much articulate in their opinion in favour of Bengali.

Still Urdu could not be dispensed with since the idea persisted that the Muslims of Bengal were under a constant Hindu pressure which might bring about their cultural extinction, and Urdu could provide a bulwark against such onslaught not only by effecting a communal solidarity but also establishing an Islamic identity distinct from any other existing cultural group.¹⁴⁵ Actually, importance of Urdu and its link with cultural identity of the Bengal Muslims became increasingly pronounced in different conferences, meetings, places of debates and discussion. In a series of conferences¹⁴⁶ the need and value of Urdu was emphasised. Aminur Rahman, President of the Chittagong session of the Bengal Presidency Mohammadan Association, held at Chittagong Town on 28 and 29 December 1918, in his inaugural speech gave a clear expression to the Muslim feeling in this regard by mentioning 'we are anxious to preserve our distinctive type. We insist that the distinguishing features of our life must remain. We shall retain our own forms of culture. We will speak and cultivate the language of

our forefathers' and concluded that cultivation of Urdu could only help the Bengal Muslims to retain their 'distinctive type'.¹⁴⁷

While the Muslim mind was quite agitated at that crucial moment over the issue and rather confused, there appeared the Urdu Association of Bengal and its foster father, Mazhary Towheed, to give a definite shape to disorganised thoughts and energies. Mazhary Towheed, a pleader of Judges Court, Alipore, Calcutta, was an enthusiastic supporter of the propagation of Urdu in Bengal. As a member of the Muslim intellectual community, Towheed participated in a meeting of the Matriculation Regulation Committee of the Calcutta University on 13 July 1932, where he gave the following suggestions:

- Mohammadan boys and girls should be exempted from Bengali songs, Urdu songs must be made compulsory;
- Vernacular must not be made medium of instruction, if done it will cause harm to unity;
- Bengali being foreign to the Mussalmans of Bengal, Mussalman boys and girls should not be encouraged in studying Bengali;
- A committee be immediately appointed to find ways and means as to how to popularise the cult of Urdu in Bengal.¹⁴⁸

Apart from this, Towheed had already written a pamphlet *Language Problem of Bengali Muslims* where in an open letter to Calcutta University Vice-Chancellor, he expressed his thorough dissatisfaction against the vernacular schemes of the University.¹⁴⁹ Whatever might have been the merit of Towheed's suggestion and fulmination, its spirit definitely provided enough *raison d'être* for galvanising the Urdu association into action. The All-Bengal Urdu Association born on 26 July 1926 at Muslim Institute¹⁵⁰, Calcutta, started functioning effectively from the thirties onwards. On 28 August 1932, in a crucial meeting held at 51, Alimuddin Street, Calcutta, the Executive Committee of the All-Bengal Urdu Association discussed the possibility of the revival of Urdu in Bengal and the decisions of the meeting in a series of letters was sent to the

Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University (dt. 20. 6. 32, 22.7.32 and 31.7.32) to that effect. The meeting thereupon decided to distribute a pamphlet entitled *Language Problem of Bengali Muslims* as also to send a delegation comprising a number of important people like politicians, lawyers and educationists, and government officers to the Vice-Chancellor to impress upon him the importance of Urdu.¹⁵¹ The meeting was soon followed by a notice on 13 September 1932 issued by the Honorary Secretary of the Urdu Association, Mazhary Towheed, asking for liberal contribution from all ranks of Muslims of Bengal for holding of a Urdu conference forthwith in view of the fact that 'there have been forces at work, political as well as cultural, those were likely to overcast with clouds the future of Urdu and of Muslim culture in the province of Bengal'.¹⁵²

Towheed's overtures ultimately took a definite shape when the urdu lovers of Calcutta witnessed the holding of the 1st session of Bengal Provincial Urdu Conference at a community hall at 12 Watgung Street, Kidderpore, on 2 July 1933.¹⁵³ S. Wajed Ali, in his Presidential address to the session stressed the need of Urdu for Muslim cultural identity and unity. He unequivocally expressed that 'Urdu is the *lingua franca* of the Muslims of Bengal and it is necessary for cultural continuity and permanence of racial existence'¹⁵⁴, To dispel any misconception regarding the holding of an Urdu Conference by the Bengali Muslims, the Secretary at the outset declared that 'this Urdu Conference is purely a Bengalee Mussalman's concern and thus a call from within',¹⁵⁵ while the remaining part of his secretarial speech was more fascinating from the viewpoint of linguistic development though the logic he offered was not very cogent. In his opinion Muslims belonging to a community of international brotherhood could not confine themselves within any petty lingua-cultural framework, hence neither Bengali nor the Bengali culture, as reflected through this language could be their cultural hallmark. Rather, he believed, *Punthi* language known as *Mussalmani Bangla* which was an admixture of Arabic-Persian words with corrupt Bengali and more akin to Urdu, should be accepted as their own language¹⁵⁶ (Appendix 9).

Obviously, the thought that baffled the Urdu lovers was how to accommodate Urdu into the cultural world of Bengali Muslims, drawing their inspiration from the rich Bengali literary tradition and heritage, as also to justify acceptance of Urdu *a fortiori*. This became apparent from an extraordinary meeting of the members of the All-Bengal Urdu Association held on 20 October 1935 under the presidency of Buland Jah Prince Mirza Mohammad Askari Bahadur of Oudh.¹⁵⁷ Syed Ibni Imam, one of the participants in the meeting, made a review of the present linguistic condition of Bengal and referred to the difficult situation created by the concurrent forces of three different types of Bengali language prevailing in the province of Bengal, namely: the *Punthi Bengali* which was spoken and written by the overwhelming majority of Bengali Muslims; the Nazrulian style of Bengali with a large admixture of Arabic and Persian words, which was growing popular with the educated Muslims; and the current Sanskritic Bengali not quite suited to Muslim feelings and requirements.

He, therefore, made a stirring appeal to the leading Muslim intellectuals and literati to give a definite lead to the community in respect of the standardisation of the Bengali language in the province. Abu Jafar, another member of the Association, spoke from his experience of tour in different districts of Bengal, that it was not correct to say that Urdu was the language of the Bengal Muslims, that the Muslims in the villages spoke a peculiar language which was half-Persian and half-Bengali. Taking the cue from Abu Jafar, Towheed characterised the language not as *Mussalmani Bengali* but as Bengali-Urdu which, in his opinion, would be much easier for the Bengal Muslims to develop into standard Urdu than the adoption of Bengali which was entirely a creation of Sanskrit. Akram Khan, the editor of *Mohammadi*, thereupon referred to the existence of different schools of thought in the province, one preferring the culture of Arabic to Urdu, the other preferring Persian to Urdu and, a third one, preferring to give Urdu the highest place for keeping alive Muslim culture in the province of Bengal. He, therefore, suggested the idea of holding another meeting after inviting other

leaders, before resolving upon an Urdu conference, approving however of the idea of adopting a resolution in respect of the introduction of Urdu as the compulsory second language for the Muslim students of Bengal. The participants of the meeting thereafter adopted a resolution to consider the desirability of urging upon the authorities the need for introducing Urdu as a compulsory second language for the Muslim students of Bengal.¹⁵⁸

With increasing gusto, public leaders of the community took up the cause of Urdu. Fazlul Haq, in Assansol Muslim League Conference on 3 April 1938, put emphasis on the need of Urdu for preserving cultural unity and implored that Urdu should be made a compulsory second language for all Muslim boys.¹⁵⁹ A few months later, during the 52nd session of the All-India Muslim Educational Conference held at Calcutta, on 29 December 1939, this esteemed leader of Muslim Bengal unequivocally declared, 'I am firmly of the opinion that Urdu should be made compulsory for all those Muslim students who take Bengali as their vernacular'.¹⁶⁰ Apart from Fazlul Haq there were other leaders like Mrs Hasina Murshed¹⁶¹ and H. S. Suhrawardy, who opined that 'the name of Urdu and the Persian script of Urdu were like the two iron walls of defence of our cultural independence'.¹⁶²

Undoubtedly, Urdu could cast its spell over Bengal very effectively. From the end of the thirties, the Urdu movement obviously got fillip and began to draw more supporters from different ranks of the Bengal Muslim society.¹⁶³ Within a short period, Bengal witnessed the establishment of two important organisations devoted to the cultivation of Urdu in Bengal: North Bengal Urdu Association (having its first session on 6 and 7 March 1943 at Dinajpur): and *Anjuman-Taraqqi-e-Urdu Bangala* (inaugural meeting held on 5 December 1943, at Calcutta Islamia College),¹⁶⁴ both the institutions being exclusively Bengal Muslims' concerns.

Urdu as a Cultural Signifier

At any rate, Urdu came to stay in Bengal as a mark of cultural independence of the Bengali Muslims, yet the fact remained that regarding the efficacy of Urdu as unifier as well as an identifier, their opinion was highly divided. Barring those vast masses of Muslim populace scattered all over Bengal, receiving their cultural nourishment from their folk tradition enriched by the Bengali language, those handful of newly emerging intelligentsia could hardly reach any consensus regarding their socio-cultural alignment. Anwarul Kadir, a liberal of the Sikha group, made a fascinating study of his community's paradox and came to make gradations among those intelligentsia as per their outlook and choice. In his opinion there existed an elite group among the Bengali Muslims who refused to admit the fact that Muslims were Bengali by their cultural lineage. Since they did not belong to the Bengali community, therefore, in their opinion instead of Bengali, Urdu should be the language of the Muslims of the province. Most of those personalities were city-bred or Calcutta-bred and had tremendous influence over the rest of the society. The next came a group of mofussil-bred Muslims who had lesser influence but were economically well-off and they were eager to make a compromise between Urdu and Bengali. While they maintained that though the Muslims could be considered a part of the Bengali community, they should have Urdu as their vernacular. In the opinion of the third group, since Islamic values and ideals had not been given proper importance in Bengali literature, Urdu should be made the deliverer.

The next one firmly believed in the position of Bengali as the vernacular of the Muslim of this province, but Urdu being the *lingua franca*, could not be dispensed with. There was as yet a radical group which was quite opposed to the elitists' outlook and had the conviction that the Muslims of this province were Bengali by every fibre of their existence, while Bengali was their vernacular on which they had as much equal right as the Hindus. Hence instead of forsaking Bengali they should bring Islamic spirit into

this language.¹⁶⁵ Whatever might have been the nature of the dispute, it transpired that the Muslims of Bengal in pursuance of their socio-cultural values had touched upon a new level of consciousness which made them feel that as a cultural unit they had been subjected to extinction and pressure from a superior or a dominant one. In this situation the only way to survival was to vindicate one's own identity with much greater emphasis. Accordingly the Muslims of this province resorted to the measure while Urdu provided a very acceptable weapon. Formally, Urdu had the capacity to unify the disparate social groups in the community and give a shape to their aspiration, but much more important was the informal or intrinsic power of Urdu to raise a cultural safeguard. The opinion makers of the community could aptly realise the fact, but while they found Urdu as a foreign language, having almost no discernible impact upon the Muslim populace, could not be relied upon, they resorted to familiarisation of *Mussalmani Bangala* which contained a higher percentage of Urdu and Islamic words and dwelt tediously that Urdu should be made a compulsory second language for the Bengali Muslim students. Anyway, the Bengali-Urdu controversy was not decisively settled, nor could the Bengali Muslims find that their outstanding problem of cultural cringe had been satisfactorily solved, until in other arenas of social existence the so-called pressure had been loosened or minimised.

Notes

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11. *Ibid*, p.236.
12. M. Asin Palacios, *El Justo Madio*, p.387: quoted in Wensinck, op. cit, p.236.
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- 4th part, 6th issue, *Aswin* 1325 BS, pp.315-318: Abdul Karim, *Bangabhasa O Sahitya Banam Bangiya Mussalman*.
18. *Islam Procharak*, 5th yr., 1st issue, op. cit., pp.21-23: *Nabanoor*, 1st yr., 3rd issue, *Asara* 1310 BS, pp.113-115: Abdul Karim, *Banga Bhasaye Mussalmani Sahitya*.
 19. *Nabanoor*, 2nd yr., 1311 (BS), op. cit.
 20. *Islam Procharak*, 5th yr., January 1903, op. cit.; *Nabanoor*, 1st yr., 4th issue, *Sravana*, 1310 BS, pp.122-124: Abdul Karim: *Prachin Mussalmani Geetamala*. In the article published in *Islam Procharak*, the editor vehemently attacked Abdul Karim who being a Muslim had attached undue importance to two Hindu mythical figures, *Radha* and *Krishna*. In the latter, the editor of *Nabanoor*, Syed Emdad Ali, mildly reproached Abdul Karim for using the term 'Muslim Vaishnav poet'. The editor pointed out that a person could not remain a Mussalman and a *Vaishnav* once at a time, and opined that these Muslim poets who created those *Vaishnav Padabalis* could not longer be treated as Muslims.
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Chapter IV

ILLUSION AND REALITY

The programme of Islamisation undergone by the Bengal Muslims during the late 19th and the early 20th centuries had two discernible impacts. It helped to create a communal solidarity under which the disparate social and economic groups of the community were bound together in a common loyalty towards religion; it also helped foster a strong feeling of separate existence which had its manifestations in various ways.¹

This feeling of separatism shared equally by the *Atraf* and *Ashrafs* got an intellectual interpretation from a nascent educated middle class who put forward a more foolproof version of Rabbi's thesis on how and in what ways the Muslims of Bengal differed from any other existing race or lingo-cultural group. Almost after two decades of publication of Rabbi's book,² Ismail Hossain Shiraji, a reformer of the new breed, in response to a statement made by a *Bramha* preacher, Kashi Chandra Ghosal, at a Rajshahi meeting on 19 *Agrahayan* 1323 BS, (1916) once more reiterated the theory of foreign origin of the Bengal Muslims and unequivocally declared that "Our youth and students should strongly believe that they belong to the stock of world conquering, wise, invincible and world renowned Arabs, Turks and Pathans".³

While on the one hand, this attitude contributed largely to the brisk upward mobility of the lower orders—their effort to gain entry into any one of the respectable social groups—the Syed, the Shaikh,

the Muhgal and the Pathan during the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, on the other, it helped create an outlook, particularly among the educated few, under which they began to think themselves as a part of international brotherhood or community to the denial of the local or regional influences that helped build up their basic socio-cultural infrastructure. Brought under the so-called Pan-Islamic influence, the Bengal Muslims went to the extent of denying their socio-cultural heritage. This, of course, did not follow a pattern but their insistence on it created an extraordinary situation which they did not even know how to handle.

Pan-Islamism or Indian Muslim Nationalism ?

The visit of Syed Jamaluddin Al-Afgani, the chief exponent of Pan-Islamism, particularly in Calcutta, enthused the Muslim leaders of Bengal with a spirit of internationalism and unity of Islam which transcended any geographical, racial and national limits. Afgani's aim was to coalesce into an effective whole the small and weak Muslim states and build up a united front to thwart British imperialistic designs. He, therefore, put emphasis on a worldwide Muslim unity. But while being put into practice his idea of Islamic brotherhood led to separation of the Muslims from the realm of national politics. This phenomenon has been endorsed by a contemporary, Bipin Chandra Pal, who, in his memoirs observed that "before Djamel ed Din's advent the educated Indian Mohammadans, particularly in Bengal, had been loyally cooperating with their Hindu fellow-subjects for the common advancement of national political interest. But after his visit they commenced to draw themselves away from the political activities of their Hindu fellow-subjects until gradually a wide gulf was created between the Hindu and the Muslim intellectuals in the country in regard to our national endeavour."⁴ Interestingly, apart from Nawab Abdul Latif and Ameer Ali, a number of other Bengal Muslim litterateurs and intellectuals were swayed by Pan-Islamic emotions while in their writings the society, culture, politics of the Islamic countries like Arab, Iran, Turkey and Afganistan were given prominence. Thus,

in 1889, one of the early reformers Mohammad Riyazuddin Ahmed Mashadi of Tangail brought forth a Bengali book, *Samaj O Samskarak*,⁵ a biography of Jamaluddin Al-Afgani, to propagate his ideas among his co-religionists, while in 1891 another reformer of repute, Fakir Abdullah, also wrote *Prabandha Kaumudi* ⁶, a collection of essays in which episodes of Arab chivalry were narrated and praised. A poet from Burdwan, Syed Raoshan Ali, wrote a book entitled *Turaska Bigraha*⁷ (1912) which centred round Turko-Balkan War. The author was so charged with Pan-Islamic emotions that in the preface of the book he expressed his desire of sending half of the sale-proceeds of the book to the Sultan of Rum (Istanbul). Even other literary personalities like Shaikh Reyazuddin Ahmed, Kazi Imdadul Haque, Hamid Ali, Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, Ismail Hossain Shiraji poured out their literary passions in praising the exploits of the Muslim heroes of countries beyond India.⁸

Interestingly, the Pan-Islamic zeal of the Bengal Muslims did not remain confined within their literary pursuits. A practical demonstration of this feeling became strongly manifest, while the Muslims of this province under the leadership of Dhaka Nawab Abdul Gani, Nawab Ahasannulla, Nawab Abdul Latif and Syed Ameer Ali sent a sum of Rs 5783 to Turkey, which was locked in a battle with Russia.⁹ Abdul Latif in his autobiography mentioned that in the Turko-Serbian War, the Bengali Muslims were decidedly in favour of the Sultan and the Turkish people. He also referred to a Calcutta Hall meeting of the Muslims on 7 October 1877 which resolved to raise funds to help Turkey and implored Queen Victoria to help the same in this predicament.¹⁰

Actually, from the very outset the leaders of the community were wrong because they could not apprehend the reality of the nation as distinct from the theocratic *Ummah* or the international religious community of the Muslims which owed its existence to the conception of *Qaom* or *Millat* or ethnic tribe coalesced together based on a strong and inflexible belief in Islam. Originally, during the pre-Islamic days *Qaom* was considered to be a conglomeration bound together on the tribal conception of blood relation. But, with

the emergence of Islam there took place a major shift in its nature since allegiance to a certain faith replaced the earlier conception of blood and became the principal unifying factor. Undeniably, *Qaomi* attitude henceforth brought about an unprecedented sense of unity and feeling of solidarity among all its members. But, at the same time, it contributed to the growth of an inflexible and rigid social structure which not only denied the existence of inalienable rights of an individual but also refused to make rapport with any social or political system that remained beyond the pale of *Qaom*. Hence the impression which it left was one of a huge monolith that superseded every sort of apparent disunity and discord but regardless of any independent idea or thinking which could drive a wedge into the structure and the elements forming the monolith had no other choice than to remain within it, ignoring any kind of deviation or diversity that could creep in.

The story of Islam in India was also the emergence of a highly organised and integrated social structure as opposed to the fragmented and disarrayed Hindu society which was a victim of racism, classism and casteism. As a matter of fact, unlike the Hindu society, which in reality, was a bundle of traditionalistic beliefs and practices, Islamic state and society presented itself as a concrete ideology inseparable from religion. Further, this politico-social order remained as a single, infallible, unique one, as well as an inevitable and unsurpassable divine sanction which could neither be paralleled to any order nor could it be substituted by another. It can, therefore, be truly imagined that while the Muslims made inroads into India and tried to identify themselves with the traditional Indian society, conception of their *Qaomi* existence and feeling of belonging to *Ummah* haunted them and kept them segregated.

During the mediaeval period in certain fields of social and cultural understanding, the community of Islam in India, particularly in Bengal, had synthesised its ideology and endeavoured with those of the Hindus and established few examples of Hindu-Muslim unity which was basically the handiwork of a few 'cultural mediators'¹¹, but it never could be considered as a trend

and, on the the whole, the community could never forget its exclusiveness.

The 19th century religious revival among the Muslims added a new dimension to the phenomenon. Apart from reviving old respect for Islam, the reform movement strengthened belief in the unity of brotherhood. The Wahhabi and other auxiliary movements, which swept nearly half of India, including the land of Bengal, in Kazi Abdul Wadud's opinion, had not only led the Muslims to give up all syncretic tendencies but also made a considerable number of common Muslims aware of their past and separate entity.¹² Hence from the 19th century onwards, the Muslims of India, including those of Bengal, pursued a policy of detached aloofness and nurtured a feeling of exclusiveness that could be misinterpreted as a lack of patriotic zeal. Even during 1930s while the nationalist struggle was quite in an advanced stage, the pronouncement of the Muslim nationalist leader Husayen Ahmed Madani to turn 'India into a nation of its Muslims' had provoked from poet Iqbal a scornful retort in poetry insisting that 'a Muslim can have no nation but Islam'.¹³

In fact, between 1937 and 1947 Maulana Madani issued a number of statements condemning the conception of a separate Muslim country. But Iqbal who philosophised the Pakistan idea registered his strong protest against such an idea of Madani, which emphasised the concept of nation as a secular entity consisting of all Indians of different religion, political opinions and social milieu. Iqbal, on the other hand, held that nationalism was essentially an Western concept which must not come under any consideration or purview of Islamic religious or political thinking. Actually, he refused to give any importance to the differences among the concepts of *Qaom*, *Ummah* and *Millat* which Madani envisaged. In Iqbal's opinion, *Qaom* and *Ummah* philosophically belonged to one and indivisible category, while the Muslims belonged to one *Millat*, non-Muslims to another.¹⁴

The difference of opinion between the two communities might be attributed to various political, social and economic reasons, but the

fact remained that the feeling of separatism nourished by the *Ashraf* leaders of Bengal slowly but steadily percolated to the lower stratum of leadership that began to emerge soon after partition. A section among the nascent middle class which took over the sceptre of leadership from the urban elites during the early decades of the 20th century very fondly nurtured this feeling and insisted on an exclusive indentity for their community. Munshi Ismail Hossain Shiraji, one of the early intellectuals, cautioned his co-religionists always to keep in mind the truth that they constituted an entirely different race and professed an entirely different religion.¹⁵ Aftabuddin Ahmed, a contributor to *Islam Procharak*, maintained that 'until the Bengali Muslims can retain their *Mussalmani* (the necessary traits of a Muslim) all attempts of reform and development are doomed to failure.'¹⁶

On the other hand, there is the conception of a modern nation which is a community in a unique complex of cultural values and a society based on organic solidarity, divisional labour, and functional differentiation. The ethnic societies which have emerged as modern nations went through a period of captivity within international politico-religious civilisation like European Christendom or Asia's Islamic Khilafat. But ultimately they have come out as entirely new formations with the development of the process of secularisation and democratisation. Yet there are examples when the nations turn to their ethnic past during their revival and think that they are continuation of it. But actually they are no longer the same ethnic units and cannot return to their 'archaic conditions', nor they can carry on the 'hang-overs' of their imperial or theocratic civilisations. In a very apt definition of 'nation', the Turkish intellectual giant, Ziya Gokalp finds that 'it is a homogenized product of various racial, ethnic and religious elements, welded to one another by historical catastrophies and is no longer reducible to its elements. In this new form of nation all 'hang-overs' or the tribal theocratic civilisational elements become pathological.'¹⁷

Remarkably, with the advancement of years among the Bengal Muslims, the fire of Pan-Islamism began to cool down, even though

the trend to look beyond the frontier was quite discernible till Khilafat and even after. The new leadership, quite conscious of its exclusiveness, was equally eager to identify itself with the Bengali culture and language and tried to accommodate itself within the broader framework of the Indian politics and society. The partition of Bengal obviously created a bad blood between the two communities but, at the same time, it witnessed the dawning of a new sense among the Muslims of Bengal who henceforth became much more conscious of their rights, demands and privileges as a major partner in the social and political life in Bengal. Reyazuddin Ahmed alias *Ebne Maez*, a zealous reformer of the day, as well as the Editor of *Islam Procharak* in a long-drawn serial *Banga Bibhag O Swadeshi Andolan*¹⁸ severely attacked the Hindus for their apathetic attitude towards Muslim demands and pointed towards disproportionate ratio of employment and other opportunities between Hindu and Muslim communities in Bengal; yet the article at the same time underlined a genuine concern of the Muslim educated middle class who henceforth thought themselves to be an indispensable part of the socio-political texture of Bengal, and from this conviction they were eager to avail of the opportunities of partition, which provided them with a major chance to wrest out more concessions from their Hindu counterparts. Shaikh Osman Ali, another contemporary writer of repute, made an admission of the fact that from the point of view of religion and race, the Muslims differed from the Hindus and a number of cogent reasons of Hindu-Muslim rift existed including those emanating from partition, but with equal emphasis he pointed out that 'for centuries Muslims have been residing in this country and accepted India as their land . . . henceforward India belongs very much to the Muslims as it does to the Hindus.'¹⁹

This sense of belonging veered round a kind of nationalistic feelings which the Muslim intellectuals could hardly afford to ignore. An example of this kind was the celebrated editor of *The Mussalman*, Mujibar Rahaman Khan, who extolled Syed Abdullah Suhrawardy for his speech in the fourth Mohammadan Education

Conference of Bengal, 1908, in which he asked the Muslims to be patriots.²⁰ In Mujibar Rahman's opinion, 'unlike a misguided section of our co-religionists he realises that he is an Indian and he has a duty to the land of his birth' and pointed out that 'patriotism is inculcated in the Qur'an and it would be deplorable if some of our co-religionist, still consider India as a land of exile.'²¹ The editor and his paper in pursuance of 'advanced school of political thought'²² of nationalism even earned the epithet of 'Congress paper'²³ from one of its contemporaries *Muslim Chronicle* which was also a zealous protector of Muslim sentiment. Yet, those comments could not deter *The Mussalman* from its vindication of the nationalist cause. Years after the Bengal partition and a few years after the Khilafat euphoria, this watch-dog of Muslim interest in reply to an article published in the *Englishman*²⁴ categorically declared that '*Mussalmans* did a grievous wrong by not joining the nationalist movement from the very begining'²⁵ and tried to dispel the notion of a large section of Muslim intelligentsia who apprehended that after the attainment of freedom, Muslims would be dominated by the Hindus.²⁶ The editor, of course, did not find Pan-Islamic sentiment of the Bengal Muslims incompatible with patriotism or nationalism. In his opinion while a Bengali Muslim could express his solidarity with Turkey in matters of faith, religion and Islamic brotherhood, in the same way he could participate in nationalist activities and vindicate his patriotism as a son of the soil.²⁷

Interestingly, this theme became a subject of intellectual discussion among different grades of thinkers of the day. The premier cultural institution of the Bengal Muslims, *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity*, undoubtedly took a very definite stand on the issue. Regarding language, the *Samity* had already pronounced its inclination towards vernacular, while in respect of identification with the Bengali cultural and national heritage, the *Samity's* stand was unequivocal. The editor of *The Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, the spokesman of the *Samity*, flayed one Mohammad Wajed Ali for his comment in his article *Bangala Bhasa O Mussalman Sahitya* published in his journal, that 'the

moment the word nation appears in the mind of a Muslim, he can never consider himself as a Bengali, nor as an Indian—he establishes a relation with the outer world.’²⁸ The editor, Mohammad Shahidullah, expressed his inability to accept Wajed Ali’s interpretation of ‘nation’. In his opinion, ‘now-a-days we accept this word (nation) in its English version. If so, then nation does not stand as a particular religious group—it actually means inhabitants of a certain country, irrespective of their creed and religion . . . on the other hand, the concept of world Muslim which entails internationalism is far removed from the concept of nation—in fact that should be called the international brotherhood of Islam.’²⁹ Eventually, in one of the occasional meetings of the *Samity* held at the *Samity* office on 25 of Chaitra 1328 BS(1921),³⁰ one of the participants, Moulvi Karamchand, raised a very curious problem. Jogendra Chattopadhyay, the ex-editor of the journal, *Hitabadi*, was the principal speaker, who in his article, *Wareshi Sampatti* made a fervent appeal to the Muslims of Bengal to patch up their differences with the Hindus and pointed out that both of them belonged to the same stock.³¹ Jogendrababu’s article instantly invited sharp criticism from all quarters, but Moulvi Karamchand referred to a basic problem that in spite of best efforts on behalf of the Muslims to identify themselves with the Bengali cultural heritage ‘Bengali means the Hindu alone’.³² Moulvi Karamchand’s comment unmistakably expressed his anguish and frustration, and revealed the basic truth of Hindu psychological drawback to accept Muslims as their socio-cultural partner but it, at the same time, denoted the emerging consciousness of the educated middle class regarding their attachment to Bengali society and culture.

In a true sense this sort of attitude was symptomatic of a far reaching change in the outlook of the Muslims after a long spell of *Wahhabi* influence, which taught them to keep aloof and inculcate a doctrine of Islamisation. It not only involved an explicit repudiation of the view that Islam projected an image of a man called Muslim, who was not bound by any impulse like patriotism and nationalism, nor guided by any consideration of local culture, but established the

fact what Akram Khan had declared in the Presidential address to the 3rd Bengali-Muslim Literary Conference under the auspices of the *Samity*, that patriotism which actually meant service to one's own countrymen, was an integral part of Islam. In the field of politics too, the attitude of a certain section whom Broomfield described as 'middle class Muslim politicians' was quite distinct from their *Ashraf* predecessors. In his opinion "they even questioned the wisdom of the old orthodoxy of unremitting Muslim hostility to the National Congress. These new middle class Muslim politicians shared with the Western educated elites of other communities, nationalist aspirations quite foreign to the old bodies and, while still protesting their primary commitment to their community, they were willing to consider collaboration with Hindu nationalist in campaigns against the British."³³

Indian Muslim Bengali: Three Dimensions of an Identity

The most intelligent and thoughtful exposition in this regard was made by two stalwart intellectuals of Muslim Bengal—Kazi Abdul Wadud and, the other, Abul Hossain. As the prime initiator of the, 'emancipation of intellect movement', those two founder members of the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* had a very reasonable understanding which accepted Muslim apathy towards Indian nationalism as a consequence of a historical process and a basic flaw in the outlook from which the Hindus also suffered. Abdul Wadud made it clear that Wahhabism among the Indian Muslims brought a new consciousness which meant a return to the pristine Islam, considered to be the eternal and unalterable system. This was definitely against any kind of advanced thinking and presaged dogmatism, which apart from bringing rigidity in thought, introduced a kind of scepticism in acceptance of any new or novel form of ideology. In Abdul Wadud's estimation, inability of the Indian Muslims to get rid of this attitude was their basic weakness, which prevented them from getting identified with any Indian system.³⁴ In a similar vein he criticised the 19th century Bengal renaissance as a predominantly religious reform movement which,

in the same way, revived veneration for the ancient and the past, and initiated attempts to establish superiority of Hinduism over all other religions. In his opinion this particular aspect of Hindu revival earned displeasure with the Muslims who were under the Wahhabi influence and obviously put a block in the way of mutual understanding and closeness.³⁵

In reality the 19th century renaissance in Abdul Wadud's opinion could be given a specific term as 'Hindu awakening'. The Mussalmans did not, it is true, merge themselves in this Hindu nationhood but they too, could not withstand its powers of assimilation in so far that, their manners and customs, arts and sculpture, and even their spiritual outlook were influenced by this Hindu nationhood, which is another name for Indian nationhood. This Hindu nationhood, better known as 'Indian nationhood, suffered eclipse for a long time but had of late come to its own and should now receive fostering care of all Indians irrespective of community or class. The composite character of the Indian nationhood need not be disturbed but all the component parts must combine effectively to create the grand Indian harmony'.³⁶

Obviously, in Abdul Wadud's opinion, the 'Hindu awakening' had mixed reaction upon Muslims. In the activities of pioneers like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Syed Ameer Ali and Iqbal, over or covert reference to separation was quite discernible. Abdul Wadud found Syed Ahmed Khan to be an intellectual who oscillated between nationalism and communalism. His Mughal cultural lineage enabled him to get rid of any fundamentalism like Wahhabism, but there existed in him an innate passion for his faith and his brethren. Whatever might have been Sir Syed's stand, eventually his insistence on superiority of Islam and efforts to create separatism in education and politics brought forth a sense of exclusiveness among his followers who regarded him as the father of Muslim modernism in India. Syed Ameer Ali, on the other hand, in Abdul Wadud's estimate, was a person who unlike Sir Syed did not suffer from any kind of so-called liberalism which could jeopardize the tenor of Muslim unity. As a man of practical sense and organisation, Ameer

Ali was the founder of the most effective body of the Muslims called the CNMA and instrumental in founding of so many *Anjumans* which contributed largely to consolidation. However, in case of both the personalities, the message they conveyed seemed to have been that the 'Mussalmans are different from the Hindus'. Regarding Iqbal, Wadud's observation was more pungent. According to him, to understand Iqbal it was necessary to take into consideration the turmoil in which contemporary India had plunged. In fact, Iqbal assumed the leadership at a very crucial moment when the Hindu-Muslim conflict had reached almost a climax. To understand Iqbal, it was therefore necessary to understand the antagonism ranged against Islam. This antagonism, Abdul Wadud pointed out, was not provided by the Hindus as a community but by a particular way of viewing their civilization and culture—a curious blending of the school of thought that looked upon the Hindu awakening as the resuscitation of the greatest civilizing force on the world and the other which considered India to be essentially Hindu in genius and temperament.

This aggressive Hinduism had strong points of similarity with the Wahhabi reaction in Islam. Both were similar in their origin. The Wahhabi reaction was born of the wide frustration the Muslim World experienced in the 18th century. Aggressive Hinduism, too, had sprung from the long travail of helplessness and sufferings the Hindus had to pass through. What Abdul Wadud emphatically pointed out was that this aggressive Hinduism gripped the attention of Iqbal who declared that nationalism as preached and practised by the Hindus was but a veiled attempt on their part to establish Hindu supremacy all over India, to which the Mussalmans could not possibly agree without detriment to their great civilization and the ideal they represented. Moreover, his poetic genius had helped this inarticulate suspicion of the Indian Mussalmans of their uncharitable environs to flare up into undisguised belligerency and a complete mistrust in any kind of nationalistic activity.³⁷

Abdul Wadud however viewed the problem from a different angle. In his estimation, creative humanism is the fundamental

force which could help an individual to tide over any kind of barrier posed by religion, language and race.³⁸ But the most potential threat in this regard had been posed by functional religion, particularly observance of religious niceties which instead of creating deep religious feeling and toleration, helped foster dogmatism, orthodoxy and intolerance. The suggestion, therefore, to remain faithful to one's own religion as propounded by Gandhi in Abdul Wadud's opinion, would create more trouble than easing the problem of deteriorating condition of Hindu-Muslim relations.³⁹ No doubt, Abdul Wadud's contention in this respect was objective. He found that although the *Ashrafs* or a handful of Muslim aristocrats of Bengal nurtured feeling of extra-Indianness, yet the majority of the *Atrafs* or sub-alterns in spite of *Wahhabi* influence had represented a kind of cultural pattern which was highly secular and had its foundation in prevalent folk culture. This pattern, in Abdul Wadud's opinion, was a product of creative humanism, but since it was moulded by interaction of some environmental forces and innate human passion for love and truth, it was neither bound by any *shastra* nor regulated by *shariah*.

Basically, this sort of attitude which insists on freedom of thought and understanding of one's own cultural moorings can be termed as 'emancipation of intellect'. In Abdul Wadud's language if this impulse could be made the guiding force, the antagonistic nature of Hindu and Muslim awakening would cease to exist; even their emphasis on the respective religio-cultural superiority appeared to become meaningless while a new synthesis was to be born out of the two.⁴⁰ To be precise, Abdul Wadud in course of this discussion made it clear that until the Muslims could identify themselves with cultural values peculiar to Bengal, there was no hope of their rejuvenation. Similarly, the Hindus of this province should try their best to get rid of the pan-Indian Hindu sentiment and instead should lean heavily on Bengal's cultural heritage. Yet these efforts of both the sections should remain confined within the concept of India as a political and geographical whole. His categorical opinion was that whatever might have been the past of

the Indian Muslims at the present moment he was no more than an Indian—it meant India was a country while all the Indians constituted a single nation.⁴¹

With all sincerity Abul Hossain lent support to Abdul Wadud's thesis. Hossain was equally emphatic in his denunciation of the outlook of both the communities, which tended to revive the fondness for the past; the trend to look back. He pointed out that this kind of attitude not only brought hostility but also generated a feeling of separation, which hindered the way to the creation of a grand Indian harmony. In an article, *Atiter Moha* published in the *Sahityik*,⁴² Hossain made an interesting analysis of the respective outlook of the Hindus and the Muslims which contributed much to their divergence. In his opinion, for the Hindus their attempt to revive the past glories would unmistakably lead to the creation of a *Hindu-Raj* which was not only undesirable for other communities like the Muslims but also detrimental to their interests. The brand of patriotism which a Hindu evinced so often, in Hossain's opinion, was something very narrow and prospectively diminishing in sense, since a Hindu could never consider any Indian as patriot outside his clan and he was prone to believe that the onus of bringing freedom to India, his motherland, and driving out the British from the same, rested entirely upon him. In fact, this feeling obviously once more landed a Hindu into wrong premise of considering every Indian as Hindu and finding out India as primarily a Hindu land. Hossain therefore presented the Hindu mode of thinking in the following formula which was undoubtedly interesting, i.e.

India lover = Hindu lover

or, Indian-Muslim lover = Indian lover

∴ Indian=Hindu ⁴³

Obviously, he decried such a solution and sharply criticised those young *Satyagrahis* who asked the fellow Hindus to ignore every one remaining outside their pale. He made it explicit that from the standpoint of state or country, India could no longer be viewed as an entity consisting of several fragmented communities, rather it was a solidified political unit which owed its existence to the faith and

support of every Indian, irrespective of their colour, creed and religion.⁴⁴ He emphatically declared that whatever might have been the religious sanction, the Bengal Muslim community must think that they very much belonged to the land of Bengal⁴⁵ and their right to that land was no less legitimate than that of the Hindus.⁴⁶

Truly speaking, the ideas on nationalism as well as patriotism did not remain confined within a particular group of intellectuals, who took a very realistic and pragmatic attitude towards the problem of identification faced by the Bengali Muslims. Intellectuals of different shades like S. Wajed Ali or a firebrand like Rezaul Karim also made significant contribution to the view that as a religion Islam was not incompatible with patriotism, nor could a Muslim ignore the local influences which were vital to their needs of socio-cultural existence. Wajed Ali in this regard made a very interesting observation, which apart from reflecting his matured political understanding, brought to the fore the deep sense of belonging to local culture values.⁴⁷ As a matter of fact, Wajed Ali was more concerned with the Bengali identity of the Muslims of this province than with the concept of Indian nationalism, yet he entirely repudiated the theory of religious state which he thought was contrary to any idea of modern state and citizenship. Of course, Wajed Ali did not wholeheartedly oppose nationalism. He found it to be a very helpful ideology which led to the end of all sorts of differences and contributed to consolidation and unity. He defined it as a force which encouraged people to express their devotion, love and veneration for their motherland, taking shape within a given geographical situation and bringing about unprecedented unity and cohesion. Wajed Ali found that due to several reasons nationalism had now-a-days become the distinctive feature of every modern state or country that had come to exist.⁴⁸ Basically, in Wajed Ali's opinion religion, especially functional religion, should in no way be allowed to be related to state or state policy, nor it should be made the guiding principle of any government of any country. The simple reason was that whatever might have been its spiritual value, in a modern secular society and political system which thrived on

common will of the countrymen and owed its existence to mutual cooperation and assistance among them, this functional religion might ferment sectionalism and help to perpetuate divisions, hence it should be dispensed with.⁴⁹

On the whole, Wajed Ali was decidedly in favour of nationalism. He, in fact, put forward his suggestion to render India into a nation state, yet there remained a certain tinge in his proposition which pre-supposed his Bengali chauvinism. In an illuminating article, *Bangali Na Mussalman*, published in *Bharatbarsha* Wajed Ali referred to a peculiar problem often faced by the Muslims, particularly those of Bengal.⁵⁰ He pointed out that a Bengali Muslim when questioned about his identity usually made the reply that he was Muslim. If further asked, he might spell out the name of the district he belonged to, but never did he want to mention that he was a Bengali. This sort of attitude, Wajed Ali thought, was symptomatic of the 'inferiority complex' from which he suffered.⁵¹ Wajed Ali's suggestion in this case was that to tide over this difficulty, as well as to forge a bond of unity with the Hindus, the Muslims of Bengal should vociferously proclaim their Bengali identity.⁵²

Wajed Ali, on the other hand, accepted the fact that the Muslims, particularly those of Bengal, could not secede themselves from the Indian confederation. The aim of the community should remain so that while retaining its exclusive Bengali ethos, it should remain as a member of the Indian federal structure consisting of several units having equal power, rights and privileges. For example, states like Canada, Australia and Ireland which had separate nationality yet had built up the edifice of the British Commonwealth based on their common will, understanding and mutual cooperation, while England remained as the head having no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the members.⁵³

Rezaul Karim appeared at a juncture while the proposal for Pakistan was in the air, and both the communities of the Hindus and the Muslims were poised for separation. This flamboyant Bengali intellectual, who was a nationalist to the core and believed

sincerely in the possibility of communal harmony, preached amidst uncertainties the sermon of mutual understanding. However, unlike Wazed Ali, Rezaul Karim's interpretation of history in respect of the role of nationalism was rather all comprehensive and pointed towards unity; it was also different in perspective and conditional reality.⁵⁴ In his opinion the history of India was not only a story of wars and intrigues between the rival claimants to the throne, it was also the story of a nation in making. In his opinion the eventful days of the Delhi Sultanate and those of the Mughals witnessed a process of Indianisation of the Muslims who in various respects made common cause with their Hindu brethren. But only during the period of the British tutelage that the imperialist design had driven a wedge between the two communities.⁵⁵

Whatever might have been the justification of Rezaul's version of history of communal relations, the account undoubtedly offered a scope to think that Indian Muslims from time immemorial had inculcated nationalism and they were untiring in their efforts to identify themselves with everything Indian. It was his considered opinion that 'if our ancestors regarded India as their homeland, why should we not regard it as our own country'?⁵⁶ 'The theory of Pan-Islamism or the belief that the Muslims of the world are of one nation,' he emphasised, 'is only of a fiction, an imaginary ideal which was never realised in practice and will never be done so'. 'The concept of Pan-Islamism', he added, 'which implied realisation of the Islamic theocratic ideal of establishing Muslim hegemony over the world with Mecca as its centre can not be accepted as viable'. Referring to the history of Middle East, Rezaul Karim pointed out that when the people of Bokhara, Persia, Afghanistan and other neighbouring countries became converted to Islam they did not link themselves to the chariot wheel of Arab imperialism. Each of the country established a separate government. Though Muslim in religion, they were a separate nation from that of Arabia. The governments of those places were purely national and no Dr Iqbal did ever appear there to sing of '*China, Arab Hamara*'.⁵⁷ Just as in Europe, Karim maintained, one Christian nation fought against

another for defending their state and nationality, so also in Middle East there are instances of struggle among the Muslim states for the same reason. Extraterritorial patriotism, he found, did not hoodwink them to overlook the cause of the nation and the country.⁵⁸

Rezaul Karim further attacked those promoters of separatism who, on the plea of Muslim socio-cultural individuality and religious independence, refused to accept India as a country composed of one nation. He, of course, admitted differences of language and religion and even of race in India, but nowhere in the world history these differences had stood in the way of uniting the people of a country into a nation. If unity of race, religion and language were considered to be the only standard of a nation, then most of the civilised countries of the world would cease to be a nation.⁵⁹

‘In the case of India’, Karim opined, ‘which is a country of diverse races and creeds, a sort of homogeneous culture served as a bond of unity’. In this connection, giving a definition of culture, Rezaul Karim maintained that the term meant the training, development of strengthening of mental powers as well as systematic improvement or refinement of mind. It not only pertained to the human mind but also used to affect the society, while it had nothing to do with the tenets and principles of religion, nor it could be qualified by a communal or religious name. In actual proposition, it was a particular type of perfection which a man used to attain through a gradual and slow process of evolution, amalgamation and assimilation. He pointed out streams of culture like Greek, Aryan, Egyptian, Roman and Islamic, but none of them necessarily represented any particular religion. For example, the prevalent culture in Europe was not known as Christian culture though European countries were predominantly Christian by religion, it had actually been known as the European culture. Similarly Karim found, Islamic culture was not the work of the followers of the Prophet of Islam alone; in fact it was the synthesis of several streams of thought like Arabic, Jewish, Persian, Greek and Sabian, a sum total of their contribution.⁶⁰ In the same way, on Karim’s

opinion, Hindu culture was not the work of the followers of the Vedas and Upanishads alone; many other factors largely contributed to its growth, The Dravidians, the non-Aryans, aborigines, the Sakas, the Huns and the Greeks had significantly contributed to its proliferation even though the contributions of the Hindus to it were decidedly great in as much as the whole structure of the Hindu culture had been tinged with Aryan influence.

Actually, Karim further mentioned, the word Hindu appeared to be most comprehensive in the world. It embraced all who adopted India as their motherland.⁶¹ Therefore, in a broad sense, Hindu culture included all that had found a place in India. The sum total of all these cultures had been known by the name of Hindu culture. It was thus distinct from the religion of the Vedas and the Upanishadas. The Muslims in India during the initial period of their existence, Karim mentions, were predominantly a religious community which refused to reconcile with any other religion, but could hardly avoid the influence of the existing Hindu culture. Hence their Islamic culture which was clearly distinct from their religion, got mingled with the Hindu mainstream and gave shape to the composite Indian culture. In Rezaul Karim's estimation, if the problem of identification could be dealt in the perspective of cultural synthesis and harmony, it would certainly cease to exist, while the truth would remain that 'an Indian Muslim is in every inch an Indian.'⁶²

Muslim Cultural Exclusivism vs Muslim Patriotism

The formulae offered by Rezaul Karim or other thinkers like Wazed Ali, Abdul Wadud or Hossain and their respective opinions on patriotism, nationalism, communal harmony and nationhood, would have certainly created profound impact on the Muslim populace of Bengal had there not been a parallel yet stronger stream of thought which harped on a theory of cultural cringe, often described as an 'inferiority complex' of the community represented by a number of people like politicians, writers, journalists, teachers and Moulvis who helped to strengthen the belief through their multifarious

activities. These cohorts of separatism, apart from pointing towards social, economic and political maladies among the Muslims and referring to Hindu apathy towards everything Muslim, very systematically and skillfully generated a feeling among their co-religionists under which they thought that the very tenor of Islamic culture, particularly in Bengal, was placed on the verge of extinction under pressure of a huge Hindu cultural leviathan. In fact, right from the turn of the century, this kind of apprehension had kept the Muslim intelligentsia on tenterhooks. In an editorial comment on an article of Abdul Karim, Reyazuddin Ahmed expressed his concern that if things were allowed to drift in their own ways, if the language, literature and ideology of the Bengali Hindus were allowed to exert influence upon those of the Bengali Muslims, ultimately the community would suffer extinction; like the Buddhists it would certainly lose its identity amidst the Hindus.⁶³

Reyazuddin Ahmed did not make the remark very casually. The ominous shadow of a Hindu domination had already gripped the Muslim imagination. In the field of politics, economy and social existence, this fear psychosis had already pushed them in a corner from where they viewed every Hindu move with suspicion, while in the literary field, Hindu vituperation through their press and literature and surfacing of Bengali-Urdu controversy had given them scopes to believe that culturally the Muslim community of Bengal had been subjected to a ruthless attack of Hindu zealots. Under no circumstances, therefore, the Muslims were ready to forsake their separate identity which they attained after so many years of a soul searching and their attitude hardened with the passage of time. The premier cultural organisation of the Bengal Muslims, the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* was an embodiment of their exclusive cultural and literary aspirations. The aim and objective of the *Samity* which had been declared, not only pointed towards the creation of a separate zone of influence, but also proposed to extend the same in different spheres of cultural and literary activities. Justifying the creation of the *Samity*, the illustrious editor of *Mohammadi*, Maulana Akram Khan, declared

in 1325 BS, (1918), that the Muslim writers and literary personalities often used to find their identity lost while participating in the deliberations of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* and *Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan*. Actually, at every stage of their performance, in their inauguration, lectures and articles Hinduism and idolatry remained so much apparent and powerful that a participating Muslim unless and until he lost his identity could have no enjoyment. For this reason alone, creation of this Samity which was an entirely separate entity from the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* was extremely necessary.⁶⁴ Some fourteen years later on 27 December 1932, in a joint meeting of the *Sahitya Parishad* and the *Mussalman Sahitya Samity* a proposal for amalgamation of the the institutions was mooted, but the members of the *Mussalman Sahitya Samity* once more categorically turned down the same for the sake of preserving the separate cultural identity of the community.⁶⁵

The concept of culture, on the whole, embraced a lot of things like education, language, literature, religious behaviour, school and university curricula, even sartorial practices. There had already been a lot of flutter, as described in the earlier chapters, regarding language and the Muslim community in Bengal could not wholeheartedly discard the importance of Urdu or Urduised Bengali as a cultural unifier. Now regarding other aspects, the community's trends of thinking gave a curious spectacle of a cultural movement.

The primary concern of the identity conscious Bengali Muslims was the system of education and the curricula. The history of Muslim education in Bengal during the 2nd half of the 19th century was one of chaos, confusion and anomaly. In fact, the Muslims of this province were thrown into utter confusion, while at the British initiative Western education was introduced. The concept of *Din-i Ilm* (religious education) as represented through languages like Arabic, Persian and Urdu and an overriding religious sentiment as well prevented them from wholeheartedly accepting the Western education. As a result of this peculiar attitude, they on the one hand, had been unable to dispense with the traditional system of

Maktab and *Madrassa* and, on the other, the gap with the Hindus in regard to English education and employment facilities considerably widened.⁶⁶ Curiously, even during the first two decades of the 20th century, when the value and utility of the Western *alias* English education had been thoroughly appreciated by the community, the importance of *Maktab* and *Madrassa* had not been allowed to diminish. J. A. Taylor, an education officer of the period, estimated that in 1916 more than 4000 *Maktab*s of different descriptions were operating in Bengal proper, as primary schools for Muslim education.⁶⁷

The reason for this phenomenon perhaps lay in the fact that the lurking fear of Hindu influence or domination remained ever present in the Muslim minds. As early as 1890, Naosher Ali Khan Yusufi, the pioneer among the Muslim *Ashraf* thinkers, remarked with dismay that discontinuance of study of Arabic and Persian or Urdu and inclination towards English and Bengali had thoroughly de-Islamised the Muslim boys, and this phenomenon was becoming increasingly apparent in the society.⁶⁸ Interestingly, even during the first few decades of the 20th century, when leadership had gone to the hands of the neo-*Ashrafs*, or the middle class, the same amount of anxiety and frustration was expressed while the study and culture of Arabic, Persian or Urdu dwindled. In fact, those Islamic languages were no longer treated, as it was in earlier periods, as a hallmark of aristocracy; they rather became the saviour of cultural integrity against the onslaught of the Hindus. Important writer-cum-intellectuals like Reyazuddin Ahmed, Aftabuddin Ahmed and Islamabadi expressed their opinion that to retain the fabric of Muslim national education the study of Urdu along with Arabic and Persian should be pursued through *Maktab* and *Madrassas*.⁶⁹

Integration of English and Vernacular into the Islamic Cultural Scene

Remarkably, those exponents of *Madrassa* education were fully aware of the fact that the study of Islamic languages alone would not bring any good to them since in a highly competitive field of

employment and opportunity, the knowledge of vernacular and English was essential. The Muslim Educational Conference of Bengal in one of its meetings held with the Director of Public Instruction at Writers' Buildings on 16 December, 1907, implored the government to introduce English in Madrasa apart from revising the *Maktab* and Madrasa courses to render them modern and relevant to contemporary needs.⁷⁰ The demand, in fact, during the later years became a regular feature of most of the Muslim educational conferences and *Anjuman* meetings.⁷¹ Even eminent educationists like Naoshar Ali Khan Yusufi⁷² and Abdul Karim⁷³, seriously felt that *Maktab* and Madrasa education would be of no avail if the study of Bengali and English could not be introduced. Eventually, a new device called the new scheme or reformed scheme Madrasa came into being in 1912 which, apart from providing religious knowledge in Islamic language, offered scope for studying English and Bengali. The system obviously came to be appreciated. An article, published in *Mohammadi*⁷⁴ in appreciation of the same, pointed out that the reformed scheme, by providing an opportunity for studying English and Bengali in Madrasahs, without attending the Hindu dominated schools and colleges, had not only saved the Muslim boys and girls from being influenced by un-Islamic Hindu thoughts and ideology but also contributed to the development of education among the Muslims. Referring to a statistics in Bengal government's 1928-29 Education report, which showed that 72.6 percent of the Muslim students had been pursuing their studies in Madrasahs, it emphasised on its popularity. Apart from this, the author of the article pointed out that the importance of the reformed scheme Madrasahs lay in the fact that it helped the Muslims retain their *Mussalmani*, and this should be the ultimate aim of every Muslim.⁷⁵

The system of course came under severe criticism from persons who found it quite unworthy and absolutely valueless. One of the critics, Abul Hossain, pointed out that although the reformed system provided for the study of English and Bengali instead of Urdu and Persian and brought satisfaction in the Muslim mind that

their culture and religion remained unaffected, the very nature of the system did not contribute to proliferation of knowledge or development of mind, nor did it help in the growth of taste and secular culture; on the whole, it could never be accepted as a symbol of liberal education.⁷⁶ Rezaul Karim was equally disturbed when he found the Muslims of the province had been evincing undue inclination towards Madrassa education. He lashed out at those educationists like Khan Bahadur Momin or politicians like Fazlul Haq at whose initiative and patronage, such an unworthy system which helped perpetuate orthodoxy and sacerdotalism came to exist⁷⁷, while Momatazuddin Ahmed, a *Sikha* intellectual, asked for total abolition of the system and its substitution by secular schools and colleges.⁷⁸ Most interestingly, a trenchant criticism came from a person who was a part of it. Mohammad Hamid Ali, Secretary, Central High Madrassa, Bogra, in a most revealing letter (dt. 23-3-31) to the editor of *The Mussalman* clearly pointed out worthlessness of the new Madrassa system and categorically opined that “those Madrassas are actually bringing the Muslims of Bengal back to the time when there was a *Fatowa* that those that read English are *Kafirs*”.⁷⁹ In spite of all these warnings, the Muslims of this province did not offer to do away with the system, nor did they want to abolish those denominational schools, and their growing fascination led to mushrooming of those institutions all over the province.⁸⁰ The Inspector of Schools, Chittagang, around 1930 observed with dismay that these “institutions (Madrassas) are cropping up everywhere choking all the secular and reformed institutions. It is time that something must be done to prevent this deplorable waste of energy of an already backward community”.⁸¹

But the community was by no means ready to forsake their cultural individuality or religious exclusiveness. A number of prominent persons like Mohammad Abu Bakr (Furfura), Assduzzaman (Khan Bahadur), Majid Buksh (MLC), Mohammad Akram Khan, Nazir Ahmed Choudhuri (Editor, *Mohammadi*), Fazlul Haque Shelbari (Editor, *Al-Islam*) made a strong protest against the introduction of Bengal (rural) Primary Education Act of

1930 which in their opinion, was aimed at the abolition of *Makhtabs*, thus driving a mortal blow to the separate and exclusive education system of the Muslims.⁸² A year later, on 22 June 1931, in a meeting held at the Bhola Muslim Institute, the local Muslim intelligentsia expressed their opinion against any attempted abolition of the reformed Madrasahs since they combined religious with secular education. The meeting advocated a change in the curriculum of High Madrasah so as to bring it on a level with that of the High English School in respect of the course of studies in Mathematics only.⁸³ Later, around 1935, in a Calcutta University Senate meeting two Muslim members of the Senate, A. K. Fazlul Haq and Shaheed Suhrawardy, registered their strongest protest against that portion of the University report which objected to the government proposal of describing general primary schools attended by majority of the Muslim pupils as *Makhtabs*. On the contrary, Calcutta University proposed that primary schools attended, respectively, by the non-Muslims and the Muslims should neither be called *Pathshalas* nor *Makhtabs*, rather simply primary schools. Decrying the move, those two Muslim members contended that any such attempt would definitely de-Islamise the Muslim students and would deal a hard blow to the religious nature of their education which was a necessity.⁸⁴

Curriculum Revision and Islam

While attempts had been made to keep the system or pattern of education as far as possible free from Hindu influence and to preserve its Islamic traits, much concern at the same time was shown regarding curricula and text books which, apart from containing opprobrious reference to Muslim tradition, culture and national heroes, had in them ideology opposed to Islam. Right from the beginning of the reform movement by the educated *Ashrafs*, protests were registered against the unwanted portions of text books. Nawab Abdul Lateef, in 1873 and 1877, twice lodged his protests as a spokesman of the community that certain portions of Calcutta University FA Standard text book should be deleted since

they contained blasphemy and affront to the Holy Prophet Mohammad (SM).⁸⁵ Abdul Lateef's view was expressed with more clarity and reason by Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury in a speech at the 13th session of the Mohammadan Educational Conference held in Calcutta in December, 1899. This enlightened zamindar of Dhanbari, Tangail, Mymensingh pointed out certain anomalies in the educational system of the Muslims. He observed that in most of the cases, schools and *pathshalas* frequented by the Muslims were situated in the purely Hindu villages or centres of Hindu population and teachers were Hindus.

Moreover, the books on history and literature which they were required to study contained subject matters mostly drawn from the Hindu scriptures, mythology and Hindu traditions and often they had to read the works of authors like Nabin Chandra and Bankim Chandra who were 'notorious' for their communal bias.⁸⁶ The zamindar observed with dismay that as a result of this 'pernicious training' a number of Muslims in different places like Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Rajshahi and Mymensingh had taken to neo-Hinduism or Bramhoism.⁸⁷ However, to make the young Muslims fully conscious of this degradation, Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury suggested that the text-books of primary schools and *Pathshalas* must be thoroughly changed. On 30 December, 1899, therefore, a resolution in this regard along with a condemnation of anti-Muslim feeling of Hindu writers had been unanimously adopted by the members attending the Mohammadan Educational Conference,⁸⁸ while the text of the same, translated in English entitled, *Vernacular Education in Bengal*, was sent to a number of Hindu editors and authors including Rabindranath Tagore.⁸⁹ Apart from leaders like Abdul Lateef and Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury and litterateurs like Naosher Ali Khan Yusufji⁹⁰ or Mir Mosarraf Hossain⁹¹, a number of intellectuals among the emerging middle class and magazines, or periodicals like *Islam Procharak*,⁹² *Nabanoor*⁹³, *Kohinoor*⁹⁴, *Al-Islam*⁹⁵ and *Basana*⁹⁶ sponsored and patronised by them, expressed dissatisfaction with the text book contents and came down heavily upon those Hindu writers like Akshay Kumar Moitra,

Manmohan Goswami, Hemchandra Bandopadhyaya, Rangalal Bandopadhyaya and so on who brought infamy upon characters like Sirajudaulla, Aurangjib, Jebunnesa and Shahajadi Raushan Ara. In the opinion of Mohammad Shahidulla this sort of teaching not only proved harmful for the Islamic character of the students but also helped generate a feeling of apathy and distaste towards their own religion, culture and society and in this way Hinduism surreptitiously could spread its hold over the unsuspecting Muslim young minds until the metamorphosis took place.⁹⁷ Begum Rokeya, presenting a very interesting picture of condition of Muslim Women's education, in her secretarial speech in the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School Managing Committee meeting, showed how after a brief period of study in a Hindu school the Muslim girl Ayesha became *Asha* and Kulsum came to be known as *Kusum*, the entire gamut of her discussion revolved round a sense of cultural cringe which so often the Muslim students faced.⁹⁸

Working under this impression the demand for a separate Muslim university became stronger. During the late 19th century there had already been considerable amount of hullabaloo for bringing into existence a separate institution which, apart from providing Islamic guidance to the students, teachers and lesser institutions, would remain as a pivot of Islamic learning in Bengal.⁹⁹ In fact, the college at Aligarh fuelled the imagination. All those speculations came true while through a communique published on 2 February 1912 the British government declared its intention of establishing a university at Dhaka.¹⁰⁰ Thus the Dhaka University, which ultimately came to appear as a means of encouraging the desire for higher education among still backward Mussalmans of the province of eastern Bengal, came to earn epithet of 'Mecca University' from the Hindus; yet the statistics between 1922 and 1948 showed that even after three decades of its establishment the Muslim students failed to make their presence felt.¹⁰¹

In fact, a considerable amount of dissatisfaction existed among a section of the Muslim intelligentsia who pointed out that in spite of being a predominantly Muslim university this institution had not

only failed to retain its Islamic character but also a large chunk of teaching and non-teaching posts had come to be occupied by the Hindus.¹⁰² In spite of those 'shortcomings by virtue of the fact that an increasing number of Muslim students were getting educated here that this university had enough residential accommodation for a large number of Muslim students and that this university started getting representation in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, this institution became the monitor of new Muslim consciousness, a producer of Muslim leaders in political, economic and literary fields and the shopper of Muslim thoughts and ideals.¹⁰³ Actually, this university along with the Islamia College in Calcutta established in 1924, remained as the embodiment of Muslim cultural individuality and provided an ideological base for isolation.

The Body Islamic

Apart from education, emphasis on retaining peculiarities in regard to religious and social behaviour even sartorial customs became a part of the cultural movement. The most alarming phenomenon in the opinion of the reformers was the rapid pace at which the Muslims of Bengal had been taking up Hindu social ideas and practices even sartorial fashion paying scant attention to their own.

Although the process of Islamisation had been set afoot from the late 19th century still some lapses could be seen and the movement did not take up considerable momentum. Naosher Ali Khan was horrified at the spectacle of the Bengali Muslim boys going without the *toopi* or skull cap and their readiness to give up their national dress.¹⁰⁴ Reyazuddin Ahmed pointed out that apart from mimicking the Hindus in their dress and attire, the Muslims had been worshipping *Kali* and *Durga*, giving Hindu names to their boys and girls and, what was most alarming, the Muslim women folk had given up *Purda*.¹⁰⁵ Moulvi Mokhtar Ahmed Siddiqui, the special Sub-Inspector of Madrassas in the Rajshahi Division presenting a catalogue of un-Islamic habits of the local Muslims of Sirajganj in eastern Bengal around 1915, showed how far and in what ways the Islamic identity of the common Muslims had come to be eroded

under Hindu influence. Following the Hindus, the Muslim populace in this particular region had given up the use of skull cap; they used *dhoti* and shirts like the Bengali (Hindu) Babus; like the Hindus they used utensils made of *kansa* and *pital* instead of porcelain cups, plates and other utensils commonly found in Muslim houses; Muslims became addicted to *hukka* made of coconut shells like the Hindus (Appendix 10); like Hindus they used to rub oil over the body before having bath and used to take their mid-day meal only after the same; they did not regularly perform *Namaz* or *Roza* which were religious musts for every Muslim; they used to pay scant attention to observance of Islamic religious festivals like *Eid* or *Muharram*, but rather highly enjoyed celebration of *Durga Puja*; a number of Muslim *Bhadraloks* of that area used to invite their daughters and son-in laws to their house during the *Durga Puja* and following Hindu ways presented them with new sets of garments; the Muslims of that area used to give Hindu names to their womenfolk; in certain areas like Tarash, Neemgadi and Chandnikona within Sirajganj, the Muslims used to worship Hindu goddesses like *Laxmi* and *Swaraswati*; Muslims of Sirajganj frequently used to buy dolls and puppets for their children and it was evidently against the Islamic religious sanction; finally, the author presented a list of rituals such as *Bratas* and *Parbans* which the Muslim womenfolk of villages performed, along with their Hindu counterparts. Remarkably, it was not an isolated phenomenon in Sirajganj alone, in fact, from different parts of eastern Bengal like Khulna and Chittagong, reports poured in indicating degradation under Hindu influence.¹⁰⁶

Those sorts of incidents were not isolated phenomena, nor were they peculiar to Sirajganj, Chittagong or Khulna, they became widespread and a sizable section among the Muslim populace in Bengal had come to be so much influenced by Hindu rituals and practices that reformers tried to provide guideline for proper Islamic ways. Thus, a reformer of repute like Syed Abu Mohammad Ismail Hossain Shiraji brought forth a book, *Adab Kayada Siksha*¹⁰⁷, to teach the community etiquettes befitting a Muslim. Another writer,

Moulvi Dewan Nasiruddin Ahmad, wrote *Islami Nam Prakaran*¹⁰⁸, which contained a long list of Islamic names imploring his co-religionists to use the same. While a liberal intellectual of repute, S. Wajed Ali, asked the Muslim boys to use *toopis* or caps to establish their *Mussalmani* as well as to underline their distinction from other communities.¹⁰⁹ *Islam Darshan*, the mouthpiece of the *Anjumane Wayezene Bangala*, highly criticised the use of Gandhi caps by the Muslim preachers during Khilafat days. In its opinion that indicated the degree of de-Islamisation to which the Muslims of Bengal had been subjected.¹¹⁰

The most objectionable of all practices was perhaps disregard shown to *Purda* by a considerable number of Muslim women. A number of social reformers, Moulvis, educationists, journalists and writers in different times projected a picture of this *Bad-Rasum* or degradation in different parts of Bengal and their unanimous opinion was that all those sorts of vices crept in due to Hindu influence resulting from intimate relation with them.¹¹¹ Remarkably, the early reformers were not blind to the need of female education although they emphasised on the fact that whatever effort to educate the Muslim womenfolk be attempted that should be done within the framework of Islamic sanction. Around 1858, during a session of the Bengal Social Science Association Abdul Hakim, the Moulvi of Calcutta Madrassa, in course of a reply to Peary Chand Mitra's query categorically stated that disregarding *Purda* the Muslims were not ready to send their women to schools because that would be an act quite opposed to Islam.¹¹² Identical opinion was expressed by the English School Inspectress Miss Brook who in her report on *Zenana* education among the Muslims in 1905-06 pointed out that *Purda* among the Muslims had become a big stumble in receiving liberal education.¹¹³

Still the reformers steadfastly clung to it. On 15 February 1903, the Muhammadan Union of Calcutta in a meeting under the presidentship of Justice Ameer Ali adopted a very important resolution for providing women's education keeping in tact the *Purdah*.¹¹⁴ While few months later in the first session of the

Bangiya Pradeshik Mussalman Shiksha Samitiy held at Rajshahi the resolution of the Mohammadan Union was ratified¹¹⁵ and after a decade and a half, the *Anjumane Ulama* in its Chittagong session had put forward an identical resolution.¹¹⁶ Even during the early years of the 20th century when the famous itinerant preacher Shaikh Jamiruddin had been making his lecturing tours on Islamic practices among the rural Muslim populace, in one of such meetings near Rajshahi town, the preacher emphasised on the need of women's education and retention of *Purdah*.¹¹⁷

In a significant way this *Purdah* consciousness percolated to the lowest level. Apart from the *Asharaf* and educated middle class of cities and mofussils and their organs like *Al-Islam*, *Din-Duniya*, *Shariah*, *Islam Darshan* and *Soltan*, a large section of the village Muslims also became extremely conscious of *Purdah* and the concurrent Islamic identity. Around the early part of 1900, western Pabna witnessed a spontaneous *Purdah* movement initiated by the rural Muslim populace. To protest against a case of assault on a Muslim working girl in a local Hindu house, almost all the Muslims of fifty-three villages mobilised under the leadership of a *jotedar*, Munshi Ashabuddin Mondal of Charmirga village. The agitated Muslims not only registered their strongest protests and invited two famous preachers of the day, Munshi Meherullah and Shaikh Jamiruddin, to give direction to their movement regarding retention of *Purdah* but also took resolution imposing a total ban on performances of any household chores in any Hindu house by Muslim women and asked the local *Panchayats* to punish with fines any individual or group of individuals who would go against the verdict.¹¹⁸

From the beginning of the 20th century, a small section of the Muslim intelligentsia in Bengal under the able leadership of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain started a movement aiming at striking a blow to the *Purdah* fascination of the Bengali Muslims.¹¹⁹ Rokeya was not alone in this crusade against *Purdah*. A handful of intellectuals including enlightened Maulanas like Maulana Abdus Salam, M. Rahman, Tarikul Alam, Abdul Bari, Sufia Khatun,

Afjalunnesa, Amina Khatun, S. Wajed Ali, Kazi Abdul Wadud, Fatema Khanam and magazines or journals like *Sikha*, *Saogat* and *Moslem Bharat* joined her in this movement, but their efforts did not register any substantial progress. Strong opposition from different quarters prevailed and the prevalent feeling was that any attempt to bring the Muslim women outside their *Purdah* would not only lead to denigration of *shariah* but also bring an end to Islamic identity.¹²⁰

Establishing *Mussalmani* Anew

Logically enough, the possibility of a Hindu cultural domination became more than a reality. Some intellectuals were already in the field who even had begun to think Hindu-Muslim rift during different phases of social, political and economic activities in terms of cultural confrontations between the two. Mohammad Ahabab Chowdhury *Bidya Binod* in his serial published in *Mohammadi* not only asked his co-religionists to appreciate the need of cultural realignment but also pointed out that in an ensuing battle of culture the Hindus had achieved success in casting their influence on the Muslims.¹²¹ In his opinion the Muslims must try their utmost to retain their cultural exclusiveness or *Majhab*. Ahabab Chowdhury further emphasised the fact of European history that in Europe, although the nations belonged to a single cultural whole, yet each and every ethnic unit like the British, the French, the Germans, and the Italians had been trying their utmost to retain their respective cultural individuality and, at the same time, they had been making cultural inroads into Asian nations, ultimately bringing about their political subjugation. Similarly, in India, Ahabab Chowdhury found the Hindus bent on achieving a cultural conquest of the Muslims with the ulterior aim of bringing them under political subjugation,¹²² and what became the overriding conclusions in the opinion of Akram Khan was that the moment the English would leave this country, the Hindus would crush the Muslims out of existence.¹²³

In fact, the fear of losing the cultural identity remained as strong as ever. What became the anxious observation of Reyazuddin

Ahmed in the beginning of this century that the Muslims of Bengal would meet the same fate as the Buddhists under Hindu influence had come to be a reality after few decades of cultural confrontation and provoked the new generation of the Muslim intellectuals to comment that 'today we the Muslims are about to lose our individuality under the pressure of a huge and overlapping Hindu culture.'¹²⁴

Under this circumstance the programme of establishing *Mussalmani* was started anew. The programme had two important aspects—one was theoretical and the other practical. Theoretically, the Muslim exclusiveness was defended and its origin was attributed to Hindu apathy and even, to some extent, their opposition. Practically, significant emphasis was put on interpreting the fundamental tenets on Islamic social behaviour and political conception. Mohammed Eakub Ali Chowdhury, one of the veteran intellectuals of liberal outlook, admitted openly that the Muslims had evinced communalism in political, social and cultural issues, but this particular attitude was a mark of their exclusiveness.¹²⁵ Eakub Ali Chowdhury was also supported in his contention by a young graduate, S. M. Akbaruddin, who defended this communalism which often took the shape of vigorous anti-Hindu campaign on the ground of establishing Muslim exclusiveness. His suggestion was that the Hindus must not misinterpret this hostile attitude as something very much detrimental to their interest, rather as the travail of birth of new consciousness.¹²⁶ Chowdhury pointed out that this exclusiveness further gave birth to Pan-Islamic feelings among the Muslims which could be attributed to reactions against Hindu apathy. Actually, Hindu refusal to accept the Muslims as a different and separate cultural unit within the composite structure of India had pushed the former towards Pan-Islamism. Out of frustration and refusal, due to their inability to find a place in the cultural mosaic of India, the Muslims looked expectantly towards the Middle East to find out their allies.¹²⁷

In fact, Pan-Islamism of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries reappeared in a more matured form. In early years, the

ideology remained merely as a semblance of infatuation for the newly emerging educated Muslims, who found in it an articulation of their Islamic spirit through various means of connections with Middle Eastern Muslim countries, but, from the second decade of the 20th century onward, it assumed a social and political significance to underline the exclusiveness of the Muslim culture as well as the difference with the Hindu one. In spite of fullest support given to the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements, protests were lodged regarding the slogan *Bandemataram* which the Khilafatist Bengali Muslims often uttered. The editor of *Islam Darshan* categorically stated that the slogan which implied worship of motherland was quite opposed to Islamic belief and taste. A slogan coined by a staunch anti-Muslim like Bankim Chandra seeking to worship motherland as a goddess to establish an exclusive Hindu kingdom was idolatrous and repugnant to Islamic taste. It implied the establishment of identity of the Muslims as Indians. The editor felt that a Muslim who always belonged to an international community of Islam could never indulge in worshipping the motherland nor could he consider himself an Indian. 'A Muslim', he opined, 'is primarily a Muslim and an Indian secondarily'.¹²⁸

Even a leader like Mohammad Akram Khan, in the course of his presidential speech at the Third Bengali Muslim Literary Conference, made it a point that nationality of the Muslims was not to be determined either by caste, creed or country. It solely depended on religion and *ipso facto* the Muslims all over the world constituted a single nation.¹²⁹ Actually, this ultra-partriotism which called for total devotion and sacrifice for the motherland was the handiwork of Bengali Hindu poets and thinkers like Michael, Hemchandra, Nabinchandra and Rabindranath Tagore, who could never transgress the boundaries of Bengal and forget provincialism to declare like Iqbal, *Ajme khan hai tu keya hai lai Hejaji hai meri nogmeya Hindi nai tu keya hai lao Hejaji hai meri*.¹³⁰ In the opinion of Mohammad Mozaffaruddin, a contributor to *Islam Darshan*, the kind of patriotism which called for worshipping of the motherland could never be treated as a hallmark of Muslim

nationalism and the Muslims should never be under a misapprehension that he was an Indian. It was for the sake of *tawheed* and *Majhab*, as enunciated by his religion, he always belonged to a greater international community.¹³¹ Hence, in the language of Mohammad Wajed Ali 'the Muslims by virtue of their residence in Bengal can be called Bengali, but never did they constitute a part of the Bengali nation'.¹³²

The implementation of the practical aspect of the programme was carried out with utmost precision, timing and measured socio-political sense. Significantly, the spread of English education among the Muslims, particularly in East Bengal after the establishment of Dhaka University in 1921 brought into being a new class of rural leadership, young and educated, but not based on traditional land holding. This class, apart from playing an important role in politics and representing the urge for modernisation, developed an uncompromising attitude about Muslim interests and were prepared to go to any length for this, regardless of what impact it had on their relations with the Hindus. Further, election of a large number of Muslims to the local and Union Boards during 1927-33, enactment of a number of agricultural and educational legislations beneficial for the Muslims and enlargement of the electorate, enfranchising four new Muslim voters to every three Hindus not only brought new forces in Muslim politics but also strengthened their spirit of self-assertion.¹³³

Under the circumstances, the attempt to vindicate the cultural exclusiveness began to gain a viable shape and the first volley was fired against the Calcutta University, considered to be the citadel of Hindu communalism. The initial attack was launched by Maulana Akram Khan, the editor of *Mohammadi*, also a renowned nationalist Muslim. It was triggered off when the University of Calcutta published its views on the education proposals regarding the reorganisation of primary and secondary education in Bengal. The government wanted to abolish *Maktab* and Madrasahs with assurance that arrangements would be made so that Muslim boys and girls reading in these general institutions might get an

opportunity of learning something about their own religion. At this stage, the Calcutta University commented that ‘the text books should be drawn up in a way to be acceptable to all communities and special precautions should be taken to prevent the introduction of communalism in any form’.

Akram Khan took exception to this remark of Calcutta University and taking excerpts from text books, particularly from Matriculation Bengali Selections, compiled and published by the Calcutta University, this leading journalist of Muslim Bengal indicted the university of communalism—how Hindu religious ideas and blatant disregard to Muslim culture had been demoralising the young Muslim students.¹³⁴ He brought out a special issue of *Mohammadi* (University issue, *Jaishthiya* 1343 BS, 1936) containing several articles and examples bringing into focus Calcutta University’s ‘cultural war’ against the Muslims of Bengal. He categorically opined that ‘the traditional cultural outlook of Muslim Bengal has become warped due to the unhealthy influence of the text books in schools. The Muslims want a remedy for this and this Muslim desire had become intolerable to the Calcutta University’.

The editor further pointed out that for nearly a century ‘this university has ruined the culture of the Muslims of Bengal, and today that university comes forth with the chatter of liberality and advice in favour of non-communalism—what can be stranger than this?’ He, therefore, cited a few excerpts from the autobiography of Debendranath Tagore, Rabindranath’s *Hidden Treasure* (*Gupta Dhan*) and Girish Chandra Ghosh’s *Siddhartha and Bimbisara* containing un-Islamic trend of thought. Even the poems not directly relating to Hindu gods and mythology were mostly of the type that made the Muslim mind revolt. Presenting an excerpt of Rabindranath Tagore’s poem entitled *The Judge*, Akram Khan pointed out that in the poem a Muslim student is being taught the glory of the victorious march of a Marhatta hero in his expedition to conquer the *Yavanas* (a term of contempt for the Muslims) and the Muslim hating Marhatta hero is made to say with great gusto:

..... Says Raghunath—
 Why untimely dost thou block my path ?
 Off am I the *Yavanas* to destory—
 To find food for *Yama* to feed'.¹³⁵

The cue was taken from Akram Khan by others. *The Star of India* in its editorial opined 'the *Temple of Learning* indeed seeks to make itself a temple for the dissemination of an idolatrous culture which is to be forced down the throats of the helpless Muslims of Bengal, because they have no option but to come to it for education of their children'.¹³⁶ 'This', the editorial remarked, 'is a matter to which we attach the greatest importance because herein lies the secret of denationalisation which has become such a sad characteristic of the average young Bengali Muslim today. The University of Calcutta has by manifest design spread the snare wherein to catch and destroy, the Islamic individuality of the Muslim students, who are forced by sheer necessity to enter into the portales. The university has triumphantly, almost arrogantly gone on its own way, trampling under foot the cherished sentiments of thousands of its Muslim alumni and compelling them to imbibe sentiments and knowledge which it is perfidy to teach to a Muslim and sinful and hateful for a Muslim to possess'.¹³⁷

The editorial therefore declared in unequivocal terms that 'the time has come when the Muslims in every part of Bengal must tell the university and the government in unmistakable terms that this attempt to Hinduise the Muslims evidently with the same object with which the *Mahasabha* has come into living must discontinue. The University of Calcutta must be told that it is no part of its business to take upon itself the function of the *Hindu Mahasabha*'.¹³⁸

Apart from the text books, another serious charge against cultural domination by the Calcutta University was related to the presence of *Sree* and *Padma* in its official emblem. Actually *Sree* in the Hindu religion meant goddess of learning or riches and lotus was her seat; therefore in Muslim eyes *Sree* and *Padma* (Lotus) stood as emblems of idolatry. Hence the crest provided further

raison de'tre for Muslim fury against the University. On 8 December 1935, Calcutta witnessed holding of a meeting of the Calcutta Khilafat Committee under the presidency of Shaheed Suhrawardy who extolled Akram Khan for his protests and he himself condemned the University for insidiously undermining Islamic culture and faith in the minds of the impressionable young Muslim students who were compelled to take up Bengali for the Matriculation examination. The meeting, apart from criticising *Sree and Padma*, also highly condemned the presence of Hindu mythology, gods and goddesses in the texts and urged upon the University to exclude all those sections repugnant to Muslim taste and sentiment.¹³⁹ A week later, on 15 December 1935, a mass meeting was held at Mohammad Ali Park in which A. K. Fazlul Haq presided and Akram Khan delivered his inaugural address (Appendix 11). Both Haq and Khan sharply criticised the University's attitude towards Muslims and their culture. The meeting unanimously adopted resolutions extolling Akram Khan condemning the Bengali selection and asking to delete the undesirable portions from the text book. It further urged the government to take immediate steps for adequate representation of the Muslims in the Calcutta University Senate.¹⁴⁰

Finally, during the celebration of Muslim National Week between 3 and 7 January 1936 at Mohammad Ali Park in Calcutta, the Dhaka Nawab Khawaja Habibullah Bahadur, apart from emphasising the need of Urdu for cultural survival of the Muslims, lent a full-throated support to Akram Khan's contention and categorically declared that 'the fundamental objective of the Indian Mussalmans is a self-governing India in the political polity of which Islam must have a place as a free community of culture'.¹⁴¹

The war of resistance against Hindu cultural domination thus began to acquire a shape and fanned out in different parts of Bengal. On 26 September 1936, the 3rd Conference of the All-Bengal Muslim Students Association (ABMSA) was held at Bogra. The Dhaka Nawab in his presidential speech warned the students

against the de-Moslemising effects of the university text books, while the following resolutions were taken:

- Secondary and Intermediate examinations should be separated from Calcutta University;
- Urdu to be made compulsory second language for all Muslim students;
- A Muslim should look like a Muslim and abandon the practice of wearing *dhota* like the Hindus;
- Muslims should use such words as Allah instead of *Isvar*, *pani* for *jal*, *khala* for *mashi*, and *ghust* for *swan*;
- Government to be moved to ask the Calcutta and Dhaka Universities to prepare text books containing adequate and proportionate matters of Muslim interest and culture; and
- Muslim debating clubs should be started in every town under the auspices of the district Muslim Students Association for the purpose of imparting Islamic ideas and culture among the Muslim students.¹⁴²

Matters came to a head when in January 1937 the students of the Islamia College unanimously decided to boycott the University foundation day celebration to be held on 30 January 1937. The meeting of the students resolved that they would not sing *Bandemataram* nor would they salute to the University flag bearing *Lotus* and *Sree*, the symbol of idolatry.¹⁴³ The stand of the Islamia College, Calcutta, was soon supported by the decision of another meeting held on 27 January 1937, at 1, Kaiser Street, Calcutta, organised by the Muslim students of the Presidency, Ripon, Islamia, Bangabasi and City colleges. The participants took resolution 'not to join the celebration until *Bandemataram* is replaced and *Sree*, *Padma* deleted'.¹⁴⁴

The politicians did not lag behind. On 16 October 1937, during the 25th session of the All-India Muslim League at Lucknow, while the resolution condemning *Bande-mataram* was taken, two representatives of Bengal, Syed Badruddoja and Muhammad Habibullah (editor, *Bulbul*) seconded the same¹⁴⁵ and the editorial of the *Star of India* pointed out that 'the very opening words

Bandemata are definitely objectionable to the Muslims who cannot religiously bow to any material object other than Allah, the Supreme Lord of the Universe. The primary meaning of *Bandana* from which the word *Bande* is derived, is worship corresponding to the Arabic word *Ibadat*. 'Can any Muslim', it questioned, 'howsoever strongly attached he may be to the motherland conceive of the motherland as his *mabood* or object of *Ibadat* or worship? He cannot do so without ceasing to be a Muslim in the truest sense of the term.'¹⁴⁶

Actually, the point which the Bengali Muslim intellectuals emphasised was, in the opinion of S. Wajed Ali, that under no circumstances the majority in a country anywhere could dictate the minority to forsake their own culture and adopt that of the former. He pointed out that even the League of Nations had been paying serious attention to preserving cultural individuality and taking active interest to bring into existence states and societies based on the principle. S. Wajed Ali, therefore, categorically stated that wherever the Muslims remained they must not forget their identity and should try their utmost to retain their cultural and religious traits.¹⁴⁷ In the language of the Qur'an '*Wamin haiso kharjata saodalle waj hake shataral Masjidil Haram wa haiso ma kulum kaoallu wajuhakum shatrah* (Wherever you stay you should turn your face towards Kaba and Kaba only).'¹⁴⁸

There of course, had been some voices of protests which considered 'the declaration of war' against Calcutta University as something denoting communalism and part of a nefarious political game in which the contemporary Bengal plunged. Abul Hossain of the Shikha group and initiator of the 'emancipation of intellect' movement in his paper, *Bangali Mussalmaner Bhabishat*¹⁴⁹, read before the second Annual Conference of the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* unleashed attacks against those thinkers and reformers who made evaluation of every effort of the Muslim society in terms of *Mussalmani*. He pointed out that the Muslims were being used as pawns in the hands of the British who lured them with employment opportunities and goaded them to oppose the Hindus. The Muslims

being brought under the influence of their British masters had evinced extreme coommunalism apart from emphasising their distinctiveness. In his opinion undue importance placed on cultural distinction as exemplified through Madrassa education not only led to the destruction of catholicity of mind but also created a psychological set back in receiving any liberal idea or secular thinking, and the *Mussalmani* which was considered to be an achievement had actually ruined them.¹⁵⁰

Rezaul Karim was more pungent and sharply criticised Muslim attitude towards Calcutta University, its curriculum and crest. He thoroughly denounced those critics for bringing slander upon the University pointing out that apart from destroying the autonomy of this remarkable institution, the trend to speak ill of the University evinced communalism. He also found behind it the ubiquitous mischief-making hand of the British government which, with the help of a small group of communalist Muslims, had been trying to kill the autonomy of the University.¹⁵¹ Apart from this Rezaul Karim pointed out that however strong might be the allegation of Hindu domination over the Calcutta University it did not appear tenable since it was not a part of conspiracy. He pointed out that Hindu domination over Calcutta University was the outcome of a natural process of development. For years the University received patronage from the Hindus who looked after the interest of this institution. It was, therefore, natural that they should establish their hegemony over it. Muslims had nothing to cry over the spilt milk.

Further, Rezaul Karim mentioned that the Muslim culture was not so flimsy a thing that it would lose its identity or be absorbed whenever it came into contact with Hinduism. Culture thrived on synthesis, on mutual give and take. It was, therefore, desirable that as far as practicable Hindu and Muslim cultures should come close together and be tied in a bond of unity leading to a significant end of cultural isolation.¹⁵²

The most pungent of Rezaul Karim's attack came when he mentioned in course of his discussion on *Padma* and *Sree* that the critics of the University were actually reactionaries who could no

longer tolerate its nationalist role.¹⁵³ Citing various examples from different periods of Muslim rule in India he put forward that the Muslim rulers even during those days were not bothered by the use of *Sree* and *Padma* which, contrary to belief, that those two were idolatrous in meaning actually conveyed a sense of beauty and holiness. The main thrust of his attack came on Akram Khan when he clearly pointed out that this conscience-keeper Maulana of Muslim Bengal frequently published such advertisements bearing pictures of *Sree* and *Padma*, even of Hindu gods and goddesses like *Ganesh* and *Durga*, while the magazine (1st year, 1st issue) of the Islamia College, the citadel of Islamic culture in Bengal, printed a picture of *Lotus* and *Swan* in its front cover page.¹⁵⁴ 'What should be the Maulana's reaction in this case?' he questioned. Actually, the outlook and attitude as expressed by intellectuals like Akram Khan was symptomatic of staunch religious bigotry which Rezaul Karim termed as Wahhabism and found it to be retrogressional movement. His opinion in this case was that this sort of outlook would only render the Muslim community a thoroughly bigoted and obscurantist class.¹⁵⁵

In a remarkable way the feeling of retaining cultural individuality was as strong among the Hindus as it was in the Muslims. Right from the second half of the 19th century the emergence of nationalistic feelings and cultural chauvinism turned out to be a discernible phenomenon among the Hindus. The high-priest of all this was Bankimchandra who was joined by other intellectuals like Hemchandra Banerjee, Rajkrishna Banerjee, Akshay Chandra Sarkar, and Taraprosad Chatterjee, while this was termed by Bipin Chandra Pal in his memoirs as literary renaissance. The reasons of this sudden outburst of feelings in favour of disclosing a nationalistic identity had been made explicitly clear by Pal who held the contemporary European thoughts responsible for this change.¹⁵⁶

But whatever might have been the reason of this exuberance, the trend of this socio-religious revival in the name of Hinduism was so strong that even the leaders and reformers could not but help

identify themselves with it. They began to preach ideas charged with strong and unmistakable under currents of religious idealism. Thus, even a leader like Surendranath Banerjee, in course of his early political propaganda, delivered a lecture on the *Rise of Sikh Power in the Punjab* in the Hindu School auditorium, under the auspices of the Students' Association, in which apart from making a reference to the spirit of freedom among the Sikhs he denounced the degree of oppression of the Mughals which they perpetrated towards them.¹⁵⁷

While Surendranath did much to prove Muslim atrocity through his demagoguery, it was Bankim who through his literary skill, imagery, metaphor, symbolism and allegory depicted such a picture which helped to make anti-Muslim feelings even more strong. The youth of the late 19th century Bengal could hardly escape the influence of this literary communalism. Bipinchandra Pal in his memoirs referred to the depth of influence of Bankim's writings, the strong patriotic passion, the stunning effect of nationalism which he felt after reading *Durgeshnandini*. Pal frankly admitted '*Durgeshnandini* quickened my earliest patriotic sentiments. Our sympathies were all entirely with Birendra Singh, the Hindu chief of Gar-Mandaran, and the court scene wherein the Muslim invader was stabbed through his heart by Bimala, one of the wives of the chief of Gar-Mandaran, made a profound impression upon my youthful imagination.'¹⁵⁸ But this sinister trend which developed as a new love of freedom in the contemporary Bengali poetry and drama strengthened by a somewhat veiled and fanciful allusions to the conflicts of the Hindus with their erstwhile Muslim political masters soon degenerated into an avowed racial hostility. The flag-bearers of this neo-Hinduism and their organs like *Bangabasi* (Sasadhar Tarka Chudamani), *Navajeevana* (Akshay Chandra Sarkar), and *Madhyastha* (Manmohan Bose), their ethics and theology on the cult of religio-nationalism culminating in the conception of *Bharatmata* (Mother India), a surfeit of religious ceremonies and congregations like *Harishava Mahotsava* and *Kirtans* —all those conjointly produced a kind of social reaction in

the Bengali Hindu Society which a Bramho like Pal described as 'hidebound conservatism'. 'Its strong currents', in Pal's opinion, 'positively set back the movement of progress not only in Bengal but all over India.'¹⁵⁹

For the Muslims of Bengal, the ultimate result of the shift was that they had eventually come to be regarded as aliens—a distinct and separate social entity having no identical cultural trends with the Bengali society which seemed to be monopolised by the Hindus. Henceforward, all these programmes or movements launched to display the national solidarity and integration carefully kept the Muslims away. The idea began to gain currency and support among the late 19th century Hindu reformers and social thinkers. Manomohan Bose, the editor of the prestigious journal *Madhyastha*, presented a strong defence of the attitude while in his editorial comment on a letter in which the writer, making suggestion on the idea of *Jatiya Sabha*, envisaged by the patriotic and nationalistic reformers had pointed out that if the term really meant a national council, then it should include, apart from the Hindus, the Christians and the Muslims of the country who were no less Indian than the former. But a staunch Hindu like Bose did not allow the term *Jatiya Sabha* to degenerate into a hotchpotch of so many classes and communities, nor did he want to interpret in terms of the said letter. He rather commented 'it is not entirely possible that group or class of people should acquire nationhood by virtue of simple inhabitation ... the Hindus are living here (in India) for thousands and thousands of years; moreover they are numerous and although they have recently been vanquished and some people have made intrusion, they still are numerous considered to be the true sons of the Indian soil. Indeed they have been shorn off their wealth, prestige and freedom, prosperities and employment still one cannot rob the epithet nation or national of them'.¹⁶⁰ To drive his point home the editor further cited the examples of the British Jews who, according to him, in spite of long co-habitation with the English people, had never ventured to participate in any English national exercise, nor were the English very much eager to take the Jews within the meaning and periphery of the word 'national'.¹⁶¹

The 19th century idea of Hindu chauvinism died hard. With remarkable eagerness the Hindu community of the thirties of the 20th century embraced the same while the idea which caught their imagination was that the Hindus of Bengal had made major contribution towards the all-round development of Bengal in comparison with the Muslims. Hence their right to the Bengali soil was much greater and of more significance than those of the Muslims.¹⁶² In other words, the trend to identify Hinduism with Indian nationhood gained much currency and the pattern of thought which gained much popularity earned a logical corollary under Rabindranath Tagore who, in his article, *Atma Parichaya*¹⁶³, gave a meaningful interpretation to the term Hinduism as related with the concept of Indianness. What the poet emphasised was that the Hindus and the Muslims—those two words did not belong to the same category, nor did they connote equivalent meaning. While Mussalman meant a particular religion or a particular religious group, Hindu did not; Hindu, in fact, appeared to be ‘a natural nationalistic consequence to Indian History’.¹⁶⁴ The poet, therefore, pointed out that all the diverse castes, categories, creeds and communities which constituted the country of India came under the definition of Hindu. What Tagore presented was precisely the inherent nature of Indian culture which was a sort of conglomeration of different trends of thoughts, outlook and culture as presented in his *Bharattirtha*.

The cue was taken from him by other lesser thinkers of later decades, but the liberalism of Tagore soon degenerated into cultural chauvinism. The spokesman of the communal Hindu *Sanibarar Chithi* unequivocally declared ‘A Muslim by religion is a Hindu by nation. Even a Christian comes under the concept of Hindu nation. Hindu means Indian.’¹⁶⁵ Ashutosh Bagchi, one of the contributors to *Sanibarar Chithi*, gave vent to his chauvinistic feelings by asserting that India belonged specifically to the Hindus.¹⁶⁶ The Hindus had not only accepted India as their motherland but also treated it as the cradle land of their ideals and aspirations, land of their spiritual upbringing.

In fact, he maintained, the Hindus stood as a community which fought for the sake of its motherland, shed their blood and tried to protect its motherland against the onslaught of foreign attackers; the Hindu was so close to the spirit of India that for this reason India was being called Hindusthan. On the contrary, the Muslims were basically foreign intruders who, after a long period of habitation, had been thoroughly Indianised and a major section among them were local converts. It was a fact to reckon with that those Indian Muslims had been quite patriotic and even fought battles against their own co-religionists who invaded India later, yet now-a-days, a section among them, being brought under the influence by Pan-Islamic ideas, had come to deny the fact of their cultural moorings and began to recognise India as an alien land. What Bagchi most resented was that unlike British colonists of America and Australia, who fully identified themselves with the colonies, the Muslims, even after 700 years of habitation in the land of India, had simply refused to recognise this land as their own country. 'What right they have, therefore, to determine the future of India?'¹⁶⁷

If this cultural chauvinism became more palpable than ever, so was the effort to safeguard the cultural integrity of the Hindus. On two specific issues like *Sree* and *Padma* and Bengal Secondary Education Bill, the Bengali Hindus evinced their utmost concern and to some extent their communal feeling. While *Sree* and *Padma* as the Calcutta University crest earned Muslim displeasure due to their supposed link with idolatry, the Hindus zealously guarded it as the symbol of their culture. A number of articles and editorials came out in magazines and journals like *Prabasi*, *Bharatbarsha*, *Basumati* and *Modern Review* which, apart from condemning Muslims, tried to justify the retention of *Sree* and *Padma* in the crest. The main thrust of their argument was that *Sree* and *Padma* in no way could mean any affront to Islam; on the other hand, there were several instances during mediaeval as well as modern periods which showed that apart from using *Sree* and *Padma* before their names, the Muslims did not hesitate to use *Lotus* or *Padma* to signify their artistic sense or cultural values.¹⁶⁸

Perhaps, the most vehement of protests came while the Bengal Secondary Education Bill, 1940, was introduced on 21 August 1940, at the behest of Fazlul Haq. The bill, based on the report of the Sadler Commission appointed almost two decades ago, sought to remove secondary education from the clutches of Calcutta University and to set up a secondary Board of Education to regulate the same. Actually, the Muslims, by and large, believed that the creation of the Secondary Education Board would give them a say in the control of the educational system of the province.¹⁶⁹ If this apprehension prompted them into action, so did it help to rally the Hindus against Muslim onslaught on their education as well as culture. Hindu reaction against the Bill was, on the whole, sharp and widespread. Long before the actual introduction of the Bill, Hindu fulmination over the same became manifest. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, during 1937, had commented that 'the object of the bill is to strike a fatal blow at the political and social power of the Hindu community and to place education as a monopoly in the hands of a Board which will be a tool in the armoury of Muslim government. We warn the present government that they should not thus try to ride rough shod over Hindu feelings and sentiments in this matter.'¹⁷⁰

A month within the publication of *Amrita bazar's* editorial the agitated Hindus held a protest meeting at Albert Hall, Calcutta, on 8 December 1937, under the presidentship of the editor of the *Modern Review*, Ramananda Chatterjee. The meeting attended by nearly thirty notaries of Hindu Bengal, with the exception of two Muslims, vehemently criticised the bill for its alleged communal undertone and its purported onslaught on Hindu culture and education. Apart from this, the meeting thoroughly condemned the constitution of the Board which handed out the majority of board membership to Muslims.¹⁷¹ The meeting was followed by another of its kind held at the Ashutosh Memorial Hall on 29 January 1938 presided over by Narendra Kumar Bose. The meeting pointed out that 'it is an anti-Hindu bill meant to keep down the Hindus by depriving them of their position as leaders in education, which they

have acquired by their intelligence, enterprise and self-sacrifice' and took the resolution that 'the provisions of the Bill are of an extremely reactionary, restrictive and unsatisfactory character.'¹⁷²

The protests against the Bill became increasingly numerous,¹⁷³ while the call to protect and ensure the Bengali Hindu culture evoked sympathy and support from a wide social spectrum. Eventually, the idea got fixed in Bengali Hindu mind that the society and culture of the community was under a virtual seizure and the community as a whole should try its utmost to segregate itself culturally from the Muslims. The Hindu Bengal while, on the one hand, spelt out the warning that it was under a survival crisis,¹⁷⁴ on the other, it called for the creation of a totally separate Hindu Bengali state on the basis of cultural integrity.¹⁷⁵ Basically, even in the Hindu mind the ominous shadow of a cultural cringe loomed large and smarting under this apprehension, a leader like Shyma Prosad Mukherjee, after a tour in certain districts of eastern Bengal, particularly Noakhali, came to the conclusion that text books written in the hybrid language of *Mussalmani Bangala* had been sapping the national vitality of the Hindu boys.¹⁷⁶ The leading litterateur like Tarasankar Bandhyopadhyaya in *Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan* unhesitatingly declared that to safeguard the education, culture and civilization of the Hindus of Bengal, Bengal must be partitioned and kept separate from the Muslims.¹⁷⁷ A plethora of solidarity exercises like Hindu Sammelan,¹⁷⁸ Hindu Andolan¹⁷⁹, and worship of *Bharatmata*¹⁸⁰, at the same time kept the flame of Hinduism ablaze.

Consolidation of the Idea of Pakistan

It was of course a most undesirable situation when the two major cultural groups in Bengal confronted each other belligerently and were poised for a breach. For the Muslims, the ideological base for separation and establishment of a dubious identity had already been achieved. While Jinnah in the Lahore Session of the Muslim League pronounced the formation of Pakistan—a separate homeland for the Muslims, it at once caught the imagination of the

Muslims including those of Bengal.¹⁸¹ The prospects of establishing one self-determining community definitely elated them, and it became evident that in Bengal Muslim literature, culture and their social existence must be given prominence and its due share. Even those intellectuals who strove for a cultural synthesis between Hindu Bengal and Muslim Bengal ultimately abandoned their efforts and preferred to speak in favour of a separate identity of the Bengali Muslims. Even a great synthesiser like Rabindranath Tagore admitted the existence of a very real difference between the Hindus and the Muslims which could not be simply ignored.¹⁸² While the Hindus flaunted their Hinduism so did the Muslims to mark their own separate identity, and right at that moment they were opposed to the idea of amalgamation with Hindus to form a cultural whole.¹⁸³ In fact, Rabindranath Tagore took into serious consideration the feeling of individuality which the Muslims manifested and came to regard the feeling as a worldwide phenomenon. Referring to the struggle of the Finns against the Russians, who were about to annexe the former, the poet wholeheartedly supported the Finnish struggle for retaining their identity and came to the conclusion that even in India efforts should be launched to establish unity, keeping in mind the basic individuality of different cultural and ethnic groups.¹⁸⁴

For the Shikha group of intellectuals, too, the question of identity posed a problem. As a matter of fact stalwarts of this group like Abul Hossain, Kazi Abdul Wadud, Kazi Motaher Hossain, and Abul Fazal, who had initiated efforts to bring about cultural synthesis, could not afford to ignore the individualistic outlook of the community. Abul Hossain in his article in *Nabya-Bangala*,¹⁸⁵ expressed his opinion that he could not subscribe to the view of Sir P. C. Roy who called for amalgamation of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* and the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity*. He, on the contrary, felt that the two institutions should be kept apart while literary pursuits of the two communities should be allowed to take their individual courses. Hossain, therefore, put forward a few important reasons for separation and individualism. Firstly, to

combat the claims of those social leaders who were out to make Urdu the vernacular of Bengal it was necessary that the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* should be kept isolated. Secondly, the Samity should be allowed to pursue its own individual course due to the reason that it would try to enthuse those aristocratic Muslims to cultivate Bengali who had for a long time shunned it. Thirdly, the Bengali Muslim society got some peculiar problems like Madrassa education, dissemination of teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith and some social problems which the Hindus were not equipped to cope with nor would they venture to do so. Hence the Samity should be retained to deal with the so-called problems. Fourthly, so long the Hindu literati had completely ignored the social problems of the Muslims, nor did they give due prominence to the same; it was therefore necessary to retain the entity of the Samity as an independent and separate institution.

Barring it all, the overriding necessity of keeping the individuality of the institution was that literature, which was the product of concentrated feeling, calling for a particular environment which only this institution could provide. Hence under no circumstances the separate entity of the Samity could be allowed to wither away—the *Bangiya Muslim Sahitya Samity* must stand as the unique example of Bengali Muslims literary and cultural individuality.

Hussain's idea found support in the opinion of Kazi Abul Wadud who, in his speech before the 5th annual conference of the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Sammelan* on 26 December 1932, pointed towards the difference between Hindu and Muslim streams of literature.¹⁸⁶ While another intellectual of repute, Kazi Motahar Hossain, on two occasions like the Dhaka Islamic Cultural Conference (Agrahayan 1351 BS),¹⁸⁷ and in his speech before the *Manikganj Sahitya Sammelan* in 1948¹⁸⁸ emphasised the need of creating Islamic literature based on Islamic culture, as distinct from those of the Hindus. This attitude of the Bengal Muslims was far more elaborately explained by Mujibar Rahman Khan, a leading Muslim journalist of the day in his book *Pakistan*

written in Bengali.¹⁸⁹ The author of the book in unequivocal terms justified the creation of Pakistan as the only succour for the suffering Muslims who were being oppressed by the majority Hindu community in every field like education, employment, and administration. Apart from this, he pointed towards the inevitability of Hindu domination over Muslim minority in case of the establishment of either unitary or federal form of government in India. Under this circumstance, it was desirable that the two communities should part and be allowed to form one's own zone of influence, particularly while regarding language, literature and *Tamuddin* (culture) both the Hindus and Mussalmans had been respectively flaunting Hinduism and Islam. The author found it very natural since no individual could foresake his nationality; in his every action he would be influenced by his national feeling and sentiment. Pakistan proposal gave recognition to this truth.¹⁹⁰

With remarkable rapidity idea of Pakistan spread. A day after the declaration on 23 March 1940, *The Star of India* in its editorial welcomed the idea by commenting that 'no constitutional plan will be workable unless it is based on territorial readjustment and the creation of independent Muslim states.'¹⁹¹ On taking advantage of the quick growth of the Muslim League branches in different parts of Bengal¹⁹², Muslim leaders like Suhrawardy, Tamizuddin Khan, Akram Khan, Begum Habibullah and Fazlul Haq (in his inaugural address before the UP Muslim Students' Conference held at Allahabad on 17 November 1940 Fazlul Haq declared in unequivocal terms: 'We are not going to un-Muslimise ourselves. We have our own culture. The Hindus are not to dominate over us') coaxed and cajoled the Muslim populace to accept the political feasibility of a separate homeland for the Muslims or Pakistan.¹⁹³ Thus between the later half of 1941 and 1942 a number of Pakistan meetings took place in different places of Bengal.

While the Pakistan idea was gaining a political shape, attempts had been made to give a cultural orientation to the same. Abul Mansur Ahmed in his article in *The Star of India* lamented by

saying that “in Bengal, a Muslim majority province, we have already got a Hindusthan press’ though a ‘Pakistan press’ is yet to come.”¹⁹⁴ A month within Ahmed’s statement Calcutta witnessed the establishment of East Pakistan Renaissance Society after a meeting held at Azad office on 30 August 1942,¹⁹⁵ (discussion in earlier chapter) followed by another of its kind named *Purba Pakistan Sahitya Samsad* at Dhaka around 1943.¹⁹⁶ The avowed object of the society was to give expression to the ideology of Pakistan in literature.¹⁹⁷

Making a clarification of this term Pakistan, Abul Mansur Ahmed, while presiding over the conference of the Renaissance society held on 1 July 1944 at Islamia College, Calcutta,¹⁹⁸ commented that ‘Whatever a politician may mean by the term Pakistan, its significance to a literature is cultural autonomy. A politician will tell you whether a nation can live without political freedom; but we litterateurs can say this much that without cultural autonomy a literature cannot even grow let alone its question of survival.’ He further maintained that it might be a debatable question whether the Hindus and the Muslims were politically two nations, but in the cultural field it admitted of no doubt that they were two nations. Political liberty for each and all nations, he thus opined, must be the slogans of the new world order. But the consummation of that liberty would consist in the untrammelled cultural development of each nation. And the inner meaning of this development lay in the cultural autonomy in Pakistan. Actually, the recognition of each other’s cultural rights was the foundation on which Pakistan stood. Finally, Ahmed referring to the slogan *Lakum Dinukum Wal-yadin* (For you is your religion and for me mine) remarked that it should remain as breath of Pakistan.¹⁹⁹

Interestingly, while the necessity of retaining *Mazhab* or cultural autonomy was such proclaimed, the importance of Urdu to safeguard or ensure the same was equally emphasised by a section of intellectuals. Muzharrray Towheed, the prime mover of the Urdu movement in Bengal, welcomed the idea of the Renaissance Society but opined that ‘Pakistan without Urdu at the bottom is likely to be

like the staging of Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark left out'.²⁰⁰ In fact, Towheed's was not the sole voice; there were yet others who had been giving serious thought to the feasibility of equating Urdu with the idea of Pakistan and its subsequent acceptability to the Muslims of Bengal.²⁰¹

The Seeds of Bangladesh

It was all the more interesting that the demand for separation did not necessarily mean identification of interest with the greater Pakistan movement. Already some amount of political maneuvering existed on the part of Bengal Muslims leaders to make the people understand the truth of non-Bengali domination over the Bengalis. The rebel politicians of Bengal, Fazlul Haq, long before the parting of ways with the Muslim League big brothers expressed his thorough disgust during Bengal Muslim Conference held at Sirajganj in 1331 BS, regarding unwanted interference of the Calcutta based non-Bengali Muslims in the affairs of this province. Apart from making the demand that most of the posts of members of Bengal Muslim League be filled in by the eligible candidates from mofussil or rural areas, Haq made a trenchant criticism of those non-Bengali Muslim leaders of Calcutta who, in his consideration, not only used to ride roughshod over the sentiments of the native Muslims but also used to take arbitrary decision on important issues.²⁰² Haq's accusation appeared in a more pungent form almost after a decade and a half while he, in his letter of 8 September 1941 sent to Nawabzada Liqat Ali Khan, Secretary, All-India Muslim League, tendering his resignation from the All-India Muslim League and the National Defence Council, with unprecedented courage and outspokenness declared that 'I will never allow the interest of 33,000,000 of the Muslims of Bengal to be under the domination of any outside authority however eminent it may be. At the present moment I have a feeling that Bengal does not count much in the counsels of political leaders outside our province although we constitute more than one-third of the total Muslim population of India.'²⁰³

Actually, the idea of Pakistan as envisaged by the Bengali Muslims was very different from that of the Muslims in other parts of India and certainly different from what Jinnah had in his mind. It was not a question 'how Muslims would get a share of power in the rest of India, but rather the ideal of an independent sovereign state consisting of the whole of Bengal and Assam, which was the real motivating force behind a movement which, for the lack of a better name called itself the Bengal Muslim League.'²⁰⁴

Subsequent events which took place between 1946 and 1947, frantic efforts made by a handful of Muslim politicians like Abul Hashim and Suhrawardy to uphold the demand for an independent Bengal proved beyond doubt that if the Muslims of Bengal were averse to any kind of Hindu domination so were they towards any kind of Muslim domination coming from without the province. Sila Sen quite aptly remarked that 'Many a Muslim leaders sincerely felt if Pakistan meant the partition of Bengal into two parts and domination of Bengal Muslims by the Muslims from the West then an independent status of Bengal outside Pakistan was a desirable proposition preferable to Pakistan.'²⁰⁵

As a matter of fact this spirit of independence, apart from gaining a political viability, received enthusiastic applause from the domain of language and literature. Although the book *Pakistan* written by Mujibar Rahman Khan was a vindication of Pakistan demand yet the author hinted at creation of two independent states—one in the North-East and the other in eastern India. A map included in the book clearly showed the zones in the West as Pakistan and the zones in the east (Bengal and Assam) as Purba Pakistan.²⁰⁶ Even a staunch pro-Pakistan leader like Maulana Akram Khan in his presidential address at the 12th Annual General Meeting of the Assam Muslim Association and the *Central Khuddamal Hejjaj Society*, Calcutta, held on 3 March 1946, at the Muslim Institute Hall, Calcutta, referred to the creation of Eastern Pakistan consisting of Bengal and Assam as a separate unit.²⁰⁷ The reason of this distinctivity was of course *Tamuddin* or culture, and emphasising on this aspect Abul Mansur Ahmed very clearly

pointed out that cultural individuality of the people of Purba Pakistan had not only rendered them different from the people of other provinces of India but also from religious brothers of Pakistan.²⁰⁸ If the Muslims of Bengal had thrown down the gauntlet before the League big brothers who wanted to establish political hegemony so did they challenge to thwart the attempt of cultural conquest through Urdu. It is a fact to reckon with that the establishment of the East Pakistan Renaissance Society was positively a step towards *Tamuddini Azadi* or cultural freedom, but it did not mean succumbing to the influence of Urdu. In a seminar organised by the society on 19 December 1943 in Calcutta one of the speakers, Mizanur Rahman, in no uncertain terms declared that there was no qualms in accepting Bengali as the mother tongue of the Muslims of this province, even though he emphasised on the point that the Bengali of the Muslims differed from that of the Hindus on the more frequent use of Arabic and Urdu words, i. e. *Mussalmani* words.²⁰⁹

In all certainty the majority of Muslim intellectuals became rather apprehensive of non-Bengali domination of politics and culture of Purba Pakistan through the medium of Urdu. When on 3 June 1947, the Mountbatten Plan regarding partition was declared and the creation of Pakistan almost became a certainty, the said apprehension became stronger. Abul Mansur Ahmed giving vent to this feeling four years ago maintained that if Urdu be allowed to become the state language of Purba Pakistan, it would certainly lead to the creation of a certain Urdu-knowing dominant minority who would be the factotum of non-Bengali Muslim interest in this region and would establish a linguistic aristocracy leading to the destruction of cultural independence of the Bengali Muslims. If, on the other hand, Bengali be made the state language a large section of educated Bengali Muslims would get considerable facility of participation in the process of 'industrialisation, economisation and educationisation' of Purba Pakistan and most important of all there would take place a cultural revival of the Bengali Muslims.²¹⁰ Ahmed in his contention was supported by many other intellectuals

like Mahabub Jamal Jahedi, Farrukh Ahmed, Dr Muhammad Shahidullah, Dr Motahar Hossain, Abul Kasem, Dr Muhammad Enamul Haque and Abdul Haque, who could hardly reconcile themselves with the fact that Purba Pakistan would be dominated by *Urduwallas*.²¹¹ While Mahabub Jamal Jahedi opined that Urdu appeared to be a foreign language for the Bengali Muslims,²¹² poet Farrukh Ahmed made the remark that if any language other than Bengali be accepted as a state language of Purba Pakistan that would certainly lead to the destruction of Islamic culture.²¹³ Dr Muhammad Enamul Haque, at the same time, expressed his fear that if Urdu be made the state language of Purba Pakistan this land would be subject to repression by the West Pakistani *Urduwallas*.²¹⁴ Kazi Motahar Hossain predicted that if Urdu be imposed forcefully upon the Bengalis of East Pakistan, the relation between East and West was sure to terminate.²¹⁵

With remarkable dexterity the Bengali Muslim intellectuals fought against the alien presence of Urdu and expressed their utmost concern to safeguard the *Tamuddini Azadi* or cultural freedom of the Bengali Muslims so long endangered by Hindu domination. Abdul Haque in an article, *Pakisthaner Rashtra Bhasa*, published in the *Azad* categorically stated that apart from political freedom, the Muslims of Purba Pakistan should get linguistic freedom, otherwise any attempt towards achieving independence would be an exercise in futility.²¹⁶

Immediately after partition, at the behest of a few students and teachers of the Dhaka University, one association called *Tamuddin Majlish* was established on 1 September 1947 to mobilise public opinion in favour of making Bengali the state language of Purba Pakistan.²¹⁷ Meanwhile, on 7 September 1947 in a meeting held at Dhaka under the auspices of *Purba Pakistan Karmi Sammelan* the following resolution that Bengali should be rendered the medium of instruction and language of court was taken.²¹⁸ On 15 September 1947, the *Majlish* brought forth a brochure entitled *Bengali or Urdu-the State language of Pakistan*, which contained articles written by Professor Kazi Motahar Hossein and *Ittehad* editor Abul

Mansur Ahmed. While apart from these two, it contained a resolution written by the Professor of the Chemistry Department, Abul Kashem, making a detailed clarification of the demand that Bengali be given proper importance in educational and cultural life of Bengal.

The resolution contained the following aspects. Firstly, Bengali must be made medium of instruction, court language and office language. Secondly, the central government of Pakistan should give recognition to both the languages Urdu and Bengali, and while Bengali should be the medium of instruction, Urdu should remain as inter-provincial language and be retained as a second language in higher classes of Secondary Schools. Thirdly, English be accepted as a third or international language.²¹⁹ The *Majlish's* efforts to popularise Bengali came under attack from periodicals and magazines like *The Morning News*, *Pashban*, *Assam Herald*, and *Yugabheri*, yet there had been few like *Insaf*, *Naobelal*, *Jindegi* and *Desher Dabi* which extended their support.²²⁰ Any way, the Bengali-ophile Muslims of erstwhile East Pakistan carried on their struggle undeterred. On 31 December 1948, Dr Shahidullah, in his presidential address before the *Purba Pakistan Sahitya Sammelan* held at Dhaka implored the citizens of the new-born state to cultivate Bengali language and literature with all earnestness since through a historical process of development they had come to be known as the Bengali community.²²¹ Few months within the *Sahitya Sammelan* on October 1949, after a meeting held at Fazlul Haq Hall at Dhaka the national Language Action Committee was formed at the initiative of *Tamuddin Majlish*²²², while in the same year, East Bengal Language Committee appointed at the behest of the government of East Pakistan put forward its recommendations that a kind of language termed as *Sahaj Bangla* based on the words, idioms and phrases in common use in East Bengal specially those in the *Punthi* and the popular literature and avoiding Sanskritisation of the language as far as possible be allowed to develop.²²³ (see Appendix)

The next few decades East Pakistan witnessed tumultuous events bringing into fore the bitter struggle of the Bengalis against

alien domination in the field of politics, economy and culture. Martyrs' blood of *Eukushe February* was an embodiment of a nation's yearning for cultural freedom.

Notes

1. Rafi Uddin Ahmed, op. cit.
2. Abdul Hamid Khan; *Translation of Haquikate Mussalmane Bangala*, Jessore, 1306 BS.
3. *Al Islam*, 3rd yr., 4th issue, *Sravana* 1324 BS, pp.187-94: Ismail Hossein Shiraji, *Bangali Mussalmaner Atma parichaya*.
4. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Memoris of My Life and Times*, Calcutta, 1932, p. 417.
5. Mohammad Reyazuddin Ahmed Mashhadi, *Samaj o Samskarak*, Calcutta, 1296 BS.
6. Fakir Abdullaha, *Prabandha Kaumudi*, 1st part, Calcutta, 1881.
7. Syed Raoshan Ali, *Turashka Bigraha*, Calcutta, 1319 BS.
8. Sheikh Reyazuddin Ahmed, *Arab Jatir Itihas'* (Bengali translation of Syed Ameer Ali's book: *A Short History of the Saraccins*), Rangpur, 1910; Khan Bahadur Kazi Imdadul Haq, *Prabandha mala* (2nd ed), Calcutta; Abulma Ali Mohammad Hamid Ali, *Kashem Badh Kavya*, Calcutta, 1311 BS; Dr. Wakil Ahmed, *Unish Shatake Bangali Mussalmaner Chinta-Chetanar Dhara*, Dhaka 1983, p. 167: Ibid; Anisuzzaman; *Muslim Bangalar Samayik Patra.*, Dhaka, 1969, P. 4
9. Abdul Kadir; *Mohammadi Akhabar*, "Muslim Bangala Samayik Patra", Dhaka 1366 BS, p.22
10. Enamul Haque, *Nawab Bahadur Abdul Lateef : His Writings and Related Documents*, op. cit; p.176: *Islam Procharak*, 4th yr., 5th & 6th issues, November-December 1901, pp.210-11: *Islam Procharak*, 4th yr., 7th-8th issues, January-February 1902, pp.263-85 (*Islam*

procharak contained a long list of names of notaries who formed the Hejaj Railway Committee); *Islam Procharak*, 7th yr., August 1905, pp. 124-28.

11. Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*, Princeton University Press, 1983.
12. Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Swaswata Banga*, Calcutta, 1358 BS, *Mussalmaner Parichaya* op. cit; pp. 169-76.
13. W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Mentor Booz), New York, 1959, pp. 282-83.
14. Aziz Ahmed, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*, London, 1969, pp. 192-93: *The Statesman and Friends of India*, 9 December 1886 (Quoted in Rajat Kanta Roy, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal 1875-1927*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, p.116.).
15. *Nabanoor*, 1st yr., 1st issue, *Baisakh* 1313 BS, p.108: Munshi Ismail Hossain Siraji, *Sahitya Sakti o Jati Sangathan*.
16. *Islam Procharak*, 6th yr., 3rd issue, July 1904, p.101: Aftabuddin Ahmed, *Bangiy Mussalmaner Sikhya*.
17. Ziya Gokalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilisation*, translated and edited with an introduction by Niyazi Bekes, p.24, quoted in *Itihasik*, April 1978: Asit Kumar Bhattacharya, *Itihase Muslim Samaj o Bharatiya Samasya*, p. 119.
18. *Islam Procharak*, 7th yr., 5th issue, September 1905, pp.185-208: 7th yr., 6th issue, October 1905, pp.241-52: 7th yr, 7th issue, November 1905, pp. 284-92: 7th yr, 9th issue, January 1906, pp. 361-68; Ebne Maez, *Banga Bibhag o Swadeshi Andolan*.
19. *Kohinoor*, 7th yr., 10th issue, *Magh* 1313 BS: Osman Ali, *Hindu-Mussalmaner Birodher Karan o Ta Nibarane Upaya*, p. 233.
20. *The Mussalman*, 24 April 1908, p. 5.
21. *The Mussalman*, 1st May, 1908, p. 6.
22. *The Mussalman*, 6 December, 1918, p. 4.
23. *The Muslim Chronicle*, 10 December, 1926, p. 374.
24. *The Englishman*, 2 June 1922: *Pan-Islamism and Hindu-Muslim Unity*.

25. *The Mussalman*, 9 June 1922, p. 4.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
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Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Towards a Resolution of Ambivalence

The change in leadership from *Ashrafs* to a professional middle class during the late 19th and early 20th centuries appears to be a most important social phenomenon in the realm of Bengal Muslims. Very few differences existed between *Ashraf* or aristocrat objectives and middle class aims, since both were guided by a few basic impulses like securing more job opportunities and education facilities. But, with regard to cultural outlook, there remained a point of difference between the two. While the *Ashrafs* outrightly refused to be identified with anything local, the new educated and professional middle class could not wholeheartedly discard their Bengali cultural lineage, although they had some kind of fascination regarding *Sharafati*, foreign descent and Islamic internationalism. While they sometimes leaned towards Urdu, pan-Islamism and extra-Indian loyalty, oftener than not they clung to Bengali as their succour—a bulwark against Hindu domination on one hand, and thwarting attempts of the *Urduwallas* who were making inroads into cultural exclusiveness of the Bengali Muslims, on the other. And this cultural ambivalence proved to be a fascinating story of their socio-cultural life.

However, by 1940 the middle class leadership had succeeded in getting over the ambivalence which clouded their senses. They came about to settle on the premise that the Muslims of Bengal should

neither be swayed by extra-Bengali feeling generated by Urdu nor be influenced by Hindu cultural and Sanskritised Bengali; instead an exclusive lingua-cultural pattern, based on a particular variety of Bengali interspersed with judicious use of Islamic words tinged with Islamic ideas, should be developed. Therefore, the distinctiveness which they wanted to achieve got a different meaning and a shape from that of the *Ashraf* leaders who emphasised on Islamic identity to the denial of Bengali cultural tradition. The new middle class, on the contrary, attempted to effect a synthesis between the two and in course of their overture had to countenance difficulties and earned diverse experiences.

Apart from the clash of ideas among the orthodox, the moderates and the radicals (see Chapter I) the middle class concern to mobilise themselves more effectively came to the surface through their attempts to form associations and organisations. Already during the 2nd half of the 19th century institutions flourished galore. Several literary, social, religious and cultural organisations came into being during that period and subsequently during the first three decades of the 20th century they had bloomed into maturity along with a few new ones. The institutional movement among the Bengal Muslims thus makes a fascinating study of their social behaviour, since in this respect too the clash among the three trends of thoughts featured. Initially, the two important organisations, *Bangiya Islam Prochar Samity* and *Bangiya Mussalman Shiksha Samity*, made considerable attempts in disseminating education and Islamic knowledge, respectively, among the Muslim masses of Bengal. Actually, as a corollary to the social regeneration movement of the 19th century those institutions had made appreciable advances in achieving their goals; the paid missionaries of the *Prochar Samity* held a number of religious congregations in various corners of rural Bengal, enlightening the people of Islamic norms and behaviour while the *Shiksha Samity*, through several of its meetings and conferences held in different parts of the district, emphasised the need of education.

Far from being closed organisations like *The Muhammadan Literary Society* of Abdul Latif or Ameer Ali's CNMA which were

primarily *Ashraf* monopolies having no links with Bengali language, those two were much broad-based, inducting elements from different strata of the society and had local cultural base, although the leadership remained in the hands of the educated professional middle class. But, soon the appearance of the *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Samity* marked a sharp departure both from *Ashraf* societies as well as from the early 20th century *Shiksha* or *Prochar Samity*. For the first time the *Sahitya Samity* took necessary steps to establish exclusive identity of the Bengali Muslims which no erstwhile samity, society or association could ever perceive or attempt, and in this regard the samity's effort remained moderately within Islamic thinking. The samity endeavoured to synthesise the Islamic conception with Bengali cultural heritage and language.

Apart from declaring unequivocally Bengali as the vernacular of the Bengali Muslims, the samity and its moderate reformers threw down the challenge before the *Urduphiles*. While taking up an elaborate programme of cultural re-discovery they tried to prove the fact that in Bengal the Muslims always remained a distinct cultural unit. The *Samity*, however, did not take any doctrinaire stand regarding modulation of language, rather maintained that judicious inclusion of Urdu, Arabic and Persian words without taking recourse to any artificial agent would help in the growth of a truly Islamic language for the Bengali Muslims. The *Samity* being primarily an association of the moderates did not subscribe to any radical viewpoint like the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* of Dhaka which made emancipation of intellect their motto, nor did it vouchsafe the orthodox opinion as reflected through organisations like the *Anjuman Ahle-Hadith*, *Anjuman Hanafia* or *Anjuman Wayezene Bangala*. Its main purpose, however, was to popularise Islam and more specifically to set a pattern of modern Muslim Bengali literature.

Interestingly, the associations which proved to be the orthodox stronghold gradually began to shed their irrational attitude and unlike the earlier associations they took steps to modernise the religion of Islam and felt the need for cultivating Bengali. Of course,

in cases where Hindu influences were apprehended those associations did not vacillate but took a firm stand, for example, the *Anjuman Hanifia-e-Bangala* supported the joint Hindu-Muslim venture during Khilafat, but strongly objected to such practice like wearing of Gandhi caps alias Hindu caps by Khilafat volunteers or shouting Hindu slogans like *Gandhi ji ki jai*. Such practices, in their opinion, would lead to the erosion of Islamic identity. The radical associations, on the other hand, proliferated. The *Dhaka Muslim Sahitya Samaj* of the twenties was soon joined by similar other organisations like Anti-Purdah league, *Parishilan Sangha*, *Omar Khaiyam Sahitya Sangha*, *All-Bengal Muslim Students Association*, *All-Bengal Muslim Women's Conference*, and the *Al-Helal Samity* which during the next few decades took up earnest efforts to do away with all the social and religious evils which so far had proved to be major stumbling blocks in the community's way to advancement. Anyway, all these institutions—orthodox, moderate or radical alike had a common goal to achieve and that was to establish an exclusive identity of the Bengali Muslims, their ways might differ but the common aim which they nurtured galvanised them to action.

Vernacular and Islamisation

The most controversial issue which kept the Muslim mind confused for decades was perhaps the question related to vernacular—its nature, spirit and the future shape it would take. The early *Ashraf* reformers, due to their insistence on foreign origin, could never accept Bengali as the language of the community. The associations which they had established reflected their attitude. Yet they could not entirely deny the importance and utility of Bengali since the majority of the Muslim masses in Bengal understood nothing except their vernacular.

The truth had been realised and the doyen among the early reformers, Nawab Abdul Latif, presented a formula that while Urdu should remain as the language of the aristocrats, Bengali be considered as the language of the common Muslim masses. But

The All-Bengal Urdu Association which appeared to be the sole spokesman of Urdu sympathisers in Bengal directed all its energy and resources towards popularising the myth of indispensability of Urdu as the Islamic language. Even an intellectual like S. Wajed Ali lent full-throated support to the Urdu Association's demand for giving proper importance to Urdu in the life of Bengal Muslims. Simultaneously, another attempt was made to present Urdu in a different garb. A majority among the Muslim intellectuals including Abdul Karim *Sahitya Bisharad* had already pointed out the importance of mediaeval *Punthi* literature, providing a requisite amount of material for building up genuine Islamic literature but regarding the *Punthi* language they reserved their opinion and felt that considering the perfection attained by the modern Bengali language, it would not be desirable to make mediaeval *Punthi* language as a courier of Muslim thought. Now this *Punthi* language, commonly known as *Mussalmani Bangala*, almost unintelligible to a common Bengali for a higher percentage of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words, caught the imagination of the Urduphiles who maintained that the *Mussalmani Bangala* was nothing less than a variation of Urdu, and when Urdu could not be popularised in its place *Mussalmani Bangala* might be given prominence. Since a majority of the rural masses was quite familiar with it and had access into the literature built on it, modern Muslim literature should develop basing itself on it. The idea came to be supported by a number of intellectuals, although no acceptable norm was set and the entire world of Bengal Muslim intelligentsia seemed to be at a loss to find a way out of this language dilemma.

Culture and Islamisation

The language issue was actually part of a greater problem which the Muslim mind of the 20th century countenanced. And this was tinged with culture. The educated middle class of the later period had succeeded in overcoming the sense of extra-Indianness generated by the erstwhile *Sharif* leaders and, apart from participating in joint political ventures like Khilafat with the

Hindus, they no longer stood aloof; rather as sons of the soil they entered into competition with the Hindus for all sorts of opportunities, emanating from the British rule.

Even Muslim stalwarts like Mujibar Rahman Khan came forward to give answers to Hindu allegation of lack of patriotism and sense of nationalism on the part of the Muslims, by pointing out that the Muslims were no less nationalistic than the Hindus and Pan-Islamism which was an entirely religious feeling in no way should clash with the sense of patriotism nurtured by the community. Such forceful assertions on the part of Muslim leaders undoubtedly brought out the truth that the community as a whole no longer counted itself as foreigners or outsiders and was eager to play the role in the society and politics of Bengal and culminating in establishing its Bengali identity.

But the way to realisation was not so easy due to the presence of certain factors which steadily and surreptitiously instilled confusion and ambivalence in the Muslim mind. The most important of all was the feeling of erosion of Islamic identity under the pressure of a dominant Hindu culture. It is to be reckoned with that right from the beginning of the reform movement, a sense of frustration and calamity was evinced by the community leaders who found certain systems like education and social behaviour being thoroughly contaminated by Hindu influence and the Muslims, on the whole, had come to lose their distinctive traits. Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, in one of his lectures delivered at the Social Science Institute of Calcutta during the end of the 19th century, lucidly described the educational condition of the Muslim boys gradually being de-Islamised under the pressure of Hindu influence. The zamindar, apart from expressing his concern, asked his co-religionists to evolve ways and means to fight back such unwanted influences and emphasised on the need of strengthening belief in Islam so that the Muslim boys could thwart those attempts or influences. However, such an exalted sense of Islamic identity was the sequel to the religious movements during the first half of the 17th century which had wider influence on the Muslim populace of

Bengal, and it still remained to be the most important phenomenon during the twenties.

Indeed at various stages of social behaviour, while the Hindu influence became more than perceptible the Muslim rural folk followed Hindu ways in matters of dress, attire, religious and social practices and the urban or semi-urban educated in their belief and thought, in their language and literature copied the Hindus. A Muslim government official, a sub-registrar presented a fascinating account of public life of the Muslims of Sirajganj district during the early twenties of this century which had been thoroughly affected by Hindu ways while Kaikobad and Meer Mussaraf Hossain, two eminent litterateurs had been so much imbued with Hindu style and form that contemporary periodicals took them to be Hindu authors. In all certainty, the educated leadership, taking pride in the new found sense of Islamic identity, could no longer accept such deviations and their protests were expressed in various forms against university text, *Bande Mataram*, university crest, sartorial practices and social behaviour. Actually, anything which threatened the cultural trait of the community, be it real or purported, roused their passion and provoked criticism.

Formation of a Muslim Middle Class

The longdrawn battle started by the disgruntled middle section among the Muslims who took the Muslim populace in their bandwagon therefore ended in a political victory with the achievement of partition. Nirmal Kumar Bose, the noted social anthropologist, in his article in *Shanibarar Chithi*,¹ referred to this significant development and pointed out that the process of embourgeoisment or *Madhyabitta karan* started anew with the introduction of the Government of India Act 1935 providing protection for the newly emerging middle classes in different parts of India gave a fillip to the growth of the already existent Muslim middle class in Bengal. And the process in fact was completed with partition, which gave the neo-middle class among the Bengali Muslims to have freer hand in matters concerning trade, commerce,

industry, politics and employment. If during the pre-partition days the Muslim middle class in Bengal could be termed as lesser elites having the aptitude to command and to exercise political control and the Hindu one as the existing ruling elite, the upward thrust of the former to dislodge the latter became an elemental social force of the day.

Many contemporary thinkers, communists and non-communists alike, viewed the communal problem, giving birth to partition in the perspective of a keen politico-economic clash of interests between the middle stratum of both the communities. Bhupendra Nath Dutta, the early communist thinker, referred to Hindu-Muslim problem as a sequel to middle class clash of interest.² A book³ written during the early forties, when Hindu-Muslim relation was under utmost strain, very elaborately discussed the issue and tried to drive the point home that Hindu-Muslim communal clash was in reality a clash of interest between two sections of the middle class of both the communities, while general working people of each community had little role to play. Even in the field of language and literature the communal feeling which came to manifest itself appeared to be the part of a bigger game played by the privilege-seeking middle class of each community.

The colonial masters in this case abetted their desires through machinations, thus intensifying the clash to perpetuate their own hold over the country. Bhabani Sen, the renowned communist leader, in a pamphlet⁴ written on behalf of the Communist Party of India a few months before partition, made it amply clear that the partition of Bengal, which was to be the sequel to a greater partition of India, had been taking place at the behest of Hindu as well as Muslim middle class and if a real communist movement, a movement of the toiling masses could be developed among the Hindu and the Muslim populace against Anglo-American imperialism, the inevitability of the partition could have been averted.

Actually, the middle class fever caught both the communities unaware. The Hindus, in spite of being the dominant class, could

hardly underestimate the threat posed by the upcoming Muslim middle class trying to dislodge them from their position. A note of genuine concern was expressed by the scion of a Mymensingh zamindar family, Birendrakishore Roy Chowdhury, MLA, who in his article entitled *The Hindu Middle Class in Bengal* published in *Modern Review*,⁵ pointed out that the advancement made by the Muslim middle class in Bengal in all walks of life had been endangering Hindu position. He maintained that the new Muslim middle class in the making in Bengal was profiting more and more by university education and were being increasingly employed in both higher and lower services under the government. In the Provincial Civil Services they had 45% of the vacancies reserved for them, while in the Judicial Service they had by a recent order 40% reserved. In some of the posts again 'it is alone the Muslims who are virtually being recruited and they have the lion's share of the comparatively lucrative membership of the legislature'. 'So the prospect', in his opinion, 'from the standpoint of the Hindus appears rather to be gloomy. While a new Muslim middle class is slowly developing, the old Hindu middle class is being washed out'. Taking the threat with all seriousness, an educationist and scholar like Srikumar Banerjee justified the expression of Hindu communalism as solidarity exercises essential for their survival. And what he thought necessary was that under such a depressing condition the Hindus needed to look after his own interest with all earnestness.⁶

With increasing strength the Muslim middle class in Bengal gradually occupied a position of importance and power. If the circulation of the elite theory as propounded by Pareto, Mosca, Pierrenne or Schumpeter⁷ be taken into consideration with regard to the Bengali-Muslim middle class, the emergence of the same as a viable social force, resulting from economic and cultural changes, may be explained. It is, however, to be admitted that the large-scale islamisation which took place during the late 19th century had a far reaching impact on Muslim masses creating a sense of Islamic identity. In this respect the mass religious leaders or village *Mollahs* had an important role to play. But once the movement crystallised

and got a definite shape, the opportunity-seeking *Ashraf* leaders got hold of it and through a well-organised network of *Anjumans* exploited it to further their own interests. Even when they were replaced by the emerging middle class, the pattern remained unaltered. The entire show was thus dominated by the middle class whose class interest, very deftly handled, was given the veneer of general Muslim interest and achieved an unprecedented success.

This middle class factor became as permanent and common as anything. Apart from politics, which appeared to be an exclusive arena of the middle class maneuverability, in social field as well their dominance was very much established. Even when a few isolated attempts were launched by the masses, particularly in rural areas, to vindicate their social exclusiveness, their success depended solely on the degree of moral and financial assistance offered by *Anjumans* and associations dominated by the wealthier and influential interest groups represented by the educated middle class. Moreover, their attempt to emphasise the importance of Urdu and raising of a cultural or language pattern divorced from the realities of the life of the Muslim masses appeared to be the part of a process motivated by the necessity for a dominant order to present itself as a natural order.

Significantly, if a semiological definition of myth, as presented by Berthes⁸ or Marx and Engels,⁹ the study on bourgeoisie ploy to represent its interest as the common interests of all members of society be taken into consideration, it, therefore, would naturally transpire that the Bengali Muslim bourgeoisie in every field of operation like politics, economy, society and culture had tried to impose their ideas, gave them forms of universality and represented them as the only rational, universally valid ones with the mythification not coming to an end until the ruling ideas of this particular social formation came to impregnate everyday reality and assumed a form very natural and universal.

In spite of this imposed domination, the singular achievement of the Bengali Muslim middle class seemed establishing an well-defined cultural pattern which so long had been remaining beyond

conception due to prevalent confusion. The beginning of a self-awakening movement was marked with 'embarass de choix', an attempt to explore the basic dichotomy between appearance and reality. The Muslim mind was faced with a crucial question of allegiance—whether to owe allegiance to a rich and well-nourished indigenous Bengali culture or to develop a half-baked predilection towards a hybrid culture of a greater Islam. This confusion went unabated and the Muslim mind had been making a continuous and strenuous effort to integrate perplexing varieties of religio-social ideas into a whole that would make sense and that would show continuity with the past while preparing for the future.

Most of the early 20th century magazines and the entire world of Muslim intellectuals had earnestly debated the issue but could not reach a satisfactory solution; their efforts rather intensified the conflict of ideas between the two groups—one advocating a negative social identity ignoring all familiar links with the Bengali society attained by virtue of their birth and common inheritance of a culture; the other clamoured for more intimate and closer ties with a purely Bengali cultural heritage. The latter made vociferous protests against the negativist approach of their cultural affiliation and their Pan-Islamic leitmotif. But it was not that by their positive stand they meant to identify themselves with the contemporary cultural trend of the Hindus or imbibe their literary ideals.

In fact, they had in their mind a plan of building up a separate literary structure and cultural tradition of their own to launch a quite separate movement to highlight the Muslim individual social entity. With the passage of time the Muslim leadership overcame the ambivalence and, by late forties, their choice went decidedly in favour of creating a quite independent socio-cultural structure that would remain impervious to any other outer influence, be it West Pakistani or of Hindu India, although there had been some sporadic efforts to subjugate this cultural independence through the imposition of Urdu. The truth ultimately emerged with the birth of Bangladesh.

Notes

1. *Shanibarar Chithi*, 22nd yr., 7th issue, *Baisakh* 1357 BS, pp. 79-87.
2. *The Modern Review*, Vol. xxxvi, no. 1, whole no. 211, July 1924: see Bhupendranath Dutta, *Reflections on the Hindu Mohammedan Problem*, pp. 21-25.
3. Sushil Kumar Basu, *Hindu Na Muslim? Sampradayikatar Bastab Byakhya*, January, 1943, Calcutta.
4. Bhabani Sen; *Banga-Vanga o Pakistan*, 1947, Calcutta.
5. *The Modern Review*, Vol. Lxiii, no. 4, April 1938, pp. 447-50.
6. *Bharatabarsha*, 1st part, 4th issue, 334rd yr., *Aswin* 1352 BS: Dr Srikumar Bandhopadhy, *Hindu Dharma o Sangathan*, pp.209-12.
7. T. B. Bottomore, *Elites and Society*, New York, 1977.
8. Rosalind Coward & John Ellis, *Language and Materialism-Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subjet*, Reutledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977. See for further reading: Barthes, R., *Mythologies*, Paladin, London, 1973; Chomosky, N, *Syntactic Structure*, Mouton, the Haque, 1957; Levi-Strauss, C., *Structural Anthropology*, Penguin edn., Harmondsworth, 1972.
9. Marx, Karl, with Engels, F., *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1969.

Appendices

Appendix 1

A satirical poem against Akram Khan and the Islam Mission.

অবতারি চাল

আবু শহীদুল্লা

গজয়েছে এক ধর্মাবতার সোনার বাঙালায়
তোরা—দেখবি যদি আয়।

(২)

(ইনি) নূতন ছাঁদে নূতন ধাঁজে
মত্ত হলেন ধর্ম কাজে
গুণ্ডা গুণ্ডা পাগুা ইহার—
লম্বা পাগড় পরে—
এদেশ হতে যাচ্ছে ওদেশ
মিলন ধ্বজা ধরে।
ওগো মিলন ধ্বজা ধরে ॥

এদের—লম্বা লেজের ঘট্টা দেখে—
কত মুনি ঝষিও মেতে যায়।
তোরা দেখবি যদি আয়।

(আহলে হাদিস, ৩য় ভাগ, ৯ম সংখ্যা, জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৩২৫, পৃ. ৪১৯-২০)

(Come along if you want to see a new prophet who has suddenly blossomed in this golden Bengal. In new pattern and style he is madly devoted to religious preaching. With high turbans on their heads, his agents, by dozens, are roving around the country with the so-called flag of unity in hand. The glamour of their long tails sweeps evn the sages off their feet. If you want to see the fun come along.)

Appendix 2

(*Anjumane Wayezine Bangala* and *Jamayete Olamaye Bangala* those two organisations of the orthodox issued one open notice in *Islam Darshan* magazine (basically mouthpiece of the Bengal *Hanafis*) making a disparaging attack on a lecturer in Persian of Burdwan Raj College named Mr. Nazrul Islam who through publication of a tract tried to prove that accepting interest has Islamic sanction i.e. *Jayej*. Mohammad Ruhul Amin, the head of *Khademul Islam* and Mohammad Abdul Hakim, Secretary *Anjumane Wayezine Bangala*, both orthodox stalwarts, challenged the liberal contention of Nurul Islam and implored the general Muslims not to listen to the heathen ideas of the lecturer.)

বঙ্গদেশে সুদ-জায়েজকারীর আবির্ভাব!!

“আঞ্জমনে ওয়ায়েজীনে বাঙ্গালা” এবং “জমইয়তে ওলামায়ে বাঙ্গালার”

প্রকাশ্য ঘোষণা-পত্র!

বর্ধমান রাজ-কলেজের পার্সিয়ান লেকচারার মিঃ নূরুল ইসলাম নামক জনৈক নব্য মৌলবীর প্রচারিত সুদ-জায়েজের একখানি ক্ষুদ্র বিজ্ঞাপন সমাজের হস্তগত হইয়াছে। ঐ বিজ্ঞাপনে তিনি দুইটি প্রশ্ন করিয়া-পরে নিজেই স্বয়ং সিদ্ধ “মুফতী” সাজিয়া তাহার উত্তর দিয়াছেন। প্রশ্ন দুইটা এইঃ-(১) “সুদ একেবারে হারাম কিনা?” এবং (২) “ভারত বর্ষের বর্তমান অবস্থায় সুদ জায়েজ বা দূরন্ত কিনা?” অনন্তর বর্ধমানের নবীন “মুফতী” ফতোয়া দিয়াছেন:- (১) “না; সুদ একেবারে হারাম নহে; বরং কোরান-হাদিস এবং বিশেষ করিয়া এমাম-আজমের মতে কোন কোন ক্ষেত্রে হারাম এবং কোন কোন ক্ষেত্রে হালাল” এবং “ভারতবর্ষের বর্তমান অবস্থায় মুসলমানের পক্ষে সুদ গ্রহণ করা জায়েজ এবং বিশেষ আবশ্যক (ওয়াজেব ফরজ?) হইয়া পড়িয়াছে।”

ভারতচন্দ্রের বিদ্যাসুন্দরের “বিপরীত বিহার” এবং হীরা মালিনীর “বেসাতীর” বিস্ময়কর হিসাবের দেশ-বর্ধমান হইতে প্রচারিত এই “বর্ধমানী ফতোয়ার” প্রতি আমরা ক্রক্ষেপও করিতাম না। যদি ফতোয়াদাতা লেকচারার সাহেব শরীয়তের দোহাই দিয়া বাঙালার আলেম সমাজকে বাহাস-মোনাজারা এবং বিচার-মীমাংসার জন্য আহবান পূর্বক চরম ধৃষ্টতা প্রকাশ না করিতেন। আমাদের দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস, এই ধৃষ্টতাই তাহার কাল হইবে; নচেৎ তিনি পাঁচ সিকা হাজারের চোঁথা কাগজে ছাপা বিজ্ঞাপন বিলি করিয়া ধর্ম-বিশ্বাস-বিহীন নব্য নাস্তিক সমাজে বেশ একটু নাম ছড়াইতে পারিতেন! কিন্তু এই ধৃষ্টতার ফলে বাঙ্গালার ধর্মপ্রাণ আলেম সমাজ চারিদিক হইতে গর্জন করিয়া উঠিবেন এবং তাঁহাদের প্রদীপ্ত রোষানলে পড়িয়া পূর্ববর্তী সুদ-জায়েজকারীদিগের ন্যায় বর্ধমানী “সুদ মুফতী” সাহেবকে ও ক্ষুদ্র পতঙ্গের ন্যায় দণ্ড ও ভস্মীভূত হইয়া যাইতে হইবে।

যাহা ইউক, আমরা বজ্রনির্ঘোষে ঘোষণা করিতেছি যে, সুদ গ্রহণ ও প্রদান করা মুসলমানের পক্ষে সকল দেশে এবং সকল অবস্থাতেই হারাম। এমাম সাহেব নির্দেশিত “দারুল-হরবের” যে বিশিষ্ট বিধির ভরসায় কোন কোন অজ্ঞ অদূরদর্শী ভুঁইফোড় “মুফতী” সময় সময় অঙ্গ-বিশেষ উচ্চ করিয়া থাকেন, বর্তমান যুগে তাহা সম্পূর্ণ অব্যবহার্য ও পরিত্যক্ত। সুতরাং যাহারা পবিত্র কোরান-হাদিস নির্দেশিত নিঃসন্দেহ হারাম সুদকে হালাল বলেন কিংবা ভারতবর্ষের ন্যায় শান্তিপূর্ণ দেশে সুদ গ্রহণ জায়েজ ও অত্যাবশ্যক অর্থাৎ (ওয়াজেব বা ফরজ) বলিয়া ধারণা ও ঘোষণা করেন, তাহারা নিঃসন্দেহে ধর্মদোষী কাফের হইয়া যাইবে।

আমরা উপরোক্ত বিষয় সম্বন্ধে বাহাসা-মোনাজারা ও বিচার-মীমাংসা করিবার জন্য বর্দ্ধমানী লেকচারার সাহেবকে প্রকাশ্যভাবে ও জলদগ্ধীর স্বরে আহবান করিতেছি। আমরা স্ব স্ব দাবী যে কোন মুহূর্ত্তে প্রমাণ করিবার জন্য প্রস্তুত আছি। অতএব বর্দ্ধমানী “মুফতী” সাহেবের যদি স্বীয় দাবী প্রমাণ করিবার উপযুক্ত বিদ্যা-বুদ্ধি, আত্মবিশ্বাস ও সংসাহস থাকে, তবে তিনিও প্রস্তুত হউন। কলিকাতা মাদ্রাসা ও হিন্দুস্থানের বিশিষ্ট আলেমদিগকে সালিস বা মধ্যস্থ করিয়া বাহাস-বিচারে প্রবৃত্ত হইতে হইবে। তাঁহার সম্মতি এবং পত্রোত্তর পাইলেই আমরা সমস্ত এন্তেজাম স্থির করিয়া বাহাসের শর্ত ও তারিখ ঘোষণা করিব।

আর যদি তিনি স্বীয় মত সমর্থনে সক্ষম ও সাহসী না হন—এবং বিনা তহকিকে শুধু নাম প্রচারের মোহ অথবা খেয়ালের ঝোঁকে এইরূপ দুষ্কার্য্য করিয়া থাকেন, তবে অবিলম্বে “তওবা” করিয়া স্বীয় ধর্ম ও ঈমান সংশোধন করুন। আমরা উদারতার সহিত তাহাকে সেই সুযোগ ও অবসর প্রদান করিতেছি।

আঞ্জমান-অফিস,
১৩নং চাঁদনীচক ফাট লেন,
জমিয়ত-কার্যালয়,
১০নং মেছুয়াবাজার স্টীট,
কলিকাতা।

খাদেমুল ইসলাম—
মোহাম্মদ রুহোল আমিন
মোহাম্মদ আবদুল হাকিম
সেক্রেটারী-আঞ্জমানে ওয়ায়েজীনে বাঙ্গালা।
আফছারুদ্দিন আহমদ
সেক্রেটারী-জমিয়তে ওলামায়ে বাঙ্গালা

Appendix 3

Mussalmaner Meye (the True Muslim girl), this poem had been published in *Ahale Hadith* (mouthpiece of the Bengal Mohammadis). The poem, in fact, can be considered as vindication of the Orthodox against the anti-Purdha liberal group. The poet Mohammad Mucha, herein depicts the desirable manners and miens of a true Muslim girl, strictly abiding Purdha.

মুসলমানের মেয়ে

মোহাম্মদ মুছা
ফাজিলপুর ২৪ পরগণা

সরমে জড়িত চরণ মোদের
কাঁপে চলিতে যেয়ে।
মোরা মুসলমানের মেয়ে।
অন্তঃপুরে থাকি আমরা—
নিরজন ভালবাসি
পর পুরুষের ছায়া মাড়াতে
বাহিরে কভু না আসি।
স্বামীই মোদের হৃদয় শশী
থাকি— সে মুখ পানে চেয়ে
মোরা—মুসলমানের মেয়ে।
অসভ্য ইতর শ্রেণীর মতো—
উলঙ্গ উদম হয়ে—
বাসিনা ভাল হাটে ঘাটে মাঠে—
বেড়াতে হাওয়া খেয়ে।
গুণে—অবৈধ প্রেম শোভে না কভু
(মোদের) নির্মল হৃদয়ে।
মোরা—মুসলমানের মেয়ে।

(আহলে হাদিস, ৪র্থ ভাগ ২য় সংখ্যা, কার্তিক ১৩২৫, পৃ. ৭৮-৭৯)

(We, the true Muslim girls, walk with embarrassed steps. We like to stay indoors and prefer solitude and never do we step out of our seclusion to meet any stranger male. We are entirely devoted to our husbands and always remain looking at their faces. Like the uncivilised and the people of low origin, we do not roam about naked and do not also like to loiter aimlessly. Never do we indulge in illegal amours with others. We are true Muslim girls.)

Appendix 4

Shikshitar Ukti (Confessions of an educated lady) is infact a satirical poem, published in *Banga Noor*, another Orthodox mouthpiece, against those who initiated the Women's liberation movement in the Bengali Muslim society. The poet, Mohammad Surat Ali from Dhaka herein describes the ways and demeanours of a so-called educated lady which almost amounts to 'licentiousness' in Orthodox eyes.

শিক্ষিতার উক্তি

মোহাম্মদ সুরত আলী,
ধামরাই, ঢাকা

ইংরাজী পড়িয়া	হয়েছি শিক্ষিতা
রমণী পুরুষে না জানি ভিন্ন	
পুরুষের কাজ	করিয়া আমরা
যোগাড় করিব পেটের অনু	
আমাদের মুখ	দেখিলে তাহারা
পাবে কি চাকুরী পুরুষ জাত	
রমণী কদর	বুঝে ভাল তারা
দেখিলে অমনি বাড়িয়ে হাত ।	
শেকহ্যান্ড করি	বসিব চিয়ারে
ফুলাইয়া বুক সম্মুখে তার	
চলিবে তখন	চায়ের পিয়াল
সরাব মিশান লিমনেড আর	
পুরুষের মুখ	চাহিয়া ধরায়
থাকিব না আর আমরা কভু	
অফিসের কাজ	করিব যাইয়া
সন্তুষ্ট থাকিবে সতত প্রভু ।	
পাঁচটা বাজিলে	অফিস হইতে
দুলিতে দুলিতে বাসায় গিয়ে	
ছাড়িয়া কাপড়	করি জলযোগ
ভ্রমণে যাইব বাহির হয়ে ।	
শিক্ষিত সমাজে	মিশিব যাইয়া
নবীন সুন্দর যুবক দলে,	
বুঝিবে তাহারা	মনের যে ভাব

কহিব যাহা কৌশলে ও ছলে ।
 ইংরাজী পড়িয়া হয়েছে শিক্ষিতা
 শিক্ষার যে গুণ বুঝেছি মোরা
 বাছিয়ে বাছিয়ে বরণ করিব
 মনের মতন সুন্দর ছোঁড়া ।
 বিয়ে না হতেই সঙ্গেতে তাহার
 হাসিব খেলিব কহিব কথা
 আহার-বিহার একত্র করিব
 একত্র ভ্রমিব যথা ও তথা ।
 এমন যে সুখ এমন আনন্দ
 এমন কৌতুক বিলাস ছাড়ি
 থাকিব কি ঘরে আবদ্ধ হইয়ে
 পিঞ্জরে যথা পাখীটি পড়ি?
 সুশিক্ষার স্রোত চলিছে যখন
 ঘোমটা তখন বিদায় দিয়া
 স্বপ্তর আলয়ে যেতে হয় যদি
 করিব না গিয়ে কোনই কাজ
 যা কিছু যখন হবে দরকার
 হুকুম করিব ত্যজিয়া লাজ ।
 রান্না বাড়া করা অসভ্যের কাজ
 ফেলিয়া সে সব পড়িব পুঁথি
 বাটনা বাটন কুটনা কোটন
 সবার কপালে মারিব লাথি ।
 ঘর ঝাঁটি দেওয়া বর্বরতার কাজ
 ফেলে দিয়ে তাহা চিয়ারে বসি
 বাজাইব বাজা হারমোনিয়াম
 ভুলিয়া কলঙ্ক সরম রাশি ।
 শিক্ষিতা সমাজে চলিছে এসব
 কলঙ্ক বলাই কিছুই নাই
 বাগানে ও মাঠে বেড়াব খেলাব
 যার সনে ইচ্ছা তার সনে যাই । ।

(বঙ্গনূর, ১ম বর্ষ, ১২শ সংখ্যা, কার্তিক ১৩২৭., পৃ. ৫১৩-১৪)

(On learning English we have become educated and find no difference between male and female. We shall earn our bread through jobs typical for

the males. If the employers look at our face the menfolk will not definitely get any employment opportunity. Because the employers are well-nigh conscious of the value of women. We will shake hands with the employer and sit before them boastfully on the chair, then we will be offered tea and lemonade mixed with liquor. We shall no longer expectantly look at the face of the menfolk, rather will attend the office to the satisfaction of the employer. At five, after office hours we shall be back home and after changing dresses we shall go mixing with young men to find out future husbands. Before entering into marriage with any young man we shall mix freely with him. In fact, we shall not remain caged while the force of so-called education is so strong. While in house, we shall no longer accept Purdha and do household chores, rather sitting on chair will play on harmonium. We shall mix with anybody whom we like and go anywhere we want This is the established trend among the educated Women.)

Appendix 5

‘Sikha’ was infact the best known among the liberal mouthpieces in the Muslim Bengal. Chief initiator of the ‘emancipation of intellect’ movement, the cover page of the magazine carried the following message ‘Where knowledge is truncated and intellect is paralysed, emancipation appears to be impossible.’



জ্ঞান যেখানে সীমাবদ্ধ বুদ্ধি যেখানে আড়ষ্ট, মুক্তি যেখানে অসম্ভব

Appendix 6

(A model marriage invitation letter).

Following is a model marriage invitation letter, offering example of a curious admixture of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian words, reads as follows - one Mohammad Mohasen of Kurigram, Rangpur has been inviting others to a feast on the occasion of his son's marriage to be held on 30th *Sravana*, 1319 (BS) 1912 AD. This is, infact, an example incorporated in the tract named *Bishuddhya Khatnama* (Proper ways of Writing Islamic letters) written by the contemporary preacher Shaik Jamiruddin.

আল্লাহো আকবর

কুড়িগ্রাম, রংপুর

২৫শে শ্রাবণ ১৩১৯

ব ফজল খোদা ওয়ান্দ রবিবল অলামিন।

তোফলে জোনার সৈয়দেল মুরহালিন।

খেদমতেমু!

আছসালাম অলায়কুম বাদ অরজ এই যে, আগামী ৩০শে শ্রাবণ শুক্রবার তারিখে আমার পুত্র মোহাম্মদ আজিজুদ্দান মিঞার শুভ বিবাহ গণেশপুর নিবাসী মুনশী সাখাতুল্লা সাহেবের কনিষ্ঠা কন্যার সহিত সুসম্পন্ন হইবে। মহোদয় অনুগ্রহপূর্বক যথা সময়ে সবাক্কে মদীয় ভবনে শুভাগমন পুরঃসর শুভকার্যো যোগদান ও প্রীতি ভোজন করিয়া বরানুগমনপূর্বক কৃতার্থ করিবেন। নিজে যাইতে না পারায় পত্র দ্বারা নিমন্ত্রণ করিলাম ক্রটি মার্জনা করিবেন।

নিবেদন ইতি

বিনীত নিবেদক

মোহাম্মদ মোহছেন

বিশুদ্ধ খতনামা অর্থাৎ

মোসলমানি পত্রাদি লিখিবার পাঠ

শেখ জমিরুদ্দীন

কলিকাতা, ১৩১৮ সাল

৫ম সংস্করণ

Appendix 7

Following is the list provided by S. Wajed Ali in *Shahittik, Sravana*, 1334 BS (1927) suggesting changes in Bengali alphabet.

১	আবৎ, ১০৩৮]	বাকলা বর্ণমালা	৩৩৩
২	হিঙ্গি, সংকত অক্ষর	হিঙ্গু ভাষা লিখন	৩৩৪
৩	নকে বিবেক ভাবেই উপযোগী	নাট	৩৩৫
৪	প্রতিবেদে। এই দিশাবে উদ্ভূ বর্ণমালাকে	নাট	৩৩৬
৫	The perfect alphabetical system	না	৩৩৭
৬	বা সঙ্গীত স্বর বর্ণমালা বলা অসম্ভব	নাট	৩৩৮
৭	হুৎনা। বাকলা বর্ণমালা	নাট	৩৩৯
৮	হুৎ বর্ণমালা	নাট	৩৪০
৯	উদ্ভূ বর্ণমালা	নাট	৩৪১
১০	সেই দিকে লক্ষ্য রেখেই তা করতে হবে।	নাট	৩৪২
১১	উদ্ভূ বর্ণমালা	নাট	৩৪৩
১২	নকশ, তাদের বাকলা	নাট	৩৪৪
১৩	বিস্ময়ে ছিলে, কোন কোন	নাট	৩৪৫
১৪	আমাদের বস্তু	নাট	৩৪৬
১৫	নহেই করতে পারা যাবে।	নাট	৩৪৭
১৬	সেই তালিকা দেখা গেল।	নাট	৩৪৮
১৭	বাকলা	উদ্ভূ	৩৪৯
১৮	নাট	নাট	৩৫০
১৯	নাট	নাট	৩৫১
২০	নাট	নাট	৩৫২
২১	নাট	নাট	৩৫৩
২২	নাট	নাট	৩৫৪
২৩	নাট	নাট	৩৫৫
২৪	নাট	নাট	৩৫৬
২৫	নাট	নাট	৩৫৭
২৬	নাট	নাট	৩৫৮
২৭	নাট	নাট	৩৫৯
২৮	নাট	নাট	৩৬০
২৯	নাট	নাট	৩৬১
৩০	নাট	নাট	৩৬২
৩১	নাট	নাট	৩৬৩
৩২	নাট	নাট	৩৬৪
৩৩	নাট	নাট	৩৬৫
৩৪	নাট	নাট	৩৬৬
৩৫	নাট	নাট	৩৬৭
৩৬	নাট	নাট	৩৬৮
৩৭	নাট	নাট	৩৬৯
৩৮	নাট	নাট	৩৭০
৩৯	নাট	নাট	৩৭১
৪০	নাট	নাট	৩৭২
৪১	নাট	নাট	৩৭৩
৪২	নাট	নাট	৩৭৪
৪৩	নাট	নাট	৩৭৫
৪৪	নাট	নাট	৩৭৬
৪৫	নাট	নাট	৩৭৭
৪৬	নাট	নাট	৩৭৮
৪৭	নাট	নাট	৩৭৯
৪৮	নাট	নাট	৩৮০
৪৯	নাট	নাট	৩৮১
৫০	নাট	নাট	৩৮২
৫১	নাট	নাট	৩৮৩
৫২	নাট	নাট	৩৮৪
৫৩	নাট	নাট	৩৮৫
৫৪	নাট	নাট	৩৮৬
৫৫	নাট	নাট	৩৮৭
৫৬	নাট	নাট	৩৮৮
৫৭	নাট	নাট	৩৮৯
৫৮	নাট	নাট	৩৯০
৫৯	নাট	নাট	৩৯১
৬০	নাট	নাট	৩৯২
৬১	নাট	নাট	৩৯৩
৬২	নাট	নাট	৩৯৪
৬৩	নাট	নাট	৩৯৫
৬৪	নাট	নাট	৩৯৬
৬৫	নাট	নাট	৩৯৭
৬৬	নাট	নাট	৩৯৮
৬৭	নাট	নাট	৩৯৯
৬৮	নাট	নাট	৪০০
৬৯	নাট	নাট	৪০১
৭০	নাট	নাট	৪০২
৭১	নাট	নাট	৪০৩
৭২	নাট	নাট	৪০৪
৭৩	নাট	নাট	৪০৫
৭৪	নাট	নাট	৪০৬
৭৫	নাট	নাট	৪০৭
৭৬	নাট	নাট	৪০৮
৭৭	নাট	নাট	৪০৯
৭৮	নাট	নাট	৪১০
৭৯	নাট	নাট	৪১১
৮০	নাট	নাট	৪১২
৮১	নাট	নাট	৪১৩
৮২	নাট	নাট	৪১৪
৮৩	নাট	নাট	৪১৫
৮৪	নাট	নাট	৪১৬
৮৫	নাট	নাট	৪১৭
৮৬	নাট	নাট	৪১৮
৮৭	নাট	নাট	৪১৯
৮৮	নাট	নাট	৪২০
৮৯	নাট	নাট	৪২১
৯০	নাট	নাট	৪২২
৯১	নাট	নাট	৪২৩
৯২	নাট	নাট	৪২৪
৯৩	নাট	নাট	৪২৫
৯৪	নাট	নাট	৪২৬
৯৫	নাট	নাট	৪২৭
৯৬	নাট	নাট	৪২৮
৯৭	নাট	নাট	৪২৯
৯৮	নাট	নাট	৪৩০
৯৯	নাট	নাট	৪৩১
১০০	নাট	নাট	৪৩২

উপরের তালিকা থেকে দেখা যাচ্ছে
নিরলিখিত উদ্ভূ বর্ণমালা প্রতি-বর্ণমালা বা
equivalent বাকলা বর্ণমালায় নাই,
যথা:—

শ-খ-গ-ঘ-ঙ-চ-ছ-জ-ঝ-ঞ-ট-ঠ-ড-ঢ-ণ-ত-থ-দ-ধ-ন-প-ফ-ব-ভ-ম-য-র-ল

Appendix 9

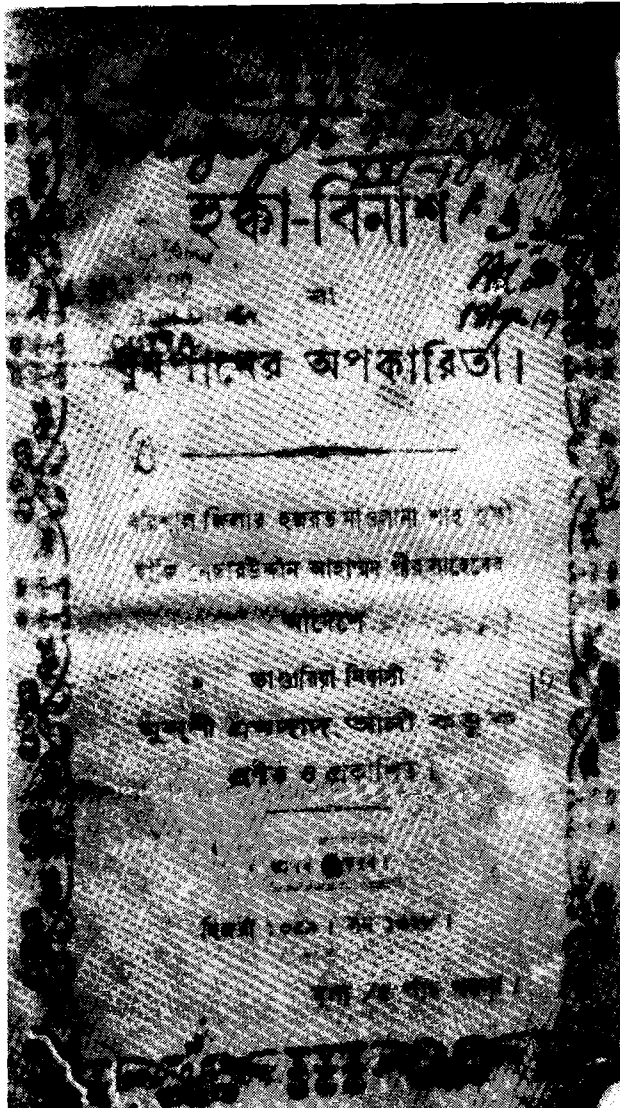
Resolutions adopted at the First Session of the Bengal Provincial Urdu Conference held on Sunday, 2nd July, 1933 at 12. Watganj Street, Kidderpore, Calcutta.

1. That this Conference urges upon the authorities of Schools and Colleges the desirability of making adequate provisions for the teaching of Urdu as an extra subject where the numerical strength of Muslim students happens to be not below 25% of the total number.
2. That this Conference urges upon the Corporation of Calcutta and upon the neighbouring Municipal and other bodies to provide for proper facilities for the learning of Urdu in Corporation School and also to post the names of streets, lanes etc. in Urdu characters along with Bengali and English.
3. That this Conference urges upon the Education Department, Bengal the advisability of making it compulsory for every teacher of Arabic, Persian and Urdu to pass the Urdu diploma examination or any other Degree Examination.
4. That in view of the fact that the Calcutta University has recognised Urdu as a second language, the authorities of Schools and Colleges be requested to make adequate arrangements for the teaching of the same in all institutions in general and in the Islamia College in particular.

The Mussalman, Tuesday, 4th July, 1933, p.9.

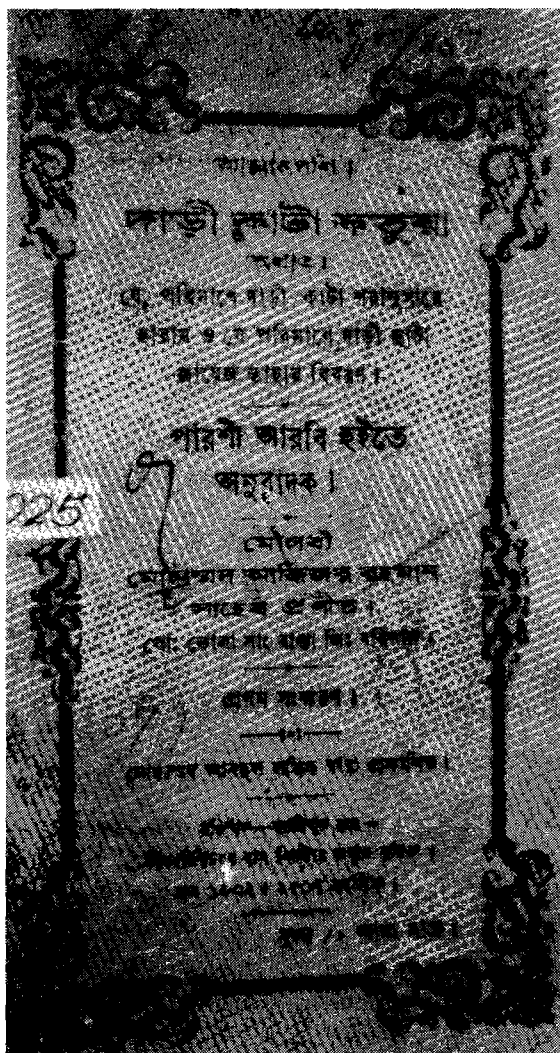
Appendix 10 A

Picture of the cover page of a booklet instructing the Muslims to give up the habit of *Hukka* smoking which is unIslamic and basically a Hindu habit.



Appendix 10 B

Picture of the cover page of a booklet making the Muslims conscious of trimming of beard as per Islamic sanction.



Appendix 11

Notice of the meeting published in Star of India asking the Muslims of Calcutta to mobilize against the decisions of the Calcutta university going against the Muslim interest.

MEETING TO PROTEST

ALBERT HALL MEETING

TO-MORROW

A Public Meeting of the Muslims of Calcutta will be held tomorrow, Tuesday, December 15th, at the Albert Hall, at 8 o'clock, to protest against the Calcutta University Council's recent decisions and their effects on the Muslims and to protest the recent anti-Muslim resolutions of the Council of the University.

The Meeting will be held at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, at 8 o'clock, tomorrow, Tuesday, December 15th.

Calcutta Muslim League, Calcutta, 14th Dec 1947.

Appendix 12

Resolutions passed at the special session of the All-Bengal Muslim Students' Association held at Rangpur on April 24th and 25th 1937 regarding Calcutta University symbol, Text-Books and Bandemataram.

1. The Conference requests the authorities of the Calcutta University to appoint a Committee of representative Muslims to examine specially the grievances of the Muslim students regarding the University and also to examine specially all University text books, specially Bengali, History and the tales of Rajput chivalry and to advise the university about the manner in which Muslim objections to those books be met.
2. This Conference requests the authorities to change the present University flag and seal with symbols of 'Lotus and Sree' and replace these with symbols acceptable to all communities.
3. This Conference is of opinion that the song 'Bandemataram' being the song and war cry of Hindu crusaders against Islam and idolatrous in spirit be dropped from the University Foundation day celebrations and be replaced by a song which does not hurt the religious feeling and susceptibilities of any community, such as *Janaganamanga* by Rabindranath or *Chal Chal* by Nazrul.
4. This Conference requests the University to select pieces infused with Islamic culture and tradition written by Muslim poets and authors for vernacular text books (at least 50% of the pieces to be selected from the writings of the Muslim authors and poets.)
5. The Conference urges upon the Education Minister and Muslim members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly not to grant any money to the Calcutta University from Public Exchequer unless the University redresses the above grievances.

Star of India, 30th April 1937, P-5 Friday

Appendix 13

Report of the East Bengal Language Committee 1949—Recommendations.

1. On Bengali Language:
 - i. That the present Bengali language of East Bengal as has been reformed by the Committee, be called 'Sahaj Bangala'.
2. That 'Sahaj Bangala' be allowed to develop through the natural process of evolution as opposed to revolution to be brought about by the agency of any mechanical device or devices unhealthy to the genesis of the language.
3. That the two styles of Modern Bengali, viz. 'Suddha Bhasa' and 'Chalit Bhasa' be accepted as the present standard literary style of 'Sahaj Bangala' and that 'Sahaj Bangala' be used for all purposes including official correspondences, newspaper matters, books for educational use, etc.. Further in regards to 'Sahaj Bangala' either of these two styles with the following provisions be followed:
 - i. That Sanskritization of the language be avoided as far as possible by the use of simple phraseology and easy construction in vogue in speeches of East-Bengal.
 - ii. That the expressions and sentiments of Muslim Writers should strictly conform to the Islamic ideology; and
 - iii. That the words, idioms and phrases in common use in East Bengal specially those in the *Punthi* and the popular literature be introduced in the language more freely.

East Pakistan Government Press, Dhaka 1958

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Bharati O Balak	Madhyasthya	Star of India
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Bengal Magazine	Modern Review	Saurabh
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