

Bengali Muslim Public Opinion  
as Reflected in the Bengali Press  
1901-1930

Mustafa Nurul Islam

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to  
the memory of  
my father

## PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to portray Bengali Muslim public opinion as reflected in the Bengali press from 1901 to 1930. The work falls into two parts. The first deals roughly, though not exclusively, with the external relations of the Bengali Muslim community with the Muslim World; its relations with the British and the Hindus in political matters; Hindu-Muslim problem in general; and Muslim reactions to a literature, educational system and an economy dominated by the Hindus. An underlying theme during this first part is the increasing consciousness of Bengali Muslims of their own identity and their attempts to preserve it. The same theme continues throughout the second part of the book. It deals with the attitude of the Bengali Muslims to the Bengali language and their reactions to some of the social and religious problems affecting Bengali Muslim society.

This book is based on research that was undertaken at the University of London for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I would like to take this opportunity of tendering my thanks to all those who helped me in the successful completion of the work. First and foremost I owe a special debt of gratitude to my supervisor Dr. J. V. Boulton of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Without his never failing help, invaluable guidance and encouragement my thesis would never have been completed. (Late) Prof. A. Razzaque, has, since the beginning of my work, shown great interest in it and helped me much with useful comments and criticism. I wish to express my gratitude to him. I am also indebted to Dr. A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed for reading the manuscript and making valuable observations.

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I regret that a few printing mistakes could not be avoided.

Akashpradeep  
June, 2003

**Mustafa Nurul Islam**

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## INTRODUCTION

The three decades from 1901 to 1930 witnessed a remarkable expansion in the Muslim Bengali press. This expansion was undoubtedly stimulated by a growing interest on the part of Bengali Muslim society in concurrent political events: the partition of Bengal, the *Swadesi* and terrorist movements, the founding of the Muslim League, the *Khilafat* and Non-cooperation movements. Other factors contributing to this expansion were those associated with a clash of attitudes in Bengali Muslim society precipitated by the spread of western education. Conservative sections of society wished to resist all change in an effort to preserve and enrich what they thought to be their Islamic heritage. More westernised sections of society sought to modify Islamic institutions so as to enable Muslims to compete more effectively with their Hindu neighbours for a more proportionate share in the political, educational, economic and cultural life of modern India; a desire which was finally to find expression in the concept of Pakistan, that was first feebly voiced round about 1930, the year of the Round Table Conference.

The source materials for this work may be broadly classified as primary and secondary. The former comprise the excerpts and information extracted from a number of journals and periodicals. A comprehensive list of these journals and periodicals appear in the appendix. The ones most frequently cited in this book are: *Islam-Pracharak*, *Mihir o Sudhakar*, *Kohinur*, *Pracharak*, *Nur-al-Iman*, *Naba Nur*, *Al-Eslam*, *Islam-darsan*, *Bangiya-Musalman-Sahitya-Patrika*, *Saogat*, *Moslem Bharat*, *Dhumketu*, *Choltan*, *Samyabadi*, *Sariyate Eslam*, *Gana bani*, *Masik Mohammadi*, *Sikha*, *Saptahik Saogat* and *Moyajjin*. Most of these journals and periodicals are preserved in Bangladesh in the library of the Bangla Academy, Dacca and also in the library of Rajshahi University and Varendra

Research Museum, Rajshahi. Most of the remainder are in private collections in Dacca, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Bogra and Sirajganj, though a few are also preserved by the British Museum in London.

The secondary source materials comprise the published works of other scholars and the author's personal correspondence with persons who were closely associated with the Bengali Muslim press between 1915 and 1930. These secondary sources have not, however, been utilised in the main text of this work. It has been found more advantageous to use them rather to elucidate the text, where necessary, in footnotes and also in the compilation of descriptive notes in the appendix.

Among the earlier works on the Bengali press the following deserve mention:

Rev. James Long	<i>A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works</i> (1855),
Ramgati Nyayratna	<i>Bangala Bhasa o sahitya bisyak prastab</i> (ed. Girindra Nath Banerji (1910),
Jogindranath Samaddar & Rakhraj Roy	<i>Sahitya panjika</i> (1915),
Kedarnath Majumder	<i>Bangla Samayik Sahitya</i> (1917),
Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad	<i>Pak-Panjatan</i> (1929),
Brajendranath Banerji.	<i>Sangbadpatre sekaler katha</i> , 2 vols. (1949),
	<i>Bangla Samayik patra</i> , 2 vols. (1936, 1952),
Benoy Ghosh	<i>Samayik patre banglar samaj chitra</i> , 5 vols. (1966/1969),
Abdul Kadir et al	<i>Muslim Bangla samayik patra</i> (1966),
Anisuzzaman	<i>Muslim Banglar samayik patra</i> (1969).

The majority of these are descriptive catalogues providing factual information on the names of the journals and periodicals, details about the editors and publishers, and in some instances an indication of the scope and purpose of the publications listed. Though valuable, such catalogues can scarcely be considered as regular histories of the Bengali press. The most noteworthy ventures

in this category are: Rev. Long's *Catalogue*, Nyayratna's *Bangala bhasa o Sahitya bisayak prastab*, Samadder and Roy's *Sahitya panjika*, Majumdar's *Bangla samayik sahitya* and Banerji's *Bangla samayik patra*. Of these the most remarkable is Banerji's covering a period of 80 years or so (1818-1900) and describing more than 1,000 publications, the highest number so far dealt with in a single volume. To his credit it may be added that he also includes a large number of Muslim journals.

Despite Banerji's book, however, the works referred to above largely ignore the Bengali Muslim press. No more than a score of Muslim journals and periodicals find mention there. Among the earlier works the two most important ones dealing exclusively with Bengali Muslim press were: Roushan Ali's article on the subject, which was incorporated in Jogindranath Samaddar and Rakhalraj Roy's joint publication, *Sahitya panjika*, and Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad's Introduction to *Pak Panjatan*. These were presumably the first two writings to deal with the Muslim press. But they also are somewhat disappointing in that neither goes beyond giving rather sketchy descriptive information, and both are in fact little more than the personal reminiscences of their authors, who were both intimately associated with a number of publications. Unfortunately, Reyajuddin Ahmad's article was compiled towards the end of his life, when his memory was excusably rather defective.

Not all the works on the Bengali press were catalogues, however. Brajendranath Banerji's *Sangbadpatre sekaler katha* and Benoy Ghosh's *Samayik patre banglar samaj chitra* aimed not at giving a historical account of the Bengali press, but at presenting a picture of Bengal life during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as reflected in the contemporary press. Bengali Muslim life finds no place in either work, however: both concentrate on Hindu concerns alone.

In recent years, interest in earlier Muslim journalism has been rekindled, as is evidenced by the appearance of two important books during the 1960s. The first of these, *Muslim bangla samayik patra* (1966), is a compilation of 12 separate essays by different authors.

These essays provide detailed information on some major journals, namely *Mahammadi Akhbar*, *Hitakari*, *Mihir*, *Mihir o Sudhakar*, *Hafez*, *Pracharak*, *Naba Nur*, *Al-Eslam*, *Moslem Bharat*, *Dhumketu* and *Kohinur*. The information provided includes comprehensive facts about the journals together with an account of their contents. Some of the essays afford a few excerpts from various articles, giving an idea of the nature of contemporary Bengali Muslim public opinion. There is also a brief historical account of Bengali, Muslim journals published between 1831 and 1947. Separately considered, each of the essays contained in the volume is valuable, but, taken as a whole, the book fails to present a consistent, complete picture.

The later publication to date on the Bengali Muslim press is Anisuzzaman's *Muslim banglar samayik patra* published in 1969. It covers a century, starting in 1831 and describing more than 150 Muslim journals. The catalogue is extensively descriptive. It gives detailed information concerning the date and period of almost every publication together with facts about editors, publishers, sponsors and patrons. It also cites the editorial aims of the journals. The most valuable section of Anisuzzaman's book is the presentation of selected indexes from the major journals. These give at least some idea of the nature of Muslim literary pursuits in the earlier period. The book also contains a number of selected excerpts from important writings reflecting contemporary Bengali Muslim thoughts,

It seems that all the studies made so far of the Bengali Hindu press belong to one of two categories:

- (i) descriptive catalogues of journals and periodicals ; and
- (ii) works like Brajendranath Banerji's *Sangbapatre sekalar katha* and Benoy Ghosh's *Samayik patre banglar samaj chitra*, which seek to portray Bengali Hindu social life as reflected in the contemporary press.

The aim of the present work has been to attempt to do for Bengali Muslim social life, what Banerji and Ghosh have already done for Hindu social life in Bengal. It also seeks to analyse the nature of Bengali Muslim public opinion particularly relating to political developments and Government policy.

The topics which have been discussed in this work are those on which there seem to be a fair number of articles available in the journals during the period. They are: the Muslim world, Politics, Hindu-Muslim relations, Literature, Language, Economics, Society and Education. Taken as a whole, they present a picture of Bengali Muslim society struggling to identify itself and define its position in the world. The various questions which arise in the course of this topic-wise discussion are: Were Bengali Muslims primarily Muslims, Indians or Bengalis? Where did their allegiance lie – to their cultural and religious origins in the Middle East, to the subcontinent in which they were born, or to the region of that subcontinent where the mother tongue of the majority of them was spoken, namely Bengal? Another set of speculations concerns the relations of the Muslim community with Hindu society both within India generally and within Bengal in particular. Were Bengali Muslims to reject the Bengali language and its literature because of its predominantly Hindu orientation, or were they to establish for themselves a separate place within that literature? And, economically, were they to remain for ever subservient to the Hindu community, because of religious prohibitions preventing them from fully accepting the world-wide, capitalist economy, or were they to modernise their religious outlook in order to accommodate themselves to the economic system prevailing throughout the modern world? In regard to education, were they to accept a western, Hindu-oriented educational system, which would undermine their religious beliefs and erode their sense of identity, or were they to insist upon inculcating into the young an Islamic form of education which was out of step with the modern world and which, whilst preserving them as Muslims culturally and religiously, would leave them permanently at the mercy of Christian and Hindu exploitation? And finally, Society. How far could Bengali Muslim society really claim to be unified, and what really was the basis of that unity? Did a any unity in fact exist? Or was it being created during the period under discussion?

## CHAPTER I

### THE MUSLIM WORLD

The region of their origin, real or imagined, the Middle East, had always fascinated the Muslims of Bengal. Place names like *Arab* (Arabia), *Iran*, *Turan* (Turkestan), *Khorasan* (Afghanistan), *Sam* (Syria) and *Misar* (Egypt) had been familiar to them from the very beginnings of Muslim Bengali literature in the fifteenth century. The achievements of Prophets, *Pirs*, Dervishes, Caliphs, Sultans and Heroes of those far-off lands had constantly excited their imaginations. The histories, traditions and mythologies of those realms, so remote in time and space, had none the less for the Muslims of Bengal a very homely ring, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when *Dobhasi* literature<sup>1</sup> flourished, flooding Bengal with its Middle-Eastern borrowings.

The literature had forged strong, emotional links between Muslims of Bengal and those of other lands, and these links were further strengthened by the frequent visits of *Sufi* saints, traders and adventurers from Middle-Eastern lands, as well as by daily, weekly and annual prayers facing the *Kaba* (in Mecca), and also by the *Hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca. Furthermore, the nineteenth century had brought to Lower Bengal *Wahabi Maolanas* and *Faraidi* leaders, who also contributed to driving the gaze of Bengali Muslims beyond the boundaries of British India, which *Wahabis* condemned for not being *Dar-ul-Islam*, a land of Islam.

Possibly the behaviour of their Hindu Bengali neighbours also helped to rivet Bengali Muslim attention outside Bengal. The Hindus had long been intent on the discovery of past Hindu greatness. Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) had found inspiration in his

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<sup>1</sup> A particular form of literature in mixed diction. For further information see chapter on Literature.

exploration of the *Upanisadas*, Bankimchandra (1838-94) in the *Bhagavat Gita* and Ramkrishna (1835-86) in Hindu mysticism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Hindu Bengal found itself inspired by the novel concept of *brihattara Bharat* (Greater India, which extended as far as the isles of Java, Sumatra and Bali). Their imaginations were kindled by the modern Asian seats of Buddhism, Japan and China. Similarly, the gaze of Bengali Muslims, frustrated by failures at home, sought consolation in the contemplation of the wider horizons of the Muslim world.

In view of this persistent preoccupation it is not surprising that, when Bengali Muslims turned to journalism, they continued to be fascinated by events in the Middle East. In framing the following chapter, based on press extracts connected with these events, the materials have been divided into five sections:

- (i) The reporting of political events in the Middle East from 1877 to 1909;
- (ii) The reporting of political events in the Middle East from 1909 to 1923;
- (iii) The reporting of political events in the Middle East from 1924 onwards;
- (iv) The display of Bengali Muslim sympathies in the press towards Muslims the world over; and
- (v) The heralding of the political awakening of the whole Muslim world by *Saogat* in 1930.

The last two sections are largely self-explanatory, the first three require comment. These three sections constitute in effect an attempt, either consciously or unconsciously, on the part of Bengali Muslim journalists to discover a focus of attention, whereby the Muslims of Bengal might be unified. Up till 1923 the natural and obvious focus of Muslim attention and sympathies was primarily, of course, Turkey, symbolized in the person of the Sultan and in his Ottoman empire, Islam's pride. The attitude of Bengali Muslim journalists towards other nations during this period was determined largely by the behaviour of those nations towards either Turkey itself or Muslims in general. Consequently, Russia was seen as the arch

enemy of Islam, France as nearly as bad, and Britain as the best of a bad lot.

Any phenomenon concerning the Ottoman empire in those days was deserving of mention in Muslim Bengali news and editorial columns. The Damascus-Hedjaj Railway Fund is mentioned so frequently as virtually to become a barometer of pro-Muslim sympathies. Jews and Christians within the Ottoman empire constituting, as they did, a source of both anxiety--because of possible Russian incursions on their behalf--and propaganda--because their occasional displays of loyalty could be held up as examples of proper behaviour to Jews and Christians elsewhere--also earn frequent mention. But perhaps most attention goes to the 'atheistic' Young Turks, whose activities were eventually to erode from within the Ottoman empire so adored by the Bengali Muslim press during the early period.

Muslim editors between 1909 and 1923 appear to have been somewhat blinkered. They deplored the activities of the 'atheistic' Young Turks, who were seeking to secularise Turkey, turning it into a modern democratic republic. Yet, at the same time they were gradually groping for similar constitutional, democratic reforms in India, which would give them as a community a greater say in the government of their homeland. What must be borne in mind, however, is that Turkey was largely a symbol of an ideal Islamic state, dominated by the Caliph-Sultan, in whom both spiritual and temporal power combined. The precise significance of this symbol seemed to vary for individual editors. The more conservative and reactionary wished genuinely to preserve it intact and forever as a glowing symbol of the true meaning of Islam. Others, more progressive and liberal, wished to use it merely as a symbol to unite Bengali Muslims with Hindus in the struggle for India's independence. Unconsciously, they probably sympathised with Mustafa Kemal's (1881-1938) desire to secularize and modernize Turkey.

From 1924 onwards the same underlying clash of attitudes and sympathies is seen in the reporting of events elsewhere in the Middle East. All editors seem to continue to have a common interest in



focussing Bengali Muslim sympathies on Middle Eastern questions so as to produce a unity within their community, but it is evident that some editors are prepared to praise progressive movements abroad, liberalising religious attitudes and producing social reforms, whilst others continue to condemn these deviations from tradition.

Nevertheless, an overall pattern is discernible. Up to about 1911 most of the Bengali Muslim press appear to have been loyal to the British Government in India desire merely to unify their own community on the basis of Islam and its cultural focal point the Middle East. Gradually, however, almost all sections of the press grew more critical of the British and desired a greater degree of self-government. Yet, basic divisions existed in the press, some being extremely orthodox and conservative, and others more liberal and progressive in outlook.

## I

1877-1909

### RUSSO-TURKISH WAR (1877-78) TO THE DEPOSAL OF THE SULTAN OF TURKEY, ABDUL HAMID II (1909)

#### (a) TURKEY: THE CENTRE OF THE SYMPATHIES OF BENGALI MUSLIM PRESS

##### (i) Turkey as a whole

In 1877 *Mahammadi Akhbar* called upon Bengali Muslims to contribute to save the innumerable widows and orphans of valiant Turks, who were laying down their lives to protect the Muslim holy places, Mecca, *Baitul Moqaddes*, Medina and *Karbala* from the Russians.<sup>2</sup> "Send money to succour them", the editor cried, "look,

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<sup>2</sup> This refers to the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. The Sultan of Turkey was regarded by Indian Muslims as *Kholifatul Muslemin* (i. e. the spiritual and temporal head of the Muslim world). His war with *Kafir* (infidel) Russia was, therefore, in their eyes *Jihad* (i. e. a religious war), and evoked deep, widespread sympathies among them. In Bengal "religious services were held in some of the Calcutta mosques, and subscriptions were raised to succour the sick and wounded and the families of soldiers who might fall in the war,..." – C. E. Buckland, *Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors*, vol. II, 1901, p. 691.

religious merit (*saoyab*) is being sold cheaply. Buy it up. Heaven is available at a low price. Do not miss this opportunity.”<sup>3</sup>

*Islam-pracharak* in 1899 lamented the passing of a great Muslim hero, Gazi Osman Pasha,<sup>4</sup> ‘the right hand of His Excellency Amirul Mumenin’, the Ruler of the Ottoman empire. Osman Pasha’s death had “plunged the whole Muslim world into intense grief.”<sup>5</sup>

### (ii) Turkey as embodied in the Sultan of Turkey

A few months later the editor of *Islam-pracharak* reproached his readers for not sending a presentation to the Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid (1842-1918) on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee. Neither the rich, of whom there numbered in Bengal several millionaire Nawabs and Zemindars, nor ordinary Muslims had subscribed to send a presentation. This was disgraceful since even the alien Jews and Christians had given gifts. The editor, therefore, suggested to his middle class readers that as a mark of respect to his Excellency at least a subscription to the Damascus-Hedjaj Railway Fund could be sent.<sup>6</sup>

“Whose heart is not inundated with joy”, Pracharak asked, waxing eloquent over the Sultan of Turkey, “to learn of the life-story of His Excellency, the Sultan, Emperor of Turkey, and leader of the whole Muslim world, who is the foremost champion of eternal Islam, and who has fully preserved from the hands of infidels Mecca and Medina, indeed the whole of Arabia, which proclaim the glory of our Islamic religion...Therefore, today this young contributor to Pracharak presents to its readers a brief account of the life of His Excellency, Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Editorial, *Mahammadi Akhbar*, June 15, 1877

<sup>4</sup> Osman Pasha, a Turkish general in the Russo-Turkish war, repulsed the first Russian advance at the battle of Pleven in Bulgaria in 1877.

<sup>5</sup> Editorial, *Islam-pracharak*, 3rd yr., 4th no.; *Kartik*, 1306 B. S. (1899)

<sup>6</sup> Editor, ‘Mahamanya Amirul Mumenin Sultan Gazi Abdūl Hamid Khaner pancha bingsati barsik raupya jubili utsab’, *Islam-pracharak*, 3rd yr., 7th-8th no.; *Magh*, 13d6 B.S. (1900)

<sup>7</sup> Syed Fazle Haq, ‘Turasker Sultan’, *Pracharak*, 2nd yr., 5th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1307 B.S. (1900)

A similar eulogy in verse celebrating the Silver Jubilee of Sultan Abdul Hamid appeared in *Pracharak*. It ran :

“Hail to you the Lord of Turkey,  
Hail to you the ornament of the Muslim clan,  
Hail to you the greatest hero, the greatest of kings,  
May your acclamations fill the world.

“You are the strength of the Muslim clan,  
You alone are its pride, and life,  
At your command the Muslim world  
Its heart’s blood can spill.”<sup>8</sup>

In its 11th no., 8th vol. the editor of *Islam-pracharak* reminded his readers of the coming anniversary of the Coronation of His Excellency the Sultan of Turkey urging them to observe the occasion in a befitting manner. The day would be celebrated throughout the whole Ottoman empire: everyone was to hold congregational prayers, *Maulud* and *Waz* meetings; give alms to the poor; decorate mosques and houses with lights and buntings; and pray for a long life for “His Excellency *Amirul Mumenin, Khalifatul Muslem*in Gazi Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan and for the power of his rule to prevail and his kingdom to prosper.

### (iii) Turkey as symbolised by the Ottoman empire, Islam’s pride

The Bengali Muslim press welcomed any sign of progress and improvement within the Ottoman empire no matter within what sphere it occurred. For example, in 1903 *Islam-pracharak* interpreted the unprecedented profit declared by the Osmania Bank and the annual dividend of 6.5% paid to share-holders as a mark of the Ottoman empire’s progress.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Raupya jubili’, *Pracharak*, 2nd yr., 10th no.; *Kartik*, 1307 B.S. (1900)

<sup>9</sup> Editor, ‘Jatiya o dharma sangbad’, *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 7th-8th no.; *Sraban-Bhadra*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

In 1907 *Islam-pracharak* drew attention to the introduction of the Japanese system of agriculture in Ottoman territories<sup>10</sup>, interpreting this as another sign of the way in which the Ottoman Government was benefiting from the experience of other countries. The depth of the affection of Bengali Muslims for the Sultan and his empire can be gauged from an editorial comment in the same journal. Viewed objectively, it would seem that Young Turks<sup>11</sup>, by instigating a military revolt in Macedonia and Albania, had compelled the Sultan to introduce a constitutional form of Government<sup>12</sup> in his country to appease dissatisfied elements. These events were interpreted by *Islam-pracharak*'s editor, however, as a triumph for the diplomatic and political skill of the Sultan, who by a single proclamation had filled everyone with devotion and extinguished the flames of revolt. Nevertheless, the editor conceded that the "atheistic Young Turks" were "still not satisfied."<sup>13</sup> By

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<sup>10</sup> Editor 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 2nd no.; *Falgun*, 1313 B.S. (1907)

The Bengali Muslim press gave the news prominence by publishing it under the headline, 'National and Religious news'. The date is perhaps significant in that Japan had only recently defeated Turkey's arch enemy Russia (1905). This event had a far-reaching and marked effect on Muslims. For they regarded Russia as the incarnation par excellence of infidel power, whose only aim were to destroy Turkey and crush Islam. So "The press and pulpits of Islam took up an anti-Christian, anti-foreign propaganda with new hopefulness... 'What heathen Japan had done, could they not do with the help of Allah?' -- This interest was universal." -- S. G. Wilson, *Modern Movements among Moslems*, 1916, p 228

<sup>11</sup> The Young Turks, a secret revolutionary society, had been agitating ever since the late 1870s for the restoration of the Constitution in Turkey. They demanded civil liberties denied by the Sultan. In April, 1909 they crushed a Mulla-inspired uprising and eventually deposed the Sultan himself. The Young Turk movement was distinctly national, discouraging religious fanaticism. They repudiated Pan-Islamism, and their manifestos even failed to give any particular prominence to Islam.

<sup>12</sup> The Sultan, under popular pressure, issued a decree on July 24, 1908, restoring the Constitution, which he himself had abrogated in 1878.

<sup>13</sup> *Islam-pracharak* appears to have opposed the Young Turks mainly for two reasons. Firstly, it was an article of faith with them to be loyal to the Sultan, who was Caliph of the Muslim world and defender of Islam. secondly, and as a concomitant to this, since the Young Turk movement was secular and aimed at

comparing them to the champions of *Swaraj* in India,<sup>14</sup> the editor did, however, attempt to sow in people's minds the suspicion that the ambitions of the Young Turks were too grandiose and unrealistic ever to succeed. He stated, "Like those crazy people in India, who are attempting to set up *Swaraj*, they desire to establish some kind of republic in Turkey."<sup>15</sup>

In 1909, however, the editor of *Basana* recorded with regret that 'the glory of Islam' had been devastated by 'atheistic Young Turks' who had deposed the 'all-virtuous *Shahin Shah*' of the Ottoman empire, Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan, under whose ideal rule the empire had made such remarkable progress.<sup>16</sup>

(b) ATTITUDE TO OTHER NATIONS DETERMINED BY THEIR RELATIONS WITH EITHER TURKEY ITSELF OR MUSLIMS IN GENERAL

(i) **Russia: Arch villain**

The Bengali Muslim press seems to have constantly seen Russia as the arch enemy of Islam. In 1877 *Mahammadi Akhbar* stated that Russia had attacked Turkey 'out of greed' and to harm the faith of the Muslims by seizing Mecca, *Baitul Moqaddes*, Medina and *Karbala*. In 1899 when paying tribute to the memory of Gazi Osman Pasha, *Islam-pracharak* did not miss the opportunity of describing him as 'the crusher of indomitable Russia's arrogance' and 'hero of the battle of Pleven'.

According to *Islam-pracharak* in 1903, the Russian emperor was constantly inciting Christians within the Ottoman empire to rebel and also going to war against Turkey on the pretext of protecting

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the attainment of civil rights for all, Muslims, Christians and Jews alike, irrespective of their religions, *Islam-pracharak* condemned the Young Turks as 'atheists'.

<sup>14</sup> For *Islam-pracharak*'s opposition to *Swaraj* and *Swadesi* agitations see my later chapter on Politics.

<sup>15</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad'. *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

<sup>16</sup> Editor, 'Soltan Abdul Hamid Khaner prati', *Basana*, 2nd vol., 2nd no.; *Jyaistha*, 1316 B. S. (1909)

Christians from Turkish oppression. This, *Islam-pracharak* regarded, as extremely brazen in an emperor “whose own realms seethe like a terrible volcano...because of his oppressions.”<sup>17</sup>

That same year *Islam-pracharak* again highlighted Russian injustice in preventing the Amir of Bokhara from going on pilgrimage to Mecca. “The Russian Government is really terribly oppressive and a great enemy to Islam” the journal declared.<sup>18</sup>

And, when discussing events in Tunisia, the editor of *Islam-pracharak* could not help observing that “in ruling other nations, the French have outdone the despotic Russian Government,”<sup>19</sup> i. e. the Russian Government was held up as a kind of yardstick of despotism by which to measure the villainy of other non-Muslim powers.

Subsequently *Islam-pracharak* again drew attention to Russia’s opportunism in benefiting from worsening conditions in Persia. And in regard to Muslims in Russia itself, the editor observed in the same article that they were “vigorously advancing towards progress despite being under the despotic and terribly tyrannical Russian Government.”<sup>20</sup>

### (ii) France: nearly as bad

In 1908 the editor of *Islam-pracharak* ridiculed the professed belief of France in equality and republicanism. The French had now by fair means or foul established their ascendancy in Tunisia which was once part of the Ottoman empire. Its whole population was Muslim and some years earlier a large amount of money had been earmarked for education by the Tunisian Government. The money had, however, been spent wholly on French national projects. The French authorities in Tunis had argued that, once given higher education, Tunisians would wish to participate in the administration

<sup>17</sup> Reyajuddin Ahmad, ‘Turaska, Inland o Rusiya’, *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 7th-8th no.; *Sraban-Bhadra*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>18</sup> Editor, *Jatiya o dharma sangbad*, ‘*Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; *Agrahayan-Paush*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>19</sup> Editor, ‘*Jatiya o dharma sangbad*,’ *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 8th no.; *Magh*, 1314 B. S. (1908)

<sup>20</sup> Editor, ‘*Jatiya o dharma sangbad*,’ *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

of their own country. "Do you not see, readers, how liberal-minded the French are!" the editor of *Islam-pracharak* ironically exclaimed, and, then comparing the colonial attitudes of the French and British concluded that "We, however, prefer British rule to French."<sup>21</sup>

The French were again criticized by the editor of *Islam-pracharak* (4th no., 9th vol.) for the influence their teachings had exerted on Young Turks. The French, he observed, were "the worst of atheists", and, in consequence, it was not surprising that Young Turks were "now out to destroy the glory of sacred Islam."<sup>22</sup> The same point was again implied in a criticism of the type of parliamentary constitutional government likely to be instituted in Turkey and Persia, outlined in the same article. According to the editor, constitutional government as practiced in Europe and specially in France, "from which the Christian religion, or anything bearing the name of religion, has been eternally banished", would be completely disastrous for Islam.

In short, it would seem that in the eyes of *Islam-pracharak* France's professed belief in equality and republicanism required qualification: the French regarded equality and the franchise as things to be enjoyed by Frenchmen alone, and not by other nations subject to French rule. Furthermore, *Islam-pracharak* regarded the

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<sup>21</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 8th no.; *Magh*, 1314 B. S. (1908) It may be noticed that *Islam-pracharak* had always been loyal to Britain, in spite of Britain's being the ruling 'infidel' Christian power. The reasons for this were: firstly, the journal was merely reflecting the general attitude of the newly-rising section of the Muslim community, who found it profitable to cooperate with the Government; secondly, patronage for *Islam-pracharak* came mostly from the landed gentry and the well-to-do professional classes whose interests were much dependent on Government favour; thirdly, loyalty to the British was felt to be the most effective safeguard Muslims had in contending with Hindu ascendancy and anti-Muslim animosity in such spheres as trade, commerce, employment and education; and finally, *Islam-pracharak* feared that the current anti-Government political agitations were tinged with Hindu extremism and, if successful, would greatly harm Muslims. Consequently, it is not surprising to find the journal on some occasions behaving not merely as a loyal agent, but also as a sycophant.

<sup>22</sup> Editor, 'Musalman rajya o samrajya samuhe bhisan biplab', *Islam-pracharak*, 9th yr., 4th no.

secular form of government practiced in Europe, and specially in France, as diametrically opposed to Islamic principles. For, in the Ottoman empire, which '*Islam-pracharak* regarded as the ideal State, temporal and spiritual power resided in one and the same person, namely the Caliph; whereas in France the power of the Church was restricted to spiritual matters and even there appeared to '*Islam-pracharak* to be infective.

### (iii) Britain: the best of a bad lot

In the closing years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth Bengali Muslims were, on the whole, bound in loyalty to the British. And so any criticism of the British during that period was mainly constructive in that Bengali Muslims hoped that Britain would be open to persuasion; and; therefore, on the whole they tended, where possible, to praise the British; as, for example, in 1903, when the editor of '*Islam-pracharak* observed that in the British domains the kind of oppression exercised upon the Amir of Bokhara by the Russians, who had prevented him from going on pilgrimage, was extremely unlikely to occur.<sup>23</sup> And in 1908, when that same editor was comparing the despotism of the French and Russians, he concluded that British rule was preferable.

This does not mean, however, that no criticism of Britain was ever uttered. In 1903, for example, '*Islam-pracharak* highlighted the inconsistency in Britain's behaviour towards Turkey. In the Crimean War (1854) Britons and Turks had fought side by side against the Russians. Yet, "when Russia unjustly attacked Turkey in 1877-78" Britain "merely stood there and watched..." Indeed, later at the Treaty of Berlin (1878) "she was even one of the chief agents in the dismemberment of Turkey, despite the fact that shortly before that war Britain had received from her friend Turkey the beautiful, fertile and useful island of Cyprus."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "There is no danger of this kind of treatment in the British domains."-Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', '*Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>24</sup> Reyajuddin Ahmad, 'Turaska, Inland o Rusiya', '*Islam-pracharak* 5th yr., 7th-8th no.; *Sraban-Bhadra*, 1310 B. S. (1903). This refers to Turkey's defensive



*Islam-pracharak* was also dissatisfied with British policy towards Egypt and Kuwait. Nevertheless, its outlook was constructive. It urged Britain to ally itself with Turkey so as to negate Russian influence in the Persian Gulf; to encourage Persia to withdraw herself from Russia's sphere of influence; and in conjunction with Afghanistan to safeguard the frontiers of India against Russian designs. The article, indeed, ends with high praise for the Emperor-King, Edward VII, his Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, and his "very brilliant Colonial Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain". "By establishing itself in the affections of the seven crores of Indian Muslims and forty crores of Muslims scattered throughout the world" Britain would "gain ascendancy... and become a power second to none."<sup>25</sup>

#### (c) THE DAMASCUS-HEDJAJ RAILWAY: A BAROMETER OF PRO-MUSLIM SYMPATHIES

Subscriptions to the Damascus-Hedjaj Railway Fund<sup>26</sup> seem to have constituted a means of showing respect for His Excellency the *Amirul Mumenin*, the Sultan of Turkey. In 1900 *Islam-pracharak's* editor urged Bengali Muslims to make such a subscription on the occasion of the Sultan's Silver Jubilee. In 1903 that same editor recorded that a resident of Tas Lijah in the Ottoman empire, Haji Sabet Effendi, had contributed £ 1,000 to the Fund, and wondered whether Indian Muslims would not follow his example.<sup>27</sup> A few months later the editor reported that a medal of the first order had been conferred upon a German doctor for generously subscribing to

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alliance with Britain, signed on June 4th, 1878, whereby the former was obliged to lease to the latter the island of Cyprus.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> The Fund was organized in India circa 1900. Its aim was to help finance the 500-mile Damascus-Hedjaj Railway project, promoted by the Caliph-Sultan Abdul Hamid to link Muslim holy places. Indian Muslims, therefore, responded favourably. In Bengal the initiative in raising the Fund was taken by *Islam-pracharak*.

<sup>27</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak* 5th yr., 7th-8th no.; *Snaban-Bhadra*, 1310 B. S. ( 1903 )

the Fund by His Excellency the Sultan. "O Muslim brothers", the editor urged, "learn from this non-Muslim how to behave well."<sup>28</sup>

The following year *Islam-pracharak* indicated that the path to be followed by the Hedjaj Railway was the same as that by which the Prophet used to visit Syria and by which Hazrat Ibrahim (Prophet Abraham) took his son, Hazrat Ismael from Canaan to Mecca. "Consequently, pilgrims using this sacred path will undoubtedly earn boundless merit and glory. For Muslims there is no more sacred path in the world than this one."<sup>29</sup>

#### (d) ATTITUDES TO CHRISTIANS AND JEWS WITHIN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The presence of Christians and Jews within the Ottoman empire was to some extent a source of anxiety and a liability. Christians were, however, occasionally cited as showing marks of respect to the Sultan or making gifts to his troops and so forth by Bengali Muslim editors, who urged their readers-and other non-Muslims also-to do likewise. The editor of *Islam-pracharak*, for example, mentioned them in regard to the Silver Jubilee of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, when Bengali Muslims had so far failed to make a presentation. And subsequently in 1903 the editor reported the gift of 216 expensive winter uniforms to Ottoman troops arranged by a Christian subject. This gift enabled *Islam pracharak's* editor to cite it as a piece of propoganda showing the loyalty of genuine Christians to Ottoman rule. "Look, you anti-Turkish, petty-minded, hypocritical, Christian dogs," he declared, "in the eyes of devils like you everything is the wrong way round."<sup>30</sup> Presumably, what the editor had in mind was that some Christian subjects were incited to rebel against the Ottoman Government by Russian agents,<sup>31</sup> which facilitated a pretext

<sup>28</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; *Agrahayan-Paus*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>29</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*. 6th yr., 1st-2nd no.; *Baisakh-Jyaistha*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>30</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; *Agrahayan-Paus*, 1310 B. S. (1905)

<sup>31</sup> "Russian agents are constantly inciting the Christian subjects of the Turkish empire against their Government. Therefore, the fires of revolt are always

for Russian hostilities. This presumably explains the abusive vocative "Christian dogs".

Reading between the lines of some reports, however, it would seem that Christians were not always happy under Ottoman rule. For example, in its 11th no., 8th volume, *Islam-pracharak* reported that the Christian community was also said to be delighted that a Parliament was to be established in Constantinople<sup>32</sup> This was when Sultan Abdul Hamid II was making constitutional concessions in 1908 after the revolt by the army in Macedonia and Albania incited by Young Turks.

After the Sultan had been deposed in 1909 it was reported by *Islam-pracharak* that non-Muslims such as Christians and Jews were to enjoy the same privileges as Muslims<sup>33</sup> as members of the same " 'Ottoman nation'. Non-Muslims have never been granted equal rights with Muslims in a Muslim State; Muslims have always retained some special privileges... But the present Turkish administration has now sacrificed even those special privileges beneath the feet of the Christians."<sup>34</sup> One presumes that it was this state of inequality which had until then rendered non-Muslims such as Christians and Jews a potential source of discontent and disruption within the empire.

#### (e) THE 'ATHEISTIC' YOUNG TURKS

Quoting a despatch by the *London Times* correspondent in Constantinople, the editor of *Islam-pracharak* reported in 1907 that the Ottoman Police and Postal departments had seized numerous handbills sent by the rebellious Young Turks. These young men were, the editor stated, devoid of religious knowledge and corrupted

burning there'? Reyajuddin Ahmad, Turaska, Inland o Rusiya', *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 7th-8th no., 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>32</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

<sup>33</sup> The Constitution, restored as a result of the revolution by Young Turks, granted people of all religious persuasions, Muslims, Christians and Jews alike, equality before the Law.

<sup>34</sup> Editor, 'Musalman rajya o samrajya samuhe bhisan biplab', *Islam-pracharak*, 9th yr., 4th no.

by perverted Western education.' They, therefore, "bring fresh allegations against His Excellency the *Amirul Mumenin*, every day."<sup>35</sup>

Later he published reports on the revolt in the province of Macedonia organised by Young Turks who desired "to establish some kind of republic for Turkey."<sup>36</sup> And in 1909 the editor of *Basana* reported with regret the fact that the "atheistic Young Turks" had deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid and "destroyed the glory of Islam."<sup>37</sup>

## II

### DEPOSAL OF THE SULTAN OF TURKEY BY YOUNG TURKS: BENGALI MUSLIM ANGUISH

#### (i) These developments deplored: 1909

In its 4th number, 9th volume, *Islam-pracharak* reported upon the aftermath of the 'terrible' revolution in Turkey. "The highly-talented and universally-respected" Sultan Abdul Hamid had been deposed, his property and possessions confiscated, and his palace opened to the sight- seeing general public. He himself had been pensioned off. His grief was, however, "nothing compared to the grief and anguish he has experienced at seeing Islam humiliated by the cruel, vile conduct of the Western-educated, atheistic Young Turks". Numerous *Ulema* scholars, newspaper editors, army officers and secret service men had been lynched. Leading ministers, *Pashas*, and *Ulema* had been exiled. "Even the terrible, despotic Russian Government has been outdone by present military Government of Turkey, who claim to be the representatives of the people. What connection can there be between such an outrageous administration

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<sup>35</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 2nd no.; *Falgun*, 1313 B. S. (1907)

<sup>36</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

<sup>37</sup> Editor, 'Soltan Abdul Hamid Khaner prati', *Basana*, 2nd vol., 2nd no., *Jyaistha*, 1316 B. S. (1909)

and the general public? Do the general public approve of such a cruel, oppressive Government?" Apart from the violence and oppression, the chief thing that seems to have upset *Islam-pracharak* was the fact that Turkey had ceased to be an Islamic state. Subjects of all religious persuasions had all been granted equal status as members of the Ottoman nation. The secular-or in the eyes of *Islam-pracharak* the 'atheistic' – outlook of the Young Turks was thus undermining the very foundations of Islam.<sup>38</sup>

The same article of *Islam-pracharak* also made perfectly clear that parliamentary government, as practised in Europe and as about to be practised in Turkey and Persia, was "not suited to all countries in all times. Muslims have, above all, to pay special regard to religion... This type of government parliamentary government is not approved by the *Quran*, nor by, Islam and, consequently, not by all-merciful *Allah* either."<sup>39</sup>

## (ii) The Caliph should be both the temporal and spiritual Head of State: 1923<sup>40</sup>

According to the editor of *Choltan* in 1923, there could be no dichotomy between Church and State. The editor had no objection to a democratic system of government, such as was reported to be about to be instituted in Turkey.<sup>41</sup> But the system would, if it were to be approved by the *Sariyat*, have to approximate to that which prevailed in the days of *Kholafaye Rashedin*. The editor's proposal was that:

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<sup>38</sup> Editor, 'Musalman tajya o samrajya amuhe bhisan biplab', *Islam-pracharak*, 9th yr., 4th no.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> The Caliphate question came to prominence once more in the early 1920's though on this latter occasion with even greater vigour, since the issue gained support throughout India. In Bengal it was championed chiefly by *Choltan*. The *Khilafat* movement, as it was then known, was no longer merely religious: it was strongly political and anti-British in character, though ostensibly *Choltan* was campaigning for both political and religious objectives.

<sup>41</sup> This refers to the political events in Turkey, which culminated in the proclamation of a Republic (Oct. 29, 1923) and the abolition of Turkish Sultanate.

“In accordance with the democratic system, there would be a Parliament together with a Cabinet responsible to it. And the Caliph himself would be the President of that grand Assembly. His tenure of office could be fixed as in France and America. We can see no impediment to this from the religious point of view. But if the Caliph is to be seated in a completely separate place like the Pope or the *Lama* without any control over Government, then the prestige of neither the Caliph nor the Caliphate will be preserved.”<sup>42</sup>

That the Muslim press was, in commenting upon the events in Turkey in 1923, facing a dilemma, is revealed in the Press itself. Pro-*Khilafat* Muslims themselves were, in collaboration with Congress and alongside their *Khilafat* movement, struggling to institute *Swaraj* – i. e. Self-Government in India. That is to say, though committed to obtaining some form of democratic government for India, they, nevertheless, wished to see the Caliph remain both the spiritual and temporal Head of Turkey. The election of Mustafa Kamal Pasha as President of the Turkish Republic (on October 30, 1923), therefore, disappointed *Choltan*, the organ of the *Khilafat* movement. It declare despairingly: “According to the Constitution, he (Mustafa Kamal) is empowered to select a Prime Minister and with his help a cabinet. If the news we have received about the way in which Turkish democracy has been established is correct, then, even though we strongly support democratic systems of government, we feel no pleasure in the establishment of this one. On the contrary, we fear that various forms of harm will emanate from it... The Caliph has now become a mere figure-head without any power whatsoever, like the Pope in Rome or the abbot of Tarakeswar. The basis of the *Khilafat* movement, which we initiated in India, has now completely disappeared.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Editor, ‘Turaske ganatantra’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 22nd no.; 25th *Aswin*, 1330 B. S. (1923)

<sup>43</sup> Editor, ‘Turaske sadharantantra’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 24th no.; 16th *Kartik*, 1330 B. S. (1923)

### III 1924 ONWARDS

#### (a) CHANGED ATTITUDE TOWARDS BRITAIN<sup>44</sup>

##### (i) Britain and Iraq

The changed attitude on the part of the Bengali Muslim press towards Britain, as a result of the campaign for *Swaraj* in India, is apparent in an editorial comment in *Saogat* in 1928, where a reference is made to the placing of Amir Faisal on the throne of Iraq by the British in order to facilitate their exploitation of that land. Misled by the British, Iraqi Arabs were, like the British themselves, becoming hostile to Sultan Ibn Saud of Hedjaj. The British army had placed a base on the Hedjaj-Iraq frontier. This constituted a threat to the sovereignty of Hedjaj. The Sultan had, therefore, protested against it and war between him and Britain was now likely. The Iraqis, who were falling in with British designs, would, however, *Saogat's* editor maintained, realise their mistake as soon as they became conscious of their own position; "The call of freedom will enliven their hearts,--and that day is not far off." Thus Britain was

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<sup>44</sup> The change in Bengali Muslim attitudes towards Britain was most pronounced from the start of the 1920s, yet the actual process of change had commenced almost a decade earlier, in 1911 to be precise, when the annulment of the partition of Bengal, regarded by Muslims as a Government breach of faith towards them, took place. Shortly after this came the Balkan War and Britain's part in it appeared to Muslims to be a further betrayal of their interests. The most hurtful blow to Muslim sensibilities, however, was Britain's hostilities against Turkey during the First World War. Fearing violent displays of pro-Turkish sympathies from its Muslim subjects, Government of India gaoled many of their leaders. Indian Muslims were, however, given assurances that upon the cessation of hostilities Turkish interests would not be harmed. In fact, however, the very reverse happened. The Turkish empire was dismembered. Indian Muslims felt justifiably grieved by this further instance of Britain's perfidy. Thus during the period of about ten years beginning from 1911 successive 'betrayals' and 'deceptions' by Britain alienated Bengali Muslim loyalties and with the emergence of the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements the popular Muslim press, a few orthodox journals excluded, swung into the attack on Britain regarding Indian political affairs and also regarding Britain's Middle-Eastern policies.

now seen as an exploiter meddling in Middle Eastern affairs for the sake of its own interests.<sup>45</sup>

### (ii) A warning to Britain not to interfere in Afghanistan

King Amanullah of Afghanistan was deposed in 1929 as a result of a revolt in his country. The Government of India was refusing to divulge information about it. Despite this lack of information, however, the editor of *Saptahik Saogat* warned the Government of India, on behalf of the people of India, and especially of the Muslim community, that no interference on their part either directly or indirectly in the affairs of Afghanistan would be tolerated. If, despite these warnings, the Government of India did anything against King Amanullah, a mass agitation would be launched throughout India. "We hope that Lord Irwin's Government will not deliberately invite this danger upon themselves", *Saptahik Saogat* declared.<sup>46</sup>

### (iii) British despotism in Egypt

*Saptahik Saogat* in the same issue used strong language in describing the 'despotism' of the 'arrogant' British imperialists in Egypt. The Wafd Party was campaigning for independence, and the British were doing all in their power to smash the Party. "What will be the outcome of such an oppressive measure?" *Saptahik Saogat's* editor asked. "Once patriotism has become firmly rooted in a nation's heart it cannot be eradicated... Yet the arrogant imperialists...fail to realise that their oppression, accumulated over the ages, is hanging poised above their own heads like the sword of Damocles. They are too blind to see it."<sup>47</sup>

### (iv) Differences between British and Iraqis

The difference of opinion predicted by *Saogat's* editor in its 2nd issue, 1928, seems to have materialized a few months later. For *Saptahik Saogat* then reported upon a serious difference of opinion

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<sup>45</sup> Editor, 'Hejaj o Irak, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 2nd no.: *Bhadra*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>46</sup> Editor, 'Afghanistan', *Saptahik Saogat* 1st yr.; 36th no, 11th *Magh*, 1335 B. S. (1929)

<sup>47</sup> Editor, 'Misare chandaniti', *ibid*.



that had arisen between the British and Iraqi Governments over the defence of Iraq. "The British say that the Iraqis are still minors and unable to defend themselves from enemy attack. On the other hand, the Iraqis feel capable of defending their own country. No compromise between these conflicting positions is feasible. And so the Iraqi Cabinet has had to resign. In short, events in Iraq are about to follow the same course as in Egypt... No matter how much lip-service the British may pay to their own claims of universal benevolence, a fiendish hunger of petty self-interest constantly blazes within them. They are, therefore, never prepared to acknowledge the competence of subject nations. But how much longer can things go on like this?"<sup>48</sup>

## (b) DEVELOPMENTS IN HEDJAJ AND AFGHANISTAN

### (i) Hedjaj

After the first world war the Turkish empire was dismembered and puppet regimes were established in various places in the Middle East.<sup>49</sup> There was presumably popular discontent against these regimes which were subservient to Christian powers.

Trouble occurred in Hedjaj, and in 1925, when British military support was withdrawn, the puppet King, Sharif Hussain, was defeated by Ibn Saud, the *Wahabi Amir* of Nezd.<sup>50</sup> King Hussain had to abdicate. Saud established his control in Hedjaj. *Sariyat*, an anti-*Wahabi* organ, was extremely critical of the manner in which Saud came to power. He had exercised "inhuman tyranny and brutality." He had seized Mecca and devastated the Prophet's birth place together with many shrines of the *Sahaba* and many holy places. He had also taken Medina and destroyed the shrine of Hazrat Hamza (uncle

<sup>48</sup> Editor, 'Irakider Nabalakatva', *ibid*.

<sup>49</sup> "Through the influence of the British, Sharif Hussain became King of Hedjaj in 1916—and his sons, the Amir Feisal and the Amir Abdullah, became sovereigns of Iraq and Trans-jordania respectively in 1921. It was hoped that the family would acquire great prestige as guardians of the Holy Cities of Mecca, Medina and Baghdad, and that Hussain might perhaps supersede the Sultan (of Turkey) as Caliph of the Muslim World. As a matter of fact, this hope has not been realised." -- W. R. Smith, *Nationalism and Reforms in India*, 1938, p. 309.

<sup>50</sup> The reference here is to the *Amir* of Nezd's support for Wahabism.

of Prophet Muhammad) and other holy places. *Sariyat* described Ibn Saud as 'Wahabi Sardar' and as "the tyrannical arch enemy of the *Sunnat Jamayet*." Apparently *Wahabi* supporters and *Khilafat* newspapers in Bengal had been loudly proclaiming Ibn Saud as 'Sultan' and 'Gazi'. But, *Sariyat* declared, it was in no way consonant with Islam to confer upon Ibn Saud the title of 'Gazi' or 'Sultan'.<sup>51</sup> *Sariyat* appears to have been pro-British and, therefore, to have favoured the rule of Sharif Hussain.

*Saogat*, however, was strongly anti-British and in 1928 took a completely opposite view to that expressed by *Sariyat*. *Saogat*, described Sharif Hussain of Hedjaj as "the obedient servant of the Christian powers", and alleged that he had tyrannized and oppressed the holy land of Hedjaj. *Saogat*, therefore, welcomed his expulsion "by the vigorous might of Ibn Saud of Nezd." Ibn Saud had "cleared away the superstitions of the centuries" and "bathed the Arab nation in a sacred stream of pure Islam." He was gradually modernizing the country and was attempting "to make Hedjaj renowned throughout the world as a state powerful and free in all respects."<sup>52</sup>

It is fairly clear that in commenting upon events in other Muslim countries Bengali Muslim editors were really formulating their views on the way in which they would like Bengali Muslim society to develop. Some, like *Sariyat*, tended to be conservative in religious matters and loyal to the British in political matters. Others, like *Saogat*, welcomed reform in religious matters coupled with the seizing and exercising of power by Indians, Hindu and Muslim alike.

*Saogat*, therefore, saw in Ibn Saud an ideal ruler, who had crushed fanaticism, superstition and sectarian dissent; abolished the worship of shrines; terminated bribery, corruption, banditry and theft; facilitated the visiting of the *Kaba*; controlled the wild Bedouins; and by diplomacy established friendly treaties with surrounding kingdoms. His rule, therefore, constituted "a glorious chapter in Arab history."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Editor, 'Hejaj samasya', *sariyat*, 2nd yr., 7th no.; *Kartik*, 1332 B. S. (1926)

<sup>52</sup> Editor, 'Hejaj o Irak', *Saogat*, 6th yr., 2nd no; *Bhadra*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>53</sup> Editor, 'Muslim Jahan', *Saogat*, 7th yr., 8th no'; *Chaitra*, 1336 B. S. (1930)

## (ii) Afghanistan

In a summary of events in the Muslim world published two decades earlier, the editor of *Islam-pracharak* had reported that Afghanistan was calm and that its wise ruler was making determined efforts to improve conditions within his regime. He had also in various ways punished all those Afghan subjects who had taken up arms against the British in the Frontier War.<sup>54</sup> This report is typical of the pro-British attitudes prevailing in Bengali Muslim society in the first decade of the twentieth century.

In 1928 *Masik Mohammadi* drew attention to the various reforms being made in Afghanistan by its enlightened ruler Amir Amanullah who had abandoned “all imperial splendour” and was mixing with Afghan citizens in ordinary clothes like one of them. This was a symbolic indication of his belief “in the genuine power of the people”; i. e. in democracy. In his newly-established capital, *Darul-Aman*, he had set up new institutions to teach European medicine and new hospitals on European scientific lines. Separate arrangements had been made for clinics for women; and colleges had been founded to train Afghan and Turkish women as nurses. Similar institutions had also been established in the cities of Herat and Ghazni.<sup>55</sup>

Apparently all these reforms and modifications were introduced too rapidly for orthodox Muslims in Afghanistan to tolerate. Within a few months of the eulogistic editorial comment outlined above, Amanullah was deposed by a revolt (January, 1929) led by fanatic Mullas. The precise nature of the revolt was not known to the Bengali Muslim press at that time, and it would seem from a comment by the editor of *Saptahik Saogat* that he may have suspected some kind of British-inspired, reactionary movement against King Amanullah. He wrote, “The affairs of Afghanistan are now not a matter of concern to Muslims alone, they have attracted the attention and concern of all freedom-loving Indians. We should like to know why the Government of India refuses to divulge any information about this?... However, whatever the present situation

<sup>54</sup> Editor, *Jatiya o dharma sangbad*, *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

<sup>55</sup> Editor, ‘Sangbadika’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 12th no.; *Aswin*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

and mystery behind the Afghan revolt might be, we warn the Government of India, on behalf of the people of India, and especially on behalf of the Muslim community that any interference on their part, either directly or indirectly, in the affairs of Afghanistan, will not be tolerated by the people of this country... If despite these warnings the Government of India does anything against King Amanullah, either directly or indirectly, then a mass agitation will be launched from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin."<sup>56</sup>

It seems to us fairly clear that in taking this stance the editor of *Saptahik Saogat* is really not so much concerned with Afghanistan as with finding some symbol on which to focus Bengali Muslim attention so as to concentrate their hostility against the British. Possibly he was seeking a substitute for the now obsolete *Khilafat* movement, so as to bring Muslims once more in vigorous collaboration with the independence movement throughout India.

#### IV

### WORLD-WIDE MUSLIM SYMPATHIES THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD

Besides commenting upon political events in the Muslim world, the Bengali Muslim press also heralded any new development in Muslim proselytization. In 1904, for example, *Islam-pracharak* reported on the conversion of 30 Japanese merchants from Buddhism to Islam, and also upon the request of Muslims in Shanghai, China, to Sheikh Abdullah William, the *Sheikh-ul-Islam* of Great Britain and Ireland, to write a number of Islamic tracts. These tracts would then be translated into Japanese at Shanghai and published and distributed amongst Buddhists in Japan. The editor concluded, "Alas, if a competent missionary had gone to Japan and dedicated himself to propagating sacred Islam, swarms and swarms of Japanese would undoubtedly have come beneath the peaceful sacred shade of Islam and been glorified."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Editor, 'Afghanistan', *Saptahik Saogat*, 1st yr., 36th no.; 11th *Magh*, 1335 B. S. (1929)

<sup>57</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

A couple of years later *Islam-pracharak* again reported that the Muslims in China were flourishing and seemed to possess a monopoly of industry and commerce. In addition to this they were also progressing vigorously in education to the 'alarm of Christian missionaries in China.'<sup>58</sup>

In 1924 *Choltan*, commenting on the need to cultivate history, pointed out that Muslims throughout the world could participate in, and enjoy, Muslim achievements in Arabia, India and China. "In the realm of thought, realign and duty, they are bound together like the innumerable roots of a single plant."<sup>59</sup>

*Saogat* in 1928 joyfully reported upon the failures of Christian missionaries to convert Muslims in the Philippine islands. In the island of Mindanao, though educationally backward, Muslims were clinging to Islam, despite the temptations offered by Christians. Muslims in the mountainous region of Lanao had similarly ignored Christian blandishments. The 'Moros' chiefs had kept intact the glory of Islam and of universal Islamic brotherhood. Christians were refusing to educate Muslims, unless they embraced Christianity. But, *Saogat's* editor commented, Muslims preferred illiteracy to the loss of their religion. He was, nevertheless, sanguine that once conversant with the outside world Muslims in the Philippines would quickly arrange to so educate themselves.<sup>60</sup>

A contributor to *Saogat* in 1926 justified the propensity of many Bengali Muslims for directing their gaze outside India. These Muslims were often complained against by Hindus intent on building an all-Indian nationhood. Such Hindus complained that Muslims were unconcerned with the welfare of India and more concerned

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<sup>58</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no. Opposition to Christian missionaries was the most frequently avowed point of *Islam-pracharak's* policy.

<sup>59</sup> 'Itihas charchar abasyskata', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 35 no.; 4th *Magh*, 1330 B.S. (1924)

It may be pointed out that, though, as here, *Choltan* frequently asserted its firm faith in Pan-Islamism, in regard to domestic politics it nevertheless advocated nationalism.

<sup>60</sup> Editor, 'Philipain dviper Musalman', *Saogat*, 6th yr., 4th no.; *Kartik*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

with Arabia Persia and Turkey whence they claimed to have come.<sup>61</sup> “Though there may apparently be some grounds for thinking like this, nevertheless, there is absolutely no truth in this allegation by Hindu nationalists... The reason why Indian Muslims express such a keen interest in the joys and sorrows of Arabia and Turkey is very clear... The Islamic religion originated in Arabia, and the great Prophet of Islam was born and died there... The *Kaba*, which Muslims face when saying their prayers, is also in Arabia... It is, therefore, extremely natural that Muslims... should feel deeply concerned about the welfare of Turkey, the temporal seat of the Caliph, and about the Caliph, the preserver of Arabia, whence Islam stems... Indian Muslims immediately feel an impulse to help and sympathize with Muslims not only in Arabia and Turkey, but also in Kabul (Afghanistan), Egypt, Persia, Morocco and the Sudan, whenever these lands are in danger. When Britain and Russia established in equal measure their lordship over Persia, Indian Muslims vigorously protested against both of them. Indian Muslims are concerned over Egypt’s struggle for independence. Our Muslim leaders in this country are often more eager to help the Turks, who are destitute, homeless and starving, due to Greek oppression, than they are to help those in difficulties at home...

“... Indian Muslims have failed to establish themselves in India. Their own country has turned them into aliens. It is for this reason that their attention is swiftly diverted outside. The anxieties of their frustrated feelings seek peace by clinging to Muslims outside India. They beguile their frustrated spirits with thoughts of the power enjoyed by the Turks and *Kabulis* (Afghans).

“A person who is himself unfortunate feels pride in the possessions of his relatives... The Muslims in India are now extremely unfortunate. Partly due to inability and ignorance stemming from past mistakes, and partly due to the impediments and

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<sup>61</sup> This belief, indeed, prevailed for quite some time among a certain section of Bengali Muslims. They preferred to insist upon their separate and special identity, by proclaiming an ancestral connection with such countries as Arabia, Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan. For further information see Khondkar Fuzli Rubbi, *The Origin of the Musalmans of Bengal*, 1895.

pressures brought to bear upon them by the more advanced conditions of neighboring communities, they are failing to find a way of expressing themselves... It seems they cannot find a free and unobstructed path for their lives to flow easily and naturally, and to develop in India. For this reason Indian Muslims involve themselves with the fortunes of Muslims outside India, and express eagerness carefully to keep alive the last glow of Muslim power and glory outside India."<sup>62</sup>

## V

### THE AWAKENING OF THE WHOLE MUSLIM WORLD HERALDED

It is perhaps fitting to end this chapter with a prophetic comment by *Saogat's* editor in 1930 heralding the awakening of the whole Muslim world. The first fingers of light of the coming dawn were symbolized in Kemal of Turkey, Reza Shah of Persia, Amanullah and Nadir Khan of Afghanistan and Ahmad Jagu of Albania. Each of these countries had effected the kind of socio-economic and political reforms that *Saogat* clearly envisaged as necessary to fit Islam for the modern age: "Amongst the countries under Muslim rule, Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and Albania at present have attracted world notice. Because the rulers of these countries, even at the risk of their own lives, by improving the socio-economic and political affairs of their countries, are attempting to fit their lands for the modern age. Kemal Pasha has succeeded. Though Amanullah failed, Nadir Khan is slowly completing the task, which he (Amanullah) began. Reza Shah also is on the way to success. And Ahmad Jagu of the small state of Albania has refashioned his country. It is to be hoped that in the not-too-distant future the whole Muslim world will newly awaken and give a fitting answer to the oppression of the white nations of Europe."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Yakub Ali Choudhury, 'Bharatiya musulman o swadesikata', *Saogat*, 4th yr., 2nd no.; *Sraban*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

<sup>63</sup> Editor, 'Muslim Jahan', *Saogat*, 7th yr., 9th-10th no.; *Baisakh-Jyaistha*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICS

As observed in the last chapter, the Caliph-Sultan of Turkey was the centre of the sympathies of Bengali Muslims and, until his interests were threatened, their attitude towards the British during the period of our study was one of almost undivided loyalty. In many respects the position of Bengali Muslims during the half century from 1880 to 1931 was comparable to that of Hindus from 1817 to 1867.<sup>1</sup> These were for each community in their respective periods times of courtship with British rule. At first that rule seemed fundamentally benevolent and just; and collaboration with it, as far as their cultures and religions permitted, seemed mutually advantageous; but gradually disillusionment set in and with it a desire initially to assert their individuality and cultural uniqueness, but eventually to claim more and more control of their political destinies.

In one important respect, however, the two periods were not comparable; for the Hindu community during the period from 1817 to 1867 there was no rival community with superior western education and greater economic power, that was then groping towards political consciousness and a greater share in the administration also; but for the Muslim community during the period under review there was such a rival community, the Hindus. The existence of these rivals, whose advancement lent them present ascendancy and potential future dominance, complicated the Bengali Muslim position. Rendered cautious by past mistakes, Bengali Muslim leaders strove during the early part of the period to steer clear of political involvement, consoling themselves with the oft-repeated belief that British rule was fundamentally benevolent and

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<sup>1</sup> The lower limit of this period marks the opening of Hindu College, which was quickly followed by Hindu Bengali journalism, and the upper limit the formation of Hindu Mela, the first Hindu nationalist organization.



that, once apprised of Muslim grievances, the British would swiftly remedy them. Thus it was that up to 1911, Bengali Muslims on the whole resolutely and doggedly struggled to remain aloof from politics and repeatedly asserted their loyalty to their British rulers.

The Bengali Muslim leaders up to 1924 were in the main the *Ulema*. For these men Islam was everything; and 'everything' meant the Caliph and their understanding of the *Sariyat*. The erstwhile loyalty to the British gradually after 1911 turned to militancy and to an uneasy collaboration with Congress, as a result of British hostilities against Turkey and mishandling of the Caliphate question.

After the collapse of the *Khilafat* movement in 1924, however, Muslim relations with Congress became on the whole as suspicious and, at times, as spiteful, as they had been before 1911. But by 1924 Bengali Muslim society was consciously in a greater state of uncertainty and confusion than it had ever been before. We speak of 'Bengali Muslims', but, the question is, who were they? Were they really a consciously united community? Or, were they a conglomeration of disparate groups, whom chance or rejection from other classes and communities had thrown together? Some Bengali Muslims were western educated and held much in common with educated Bengali Hindus, from whom they imbibed political attitudes. It was perhaps members of groups such as these that Alim editors regarded as 'Congressite touts' and 'Hindu-bootlickers'; for their educational advancement had possibly engendered in them similar political aspirations to their Hindu neighbours with whom they sought to collaborate. It was perhaps to educated Muslims like these that the pro-Congress *Choltan* most readily appealed. Other Bengali Muslims were landed gentry and the highly educated and sophisticated Muslim elite who had achieved comparable status with them. These people again had much in common with their Hindu counterparts. They thus hovered between Congress and the Muslim League, believing both to be fundamentally unopposed to British rule, which to them had been, and was continuing to be, fundamentally beneficial. This was the group whose prattle about democracy was later to bring forth a cry to stop blathering about democracy, for their doing so was likely to end only in Bolshevism

amongst the peasants, whose interests they were betraying. The vast majority of Bengali Muslims were, however, peasants, and of their feelings and aspirations little is actually known. And finally the *Ulema*; what was their role to be after Mustafa Kemal had 'pricked the Caliphate bubble?' Where were they to lead the Bengali Muslims after the goal itself had disappeared?

In brief, all that can be said in prelude to the review of Bengali Muslim political writings during the period of the present study is that 1880 to 1930 was a time of increasing Muslim awareness and political participation; during it Bengali Muslims gained a clearer picture not only of their situation, but also of who they themselves were and what they wanted.

## II

PRE – 1905

### IN THE EARLY STAGE MUSLIMS WERE LARGELY APATHETIC TO POLITICS AND LOYAL TO THE BRITISH

#### (a) ALOOFNESS FROM POLITICS

An editorial in *Mihir* in 1892 indicated that the journal wished to remain completely aloof from politics arguing, "how can we, who are devoid of scruples, attack the politics of our Rulers? This would be excessively presumptuous on our part. 'Whenever any question arises in this country regarding some important or necessary change we shall attempt to publicize clearly the intentions of the Government and shall refrain from interjecting any opinion of our own.'<sup>2</sup>

An article in *Hafez* in 1897 argued that though Muslims were now subject to British rule there was no point in lamenting the matter. The contributor was optimistic that, provided Muslims could petition the whole British nation in Britain and inform them of their needs and aspirations, then, no matter how great those needs might be, or how high their aspirations, they could certainly be fulfilled.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Editor, 'Abhas', *Mihir*, 1st. yr., 1st. no.; January, 1892

<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Osman Ali, B. L., 'Kangres o Musalman jati', *Hafez*, 1st vol., 2nd no.; February, 1897

## (b) LOYALTY TO THE BRITISH

The loyalty of Muslims towards the British is particularly evident from their comments in the press over the Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa. *Mihir o Sudhakar* in 1899 was confident that the extra-ordinary military skill of Lord Kitchener (1850-1916) would soon destroy the Boers. "Victory for the British flag", *Mihir o Sudhakar* declared, "is what we desire."<sup>4</sup> *Pracharak* in 1900 reiterated the desire for a British victory especially amongst Indians and reported that even though the Indian residents of Natal in South Africa had not been at all well treated by the British<sup>5</sup>, they had, nevertheless, volunteered to serve as Medical orderlies on the British side. This was a mark of "the capacity of Indians for supreme self-sacrifice" and also of "their great loyalty to rulers desirous of their well-being".<sup>6</sup> *Pracharak* some months later expressed delight in "the display of loyalty by young students at the General Assembly Institution in celebrating the victory achieved in South Africa by our British rulers."<sup>7</sup>

An article in *Islam-Pracharak* in 1903 indicated the way in which British and Muslim sympathies and interests were interwoven. "A quarter of the Muslims in the world are now subject to the British Government. Wherever the British have penetrated, the Muslims now follow like shadows. Wherever the British rule, the Muslims are their subjects and merchants. Wherever the British command, their most loyal soldiers are Muslim." *Islam-Pracharak*, therefore, rejoiced over the foundation of the British empire in India, because of the protection it had afforded to Indian Muslims: "We humbly submit that the establishment of the British empire in India was a special mark of divine favour to Muslims. Had not the British assumed the sceptre of India, Muslims would have suffered endlessly at the hands of brigandish Marathas and fiendish Sikhs. Probably in many regions of India Muslims would have ceased to exist. All these

<sup>4</sup> 'Sangbad', *Mihir o Sudhakar*, 8th Paus, 1306 B. S. (1899)

<sup>5</sup> This refers to the sufferings inflicted upon Indian settlers by the Britishers in South Africa.

<sup>6</sup> 'Duksin Afrikar Buyar yuddher bibaran', *Pracharak*, 2nd vol., 1st no.; *Magh*, 1306 B. S. (1900)

<sup>7</sup> 'Rajar jaye ananda', *Pracharak*, 2nd yr., 7th no.; *Sraban*, 1307 B. S. (1900)

reasons render us eternally indebted to the British, and this we state with a hundred thousand, nay with a crore, of voices. So our favouring of British rule is natural and our loyalty to the British Government spontaneous. Should we ever forget the countless kindnesses of the British Government, we should deserve to be described as ingrates.”<sup>8</sup>

#### (c) TRIBUTES TO QUEEN VICTORIA

The Muslim loyalty to the British is also evidenced by tributes to Queen Victoria paid after her death (1901). *Islam-Pracharak* outlined all the various beneficial projects and institutions advancing the Muslims, which had been launched and founded during Victoria’s reign: English education, the Anglo-Mahomadan College in Aligarh, the Aligarh Education Committee, The *Anjuman Himayet-i-Islam* in Lahore, the *Nadwatu’ I-Ulema* in Lucknow, Muslim newspapers, the flowering of Urdu literature, Muslim books and newspapers in Bengali and numerous “religious revivals. “There could be no end to the writing of the many other beneficial projects, initiated during that period. And so, from all standpoints, the passing of this great Queen will be seen as a great loss to us.”<sup>9</sup> *Pracharak* at the time also reported that: “Thanks to the great kindness of the Queen Empress of India, who was like a mother to us, we backward Indian Muslims were gradually advancing towards progress. It breaks our heart to say that on the evening of Tuesday, the 22nd of January, floating us upon a sea of tears, she departed this life.”<sup>10</sup>

#### (d) EARLY ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONGRESS

Despite this professed loyalty towards the British, there was, nevertheless, an underlying feeling, occasionally expressed, that the Indians were not being properly treated. Phrases like “subject to others, trampled beneath their feet” and “being regarded, as they were, virtually as slaves” suggest the sense of humiliation which

<sup>8</sup> Reyajuddin Ahmad, ‘Turaška, Inġland o Rusiya’, *Islam-Pracharak*, 5th yr., 7th-8th no.; *Sraban-Bhadra*, 1310 B. ~. (1903)

<sup>9</sup> Editorial, *Islam-Pracharak*, 3rd yr., 11th-12th no.

<sup>10</sup> Editor, ‘Maharanir mrityu’, *Pracharak*, 2nd yr., 12th no.

Indians felt under British rule. The problem, as it appeared- to one Muslim journal, was: "How can we awaken and guide the British conscience?" The British were regarded as fundamentally benevolent, but blind to Indian grievances. A national association could, therefore, be instrumental in awakening the British to Indian grievances. The Indian National Congress constituted such an association. "The question now is, why have we not joined it?"<sup>11</sup> *Hafez* asked in 1897. *Hafez* suggested that there were two reasons for the lack of Muslim sympathy towards Congress: one was the fear that Congress was criticizing Government policies and incurring Government displeasure; and the other was the feeling that any political concessions or job opportunities in Government service gained by Congress would be shared out amongst Hindus alone. *Hafez* regarded these attitudes as misguided: "The measures discussed by Congress are not intended to undermine the British Government, but, on the contrary, to enable British rule, to become firmly established, and more beautifully and immaculately managed. Congress never opposes Government."<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, *Hafez* argued, none of the recent 25 proposals put forward by Congress were tainted by communal partiality. "So, how can we say that if Congress gains any rights, they will be for Hindus alone?" *Hafez*, therefore, urged Muslims to abandon apathy, and ended by reporting that 40 Muslim delegates had in fact attended the recent session of Congress.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> It may be pointed out that of the 72 delegates attending the first Congress in 1885 only 2 were Muslims, of 431 attending the second there were 33, and of 1,889 present in its 1889 session Muslim delegates numbered only 258. "Between 1885 and 1905 the Muslim delegates formed only 10 per cent. of the total number of Congress delegates." – Mafiur Rahman, *From Consultation to Confrontation*, 1970, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, the very foundations of the Indian National Congress were laid with the blessings of Viceroy Lord Dufferin (1884-1888); and, more significantly, it was a retired Civilian officer, Mr. Allan Octavian Hume, who initiated the movement. He so designed the Congress movement as to act as the most 'efficacious safety valve' in the interests of British rule in India. It may also be noted that Congress in those days was primarily engaged in propagating loyalty to the British Crown. It believed that real good for Indians could come only through cooperating with Government.

<sup>13</sup> Sheikh Osman Ali, B. L.; *op. cit.*

In 1900 *Pracharak* reported that the 'Hindu' Congress,<sup>14</sup> would hold its next session in Lahore and expressed the hope that this might lessen Hindu-Muslim animosity.<sup>15</sup>

A graduate writing in *Naba Nur* in 1904 expressed great suspicion of the underlying motives behind Congress. Attempts were being made to persuade Muslims of their brotherhood with Hindus as the twin sons of 'Mother India' and that as such they ought to strive to preserve the Bengali nation and its language and literature by protesting against Government policies. "Can you not see readers", the graduate contributor asked, "how much self-interest, how much trickery and deception, lie in these honeyed words?"<sup>16</sup>

## II

1905-1919

### MUSLIM PRESS STILL URGING MUSLIMS TO REMAIN EITHER ALOOF FROM POLITICS OR LOYAL TO BRITISH RULE

#### (a) LOYALTY TO THE BRITISH

It would seem that even during the *Swadesi* movement over the partition of Bengal (1905) most sections of Muslim society remained firm in their loyalty to British Rule. For example; an article in *Islam-Pracharak* in 1905 stated that "under British Rule we are undeniably

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<sup>14</sup> It is to be noted that in spite of *Pracharak's* being a liberal, unorthodox Journal devoted to the promotion of Hindu-Muslim harmony, it, nevertheless, refers to Congress as 'Hindu'. This apparently reflects how deeply rooted in Muslim minds was the distrust of Congress.

<sup>15</sup> 'Kangres', *Pracharak*, 2nd yr.; 10th no.; Kartik, 1307 B. S. (1900)

<sup>16</sup> Osman Ali, B. L., 'Du mukho', *Naba Nur*, 2nd yr., 3rd no.; Asarh, 1311 B. S. (1904)

About 7 years earlier this self-same author had been pro-Congress and had been urging his co-religionists to join that institution, which, he opined, was bound to benefit them. Thus this subsequent change of attitude may be deemed significant and, indeed, possibly typical of the English-educated class of Muslim graduates to which he belonged. Presumably his change of attitude stemmed from Congress's failure to substantiate its proposed non-communal, impartial character. Meanwhile the rising, English-educated Muslim middle-class had gradually been realizing that their communal interests would be best served by isolating themselves from Hindu-dominated associations like Congress.

dwelling in great peace and happiness". The Hindus had already started their agitations, *Islam-Pracharak* protested, "yet our highly-educated Hindu brethren refuse to understand this... Muslims are eternally loyal... they have risen against him (the British King) only on religious issues, as, for example, the Mutiny... If the king is unjust, we shall naturally seek to remedy it, but with patience. We shall humbly and politely acquaint him with our needs and grievances; for in British domains our religious freedom is not interfered with."<sup>17</sup>

An article in *Islam-Pracharak* in its 8th year repeated similar views about the freedom and religious tolerance enjoyed under British Rule: "The special feature of the administration and rule of the benevolent British Government is that it rules all races, whether Hindu, Muslim, Jew or Christian, with impartiality and without discrimination. In exchange for the surrender of our sovereignty, we have acquired from them noble and magnanimous qualities and if we can emulate those great qualities, then subjection to them will be felt to be a source of great joy."<sup>18</sup>

One paper at least, *Naba Nur*, in 1905 expressed incredulity at the proposal by Lord Curzon (1859-1925) to partition Bengal. According to *Naba Nur*, the proposal had "gained support of no one in this country, neither British nor Bengali." Nevertheless, *Naba Nur* remained firm in its faith in British rule. "The hopes of the people of this country rest unshaken on the fair-mindedness and justice of the British people. The inhabitants of East Bengal have, therefore, despatched a widely-supported petition to the Secretary of State and now await its reply. We have not yet been able to ascertain what the consensus of opinion amongst our Muslim leaders is. In most instances, however, the Muslims of this country have protested against the proposed new provinces, and it is, therefore, certain that Muslim public opinion opposes their creation."<sup>19</sup> It would seem that

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<sup>17</sup> Ebne Ma'az, 'Bangabibhag o Swadesi andolon', *Islam-Pracharak* 7th yr., 5th no.; September 1905.

<sup>18</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, 'Musalman sampraday o tahar patan', *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

<sup>19</sup> Ekinuddin Ahmad, 'Banger angacched', *Naba Nur*, 3rd yr., 6th no.; *Aswin*, 1312 B. S. (1905)

Naba Nur was probably mistaken, for very few Muslims appear to have supported the *Swadesi* movement in protest against the partition of Bengal.<sup>20</sup>

(b) THE *SWADESI* MOVEMENT<sup>21</sup> AND CONGRESS

An article in that same number of *Naba Nur* in 1905 seems to suggest that there was massive support for the boycott of foreign goods in Bengal and that this would ultimately lead to Bengal's prosperity.<sup>22</sup> Westernized, upper-class Muslim ladies were, therefore, called upon to discard their 'foreign'-made saris, bodices, blouses, stockings, lavender water, jewellery and lady's shoes, and use indigenous products instead."<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, there seems to have been strong distaste in the Muslim community for the *Swadesi* movement.<sup>24</sup> An article in *Islam-Pracharak* in 1907 appears to rejoice over the failure of this "perverse Hindu *Swadesi* movement ... The rhythmic clank of indigenous looms is silent. Foreign goods fill the land." Foreign cigarettes, textiles, salt, sugar and shoes were now back in Calcutta's

<sup>20</sup> See A. R. Mallick, 'The Muslims and the partition of Bengal', *A History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III, pt. 1, 1961

<sup>21</sup> The *Swadesi* (lit. 'of one's own country') movement, primarily an agitation for the strengthening of indigenous trade and industry, was the driving force behind anti-Partition agitations (1905-11) in Bengal. Nonetheless 'it was essentially a movement of Hindu revival'. -- For details see J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, 1915, p. 365; Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, 1951, p. 226, and A. C. Gupta (ed.), *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, 1958, pp. 176 and 414.

<sup>22</sup> A wave of agitations urging people to boycott foreign goods and to buy *Swadesi* products instead flooded Bengal. As a result Bengali economic enterprise suddenly got tremendous support and manifold opportunities. Scores of small industries grew up and big enterprises like banking, insurance, shipping, textile-production and so forth were launched with Bengali capital. Yet, in spite of *Naba Nur's* seemingly favouring the *Swadesi* movement, all these were mostly 'Hindu' affairs.—See A. C. Gupta, (ed.); op. cit., pp. 549-551.

<sup>23</sup> Khayerunnisa Khatun, 'Swadesanurag', *Naba Nur*, 3rd yr., 6th no.; *Aswin*, 1312 B. S. (1905)

<sup>24</sup> For the reasons why *Swadesi* agitations failed to rouse favourable reactions among Muslim masses, see Rabindra rachanabali, vol. X, 1950, pp. 522-528.



markets “at twice the previous volume”. “The *Swadesi* movement survives in name alone in newspaper propaganda and the dry orations of word-spinners. Otherwise, it is now quite dead. The illusory ‘Hindu *Swadesi* movement’ is now exactly like their gods: outwardly decked in wondrous splendour, ‘but inwardly inert and lifeless.’”<sup>25</sup>

Apparently the Hindus had been coercing Muslims into joining their movement.<sup>26</sup> Another article in *Islam-Pracharak* in 1907 stated, “Bengali Hindus have begun inhumanly oppressing, tyrannizing and coercing poor, innocent Muslims. On the pretext of their *Swadesi* movement, they have destroyed, and are still destroying the foreign clothing, foreign sugar and foreign salt of hundreds and hundreds of Muslims, who have been forced to pay through the nose for inferior indigenous salt, inferior indigenous sugar and inferior indigenous cloth. These oppressions have been borne under duress, but how much longer can they be borne? In order to coerce them into accepting the Hindu line, the Hindus have, following the outbreaks in Comilla, begun using greater force to destroy the foreign-made belongings of Muslims. As a result, flare-ups occurred at first in such places as Magra and Chatiyara in Tippera and then Jamalpur, Dewanganj and Bakshiganj in Mymensingh. In each of these places the Hindus at first trampled on the Muslims, but afterwards ‘n a few areas received beatings in return. No one can blame, the Muslims for this.’”<sup>27</sup>

Indeed *Islam-Pracharak* in 1908 declared that ‘the present perverted *Swadesi* movement’ was contrary to Islam: “Does the Islamic religion enjoin you to burn anyone’s foreign goods, to throw them into the river, to tear them up or smash them into pieces? Does the Islamic religion teach you to obstruct foreign goods coming into the country or to impede foreign trade? No, never! Such unnatural

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<sup>25</sup> Editor, Bangiya Musalmander gatrotthan’, *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 2nd no.; Falgun, 1313 B. S. (1907)

<sup>26</sup> See *Rabindra rachanabali*, op. cit., pp. 527-528, and also J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*, 1968, pp. 31-32.

<sup>27</sup> Ebne Ma’az, ‘Bharater bartaman rajnaitik abastha o Musalman jatir kartabya’, *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 4th no; *Jyaistha*, 1314 B. S. (1907)

injunctions are alien to, and impossible in, the Islamic religion, which on the contrary declares such conduct sinful.”<sup>28</sup>

As regards Congress, *Islam-Pracharak* in 1908 rejoiced over its ‘death’<sup>29</sup>: “The 22 year old Congress, having entered its 23rd year, is finished. Fortunately, with the exception of two or three negligible, perverted *Swadesi* touts, who bear the name of Muslims, no famous Muslim was present at its death bed.”<sup>30</sup>

### (c) EMERGENCE OF MUSLIM LEAGUE<sup>31</sup>

The editor of *Islam-Pracharak* in its 8th year indicated that the Hindu political leaders were deeply upset over the likelihood of a branch of the Muslim national political organisation known as the All-India Muslim League being founded shortly in Bombay. The Hindus were, therefore, harassing Muslim leaders such as the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca, the Hon’ble Khan Bahadur Nabab Ali Choudhury and Maolvi Hossam Haidar Choudhury and preventing them from holding political meetings. The Hindus involved seemed to have been members of Congress or of the *Swadesi* movement. “It is infinitely regrettable”, *Islam-Pracharak* commented, “that a number of vile individuals, treacherous to their own people, who bear the name of Muslim, have become the principal accomplices of the Hindus in achieving their fell schemes.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ebne Ma’az, ‘Bhai Musalman Jago’, *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 8th no.; *Magh*, 1314 B. S. (1908) It may be pointed out that *Islam-Pracharak*’s observations on the *Swadesi* were followed up later by *Islam-darsan* in 1921.

<sup>29</sup> Reference here is to the breaking-up of the Surat Congress in 1907.

<sup>30</sup> Editor, *Jatiya o dharma sangbad*, *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 8th no.; *Magh*, 1314 B. S. (1908)

<sup>31</sup> The All-India Muslim League was founded on December 30, 1906 in Dacca to serve exclusively Muslim political interests in British India. The first resolution of the convention stated the objects of the League as follows: “(a) To promote, among the Musalmans of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government, and to remove any misconception that may arise as to the intention of Government with regard to any of the measures. (b) To protect and advance the political rights and interests of Mussalmans of India, and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government. (c) To prevent the rise among the Mussalmans of India of any feeling of hostility towards other communities, without prejudice to the aforementioned objects of the League.” – Quoted in Matiur Rahman, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> Editor, *Jatiya o dharma sangbad*, *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 3rd no.

Commenting on the All-India Muslim League in 1923,<sup>33</sup> the editor of *Choltan* wrote, "Fourteen or fifteen years ago, when the All-India Muslim League was founded, its aims were to support Government and oppose Congress; for it was then considered a serious offence for Muslims to join the latter institution. The one or two Muslims who did were labelled Hindu-boot-lickers and traitors to their religion and community."<sup>34</sup> Since there was this opposition between Congress and the League, it is perhaps not surprising that clashes should have occurred between the two communities. Reading between the lines of Muslim press reports, it would seem that Hindus were mainly taking the initiative in political matters and were trying to cajole, hoodwink or coerce Muslims into following their lead. The assumption of an initiative by Muslim leaders themselves seems to have greatly angered Hindus: for example, *Islam-Pracharak* while commenting on an incident at Comilla, wrote, "Probably no one is unaware of the dreadful incident which recently occurred in Comilla. The evils of the perverse Hindu *Swadesi* movement are gradually manifesting themselves. The rebellious speeches of Hindu leaders involved in this agitation against the partition of Bengal has set ablaze a fire of unrest throughout the land... They have tried to hoodwink Muslims into joining their movement, but when Muslim leaders suddenly assumed leadership of their own community, the high hopes of the Hindus were impeded and their aspirations almost extinguished. Pal (Bipin Chandra Pal), Banerji (Surendra Nath Banerji) and their disciples have been setting up their meetings and committees all over Bengal, without any interference from Muslims. Yet, as soon as it was announced the Nawab Bahadur (Nawab Khawaja Salimullah Bahadur of Dacca) would be holding a meeting in Comilla, these Hindu disciples of Bande Mataram got up to new tricks. A group of them in Comilla hatched a plot to ruin the

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<sup>33</sup> From the Journals and periodicals so far consulted it would seem that, with the exception of *Islam-Pracharak* the Bengali Muslim press did not much mention the Muslim League until 1923, presumably because Muslim politics in Bengal were in those days dominated by the *Ulema*. Consequently, the League did not come to the forefront until the *Ulema*-led *Khilafat* movement died out.

<sup>34</sup> Editor, 'Kangress o Mosalman', *Choltan*, 8th yr. 17th no.; 21st *Bhadra*, 1330 B. S.; 7th September, 1923

Nawab's meeting. When, after a tumultuous Muslim reception, the Nawab Bahadur, the Hon'ble Khan Bahadur (Syed Nabab Ali Choudhury) and Prince Khan Bahadur of Paschim Gaon were setting out on the 4th of March for the residence of the most important local zemindar, Maolvi Syed Hossam Haidar Chaudhury, some infidel Hindu cast a stone or brick at the Nawab Bahadur. Some of these fiendish, ill-bred Hindus did not even hesitate, so it is said, to threaten the Nawab and other Muslim leaders with brooms... precipitating a clash with the Muslim general public, who were loyal and devoted to the Nawab Bahadur. No matter how these ill-bred nihilist Bengali Hindus boast, they fear to face Muslim valour and vigour; so, very likely they did receive a punch or two. The peace-loving, noble-hearted Nawab Bahadur and the other Muslim leaders did their best, however, to pacify their excited fellow Muslims... The clash will have deplorable repercussions and set back India's advancement one hundred years. It goes without saying that the Hindus of Comilla have been very imprudent."<sup>35</sup>

(d) MUSLIM PRESS STILL URGING MUSLIMS TO REMAIN ALOOF FROM POLITICS

According to an editorial in *Islam-Pracharak* in its 8th year it would seem, however, that Muslims were still being urged to remain aloof from politics regarding involvement as disastrous. The editor wrote; "An heretical Muslim graduate in Delhi has launched an Urdu news paper called *Aftab* at the instigation of some Congressite Hindu and is attacking the British Government and the Muslim people. In this connection my fellow Muslims should remember two Calcutta journals namely the English weekly newspaper *Musalman* and the Bengali *Soltan*."<sup>36</sup> Though these are known as Muslim newspapers they actually belong to Hindus in the *Bande Mataram* crowd or to

<sup>35</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 2nd no.; Falgun, 1313 B. S. (1907)

<sup>36</sup> *The Musalman*, edited by Mujibur Rahman, is acclaimed as one of the pioneers of Bengali Muslim journalism. Yet it was never in its days favoured by the communal and pro-Government Muslim journals, because of its maintaining a strong policy of promoting nationalist, political agitations. The weekly *Soltan*, too, was censured for supporting Congress-sponsored political movements.

Congressite touts. These papers have no relation with the opinion of Muslim society. Their editors are out to destroy their own people for their personal interests. All Muslims should carefully protect themselves from these treacherous journals.<sup>37</sup>

#### (e) TERRORIST MOVEMENT

There seems to have been a strong feeling among Muslim editors against the terrorist movement indulged in by Bengali Hindus.<sup>38</sup> According to *Islam-Pracharak* in 1907, in their determination to defeat both the British and the Muslims, Hindus recruited from all classes, ranging, from the highly educated to schoolboys, were training themselves in such things as stove-fighting and wrestling. "Their alarming antics have lit fires of insurrection throughout Bengal." These thugs had shot dead a Muslim in Comilla, slaughtered two others in Jamalpur and in the guise of both Hindu and Muslim mendicants were spreading terrorism throughout Bengal. Disguised as *Maolvis*, they were inciting Muslims to loot Hindu homes, marry Hindu widows and rape Hindu ladies on the assurance of help from both the Government and the Nawab of Dacca. *Islam-Pracharak* was pleased that "the authorities have realised the alarming form this illegal incitement by Hindu terrorists has assumed". It, therefore, cautioned Muslims not to associate with Hindu terrorists or do anything at their instigation, "which would occasion annoyance or displeasure to the Government."<sup>39</sup>

That same issue of *Islam-Pracharak* also reported upon the protest meetings held by Muslim associations in the Punjab

<sup>37</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 3rd no.

<sup>38</sup> Muslim press opposed the terrorist movement mainly for, three reasons: firstly, the pro-Government section quite understandably, did not favour revolutionary terrorism, that was designed expressly to strike at Government; secondly, any anti-Government activities, let alone terrorism, were regarded as contrary to Muslim communal interests; thirdly, the religious aspect of the terrorist movement, being little more than extreme Hindu nationalism, as defined by Tilak, Aurabindo, Bipinchandra and Brahmabandhab, was provocatively anti-Islamic.

<sup>39</sup> Ebne Ma'az, 'Bharater rajnaitik sbastha o Musalman jatir kartabya', *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 4th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1314 B. S. (1907)

condemning the terrorist activities of Punjabi Hindus, especially of 'Congressite touts in the *Arya Samaj*'. "They have also stated in unequivocal language that no Muslim was either associated, or in sympathy, with this Hindu lawlessness. The resolutions...have been sent to the British authorities, thereby demonstrating the proper loyalty of Punjabi Muslims."<sup>40</sup> Later on *Islam-Pracharak* expressed satisfaction in the fact that Muslims were not "associated with the present disturbances (terrorist activities) in India. May God preserve them from this highly contagious disease."<sup>41</sup>

Commenting on the first *Swadesi* movement about one and a half decades later the editor of *Choltan* observed that it was then "that political murderers first emerged. Then on the scene appeared a group of gentlemen-bandits.<sup>42</sup> After many of these had been arrested and sentenced, this banditry for a long time ceased to be manifest... Fortunately, Muslim young men had never been associated with such banditry, murder and so forth."<sup>43</sup>

#### (f) SOME WESTERN-EDUCATED MUSLIMS IN FAVOUR OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY BY MUSLIMS

It may have been noticed in section (d) above that the person who launched the anti-British journal in Delhi round about 1906 was a graduate, as also was the contributor to *Hafez* in 1897. It would seem that, partly due to their education and partly to their contact with their politically advanced associates, these graduates had

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<sup>40</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *ibid*.

<sup>41</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 12th no.

<sup>42</sup> This refers to the political dacoities, popularly known as *Swadesi dakati*, that were frequently committed by volunteers from revolutionary parties.

<sup>43</sup> Editor, 'Siksita dakati', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 20th no.; 11th *Aswin*, 1330 B. S.; 28th September, 1923.

Yet, it would seem there was also a Muhamedan element involved in violent, terroristic activities. *The Sedition Committee Report 1918*, (pp. 174-76), states, "In January 1917 was discovered that a party of eight Muhammadans had joined the *Mujahidin* (i. e. Muslim revolutionaries) from districts of Rangpur and Dacca in Eastern Bengal." Since such Muslim activities were presumably isolated and not as conspicuous as those of Hindus, the Muslim press may well have been unaware of them.

become conscious of India's political condition and wished to ameliorate it.

An article in *Naba Nur* in 1905 is interesting as one of the first statements of the political opinions of a section of educated Muslim society and we, therefore, quote it: "The British are reluctant to fulfil the aspirations they have aroused in the hearts of the educated of this country by disseminating political ideas from time to time and by spreading English education. This has caused political agitations all over the place. It is a travesty of truth to say that these political agitations are confined merely to Hindus. With the spread of education, the desire to ameliorate the motherland is spreading throughout the whole country..."

"Tanks to Lord Ripon's administration, the aspirations of the educated community of this country have widened and the political agitations have assumed greater speed than hitherto. It was at this time that the veteran diplomat Lord Dufferin appeared on the scene. In collaboration with his able colleague, Lieutenant Governor Sir Auckland Colvin, he determined to weaken political agitations by a policy of divide and rule. It was from then on that the back-slapping of Muslims began. The result of this back-slapping was a circular which was nothing but an attempt to throw dust into the eyes of Muslims. In this circular the British Government in India announced that if an equally-qualified Muslim candidate applied for a post, then he was to be given priority over a Hindu. The job-opportunities for Hindus under the British Government were limited. The British thought they would be able to keep the Muslims separate from the Hindus by tempting them with these limited job-opportunities..."

"As far as the Government was concerned, both Hindus and Muslims were aliens to it: the assumption of power by either of them was equally against the interests of the British. The British policy is now clear to educated Muslim society. And the British Government has also realised that it is not feasible to keep educated Muslims satisfied with mere empty words. Consequently, an ebb-tide has set in British affections for Muslims. On a visit to Mymensing Lord Curzon used harsh words in reply to a Muslim: petition for government jobs.

“Consequently, it is equally necessary for Hindus and Muslims alike to make political agitations. That is why we now see Hindus and Muslims going forward hand-in-hand in political movements...

‘For a whole decade the Muslims stood aloof from political agitations begging for government favours. But what good has it done them? Did the Muslims acquire any rights or privileges during those long years?...

“My final point is this: the Muslim decline has reached its limit. There is no longer time for bandying words. The time for genuine action has arrived. We must strive for advancement in all spheres. It is ridiculous to hope to nourish the remaining limbs of the body of society by keeping one limb unnourished. Consequently, we must participate in political movements also.”<sup>44</sup>

A further article two months later was written in a similar vein and seems to have been aimed at getting Muslim society to collaborate with Hindus in the *Swadesi* movement. We quote: “However much the British may have helped to uplift us, their policy of divide-and-rule has done us irrevocable harm. It has so widened the paper-thin line of difference between Hindus and Muslims, that the Hindus are now alienated from us... That education, which increasingly enfeebles the student and denies him the opportunity to cultivate politics, is in no way western education; for an integral part of western education is politics. The British have no intention, however, of making us politically great, by imparting that education properly. Consequently, they wish to exclude politics from our education... Our attempts to obtain our just rights in the administration of our country have disturbed them, and they intend suppressing them. Furthermore, they have been forced to seek a way of even closing our path to higher education. University ordinances<sup>45</sup> are an easily recognisable move in that direction... The political power which has established domination over us wishes to suppress our

<sup>44</sup> Khayer Khan Munshi, ‘Rajnaitik andolon o Musalman’, Naba Nur, 3rd yr., 5th no.; *Bhadra*, 1312 B. S. (1905)

<sup>45</sup> This refers to Lord Curzon’s education policy, as embodied in the Indian University Act, 1904.



cultivation of politics and has deprived us of our rights in the administration of our country. It forbids us to consider our own welfare. This kind of domination can, however, never become firmly established.”<sup>46</sup>

It would seem, however, from subsequent events that the two articles failed to awaken much response; for Muslims were still too apathetic to safeguard their own political interests, let alone unite with Hindus in a concerted campaign.<sup>47</sup>

(g) BENGALI MUSLIMS STILL APATHETIC IN REGARD TO POLITICS

A report in *Islam-Pracharak* in 1908 would seem to indicate that the Mahomedan Education Conference and the AII-India Muslim League sessions held in Karachi in December, 1907 were poorly attended as far as Bengal was concerned: “There is no doubt that this great convention would have been devoid of any Bengali delegate had not the Khan Bahadur Sahib (Syed Nabab Ali Choudhury) and his two companions and the editor and reporter of the *Sudhakar* (*Mihir* o *Sudhakar*) been present in Karachi.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Maolvi Mohammad Hedapetullah, ‘*Swadesi andolon*’, Naba Nur, 3rd yr., 7th no.; *Kartik*, 1312 B. S. (1905)

<sup>47</sup> An interesting reference in this regard is the resolution passed by the Muslim League over the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911. Though considered detrimental to Muslim interests, this Government action was not censured by the League in its special session in Dacca on December 30, 1911. Indeed, the resolution states: “the Mahomedans out of their loyalty to and profound respect and regard for the Throne, feel that they have no other alternative but to desist from entering a protest (against it).”— Quoted in Matiur Rahman, op. cit., p. 243:

<sup>48</sup> Editor, ‘*Jatiya o dharma sangbad*’, *Islam-Pracharak*, 8th yr., 8th no.; *Magh*, 1314 B. S. (1908)

### III 1919-1923

#### (a) HINDU-MUSLIM POLITICAL COLLABORATION<sup>49</sup>

##### (i) Via Congress

The *Khilafat* movement drove Muslims into collaboration with Hindus and thus Congress began being attended by Muslims in greater numbers. In 1920 *Al-Eslam* wrote: "During the long 34 years of its existence, no session of Congress has been attended by so great a number of Muslim delegates as was this recent special session. My heart jumps with joy to announce that from amongst those Maolvis, who always declined to attend Congress, deeming it a Hindu institution, and indeed, who have until now disdained it, at least one thousand *Ulema*, *Fazes* and so forth attended this recent session. This leads one to conclude that distressed by the *Khilafat* question people from all classes of Muslim society... assembled...to make known their distress."<sup>50</sup>

*Choltan* had always been in favour of collaboration with Congress and its management had, in fact, been attending since round about 1910. This had exposed them to many bitter attacks from the conservative pro-Government Muslim press. But now during the *Khilafat* movement Muslim public opinion was beginning to move in step with *Choltan* who in 1923 expressed the belief that "politics are part of Islam, whose very foundations are the State, the Administration and the *Khilafat*. The main means of preserving the *Khilafat* and of protecting Islam is the Jihad. Consequently,

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<sup>49</sup> The first public manifestation of collaboration between Hindus and Muslims was in anti-Government demonstrations in 1919 over 'Rowlatt Acts' and 'Jalianwalabagh massacre.' The union between the two was finally cemented when combined Non-cooperation and *Khilafat* agitations swept the country. The *Jamiyat-i-Ulema-i-Hind* issued a *fatwa* sanctioning the Congress-sponsored Non-cooperation movement. The Congress, on the other hand, gave full support to *Khilafat* agitations: Gandhi, accompanied by *Khilafat* leaders, the Ali brothers and Maolana Azad, toured the country extensively to drum up public support for *Khilafat* demands.

<sup>50</sup> Sheikh Abdul Gafur Jalali, 'Khilafat o Bharatbasi', *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 5th no.; *Bhadra*, 1327 B, S. (1920)

Muslims are deeply committed to politics... We hope Muslims will devote more and more of their energies to Congress, and within Congress will strive to increase their numbers and extend their influence.”<sup>51</sup>

Later that year *Choltan* expressed regret about the number of Muslims who had been elected members of the general assembly of the Bengal Congress. “Of 268 elected members, only 32 are Muslim... An executive council of 60 members has been formed, it includes only 19 Muslims... of the 7 office-holders, only 2 are Muslim... due consideration does not appear to have been given to Muslims.”<sup>52</sup>

A little later that year *Choltan* returned to the theme of Muslim indifference to political affairs complaining that they did not contribute the four-anna subscription to congress on time, nor did they seek to become members of the provincial Congress committee. Naturally their views were not properly represented in Congress. “It is essential”, *Choltan* maintained, “that in future Muslims should be circumspect in all these regards”<sup>53</sup>

In general *Choltan*'s view seems to have been summed up by a remark of its editor in June, 1923: “To achieve the objects with which as Indians we are involved in India we must co-operate with Congress.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Editor, ‘Kangrea o Mochalman’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 17th no.; 21st *Bhadra*, 1330 B. S.; 7th September, 1923

<sup>52</sup> Editor, ‘Bangiya Kangres kamiti’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 30th no. q 28th *Agrahayan*, 1330 B. S.; 14th December, 1923

<sup>53</sup> Editor, ‘Kangres o Mochalman’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 31st no.; 5th *Paus*, 1330 B. S.; 21st December, 1923

<sup>54</sup> Editor, ‘Amader bhabisyat karyapranali’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 8th no.; 14th *Asarh*, 1330 B. S.; 29th June, 1923

## (ii) The aim of collaboration

1. *The Khilafat*<sup>55</sup>

The hostility between Britain and Turkey during the First World War placed Muslims in an unhappy position and the *Khilafat* question immediately after the war reveals the deep dilemma into which Muslims had fallen. A clash of loyalties was being waged in their hearts between their loyalty to their King Emperor, who held temporal power over them, and the Sultan, Caliph of Turkey, who held spiritual power over them. This dilemma is clearly seen in the following quotation from *Banga Nur* in 1920: "The chief concern of the Muslims is what can now be done in regard to the Caliphate... Most unfortunately for us our Emperor waged war with our Caliph, the *Sultan* of Turkey. There were always good relations between these two states, and our Emperor always helped our Caliph, the ruler of Turkey. No other king in the world has as many Muslim subjects as our Emperor. Consequently, good relations and friendship between these two states was natural. In these circumstances it is difficult to understand why this has happened. Nevertheless, the two Emperors waged war. Why they fought against each other, despite so many grounds for friendship, is a matter that they alone can know. All that we can say from the outside is that some serious cause must have compelled our Emperor to make war on Turkey and the Sultan of Turkey to make war on our Emperor.

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<sup>55</sup> "The growing weakness and fast decline of Turkey before 1914 and her losses during the First World War (1914-18) threatening her with complete extinction roused the liveliest interests of the Indian Muhammadans and a movement was started in about 1920 for exercising pressure on England so that she might not join in the destruction of Turkey and the Caliphate. This movement amongst the Indian Muhammadans is known as the *Khilafat* movement." (S. Bhattacharya, *A Dictionary of Indian History*, 1967, p. 520). The movement sanctioned the Congress-programme of 'Non-violent Non-Cooperation' and forbade Muslims from serving the Government of India in any capacity, particularly in the Indian Army. Furthermore, India under British rule was declared to be *Dar ul harb* i. e. a place of war. This resulted in an exodus of about 20,000 Muslims to Afghanistan. The *Khilafat* agitations, however, continued in full force upto March, 1924, when Kemal Pasha 'pricked the *Khilafa* bubble' by deposing and banishing the Caliph himself.

The British king was victorious. The treaty is now being negotiated... Our most serious concern now is the protection of our holy places<sup>56</sup> and the settlement of our *Khilafat* question. In reply to all the petitions sent to it in this regard from our various meetings and associations the Government has stated that the solution of the *Khilafat* question is up to Muslims alone... But the Muslims can not do anything about the matter until they see what solution is in store for the Turkish empire... We pitifully petition our just British King in this regard.”<sup>57</sup>

It was as impossible to imagine Islam without a Caliph. Therefore, in 1920 *Islam-darsan* wrote, “His Excellency the Sultan of Turkey is the approved Caliph and universally acknowledged representative of the whole Muslim World... Islam without a Caliph is like a boat without a helmsman... It is, therefore, essential for the Muslim world to elect a Caliph... Some people suggest that someone else be elected Caliph instead of His Excellency the *Sultan*. But they ought to recognise that this is completely impossible ... We fear that those who attempt to do this will be sinners and heretics.”<sup>58</sup> Some Muslims were clearly concerned about the possibility of bloodshed over the *Khilafat* question. It will be seen in the following quotation from *Islam-darsan* how Muslim leaders were struggling, on the one hand, to warn the British Government of the violence that might break out over this at any moment and, on the other, to restrain Muslims from violence and to persuade them peacefully to petition the British to hand back to the Turks all the territory they had seized: “As a well-wisher of the British Government, I emphasize that... Muslims are a peace-loving, God-fearing nation. But when their religious beliefs are affected they go to extremes. In consideration of this it is proper that the government should in accordance with its own agreement hand back to the Turks all those lands which have ‘now been snatched from them and which previously were subject to

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<sup>56</sup> This refers to the Muslim holy places in the Middle East which were occupied by the Allied forces in the First World War.

<sup>57</sup> Syed Nabab Ali Choudhury, ‘Abhibhasan’, *Banga Nur*. 1st yr., 4th no., Falgun, 1326 B. S. (1920)

<sup>58</sup> ‘*Khilafat prasanga*’ *Islam-darsan*, 1st yr., 1st no.; Baisakh, 1327 B. S. (1920)

the authority of the Turkish Government. Otherwise, there is a danger of great unrest and peril in India...<sup>59</sup> I expect of the British Government that they should do nothing which will harm our religion or interfere with it. Should such things occur inadvertently, however, I hope that they will be swiftly remedied.

“I now request the Muslims in general and my own friends in particular that in seeking to draw the attention of the British Government to the *Khilafat* question they should do all in their power to adopt only those means whereby there is no danger of a breach of peace or bloodshed occurring.”<sup>60</sup>

The expression of opinion in *AL-Eslam* in 1921 was, however, less restrained, and an underlying anti-British tinge was now clearly discernible: “Unless the Caliphate is protected and unless the Caliph’s throne jurisdiction and prestige are preserved, Islam will be irreparably harmed and the Islamic nation destroyed... The Caliph constitutes the spinal cord of the Islamic religion and the Muslim nation... The way the allies have destroyed and devastated the empire of the Turkish *Sultan*, the sole Caliph of the Muslim world, and have

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<sup>59</sup> The British had during the war managed to gain Indian Muslim support, by clear assurances that the Turkish empire would not be dismembered, nor the Caliphate disestablished. At the cessation of hostilities, however, the British Government had abandoned its promises. Under the terms of the Treaty of Sevres (1920) the Turkish empire was partitioned; it lost not only its Arab provinces, which were placed under the control of Britain and France, but other places also: Constantinople and the Straits, a large part of Asia Minor and nearly the whole of Thrace were put under different European powers. The Caliph-Sultan himself was ‘made a virtual prisoner in the hands of an allied High Commission’. Indian Muslims were naturally shocked at this; they felt deceived. In consequence, violent reactions over the Turkish question were manifested via *Khilafat* agitations, demanding that all pre-war Turkish territories be handed back to the Caliph.

<sup>60</sup> Maolana Shah Sufi Mohammad Abu Bakar Sahib, ‘Abhi-bhasan’, *Islam-darsan*, 1st yr., 7th no.; Kartik, 1327 B. S. (1920). This, however, reflects the compromising attitudes of a particular section of Muslim public opinion. Yet, it is to be remembered that during the early 1920’s *Khilafat* captured people’s minds. Consequently, the rather stronger anti-British stand, taken by *Choltan*, would have immediately attracted wide popular support.

arbitrarily partitioned it has absolutely ruined the Caliph's prestige and honour. Our holy places are now occupied by infidels."<sup>61</sup>

Interlaced with the *Khilafat* question was the question of the identity of the Bengali Muslims and the nation to which they belonged.<sup>62</sup> If they belonged to a world-wide Muslim nation based on religion then their loyalty to the Caliphate would override all other considerations. But if they belonged to an all-India Indian nation based on birthplace and domicile, and, thus, secular in outlook, then their first priority was the preservation of Indian interests alone. This was the question raised in *Moslem Bharat* in 1921: "Are we first of all Muslims, or, inhabitants of India? That is, are we obliged first of all to safeguard the interests of the Muslim world, or, is it the interests of India that we must consider first?... (If) the representatives of the Caliphate, for which we are now striving so desperately, were to invade India, then it would be our duty to oppose them. For we must become independent not only from the

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<sup>61</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, 'Asahayogita o amader kartabya', *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr.; 10th no.; *Magh*, 1327 B. S. (1921)

<sup>62</sup> Bengali Muslims had seemingly long been in a dilemma over their nationhood, and this was to remain a thorny problem for many years to come. The points at issue were: (i) did the Muslims of Bengal belong to a Bengali nation, or to a more broadly-based Indian nation; (ii) or, did they perhaps form an integral part of a world-wide Muslim nation based on Islamic brotherhood. Needless to say, the seeds of this problem lay in Bengali Muslims seeking to achieve a separate identity for themselves, based apparently on religion. This accounts for their propensity for directing their gaze to the Muslim countries outside India. It may be further noted that the Panislamic movement, coupled with *Khilafat* agitations, provided a stronger base in Muslim minds for the development of world-wide Muslim nationalism. Yet, throughout the years, from 1900 to 1930, there existed a counter challenge too, which attempted to promote among Muslims the concept of Bengali or Indian nationalism. For example, *Pracharak* in 1900 stated, "I am satisfied to identify myself as a Bengali: 'Twenty-one years later *Moslem Bharat* posed the question: "Are we first of all Muslims, or, inhabitants of India?" And, in 1928 *Saogat* stated more explicitly, "Through its emphasis on religion Bengali Muslim society has completely ignored the claims of nationality, completely forgetting that Islam is a religion, not a nation.'" *Saogat's* attitude here is unmistakably clear. Nevertheless, it was via this concept of religious nationalism that the separate state of Pakistan was created in 1947.

British, but also from all other foreign powers. Of course as Muslims we could perhaps achieve liberty and equality with them (i.e. the Turkish invaders), but we are not the only inhabitants of India. No one...has the right to hold in subjection all these countless Hindus, Buddhists and Christians of India.”<sup>63</sup> Thus it would seem that in some sections of Muslim society blind loyalty to the Khalifa had disappear even as early as 1921.

On the other hand, *Choltan* in June, 1923, opined that “For the time being, to achieve our wider religious and national objects outside India, we must abide by the decisions of the *Khilafat* Committee.”<sup>64</sup>

## 2. *Swaraj*<sup>65</sup>

It would seem from remarks in the press about *Swaraj* that the meaning of the word itself was deliberately kept a little vague. Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899–?), for example, in an editorial in his *Dhumketu* in 1922 declared, “I do not understand this *Swaraj* business. Every eminent leader interprets it in his own individual way.” Nevertheless, Nazrul’s position was unequivocal: “Not one scrap of Indian soil should remain subject to foreigners... The present King and administrators who are bossing “this country are turning it into a burning ground... When we petition them...they refuse to listen. They still have not acquired that much sense... We must give up this nonsense of begging from them or supplicating.” In brief, as far as *Dhumketu* was concerned, the British “must... pack up and be off across the sea.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Abdullah al Azad, ‘Nan-ko-aparesan ba asahayogita’, *Moslem Bharat*, 1st yr.; 4th no.; *Magh*, 1327 B. S. (1921)

<sup>64</sup> Editor, ‘Amader bhabisyat karyapranali’, *Choltan*, 8th yr.;, 8th no.; 14th *Asarh*, 1330 B. S.; 29th June, 1923

<sup>65</sup> *Swaraj* (lit. ‘self-government’), as associated with Non-co- operation agitations, was a Congress-sponsored political movement launched in 1920. It aimed at the construction of ‘a government of one’s own within the dead shell of the foreign [ i. e. British) government’ via non-violent methods.

<sup>66</sup> Editor, ‘Dhumketu path’, *Dhumketu*, 1st yr., 13th no.; 26th *Aswin*, 1329 B. S. (1922) It may be noted that *Dkuntketu* here clearly contradicts the official



*Choltan*, too, in 1923 seemed a little impatient about the vagueness and uncertainty surrounding the meaning of *Swaraj*: "Mahatma Gandhi always used to try to remain vague in his exposition of *Swaraj*."<sup>67</sup> The reason for the vagueness was implicit in *Choltan*'s article. For it stated: "The venerable Maolana Hasrat Mohani attempted to define the meaning of *Swaraj* in Nagpur and Ahmedabad<sup>68</sup> – he has been given a two-year prison sentence for making that attempt." Nevertheless, *Choltan* saw no reason for being satisfied "with mere spiritual and moral interpretations of it. There is no sense in congratulating ourselves on having attained *Swaraj* merely because we have learnt to take beatings."<sup>69</sup> That is indicative of faint-heartedness and limited aspirations. Congress should keep a sharp lookout, lest people are deceived and misled by such specious explanations of *Swaraj*.<sup>70</sup>

In June 1923 *Choltan* drew attention to the question of Council elections.<sup>71</sup> *Choltan* did not itself feel that *Swaraj* would be attained by getting elected to the Council or by Non-cooperation alone. Nevertheless, it did feel that a combination of these activities could clear the path to *Swaraj*. Therefore, since a number of people in

Congress line, which, by the term *Swaraj*, did not imply 'Full political independence.'

<sup>67</sup> Presumably the 'vagueness' referred to arose from Gandhi's own interpretation of *Swaraj*, which to him was not merely political, but, more importantly, moral and spiritual.

<sup>68</sup> The Maolana in the Ahmedabad session of Congress in 1921 proposed that *Swaraj* meant 'complete Independence free from all foreign control', the definition, which Gandhi did not like.

<sup>69</sup> This refers to police lathi charges on Satyagraha demonstrations by *Swaraj*-volunteers, which were intended by Congress to be non-violent and passive.

<sup>70</sup> Editor, 'Swarajier byakhya', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 3rd no.; 11th *Jyaistha*, 1330 B. S.; 25th May, 1923

<sup>71</sup> Political leaders and the nationalist press were at the time divided over the Council Entry' issue. Staunch non-cooperators advocated all-out Non-cooperation with government and regarded the boycotting of Council elections as one of its most effective methods. On the other hand, the *Swarajites* led by Mr. C. R. Das and Mr. Motilal Nehru, though committed in principle to Non-cooperation, determined to Contest the elections, urging that the Legislative Councils be boycotted from within.

Congress considered election to the Council worthwhile, *Choltan* maintained, Muslims should not impede them. "Everyone must agree... that if a number of patriotic, independent-minded people can get elected to the Council instead of incompetent useless yes-men and lackeys, then at least the country will not be harmed to the extent to which it was in the past."<sup>72</sup>

According to that same issue of *Choltan* "many shortsighted and politically-ignorant Muslims believe *Swaraj* will benefit Hindus and that *Swaraj* is a Hindu affair." This, *Choltan* maintained, was a great mistake. It was equally erroneous to "think that the *Khilafat* question can be solved only by the award of Mustafa Kemal, or by the feelings for the Muslim nation of the *Amir* of Afghanistan". Both views were equally mistaken. "The holy places of the Muslims and Muslim domains will never be free from danger until India has achieved *Swaraj*... So, those who favour the protection of the Caliph, those who are eager to preserve the sanctity of the holy lands, those who aspire to the independence of Iraq and Egypt and those who wish well for Constantinople and the Caliphate domains must all first of all think about achieving the freedom of India in order to attain the objectives of their nation and religion... *Swaraj* will benefit Muslims more than Hindus. *Swaraj* for India will widen the path for the rise of Muslims throughout the whole world."<sup>73</sup>

### (iii) Means

#### 1. *Non-cooperation*<sup>74</sup>

"A terrible agitation has been stirred up in India over the brutal slaughter at Jalianwalabag"<sup>75</sup> and the *Khilafat* question", *Al-Eslam*

<sup>72</sup> Editor, 'Kaunsil prabes', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 4th no.: 18th *Jyaistha*, 1330 B. S.; 1st June 1923

<sup>73</sup> 'Handu Mochalman', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 4th no.: 18th *Jyaistha*, 1330 B. S.; 1st June, 1923

<sup>74</sup> In August 1920 Congress rejected the new administrative reforms embodied in the Act of 1919 and launched the Non-cooperation movement. Muslim support invested the movement with an unprecedented all-India character but it was suspended following the Chauri Chaura massacre in 1922.

<sup>75</sup> The reference here is to the atrocious killing, under the order of General Dyer, of over 500 unarmed Indians, who had assembled at a meeting at Jalianwalabag, Amritsar on 13th April, 1919.

stated in 1921. "This agitation is called Non-cooperation. Its originator is Mahatma Gandhi, the ideal and distinguished son of India. And his associates are such people as Maolana Shaokat Ali and Maolana Mohammad Ali,. Lacs and lacs of people throughout India support this declaration (of Non-cooperation) and are dedicated to it. The aims of the Non-cooperation movement are twofold: firstly, the solving of the *Khilafat* question, the restoration of all those domains taken from the Sultan of Turkey and preservation of the prestige of the Caliph of the Muslim world and secondly, the gaining of *Swaraj* for India ... The one power amongst the allies which has done most harm to the Turkish Sultan is Britain, under whose mandate most of his domains now are."<sup>76</sup>

According to the same article in *Al-Eslam* numerous petitions had been made to the British Government in the last few years by both Hindus and Muslims, but none had been heeded. "Having no other alternative the Muslims have adopted the policy of Non-cooperation. The purpose of the declaration of Non-cooperation was this: 'I shall not assist any individual or nation which seeks to harm my religion, my motherland and my individuality'... This is the advice of the *Quran* and the *Hadith*... In order to comply with this religious counsel, we must, as far as possible, relinquish contact with the British."

The editor of *Choltan* in 1923 was not sanguine about the achievement of *Swaraj* merely by Non-cooperation and Civil disobedience.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, the movement was "infusing into the hearts of Indians some qualities necessary for the attainment of *Swaraj* and this in itself is for the moment a considerable gain."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, 'Asahayogita o amader karttabya', *Al-Eslam*. 6th yr., 10th no.; *Magh*, 1327 B. S. (1921)

<sup>77</sup> On April 6th, 1919 Gandhi started the first Civil Disobedience movement in protest against the Rowlatt Acts.

<sup>78</sup> Editor, 'Ain bbanga kamiti', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 23rd no.; 9th *Kartik*, 1330 B. S.; 26th October, 1923

## 2. *Swadesi*<sup>79</sup>

*Islam-darsan* in 1921 was not altogether in sympathy with the boycott of foreign textiles. Attempts had been made to persuade people that foreign textiles were *haram* and prayers said in them void. In various places such textiles had been burnt because of their alleged sinfulness. "All the specious arguments against the use of foreign (textiles) are political", *Islam-darsan* declared, "their connection with religion is tenuous... Naturally we fully support the production and use of home-products... But we do not in the least support the burning of foreign textiles or the indulgence in waste, by destroying them in any other way."<sup>80</sup>

*Choltan*, however, felt two years later that the picketing and boycotting of foreign goods was more likely to lead to the attainment of *Swaraj* than the packing of jails with political prisoners.<sup>81</sup>

### (b) DISSATISFACTION WITH POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

#### (i) Trickery by the conservative wing of Congress

*Choltan* in October, 1923 'complained that the conservative wing of Congress had been tricking Muslims out of becoming Council members by persuading them that Council membership was *haram* to Muslims. "That is why at the recent special Delhi Congress Maolana Abul Kalam Azad has decreed that it is not only *jayej* to become Council members but, on the contrary, one's special obligation... Relying upon what little knowledge we possess of religion and of the *Quran* and *Hadith* we say without hesitation to the Muslims of Bengal and to Muslim voters that voting for worthy candidates who will fight the Government in the Assembly for the

<sup>79</sup> The *Swadesi* movement, urging people to boycott foreign-made goods and to buy indigenous products instead, originally started in 1905 over Curzon's Partition of Bengal. After the annulment of Partition in 1911 the movement apparently lost its intensity only to be revived again with full vigour during *Khilafat*-Non-cooperation days.

<sup>80</sup> Editor, 'Bidesi bastra barjan', *Islam-darsan*, 2nd yr., 4th no.; *Sraban*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

<sup>81</sup> Editor, 'Nagpure satyagraha', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 4th no.; 18th *Jyaishta*, 1330 B. S.; 1st June, 1923

sake of the country and for the good of its people is not only *jayej* but, indeed, also one's special duty."<sup>82</sup>

#### (ii) Lackeys in the All-India Muslim League

According to *Choltan*, prior to 1923 the All-India Muslim League had been under the leadership of 'lackeys'. Apparently at a special meeting in Delhi fresh life had been infused into the 'League's corpse'. "It is essential that this reformed League should be guided by Muslim nationalists", *Choltan* declared.<sup>83</sup> The 'lackeys' were not identified, but one presumes them to have been the pro-British landed gentry who, since it was *Choltan* making this remark, might not have been sympathetic towards the Congress of *Khilafat-Non-cooperation* days.

#### (iii) Deception of the peasants by the landed gentry

In and around 1923 legislation had been proposed in the Provincial Council to protect the interests of the peasants. This had upset the landed class and some of them had formed associations such as the *Praja Samiti* (Association for the ryots) "to deceive the peasantry in an attempt to safeguard the interests of *Jotdars*, *Talukdars* and *Zemindars*." *Choltan's* editor had no objection to the landed class seeking to safeguard their own interests, but he did object strongly to this barefaced attempts to swindle the peasants.<sup>84</sup>

#### (iv) Bolshevism

In 1921 *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* warned the landed gentry to change its ways. Their speeches to the peasantry about franchise and democracy were awakening a genuine desire for equality. "Will you as a man be able to mix with the peasants", a contributor in *Bangiya Musalman-sahitya-patrika* asked. "Can you

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<sup>82</sup> Editorial comment, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 23rd no.: 9th Kartik, 1330 B. S. ~ 26th October, 1923

<sup>83</sup> Editor, 'Moslem Lig', *Choltan*, *ibid*.

<sup>84</sup> Editor, 'Praja svatva ain', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 1St no.; 28th *Baisakh* 1330 B. S.; 11th May, 1923

look upon their hardships as your own?... He wants equal rights as a man.” Therefore, further talk about the franchise and democracy would only lead to Bolshevism in Bengal.<sup>85</sup>

Later that same year *Bangiya-Musalman-sahityapatrika* issued a further warning to the landed gentry to give the labourer a just price for his labour, to increase the fertility of the peasant’s land and to stop wasting on their own pleasures the crops produced by the peasant. “If Bolshevism ever takes root amongst the peasants of India”, the *Patrika* said, “then the responsibility for this will lie completely with the land-owning class. For it is they who, by depriving their peasant-tenants of their freedom, their proprietorship, their rights and their interests, are paving the way for revolution. They are the ones who have neglected their duties.”<sup>86</sup>

*Choltan*, however, in 1923 seemed unaware even of the existence of Bolsheviks in India. In one of its December issues it condemned the Bolsheviks of Russia as enemies of religion and complete atheists, stating that “the oppression of the Bolsheviks has reached a higher peak than that of the tyrannical Czar. If God does not protect Islam from these tyrannical oppressors then who else will?”<sup>87</sup> In an editorial comment on a speech by Lord Lytton (*Governor of Bengal*), *Choltan* avered: “We never approve of revolutionary thought, and Islam also does not support any kind of revolutionary thinking which is founded upon irreligiousness and oppression. Nor does it support murder, oppression or secret intrigues smelling of cowardice. In fact, we are completely unaware of there being any revolutionary thought or intrigue anywhere in India in these days of Non-violence and Non-cooperation... We fail to understand also, where in this land he (Lord Lytton) found the

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<sup>85</sup> Abul Hossain, ‘Banglar Balsi’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 4th yr., 2nd no.: *Sraban*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

<sup>86</sup> Abul Hossain, ‘Krisi biplaber suchana’ *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya patrika*, 4th yr., 3rd no.; *Kartik*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

<sup>87</sup> Editor, ‘Balsebhik gabarnment o Mochalman’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 29th no.; 21st *Agrahayan*, 1330 B. S.; 7th December, 1923

existence of Bolsheviks, i. e. foreign conspirators, and attempts by them to spread revolution.”<sup>88</sup>

(v) The role of the western-educated contrasted with that of the Ulema

“In Chittagong even at the height of the movement not a single one of the 20 or so Muslim B. L. s (Law graduates) in the district participated in the *Khilafat* and *Swaraj* movements for which that district achieved the highest rating in all India”, *Choltan* observed in June, 1923. “... I do not think we have a single highly educated person in the *Khilafat* and *Swaraj* movements in Dacca... There must be at least 200 pleaders and graduates in the 7 districts of the Rajshahi division, yet only one of these showed any enthusiasm for a few months.” The *Swaraj* and *Khilafat* movements were admittedly dangerous but the campaign to spread literacy was not. Yet not even in these spheres had any Muslim pleader or barrister or M. A. or B. A. come forward. “Is this not indicative of their lifelines and impotence?” *Choltan* asked.<sup>89</sup>

Later that year *Choltan* demonstrated with statistics that during the *Khilafat* and *Swaraj* movements throughout the whole of Bengal and Assam the *Ulema* had suffered far more than the western-educated.<sup>90</sup> Hundreds of *Ulema*, had, in fact, suffered imprisonment, but not more than 3 or 4 of those highly educated in English. “Those who abandoned their law practices and positions have eaten humble pie and begun to go home again like good boys. Can this be called

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<sup>88</sup> Editorial comment, *Choltan*, *ibid.*

It may be noticed that though *Choltan* did not apparently favour the Gandhi-prescribed, passive and completely ‘non-violent, symbolic’ *satyagraha*, it, nevertheless, in contradistinction to *Dhumketu*, would not sanction any form of revolutionary or extremist politics either.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Uchcha siksar phal’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 7th no.; 7th Asarh, 1330 B. S.; 22nd June, 1923

<sup>90</sup> Incidentally, the *Khilafat* leadership with its rank and file were primarily *Ulema*-dominated. The *Ulema* association *Jamiyat-i-Ulema-i-Hind* could, therefore, claim a large share in reinforcing *Swaraj* agitations throughout the country. It may also be pointed out that *Wahabi* and *Faraidi* movement in the 19th century had been completely *Ulema* sponsored as well.

national feeling or patriotism?" In regard to the *Ulema*, however, the journal was full of praise: "I should say that if nationalism, love of religion, national sympathy and sense of patriotism exist in any group at the moment then it is amongst those old-fashioned people alone."<sup>91</sup>

(vi) Religious scruples about political developments

Though many Muslim religious leaders joined the *Khilafat* and *Swaraj* movements others had scruples about the various non-Islamic practices associated with the movements.<sup>92</sup> An article in *Islam-darsan*, for example, in 1920 declared that strikes were not sanctioned by the *Sariyat* and were thus forbidden and sinful; even though in favour of the *Khilafat*, meetings held, where pictures of Siva, temples and mosques were displayed, were declared to be *harem*; it was described as blasphemous to utter *Bande Mataram* in conjunction with *Allahu Akbar*, the sacred kalima of Allah, the one sole God.<sup>93</sup> Though like the League and the *Khilafat* Committee it favoured collaboration between Muslims and Hindus, *Islam-darsan* in 1921 declared itself unprepared to tolerate non-Islamic practices on that account. It disapproved of Muslims chanting *Bande Mataram* and Mahatma Gandhi ki jay (hail to Mahatma Gandhi). "We have nothing against Mr. Gandhi, who is the powerful leader of the present movement and the very embodiment of self-sacrifice and self-

<sup>91</sup> Abul Kasem, 'Deser katha', *Choltan*, 8th yr.. 21st no.; 18th Aswin, 1330 B. S.; 5th October, 1923

<sup>92</sup> It may be noted that the ideological foundation given to the concept of *Swaraj* was exclusively Hindu. "Gandhi, for instance, interpreted *Swaraj* as Ram Raj, a historical memory which could not enthuse the Muslims."— A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, 1956, p. 366.

<sup>93</sup> Abdul Wadud, B. A" 'Haram o Kofar', *Islam-darsan*, 1St yr. 4th no.; *Sraban*, 1327 B, 5. (1920) *Bande Mataram* (hail to the motherland) is the title of a song in Bankimchandra's novel *Anandamath*. Congress adopted it as the national anthem. Because of its associations with Hindu idolatry, however, Muslims were opposed to its being chanted as national slogan. They had a cry of their own: *Allahu Akbar* (God is great). When Hindu-Muslim collaboration over Non-cooperation and *Khilafat* reached its peak, however, both *Bande Mataram* and *Allahu Akbar* used to be uttered jointly. But this practice was not approved by orthodox Muslims.



control. Nevertheless, we do not think it at all proper for Muslims to adulate anyone but Allah and the Prophet.”<sup>94</sup>

*Islam-darsan* in 1922 raised the question of Muslim nationality. Unlike *Moslem Bharat*, *Islam-darsan* believed that “each Muslim should bear in mind that for us Islam comes first, and our country second. Our religion is the primary consideration, our mother-land the secondary. First and foremost we are Muslims. After that we are Indians or inhabitants of other countries. We desire the *Khilafat* and *Swaraj*, but not at the expense of any portion of Islam, on the contrary, by fully preserving Islam”. *Islam-darsan*, therefore, condemned the non-Islamic practices and beliefs that had entered Muslim society as a result of the *Khilafat* and *Swaraj* movements.<sup>95</sup>

A further report by the editor of *Islam-darsan* made perfectly clear what those non-Islamic practices and beliefs really were: “Alas! Ignorant Muslims have under the influence of foolish *Swadesi* Maolanas now lost their religion and faith and have begun in cooperation with Hindus at various meetings and conferences and at Congress to worship Mother Cow, the statue of Tilak, the image of Mother India and of the goddess mounted on the lion. In imitation of Hindus, Muslims have now begun hanging up in their homes pictures of renowned national leaders from both the Hindu and Muslim communities, and offering homage and reverence to them. In a famous picture in the market-place I saw Mother India being humiliated at court in the form of the superbly beautiful Draupadi. Duhsasan in the form of the British Government was re-enacting her disrobing by pulling her beautiful green *sari*. Meanwhile in the guise of the five *Pandava*, Maolana Mohammad Ali, Shaokat Ali, Mr. C. R. Das, Lala Lajpat Roy and Pandit Motilal Nehru were poised in readiness to punish Duhsasan with clubs, swords, bows and arrows. But Gandhi in the form of Sri Krishna told them to desist and was himself engaged in supplying clothing for the beautiful woman in the form of Draupadi from his *Charka* in the form of the *Sudarsan Chakra*. The picture was entitled *Swadesi bastraharan*. I saw in

<sup>94</sup> Editor, ‘Khelafat o Nan-koaparesen’, *Islam-darsan*, 2nd yr., 6th no.; *Aswin*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

<sup>95</sup> Editor, ‘Islam o bartaman andolon’, *Islam-darsan*, 2nd yr., 11th no.; *Falgun*, 1328 B. S. (1922)

another picture Mr. Gandhi in *Brindaban* standing in Krishna's famous *tribhanga* pose piping the flute of Non-cooperation. Mohammad Ali, Shaokat Ali, Das (C. R. Das), Roy (Lajpat Roy) and Nehru (Motilal Nehru) etc. as young lads of Braja (*Braja-balakas*) or cowherd boys were engaged in a wild *Charka*-dance with such cowherd maidens (*Braja-balikas*) as *Banga Laksmi* and *Bharat Laksmi*. This one is probably called the Swadesi dalliance in *Brindaban* or some such thing. Obviously it is not unnatural or surprising for Hindus to think up such pictures. But we were really mortified to see representations in these pictures of Mohammad Ali, Shaokat Ali and Abul Kalam (Azad) who bear the title of Maolana... Not one iota of advancement will be achieved by the Muslims through a hundred thousand movements until they completely abandon contact with idolatry and fully follow Islam."<sup>96</sup>

(vii) Franchise for women

In 1921 an agitation had arisen amongst Bengali women-folk to acquire the franchise. *Annesa* was discouraging—it advised them to guide the voting of their husbands instead. "It is wrong to go outside one's capabilities"<sup>97</sup>.

(c) DISSATISFACTION WITH THE BRITISH

To add to the dissatisfaction over the *Khilafat*, the British had in 1923 instituted a Service Commission.<sup>98</sup> *Choltan's* editor sarcastically commented, "A 'Service Commission', that is to say, Commission to relieve hardship', has recently been set up. Its purpose is to alleviate hardship amongst poor white civilians by increasing their pay... Since we are black men, it is alright for our families to manage on 5 or 7 rupees, but how are these poor whites to manage on only 1,625 rupees a month?"<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Editor, 'Islame pauttalikata', Islam-darsam, *libid*.

<sup>97</sup> Sufia Khatun, 'Narir adhikar', *Annesa*, 1st yr., 7th no., *Kartik*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

<sup>98</sup> This has reference to the Royal Commission appointed under the Chairmanship of Lord Lee in 1923 to enquire into the question of pay and emoluments of the Superior Civil Services.

<sup>99</sup> Editor, Sarbhis kamisan', *Choltan*. 8th yr., 28th no. 14th *Agrahayan*, 1330 B. S.; 30th November, 1923

#### IV 1924-1928

### WORSENING RELATIONS BETWEEN HINDUS AND MUSLIMS<sup>100</sup>

#### (i) 1924: Collapse of movements and disenchantment with leaders

In 1924 *Islam-darsan* became jubilant over reported internal strife in Congress: the Swarajites were challenging Gandhi's leadership. "The days of Mr. Gandhi's undivided leadership are over", the paper commented "his policy of Non-violence...has been washed away in tides of violence. His ineffective Non-cooperation had vanished in the winds of cooperation...people now feel the words of Mr. Gandhi to be tiresome, useless ravings and impossible fancies. And his much-prized, non-violent Non-cooperation is now floating about the skies of India like the haziness of a dream made up of mere empty air."<sup>101</sup>

*Choltan* in 1924 deplored terrorism, stating that it had been proved conclusively during the first Swadesi movement that independence could not be gained by one or two clandestine murders. "To re-enter that same path is not indicative of political good sense", *Choltan* avered.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> The break-up of Hindu-Muslim relations had already started with the *Mopla* troubles in 1921. It was followed by several communal clashes. Meanwhile Hindu communal organisations launched *Suddhi-Sangathan* movements, to which Muslims retaliated by the similar formation of *Tablig-Tanzim* movements. In the political sphere Gandhi in 1922 called off the Non-cooperation campaign. The final blow came in 1924 when the *Khilafat* movement collapsed. The *Khilafat* and Non-cooperation were the only ones in which Hindu and Muslim masses jointly participated. So, with these unifying factors gone, the frustrated people, Hindus and Muslims alike, were left to their own devices. They looked on each other with distrust and hatred. Consequently, the years that followed were marked by serious communal troubles, involving at least 69 riots between 1924 and 1926. See also chapter on Hindu-Muslim Relations; M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, 1967, p. 437; and B. N. Pandey, *The Break-up of British India*, 1969, pp. 116-126.

<sup>101</sup> Editor 'Sabarmati sangram-Mr. Gandhir patan; *Islam-drasan*, 4th yr., 2nd no.; *Bhadra*, 1331 B. S. (1924).

<sup>102</sup> Editor, 'Abar paglami, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 35th no.: 4th *Magh*, 1330 B. S.; 18th January, 1924

*Islam-darsan* in 1924, besides attacking Gandhi, also attacked Mr. C. R. Das (1870-1925) as a newcomer to politics, a man of fragile and vacillating opinions, whose policies and approach were devoid of honesty, straightforwardness, experience and far-sightedness. "Similarity between what he says and does is extremely rare. When it came to deeds he failed to keep any of his pledges to the Muslims. Upon getting supreme power in the (Calcutta) Corporation he displayed to the full his policy of grabbing for himself. He has opposed Muslim interests in the Council with all his might--the two Muslim ministers (Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq and Mr. A. K. Guźnavi) have been forced to resign through the administrative reforms for Bengal being withdrawn due entirely to Mr. C. R. Das's envy, animosity and impetuosity."<sup>103</sup>

Earlier that year *Islam-darsan* published an Address (given by Syed Ismail Hossain Siraji) complaining Muslims had suffered far more than Hindus during *Swadesi* and Non-cooperation movements: more Muslims than Hindus had given up Government jobs; the *Moplas* (Muslim inhabitants of Malabar in South India) had become virtually extinct due to the Non-cooperation movement;<sup>104</sup> and in Salanga in Sirajganj many Muslims had suffered untimely death. The Islamia College in Lahore and the Aligarh College, both dear to Muslims had suffered much during Non-cooperation, whereas Hindu institutions had been relatively unaffected; and in the Punjab and in Sind thousands of Muslims had fired their homes and migrated to Afghanistan thereby exposing themselves to great hardship. The Hindu community had suffered no comparable loss. "Muslims suffered immense losses through the use of indigenous textiles, as well. Hindu and Marwari shop-keepers made huge profits by selling indigenous cloth at high prices. On the other hand, it was the Muslims who paid the penalty by buying coarse home-spun cloth at inflated prices."<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Al Faruk, 'Asahayoger abasan', *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr., 5th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

<sup>104</sup> See W. R. Smith, op. cit. pp. 314-17.

<sup>105</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, 'Abhibhasan', *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr. 2nd no.; *Bhadra*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

A few months later *Islam-darsan* declared, "Non-cooperation is dead". It had been born in Calcutta in 1920 and had died there in October, 1924. "It is doubtful whether even the next fifty years will remedy the utter decline in the Muslim community's sense of nationhood, its principles and its religion and also the terrible catastrophe that fell upon the Indian Muslim community during those four years as a result of Non-cooperation."<sup>106</sup>

The article goes on to attack the great *Khilafat* leader Maolana Mohammad Ali: "... His policies, character and behaviour are characterized principally by a lack of self-control, intolerance, sensationalism and instability. Previously he was a Muslim extremist and intensely anti-Hindu. Then during the Non-cooperation period he inclined greatly in favour of Hindus... Having now secured supreme power in Congress he is putting a knife to the throat of Muslim community and Islamic religion without any fear at all... It is due to the speech and action of leaders, who are traitors to their own community and religion, and who are worshippers of Hindus, such as Mr. Mohammad Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Doctor Ansari that the anti-Hindu feeling, which was previously extinguished, is being reawakened and intensified in the minds of Indian Muslims."<sup>107</sup>

(ii) 1925: Loyalty to British reviving<sup>108</sup>; League suspicious of Hindu political leaders

"It has become fashionable to criticise the Government nowadays", *Islam-darsan* observed in 1925, "... but no matter how

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<sup>106</sup> A1 Faruk, 'Asahayoger abasan', *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr., 5th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> It was natural that after the countrywide anti-government agitations ceased in 1924 agents seeking Government patronage should come to the forefront. Such people came usually from amongst the landed gentry, the business community, higher Government officials and the professional classes. Given their strong economic position and their support for a section of the *Mullas*, they could easily hold sway over the already-frustrated masses. Thus, seizing their opportunity, they now reentered the political arena and attempted to re-fashion public opinion in favour of the Government in order to obtain their own self-interests.

much the Government may be criticised it does not countenance any kind of oppression... No kind of despotism finds a place in its policy. Even an ordinary beggar can take legal proceedings against it. Yet rayats do not dare to do so against *zemindars*... In regard to cow-slaughter most Hindu *zemindars* reach the pinnacle of oppressiveness in a most unjust way... The leaders and highly educated of this country are either themselves mostly members of the *zemindar* class or strongly influenced by them. The first and primary duty of those who dream of *Swaraj* should be to apply themselves to the rectification of the deadly defects within themselves; otherwise *Swaraj* under the *zemindars* will be even less popular with the general public than being ruled by the present Government.”<sup>109</sup>

The same year *Islam-darsan* reported that *fatwas* had been issued in Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi declaring the *Khilafat* leaders, Maolana Abul Kalam Azad, Maolana Mohammad Ali and Maolana Shaokat Ali to be infidels. These *fatwas* were, *Islam-darsan* believed, perfectly justified. “Maolana Abul Kalam Azad both acted as pall-bearer for the late Chittaranjan Das and supported the playing of music outside mosques; and Mohammad Ali bowed his forehead at the feet of Mr. Gandhi. Their words and deeds contravened the *Sariyat*.”<sup>110</sup>

Some months later an editorial miscellany in *Islam-darsan* contained a eulogy of the scholarship and political acumen of Sir Abdur Rahim, the Chairman at a recent session of the All-India Muslim League. Apparently Sir Abdur Rahim had spent much of his speech in unveiling the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of Hindu leaders. *Islam-darsan* commented: “By penetrating all the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of Hindu leaders, Sir Abdur Rahim demonstrated to his fellow-countrymen the way in which Hindu leaders under-cover of the Non-cooperation, *Swaraj*, Suddhi and Sangathan movements were wandering about the whole country igniting fires of animosity

<sup>109</sup> Sheikh Habibar Rahman Sahityaratna, ‘Jamidar o Government’, *Islam-darsan*, 5th yr., 2nd no.; *Agrahayan*, 1332 B. S. (1925)

<sup>110</sup> Editor, ‘Kaferi fatwa’, *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr., 11th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1332 B. S. (1925)

against Muslims, and how a group of Hindu leaders had become impatient and intolerant in their attempts either to initiate Muslims into Hinduism by 'purifying' them or, to drive and expel them from India."<sup>111</sup>

(iii) 1926: Muslims should participate in Congress in greater numbers

"Would things be as they are", *Saogat* asked in 1926, "if Muslims in greater numbers joined Congress and pre-vailed upon its leaders to accept their true opinions? We call upon Muslim society to consider these matters carefully. We may not see eye-to-eye with Congress, but that does not mean we should try to wreck it."<sup>112</sup>

(iv) 1927 and 1928: Muslims and Congress

An article in the same journal in 1927; however, admitted that the charge of communalism made against Muslims by Hindus, who were trying to build up an all-India nation, was true. Muslims were deeply concerned about their own rights and interests as a community, and it was this concern which prompted them to seek separate electorates at all political levels. Nevertheless, it was untrue to suppose that behind the present multifarious political activities of Indian Muslims there lay any inordinate desire to hoist in India with the help of the Muslims of the newlyawakened Turkey, Afghanistan and Arabia the triumphant flag of Islam. Were any of these Muslim powers to establish a new regime in India then the benefits would go not "to Indian Muslims but to the Muslims of Turkey and Kabul." The article continued: "The political life of individual nations is in large measure similar to that of individual families...whenever the younger brother fails to get his own proper rights, he immediately claims to have his property separated from that of his elder brother... It is no more surprising that Muslims should quarrel with Hindus over their rights and existence than that a brother should quarrel with his brother. These things stem from the selfishness of Hindus. They

<sup>111</sup> Editor, 'Bibidha prasanga', *Islam-darsan*, 5th yr., 3rd no; *Paus*, 1332 B. S. (1925)

<sup>112</sup> Editor, 'Bibidha prasanga', *Saogat*, 4th yr., 5th no.; *Kartik*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

arise from thoughts of Muslim consciousness and self-expression."<sup>113</sup> Thus it would seem that some Muslims by 1927 considered themselves outside the all-India nation being built by Congress.

The editor of *Saogat* himself clearly did not agree with the sentiments of Mr. Yakub Ali Choudhury quoted in the article above; for in 1929 he stated unequivocally that though the Muslim League was the Muslim national organization, it was, nevertheless, merely representative of the Muslim community and not of any other community in India; as such, it was comparable in status to the Hindu Sabha, the Sikh League and the Parsee Association. It was not, however, in opposition to Congress.<sup>114</sup> For, Congress was the overall national organisation for the whole population of India. "The Muslim League is, therefore, merely a branch of the Congress." The function of the League was not to bring Muslim claims before Government, but to persuade Congress to do so. On the other hand, were the League to acquiesce in whatever Congress proposes, then there would be no need for the League. "Ultimately the *raison d'être* of the League is to fight with Congress over the putting forward of the just claims of Muslim community."<sup>115</sup>

Indeed, two months earlier, *Saogat's* editor had maintained that rather than opting out of Congress, Muslims ought to fight for their rights in it. "It is up to us to come to an understanding with the Hindus, and the place for that is Congress. Once there, if necessary, we will argue, and if need be, compromise. But there is no reason for letting fear of Hindus or anger against them keep us away from Congress... India is our motherland. The claims to her of both Hindus and Muslims are equal. So, neither fear of the Hindus nor resentment against them is going to make us give her up. We shall make room

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<sup>113</sup> Yakub Ali Choudhury, 'Musalmener sampradayikata o Hindur jatiyata', *Saogat*, 5th yr., 1st no.; *Asarh*, 1534 B. S. (1927)

<sup>114</sup> In spite of *Saogat's* favouring of collaboration with Congress, the consensus of Muslim leaders was opposed to it. The last attempt to unite League and Congress foundered on the rock of the Nehru Report (1928), which rejected Muslim demands for separate electorates. Subsequent history witnessed bitter League-Congress political rivalries, resulting eventually in the partitioning the subcontinent.

<sup>115</sup> Editor, 'Ebarkar Muslim Lig', *Saogat*, 6th yr., 7th no.; *Magh*, 1335 B. S. (1929)



for ourselves here where we rightly and properly belong. Some may say that Congress is so Hindu-dominated that Muslims cannot possibly get their rightful say in it. Let us take Bengal first. If we wanted to, could we not get control of the Bengal Congress?"<sup>116</sup>

Clearly in 1928 the mood of *Saogat*'s editor was militant. In another expression of opinion on self-reliance he wrote, "We arrange meetings over *Swaraj* and independence, and shout ourselves hoarse. We strongly protest against the British for not giving us independence. This makes the British laugh. Because the thing is highly laughable. *Swaraj* and independence is not to be got by asking. No one can give it to anyone. It has to be taken by force. The British do not give us *Swaraj* because they say we are not fit for such a great task. And we arrange meetings and strongly protest against such statements by the British and we publish our protests in the newspapers. But are we really fit for *Swaraj*?"<sup>117</sup> The point about this discussion of Muslim relations with Congress is that the Simon Commission visited India twice in 1928-29 to investigate the workings of the Constitution established by the Government of India Act, 1919, and people were wondering whether the League should approach it directly, or through Congress, or even whether the Commission ought to be entirely boycotted because of the humiliation inherent in its mission of considering whether Indians were really fit to rule themselves.

## V

1928-1930

### FROM THE SIMON COMMISSION TO PREPARATIONS FOR THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

#### (i) 1928

##### (a) MUSLIMS URGED TO COLLABORATE WITH THE BRITISH

It would seem that fear of the ascendancy of the Hindu community was in part responsible for an appeal by the editor of

<sup>116</sup> Editor, 'Kangres o Musalman', *Saogat*, 6th yr., *Agrahayan*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>117</sup> Editor, 'Atma-nirbharsilata', *Saogat*, 6th yr., *Agrahayan*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

*Moslem darpan* to Muslims to collaborate with the British Government in order to achieve parity with rival communities. "Otherwise their ascendancy will pollute your property, honour and lives and even your religion." The editor reminded Muslims of the Prophet's ordinance that each Muslim was in duty bound to obey the king's command and to "respect his wishes, irrespective of personal pleasure, provided God's commandments are not thereby contravened". Instead, therefore, of creating unrest and destroying themselves in purposeless agitations against the Government via such movements as Swaraj, Congress and the *Khilafat* Muslims were urged to strengthen their faith "by duly instituting in each village a branch of the *Tablig* Mission."<sup>118</sup>

(b) SIMON COMMISSION<sup>119</sup>

In March 1928 *Saptahik Saogat* reported on a large demonstration held in Calcutta to protest against the 'arrogance' of the British Parliament in appointing the Simon commission "to test the fitness of Indians to rule themselves... On everyone's lips was 'Simon go home'... The procession terminated at the Monument (Ochterlony Monument in Calcutta Maidan) where three huge meetings took place. At these meetings Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose and Mr. Jatindra Mohan Sen Gupta bellowed out the way in which the whole nation had reacted adversely towards the Commission."<sup>120</sup> One deduces, however, that the demonstration was held under Congress initiative and that the participants may well have been largely Hindu.

<sup>118</sup> Editor, 'Grahakder prati nibedan', *Moslem darpan*, 4th 9r., 10th no.; October 1928

<sup>119</sup> The Commission, appointed in November, 1927, with Sir John Simon as its Chairman, was to investigate the working of the Constitution, established by the Government of India Act, 1919. Apparently because of its 'all white' composition, the Commission's visit in India provoked deep resentment among the people. Congress boycotted the Commission; the League was split, its more conservative group favouring the visit. Other orthodox Muslim bodies, too, welcomed the Commission. For Muslim reactions see also W. R. Smith, op. cit., pp. 357-59.

<sup>120</sup> Editor, 'Kalikatay Saiman-birodhi sobhayatra', *Saptahik Saogat*, 1st yr., 36th no.; 11th March, 1928

On the other hand, a large meeting of the Muslim Tablig Mission held in Calcutta on October 7, 1928, was reported, by *Moslem darpan* to have unanimously resolved: firstly, to express its readiness to cooperate with the Simon Commission and to urge Bengali Muslims to do so; secondly, to beg the Commission and the Government of India to retain separate electorates and enfranchise Hindu untouchables such as *Mahisya, Bagdi, Namah Sudra and Rajbangsi*, thus enabling them to participate in the workings of District Board, Municipality, Corporation, Council, Assembly and so forth; thirdly, that *Swaraj* was at present disadvantageous to Muslims and would in present circumstances drop them “into the clutches of powerful Hindus”, and fourthly, that the *Tablig* Mission protested strongly against the Nehru Report<sup>121</sup> and publicly condemned those Muslims who had, against the interests of their community, voted in favour of abolishing separate electorates for Muslims in regard to legislative assemblies.<sup>122</sup>

### (c) SEPARATE ELECTORATES INTENSIFY COMMUNALISM

*Saogat*, however, in 1928 did not agree with the *Tablig* Mission in its support for separate electorates. On the contrary, *Saogat* maintained that separate electorates intensified communalism. “They compel candidates to appeal to the communal feelings of voters in order to win the election.” Therefore, from the point of view of the overall welfare of the nation which depended in large measure upon inter-communal harmony separate electorates were undesirable. And both the All-India Muslim League and the Bengal Provincial Muslim League had, according to *Saogat*, opted for joint or mixed electorates.<sup>123</sup> The only point in favour of separate electorates was their safeguarding communal interests. But *Saogat* maintained, “We feel it

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<sup>121</sup> The Nehru Report, prepared by a Congress-appointed Committee under Motilal Nehru, was submitted in August 1928. Since it rejected Muslim demands for separate electorates and offered joint electorates instead, the Report was objected to by Muslim bodies.

<sup>122</sup> Editor, ‘Sabha sangbad’, *Moslem darpan*, 4th yr., 10th no.; October 1928.

<sup>123</sup> See also B. N. Pandey, *op. cit.*, p.

is sufficient for this purpose to specify the number of Muslim members.”<sup>124</sup>

(d) THE *ULEMA* HAD DONE MOST TO AWAKEN MUSLIM CONSCIOUSNESS

In 1928 the editor of *Masik Mohammadi* reaffirmed an earlier view that it had been the *Ulema* who had done most to awaken Muslims and who had suffered most in the cause of independence. Many had been transported, hung or had died in open combat.<sup>125</sup> “It was the *Ulema* of India who breathed life into the Non-cooperation and *Swaraj* movements. Like fair weather friends the English-educated deserted the field and disappeared within a couple of days.” Admittedly one or two Pirs and Maolvis had opposed the *Swaraj* and nationalist movements, but *Masik Mohammadi* maintained, in such instances they were being manipulated by the English-educated well-to-do who had persuaded them that “*Congresswalas* are a ‘crowd of devils dressed in Khadi’ and out to destroy the Muslims... Actually it is the Mullahs”, *Masik Mohammadi* concluded, “who have given birth to political consciousness in Asia.”<sup>126</sup> And even now such people as Aga Maidul Islam and Maolana Abul Kalam Azad are reputed to be the greatest political experts in the East.”<sup>127</sup>

(e) BANDE MATARAM OBJECTIONABLE TO MUSLIMS

The editor of *Sariyate Eslam* that same year brought up another old theme, namely the singing by Muslims of *Bande Mataram* at joint Hindu-Muslim meetings and functions. This was objectionable and clearly opposed to Islam. Fortunately, *Sariyate Eslam*

<sup>124</sup> Editor, ‘Swatantra nirbachan mandali’, *Saogat*, 6ch 9r., 2nd no.; *Bhadra*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>125</sup> This refers to the Wahabi freedom movement and the *Wahabis*’ eventual suffering at the hands of the British.

<sup>126</sup> *Masik Mohammadi* here refers to the contributions made by Jamaluddin Afghani (1839-97) and his followers to spreading the Pan-Islamic movement throughout Asia.

<sup>127</sup> Editor, ‘Molla-prabhaber anistakarita’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 9th no.; *Asarh*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

maintained, the editor of *The Musalman* Maolvi Mujibar Rahman had, therefore, submitted to the national committee of Congress a proposal to cease singing *Bande Mataram* at its meetings.<sup>128</sup>

(f) A ROYAL COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE WASTING INDIA'S MONEY

Despite the fact that the Independence movement was now reaching its peak, relatively little anti-British propaganda was published by the Muslim press in Bengal. The one or two direct criticisms of government actions seem, on the contrary, entirely justified and of the type that ought probably to have been made regardless of whether India was seeking independence or not. In 1928, for example, *Saogat's* editor criticised the lavish government expenditure on a Royal Agricultural Commission whose seven members had managed to spend 14 lacs of rupees on a tour of Europe gathering information that was too self-evident to need saying.

"The real point, however, is", *Saogat's* editor declared, "the bureaucracy is not in the least interested in improving the condition of agriculturists. If they were, then the Government, which can spend 14 lacs of rupees on a single Commission would not be so niggardly in regard to the health and education of the people of this country; it would not refuse to spend a single penny on proposals of village reconstruction and it would not display such indifference towards the movement to abolish the zemindary system."<sup>129</sup>

(g) DECEITFUL ZEMINDARS AND FOOLISH PEASANTS

"The peasants of Bengal are so stupid", *Sariyate Eslam* observed, "that they have made their *zemindars* their representatives. Some of them voted for their *zemindars* out of fear, some out of avarice and some out of respect. But the *zemindars* have slaughtered

<sup>128</sup> Editor, 'Bande Mataram', *Sariyate Eslam*, 3rd yr., 11th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>129</sup> Editor, 'Krisi Kamisaner riport', *Saogat*, 6th gr., 1st no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

them. To preserve their own interests they voted against the peasantry and tightened the iron chains upon their feet."<sup>130</sup>

*Sariyate Eslam* was referring to the Amendment (1928) to the Tenancy Act by the Bengal Legislative Council which was reported by Saogat in the same month as the above article appeared.

According to *Saogat*, the sole right granted to tenants by the Amendment was the free right to transfer land. Though tenants had not enjoyed this right before they had in practice, with the *zemindar's* permission, been able to buy and sell land throughout the country for some considerable time. The amended Act legalised this practice, provided that 20 per cent. of the selling price was given to the *zemindar* as selami. "This provision is unfair... The law has never recognised the *zemindar's* rights to such selamis. They are not mentioned in the Act of Permanent settlement, nor are they provided for in the revised Act of 1885." Apparently *zemindars* paid the Government slightly more than 2.5 crores of rupees, but to do so they collected from their *rayats* a little less than 14 crores. In addition to this, they illegally extracted various kinds of gifts, levies and contributions to festivals. Consequently, *Saogat* commented, "There was no logical reason for further increasing by law the income of people who already extract 14 crores of rupees on behalf of the Government. Who can tell us why it was that this method of exploiting tenants was, nevertheless, legalised?"<sup>131</sup>

The editor of *Moyajjin* the following month indicated that in fact the amended Act gave the tenant one or two other minor rights besides the free right to sell his land. According to *Moyajjin*, however, the first option to buy belonged to the *zemindar*; i. e. within two months of the transfer of the land the *zemindar* could, if he so wished, buy the land himself at 10 per cent more than the sale price. This option in effect enabled the *zemindar* to compel either the buyer or seller to hand over the 20 per cent. *Selami*; for in the last resort he could always acquire the land himself, despite the fact that in the meantime the purchaser might actually have cultivated it. Thus

<sup>130</sup> Rafiquddin Ahmad, B. L., 'Banglar prajasvattva ain o Sarajyadaler kirti', *Sariyate Eslam*, 3rd yr., 9th no.: *Aswin*, 1335 B, S. (1928)

<sup>131</sup> Editor, 'Prajavattva aia', *Saogat*, 6th yr., 3rd no.; *Aswin*, 1335 B, S. (1928)

“though the tenant has been given the free right to sell his land he still has no way of escaping from the *zemindar*... Now everyone can easily appreciate the extent to which ordinary tenants have been either benefited or harmed by the amending of the Land Tenancy Act.”<sup>132</sup>

#### (h) INDIA COULD CHOOSE BOLSHEVISM IF IT LIKED

According to *Saogat*, the Government never let slip a single opportunity of abusing Russia’s Soviet government. It was, however, pointless to frighten people with statements like “the Russians are revolutionaries” and “they favour the creation of social disorder”. There was no reason to suppose that Indians were so infatuated with Russians as to wish to invite either the Russians themselves, or their system of government to India. There was, therefore, no need to abuse the Russian government. Indians desired only the welfare of their country and would, if possible, institute whatever system of government seemed likely to achieve the overall welfare of the country. If the Soviet system were the best, then what reason was there why they should not adopt it?<sup>133</sup>

#### (i) INDEPENDENCE WOULD NOT BE GAINED BY ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST MANCHESTER

“India’s desire to achieve Dominion-status can never be fulfilled by boycotting foreign goods.” *Saogat*’s editor said. “Even those who advocate this demand, including Mahatmaji (Mr. Gandhi) himself, regard that status as equivalent to full independence. If this be so, it will never be attained by economic sanctions against the textile manufacturers of Manchester... such means might achieve some further administrative reform, but not the grant of Dominion-status, let alone full independence.” Boycott was at best merely revenge against exploiters. Over-enthusiasm for *Khaddar* could in the long

<sup>132</sup> Editor, ‘Prajavattva ain’, *Moyajjin*, 1St yr., 3rd no.; *Kartik*, 1335 B. S. (1928)  
See also Radhakamal Mukherji, *Economic Problems of Modern India*, vol. 1, 1939, pp. 221 and 229.

<sup>133</sup> Editor, ‘Sobhiyet sarkarer prajasasan’, *Saogat*, 4th no.; *Kartik*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

run militate against people's interests. For it was impossible to go on forever buying cloth at four times the price of mill-textiles. Consequently *Saogat* concluded, "If we desire to attain genuine rights, then we must become self-supporting in textiles."<sup>134</sup>

(ii) 1929-30: Growing distrust of Hindu movements and motives

(a) MUSLIMS APATHETIC AND EVEN DISTRUSTFUL OF SWADESHI

According to *Saogat* 'a group of low-minded individuals' were trying to dissociate Muslims from the *Swadesi* movement. They had discovered in the Boycott movement 'profit for Hindus' and 'loss for Muslims' and were baiting their uneducated co-religionists with these slogans. This factor, added to the apathy of Indian Muslims who, *Saogat* maintained, never participated in great numbers in any project promoting the welfare of their society and country, was damping their enthusiasm for the *Swadesi* movement. "Rural Hindus and Muslims", *Saogat* concluded, "will cease using foreign goods, only when it is explained to them, how people of all communities will benefit from keeping the country's wealth within the country, and how it is that our poverty, and the misery and shortages consequent upon it, are increasing due to the country's wealth being drained abroad."<sup>135</sup>

(b) CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AIMED AT HINDUS' OBJECTIVES<sup>136</sup>

"If Mr. Gandhi's movement (The Civil Disobedience Movement)" *Sariyate Eslam* wrote in 1930, "had been genuinely peaceful and intended to achieve the good of both Hindus and Muslims, then before proceeding with it he would first of all have consulted Muslim opinion, ...safeguarded their interests fairly and

<sup>134</sup> Editor, 'Bilati bastra barjan', *Saogat*, 6th yr., *Magh*, 133b B. S. (1929)

<sup>135</sup> Editor, 'Bilati barlan o Muslim samaj', *Saogat*, 7th yr., 8th no.; *Chaitra*, 1336 B. S. (1930)

<sup>136</sup> This refers to the Civil Disobedience Movement launched in March, 1930 by Gandhi, aimed at 'paralysing the British Government in India by the mass performance of specific illegal acts: Muslims, however, did not, on the whole, take part in it; it was primarily a Hindu affair.



put an end to communal strife. But instead of that he proceeded in a very Hindu way to achieve Hindu objects alone...

“... Sleeping Muslims! ...take care while time remains, -- save yourselves and your community. Do not join this Disobedience Movement by being tricked by Congress into an infatuation for their bogus freedom.. Because the main purpose of their Movement is not dependence, but rather the laying of the foundation for Hindu Independence. It is merely an open plot to crush the Muslims.”<sup>137</sup>

#### (c) CONGRESS-A HINDU INSTITUTION

It is clear from the editorial comments of *Sariyate Eslam* that the journal was definitely taking a strong anti-Congress line in sharp contradistinction to *Saogat*. “Congress is nothing but a Hindu institution.” *Sariyate Eslam* declared, “An analysis of its activities will demonstrate that it is another manifestation of the Hindus’ Muslim-crushing mentality... The net of intrigue being spread throughout India by this crowd of Hindu Congressites, *Swarajis* and Revivalists in a united effort to wipe Muslims off the face of India is perilous in the extreme... The riots in Calcutta, Kulkathi, Pabna and Palasipara are a flagrant proof of this... So, unless the Muslims put up a fair fight for themselves, their religion and community, instead of just lying there and taking a beating, no one will be able to save them, let alone the Government. To our fellow Muslims we, therefore, say: sleep no more, a life-and-death crisis is at hand.”<sup>138</sup>

#### (d) CONGRESS NOT FULLY REPRESENTATIVE: ONLY EDUCATED AND LANDED GENTRY ARE REALLY REPRESENTED BY IT

On the other hand, however, *Saogat*’s editor was constantly out to improve Congress’s position by warning it, if necessary, of its own inadequacies. In one such warning *Saogat* maintained that Congress could now claim to represent merely the rich, the landed gentry and

<sup>137</sup> Editor, ‘Ain amanya’, *Sariyate Eslam*, 5th yr., 3rd no.: *Chaitra*, 1336 B. S. (1930)

<sup>138</sup> Editor, ‘Dhakar danga’, *Sariyate Eslam*, 5th yr., 2nd no.; *Falgun*, 1336 B. S. (1930)

the educated minority. It had still not earned the right to lead the workers and peasants. The working class had formed Trade Unions, the younger generation Freedom Movements and the peasants too, were trying to organise themselves. "Unless Congress accepts and advocates the demands emerging from these various organisations", *Saogat's* editor concluded, "it will one day be driven to ally itself with Government."<sup>139</sup>

(e) MUSLIMS OUGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

In a further article that year *Saogat* again attempted to inveigle Muslims into joining the Freedom Movement India was bound one day to sever her foreign fetters... Would Muslims who had remained aloof from the Movement then "be able to hold out their hands and receive like charity the freedom earned by others?"<sup>140</sup>

(f) MUSLIMS UNDERGO ALL THE SUFFERING

On the other hand, *Sariyate Eslam* in 1930 maintained that the boycott of schools and colleges had harmed Muslims most.<sup>141</sup> Muslim students were poor and they had to suffer much hardship in order to study. But now their studies were being jeopardized by scheming Congressites.<sup>142</sup> Closing educational institution, turning young men by the thousand into tramps and increasing the unemployment rate and the number of thieves and bandits would not bring *Swaraj*. But it might well open the door to the impoverishing of the backward Muslim community. And this, *Sariyate Eslam's* editor implied, seemed to be what lay behind the machinations of the scheming Congressites.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Editor, 'Kangres o mantritva', *Saogat*, 6th yr., 11th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

<sup>140</sup> Abul Fazal, 'Banga-Muslim nari jagaran', *Saogat*, 7th yr., 5th no.; *Paus*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

<sup>141</sup> The comment here refers to the boycott of educational institutions during both the earlier *Swadesi* and the later Non-cooperation agitation.

<sup>142</sup> This refers to the Congress-inspired Civil Disobedience volunteers, who created disorder by strikes and pickets in educational institutions.

<sup>143</sup> Editor, 'Piketing', *Sariyate Eslam*, 5th yr., 7th no.; *Sraban*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

## (g) THE SIMON COMMISSION REPORT PUBLISHED

The publication of the Simon Commission Report (June, 1930) was not welcomed by *Saogat*. "The political structure it envisages for India", observed *Saogat*, "cannot be called Self-Government". Infinite powers had been invested in Provincial Governors, who were, in effect, responsible only to the Viceroy, who in turn was obliged to act in accordance with the Secretary of state for India in Britain. Consequently, it was the Secretary of state for India himself who, through manipulating the Provincial Governors would continue to rule India. "Even from the point of view of Muslim communal interests" the proposals of the Simon Commission were unsatisfactory. The principle of separate communal electorates had been preserved, but in no province had the majority status of Muslims been recognised. It looked as if the Commission had deliberately turned down all the special demands of the Muslims "with the express purpose of giving a proper lesson to all those Muslim gentlemen who ignored the public opinion of both Hindus and Muslims and eagerly cooperated with the Simon Commission." *Saogat* hoped that Muslim leaders would now have realised their error in failing to collaborate with the Hindu community. The journal, however, concluded by saying that the Commission had failed to fulfil the aspirations of all people in India irrespective of their communal identities, and so "unless its Report is greatly amended, it will not be considered acceptable to either the people of India as a whole, or to any of its constituent communities."<sup>144</sup>

## (h) DISSATISFACTION WITH POLITICAL LEADERS FROM THE LANDED GENTRY

"Even the greatest moderates have now realised in their hearts", *Masik Mohammadi* declared, "what a great farce has been made out of our administrative reforms, the Legislative Assemblies, Indian Parliament' and so forth really are. Up till now Congress leaders have been persistently striving to placate the landowning classes of India. But it is hoped that from now on their eyes will be opened by

<sup>144</sup> Editor, 'Saimen riport', *Saogat*, 7th yr., 9th-10th no.; Baisakh-Jyaistha, 1337 B. S. (1930)

the kind of language in which 200 Bengali zeminders under the leadership of Maharaja Thakur (Maharaja Pradyot Kumar Sinha Tagore) displayed their mentality at this critical time. Muslim leaders, too, now probably have realised from the study of the terrible events in Peshawar that it would no longer be possible for them to retain their leadership of Muslim society by blowing Government triumphs in their old servile way... And now the nationalist leaders will likely be able to fully appreciate how much imperative and beneficial it would be to have genuine collaboration between Hindus and Muslims by engaging in more serious political endeavours for achieving their hoped for objectives."<sup>145</sup> The point seems to be that people were beginning to realise that the zemindar class was out to protect its own interests alone and that ultimately neither they nor the British cared much for instituting democratic government in India. The interests of the landed gentry were, in fact, more allied to the alien British than to those of their less fortunate fellow-countrymen.

#### (i) ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

##### 1. *Lackeys must not be invited*

According to *Saogat*, every single community in India have boycotted the Simon Commission,<sup>146</sup> because it did not contain a single Indian member. To console Indians the British Government was, therefore, arranging a Round Table Conference.<sup>147</sup> Success seemed unlikely. On the one hand, neither the moderates nor the extremists in India would be satisfied with anything less than full self-government, yet on the other, the Round Table Conference

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<sup>145</sup> Editor, 'Deser abastha', Masik Mohammadi, 3rd yr., 8th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

<sup>146</sup> This, it would seem, was *Saogat's* wishful thinking: at least the conservative group in the Muslim League under Sir Muhammad Shafi and the Muslim Tablig Mission supported the Commission.

<sup>147</sup> The Conference was designed to draw up a new constitution for India. With this purpose three sessions were held in London in 1930-32 between the representatives of the United Kingdom, British India and the Indian States. The Congress boycotted the Conference, but it went ahead with cooperation from the Liberals, Hindu Communal bodies, Muslim leaders and Indian princes.

would be attended by anti-Indian Conservative and Liberal representatives who were opposed to the institution of fully, responsible government in India. "So what", *Saogat* asked "is the outcome of the Round Table Conference to be?... We know that the Government can send to London a pack of lackeys, if it so wishes, but it is to be hoped that the Government is not unaware of the true standing of such lackeys in the eyes of the people of this country. If they come back from England rejoicing over some tawdry bauble they have brought, the people of India will never be taken in by it, and consequently the purpose of the London Conference will also have failed. If the British Government genuinely wishes to pacify the political mood of the Indian people then they must accede to the demands of those who are the true representatives of India. It will not do just to invite a pack of lackeys to London and give them a good time."<sup>148</sup>

## 2. Muslims must attend

*Masik Mohammadi* in 1930 reported on a meeting of the Bengal Muslim Conference held under the leadership of Sir Abdur Rahim at the Town Hall in Calcutta, where 'the most important' proposal discussed was the one, concerning the Round Table Conference. The meeting felt that the Simon Commission had disregarded Muslim demands and cruelly spurned their self-respect. While making editorial comments on the proceedings of the meeting, *Masik Mohammadi* concluded that "it would be virtually suicidal for Muslims to remain aloof from the Round Table Conference" for two reasons: firstly, the Conservative and Liberal representatives in Britain were determined to support the Simon Commission Report; and secondly, even if Congress failed to attend, many able Hindu representatives from the Hindu Sabha together with Moderates would certainly attend and would not hesitate to oppose the just demands of the Muslims. It was, therefore, essential that Muslim representatives be present.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>148</sup> Editor, 'Gol tebil baithak', *Saogat*, 7th pr., 9th-10th no.; *Baisakh-Jyaistha*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

<sup>149</sup> Editor, 'Mochlem kanfarens', *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr., 11th no.; *Bhadra*, 1337 B, S. (1930)

## CHAPTER III HINDU-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Chronologically this chapter of necessity follows more or less the same pattern as the two previous ones, the period from 1888 to 1930 being broken up into the following phases:

- I 1888 to 1909;
- II 1909 to 1920;
- III 1919 to 1923; and
- IV 1923 onwards

During phase I, though some *highly sophisticated Muslims* were aware of a need for harmony with the neighbouring Hindu community, most Muslims tended, the press extracts seem to suggest, to see faults on the Hindu side alone; to be suspicious of Congress; and to be somewhat intransigent in rejecting suggestions by moderates to amend their behaviour in order to accommodate Hindus. From 1909 to 1920 moderates and other politically conscious Muslims continued to advocate Hindu-Muslim harmony, but the attainment of it was impeded by an increasing consciousness amongst Muslims of the grounds of communal friction, namely the tendency of Hindus to monopolize jobs in Government Service and self-governing bodies like the Calcutta Corporation; the exploitation of Muslims by Hindu money-lenders; and interference by Hindu zemindars in the religious practices of Muslims. During phase III, 1919 to 1923, collaboration was in the air chiefly due to the agitation of Muslims over the *Khilafat* question; but during phase IV, after the collapse of the Non-cooperation and *Khilafat* movements, there was from 1923 onwards an accelerating decline in Hindu-Muslim relations culminating in riots.

The spectrum of opinion in Bengal during the period was wide. The groupings, however, were:

- a. Moderate Hindus;
- b. Militant Hindus, whose nationalism was built on religious symbols;

- c. Orthodox Muslims, suspicious of Hindu-Muslim harmony and quick to be offended by any non-Muslim practices; and
- d. Moderate Muslims, eager to play down communal differences in the interests of Bengal and India as a whole.

This fourth group (d) was characterized by a rational, almost secular approach. All they said was sound commonsense and, had their outlook been more widespread, it is possible that a Bengali or All-India nationhood might have resulted. Unfortunately, a rational, secular outlook was open to interpretation-possibly even a forced interpretation-by fanatics as irreligiousness. It could, therefore, all too easily be condemned as such. The fact of the matter is that during a period of nationalist agitation for an increasing say in the control of India's affairs by the people of the sub-continent, prejudice and fanaticism were at a premium. No nationalist movement can succeed without deep feelings being stirred, brought to the boil, and kept simmering. Prejudice and fanaticism provide excellent fuel for such a purpose. Rationalism and secularism, on the other hand, have a cooling effect. Such cooling would deprive almost any nationalist movement of any hope of success.

## I

1888-1909

- (a) PLEA FOR HARMONY, TENDENCY TO SEE EVIL ON HINDU SIDE AND TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF CONGRESS

In 1903 *Islam-pracharak* alleged that the Hindus were both ungrateful and arrogant. Once during Muslim rule they had enjoyed Muslim favour: now they had forgotten that. They now hated the Muslims – even Congress members did so: “Only when Hindus realise that Muslims are related to them and are their neighbours, and that for a long time they have enjoyed Muslim favour, will this animosity of theirs to their own fellow-countrymen cease. Realising the fundamental need for Muslim energy to uplift India they will of their own accord invite us to join them.”<sup>1</sup> That same year *Naba Nur*

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<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Fazlal Karim, 'Unnatir upay ki', *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 5th-6th no.; Jya1stha-Asarh, 1310 B. S. (1903)

pleaded with Hindu intellectuals and leaders to prove not only in words but in deeds also that they genuinely desired the welfare of the Muslims; Hindus were to abandon hypocrisy and embrace Muslims as brothers. Otherwise, Congress and conferences were in vain.<sup>2</sup>

One of the difficulties bedevilling Hindu-Muslim relations was Government employment. Even as early as 1898 *Kohinur* had hinted that Hindus predominated in Government posts and were obstructing Muslims from getting promotions.<sup>3</sup> But, *Kohinur* maintained, "Everyone favours people from his own community."<sup>4</sup> In 1903 *Naba Nur* quoted the most recent census report (1901) showing the proportions of Hindus and Muslims educated in English, and "how far behind Muslims are" in regard to government employment –

"Government post	Total no.	Muslim
High Court Judge	3	1
District and Session Judge	10	2
Sub-Judge	62	1
Munsiff	343	18
Provincial Judge	3	x
Additional Judge	7	x
Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector	529	76
High Court Lawyer	215	11" <sup>5</sup>

A little later that year *Naba Nur* complained that Hindus were stopping Muslims from getting Government jobs. This was jeopardizing hopes of Hindu-Muslim unity: "It has been proved in practice that Muslim officials are not inferior to Hindus in efficiency.

<sup>2</sup> Editor, 'Matribhāsa o Bangiya Musalman', *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 9ch no.; *Paus*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>3</sup> Muslims were apparently conscious of their position vis-a-vis Hindus in regard to Government service even as early as 1869, when *Durbin*, a Persian journal, commented. "All sorts of employment, great and small, are being gradually snatched away from the Muhammadans, and bestowed on men of other races, particularly the Hindus:" – as quoted in W. W. Hunter, *Indian Musalmans*, 1871, p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> Mir Mosharrāf Hossain, 'Sat Prasanga', *Kohinur*, 1st gr., 3rd no; *Bhadra*, 1305 B. S. (1898)

<sup>5</sup> Mirza Abul Fazal, 'Pradesik Musalman Siksa Samiti' *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Srabān*, 1310 B. S. (1903)



Yet the oppression of Hindu officials makes it difficult for Muslims to get on in the initial stages. When they saw that their monopoly was being broken, Hindus strove with redoubled zeal to make out that Muslim officials were stupid... Why go on uselessly trying to create unity if our Hindu brethren feel so upset as soon as one or two Muslims get a job alongside hundreds and hundreds of Hindus?"<sup>6</sup>

A further impediment to unity was the term *Yavana*.<sup>7</sup> In 1903 *Naba Nur* raised the question of whether or not this referred exclusively to Muslims and whether in fact it was abusive. Apparently Aksay Kumar Maitreya (1861-1930) had written an article in *Banga darsan (Bhadra, 1309 B. S. 1902 A. D.)* on the origin of the term. His findings failed to satisfy *Naba Nur*: "We Muslims shall continue to take it as a terrible term of abuse until the real meaning of the word *Yavana* has been settled."<sup>8</sup> *Kohinur* in 1905 grew sarcastic. It regarded the use of the term *Yavana* as an attempt to oust Muslims ('the *Yavana* clan') from India with the pen instead of the sword. "Hindus whiningly and brazenly" expected Muslims to like them despite using this term *Yavana* which infuriated Muslims. *Kohinur* concluded, "If you still have not realised that internal dissension is the root of ruination then... harmony between Hindus and Muslims... will remain a noontday reverie."<sup>9</sup>

Writing in 1905 *Islam-pracharak* argued that historical circumstances had now rendered Hindus and Muslims brothers in subjection. They ought, therefore, to unite in the service of 'Mother India'. Unfortunately, most Hindus despised Muslims. Hindus on the whole might be advanced and cultured, but not all of them were. Similarly, though many Muslims might be backward and illiterate, not all of them were. Therefore, there was no reason to regard Mus-

<sup>6</sup> Editorial, *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>7</sup> *Yavana* strictly means 'alien' or 'non-local.' In the 19th and 20th centuries, however, it acquired a derogatory connotation, signifying 'Muslim'. Bengali Muslims strongly resented this. See also chapter on Literature.

<sup>8</sup> Aftabuddin Ahmad, 'Hindu lekhak o Musalman samaj', *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 6th no.; Aswin, 1310 B. S. (19U3)

<sup>9</sup> Manuyar Hossain, 'Masik sahitya samalochana', *Kohinur*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; *Falgun-Chaitra*, 1311 B. S. (1905)

lms as contemptible inferiors: "I hope every Hindu brother will read this attentively, and, instead of regarding us with contempt or dislike, will embrace us with genuine brotherly love."<sup>10</sup> In 1907 *Islam-pracharak* complained that Hindus were out to set up *Swaraj* "by vile means". Their lies and unfair means had undermined religion and morality and alienated the Muslims. Seven crores of Muslims could not be considered negligible. Had Hindus treated them fairly and with respect, they would as fellow-countrymen have supported their cause: "Now Muslims consider British dominance in India a thousand times preferable to Hindu dominance."<sup>11</sup> In 1908 *Islam-prachark* alleged that, on the one hand, Hindus called Muslims brothers whilst on the other hand, Hindu zemindars were dreadfully oppressing Muslims and interfering with their religious practices, such as *Korbani*. "Muslims are now well aware of the hypocrisy in Hindu protestations of friendship and brotherhood". *Islam-pracharak*, therefore, rejoiced over the apparent failure of the 22nd Congress in Surat (1907) deeming this failure to be the judgement of Allah.<sup>12</sup>

In 1909 *Basana* argued that Bengalis consisted of two groups: Hindus and Muslims; neither could progress without the other. But the establishment of true unity depended upon Hindu zemindars, who were rich enough "to dine at the Great Eastern Hotel in Calcutta", allowing their poor tenants to practise their 'religious' *Korbani* in public. "This must be brought to the attention of the leaders of the Hindu community."<sup>13</sup>

#### (b) OCCASIONAL TENDENCY TO SEE THE BRITISH AS SCAPEGOAT

*Kohinur* in 1907 argued that communal disharmony was spread by the British as part of their policy of 'divide and rule': British

<sup>10</sup> Osman Ali, 'Satyai ki Musalman ghrinar patra?' *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 10th no.; *Magh*, 1311 B. S. (1905)

<sup>11</sup> Ebne Ma'az, 'Bharater bartaman rajnaitik abastha o Musalman jatir kartabya', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 4th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1314 B. S. (1907)

<sup>12</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 8th no.; *Magh*, 1314 B. S. (1908)

<sup>13</sup> Amiruddn Ahmad, 'Musalman siksa samiti', *Basana*, 2nd yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 131ti B. S. (1909)

incitements to both Hindus and Muslims ought, therefore, to be regarded as the machinations of an interested party.<sup>14</sup> Much later in 1926 *Satyagrahi* alleged that the *Arya Samajites*, who were then stirring up so much dissension between Hindus and Muslims,<sup>15</sup> were in fact British agents.<sup>16</sup>

(c) UNDERLYING TENDENCY OF MUSLIM INTRANSIGENCE

In 1888 an anonymous article attributed to Mir Mosharraf Hossain (1848-1911) published in *Ahmadi* argued that Muslims ought in the interests of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood to abandon cow-sacrifice which was then apparently a subject of controversy<sup>17</sup> in both the English and Bengali press. The author maintained that much other meat was available for consumption in India besides beef. The cow benefited mankind in innumerable ways – its milk sustained life, its hide provided shoes and slippers and even its powdered bones purified sugar and salt. “Do you not feel the least pity when sticking a knife into the throat of that which benefits you so much?”<sup>18</sup>

*Akhbare Eslamiya* that year rejected this plea, however, arguing that despite the consumption of beef cows were the most numerous domestic animal in India. The cow thrived and increased because the Muslim cared for it, not only because of beef, but on account of its many other uses also: its milk, its physical contribution to agriculture and so forth.<sup>19</sup>

In 1909 *Basana* put forward the view that even Hindus had at one time performed cow-sacrifice: “The *Mahabharata* of the great

<sup>14</sup> Osman, Ali, ‘Hindu Musalmaner birodher karan o tannibaraner upay’, *Kohinur*, 7th yr.; 10th and 11th nos.: *Magh and Falgun*, 1313 B. S. (1907)

<sup>15</sup> Arya Somaj aimed primarily at socio-religious reforms in Hindu society. In the course of its development, however, it grew more and more militant, thus alarming Muslims. For further information see *A History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. III, p. I, 1961 p. 245 and W. R. Smith. op cit. pp. 57-58.

<sup>16</sup> Editor, ‘Eslam satru na desa-bairi’, *Satyagrahi*, 14th *Paus*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

<sup>17</sup> Hindu and Muslim attitudes to the cow were diametrically opposed: for Hindus it was an object of divine reverence; for Muslims it was an object of divinely-approved (halal) human consumption, figuring in an important ceremonial feast (known as *Bakar Idd*).

<sup>18</sup> ‘Gokul nirmmul asanka’, *Ahmadi*, 1st no.; 1295 B. S. (1888)

<sup>19</sup> ‘Gokul nirmmul asanka prabanddher pratibad’, *Akubare Esdamiya*, 5th vol., 4sh no.; *Sraban*, 1295 B. S. (1888)

sage Vyasa shows that cow-sacrifice was a straight path to Heaven for Hindus. The *Taittiriya Brahmana* in the *Sukla Yajur Veda* provides for the sacrifice of 17 cows. According to the Mahabharata Madra Raj slaughtered ten thousand cows to feed the Brahmins and according to *Yajur Veda* it was permissible to perform great sacrifices with the heads of such creatures as sheep, goats, horses and men". *Basana* then ridiculed the editor of *Hindu Ranjika* (an influential Hindu organ): "Oppressing two or three poor innocent Muslims for cow-sacrifice may have made them so courageous, but Muslims are not cowards... They do not hesitate even to lay down their lives for their religion. Unless he (the editor) can explain to us with evidence and logic that cow-slaughter is wrong he will never keep us from observing the dispensations of our religion with threats... India will never advance if Hindus and Muslims are incited to violence like this over cow-slaughter. Our brother editor must not think that Hindus will be able to scale the heights of prosperity without the Muslims."<sup>20</sup>

## II

1909-1920

### CONTINUED NEED FOR HARMONY: CLEARER CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE GROUNDS OF COMMUNAL FRICTION

In 1917 *Al-Eslam* lamented the fact that Muslims had no place in the 'national song' *Banga amar* composed by D. L. Roy (1863-1913). "It mentions Asoka, Nimai, Rasumani,<sup>4</sup> Pratapaditya but contains no trace of Muslim heroes like Giyasuddin, Isa Khan and so forth. The population of Bengal is seven crores – more than half of these are Muslims. Why then were Muslims excluded from a national song composed for this vast Bengali nation constituted of both Hindus and Muslims?"<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Sheikh Reyajuddin Ahmad, 'Jibahatya o Korbani', *Basana*, 2nd vol., 2nd no.; *Jyaistha*, 1316 B. S. (1909)

<sup>21</sup> S. M. Akbaruddin B. A., 'Bartaman Bangala sahitye Musalmaner sthan', *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 10th no.; *Magh*, 1323 1917)

The following year *Al-Eslam* analysed the sources of friction between the Hindus and Muslims of India. "The grounds for complaint by Muslims against Hindus in Bengal are: firstly, Hindus unjustly and unfairly attack Muslims in literature; secondly, they oppose cow-sacrifice; thirdly, they stop Muslims from getting Government jobs; fourthly, ordinary Muslims complain that Hindu *zemindars* behave unfairly towards them, and even ordinary Hindus make insinuations and behave in a hostile, contemptuous manner towards them on the streets, in trains and steamers, and in the market-place." *Al-Eslam* then went on to outline the distorted picture of Muslims presented in Hindu literature and in school text-books, that have been referred to elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> It continued, "Hindus have no lawful right to interfere, especially since Muslims perform their cow-sacrifice in their own homes and not in public. Yet we also advise Muslims out of consideration for their neighbours"<sup>23</sup> to perform their cow-sacrifice, as far as possible, out of sight.

Regarding positions in self-governing institutions, *Al-Eslam* alleged, "Muslims do not seem to have any right to such positions as Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Member of the Local Boards, District Boards and Municipalities, which are granted by the Government to people of this country as a token of self-government, nor to government posts. By fair means or foul, Hindus exclude Muslims from these posts and enjoy almost all of them themselves. Yet Muslims constitute 52% of the population of this province. In these circumstances, since Muslims are unable to compete with Hindus, they ask for the right to separate electorates. The Hindus are impeding the achievements of Muslim aims by tumultuous agitations against them..."

"Muslim tenants do not receive civil treatment in the offices of Hindu *zemindars*. They are forced to subscribe to the cost of Hindu *Pujas* and music at fairs, both of which are contrary to their religious beliefs. Muslim tenants are treated worse than Hindu tenants... These Hindu *zemindars* even prevent them from performing cow-sacrifice.

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<sup>22</sup> See chapters on Literature and Education.

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad Ali, 'Hindu Musalman prasna', *Al-Eslam*, 3rd yr., 11th no.; *Falgun*, 1324 B. S. (1918)

If the Muslim tax-payers happen to be prepared to vote for a Muslim candidate for the Municipality or Local Board, then the Hindu zemindars compel them to vote for a Hindu candidate by harassment... There is no need to say anything about the behaviour of ordinary Hindus. Their sweetest endearment for Muslims is *neres* ... When a number of Muslims board a train or steamer,... Hindus say, 'Good garcious, a flock of *neres* have got on'... If we are to bind this country with ties of love and affection then it is our duty to attempt to remedy these matters."<sup>24</sup>

*Banga Nur* in 1920 argued that cow-sacrifice was not the sole cause of friction. Other sources of friction were: the Hindu phobia about contact with Muslims polluting them, their use of abusive terms like *Yavana*, *Mleccha*, *Pati Nere* and so forth; their bad treatment of Muslims over jobs; and their general inclination to do Muslims down wherever "their own interests are involved... All these things render Hindu-Muslim unity more distant."<sup>25</sup>

### III

#### A FEW POSITIVE SIGNS OF FRIENDSHIP<sup>26</sup>

There is only one press-extract in hand indicating that positive signs of friendship were in fact manifested. The extract is from *Al-Eslam* in 1919 and is quoted below:

"It is a very hopeful and joyful thing that the poverty and sameness of our circumstances have undeniably aroused in us

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<sup>24</sup> Ahmad Ali, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> Editor, 'Go-Korbani o Hindu Mosalman', *Banga Nur*, 1st yr., 9th no.,; *Sraban*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>26</sup> Despite communal differences at least one phase of Hindu-Muslim harmony occurred round about 1916, mainly for political reasons. Reaching an understanding that year, Congress and the Muslim League jointly drafted a Constitution in Lucknow. This was followed by a number of joint annual sessions. Still more spectacular, however, was the countrywide Hindu-Muslim harmony when brother-like both communities plunged into *Khilafat*/Non-cooperation agitations against their common foe, the British. Such events were unprecedented in Indian history; and never again, after the collapse of the agitations in the early twenties, did the two communities come so close together.

Hindus and Muslims a desire for mutual harmony. Breaking the narrow bounds of convention, we are becoming aware of the existence of universal humanity. Consequently, from above the Jame Mosque in Delhi and the Nakhoda Mosque in Calcutta we now hear the addresses of Swami Sraddhananda and Byomkesh Chakravarti respectively; in the Hindu temple in Madhava Bagh in Bombay Muslims, Parsees and Hindus are meeting in fellowship; a Hindu Pundit unmasked and without hesitation offered the Muslims at a meeting in Patna his own turban so that they could say their prayers; on the maidan in Calcutta Hindus and Muslims were giving each other iced *sherbet*... Now the point is that we must each of us obviously take care that this harmony is sincere and durable.<sup>27</sup>

#### IV

#### 1923 ONWARDS: DETERIORATING RELATIONS

##### (a) 1923: SIGNS OF STRAIN

##### (i) In Bengal

In an article in *Choltan* in 1923 Muhammad Shahidullah (1885-1969) expressed his belief that culture was the path to Hindu-Muslim harmony – “no genuine harmony will be achieved till Muslims cease to be ignorant of Hindu culture and Hindus of Muslim culture.”<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately in this article he stressed the right of each community to propagate its own religion, but this in itself was to become a source of strain. In that same issue of *Choltan* the editor made clear that in the interests of the *Swadesi* and *Khilafat* Movements, Muslims were prepared to make concessions: “Indeed, they are reluctant to quarrel even about their proportionate representation in Government jobs and in elected seats. But Muslims cannot remain silent under any circumstances when they see their religion insulted and Islam slighted.” Later that year *Choltan* complained that Congress organs like the *Calcutta Servant* and *Ananda Bazar Patrika* and the

<sup>27</sup> Abbul Malek Choudhury, ‘Alochanar alochana’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 9th no.; *Paus*, 1326 B. S. (1919) For a detailed account of Hindu-Muslim political collaboration between 1919 and 1923 see chapter on Politics III (a).

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Shahidullah, ‘Daser katha’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 2nd no. 4th *Jyaishta*, 1330 B. S.; 18th May, 1923

nationalist organ *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the moderate organ *Basumati* were constantly beating the drum of Hindu-Muslim unity and fellowship, yet, and never hesitating to support measures which at one stroke could “wipe out any plan of unity from the country for ever.”<sup>29</sup>

(ii) Outside

That same year the editor of *Choltan* drew attention to the threat to Hindu-Muslim harmony in Lahore and Amritsar, saying, ‘What can be more regrettable than that Hindus and Muslims through forming factions over their own petty interests should destroy the unity and harmony upon which Independence of India depends?’<sup>30</sup> In June that year *Choltan*’s editor also drew attention to an insult to the Prophet made by “the *Kesari*, an *Arya* organ from Lahore... Unless the *Kesari*, immediately begs apology the river of blood which flowed through Calcutta over a similar offensive comment by the editor of the Calcutta *Daily News* will be re-enacted in the Punjab and throughout India.”<sup>31</sup> Later that year *Choltan* lamented the depressed state of Muslims in Kashmir where they constituted 80% of the population, yet held scarcely 5% of the State posts in the executive and judiciary – “This is extremely deplorable.”<sup>32</sup>

(b) 1923: HINDU EXTREMISM OUTSIDE BENGAL

In June, 1923 the editor of *Choltan* requested the Hindu community to compel Swami Sradhananda and the disciples of his *Suddhi* movement<sup>33</sup> to desist from their unfair oppression of the

<sup>29</sup> Editor, ‘Alochana’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 16th no.; 14th *Bhadra*, 1330 B. S.; 31st August, 1923

<sup>30</sup> Editor, ‘Panjabe Hindu Mochalman’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 1st no.; 28th *Baisakh*, 1330 B. S. (1923)

<sup>31</sup> Editor, ‘Kesarir garalodgiran’ *Choltan* 8th yr., 6th no.; 32nd *Jyaistha*, 1330 B. S.; 15th June, 1923

<sup>32</sup> Editor, ‘Kasmire Mochalman’. *Choltan*, 8th yr., 22nd no.; 25th *Aswin*, 1330 B. S. (1923)

<sup>33</sup> The *Arya Samaj* movement to ‘purify’ (*Suddhi* – ‘purification’) and reconvert former converts from Hinduism to Islam. Its main appeal was to communal bigotry, and it thus intensified anti-Muslim sentiment. The movement gained most ground after 1923, when Hindu-Muslim harmony sharply declined, degenerating into open hostility once more.



Rajput *Malkan* Muslims. It said, "The thought of the eventual consequences of such oppressions fills us with deep concern". *Choltan* then continued, "It is not that the Muslim community cannot remedy the matter, but for one thing, they desire peace and secondly, they desire Hindu-Muslim unity in the interests of *Khilafat* and *Swaraj*."<sup>34</sup>

In August that year the editor of *Choltan* warned Hindu Congressite leaders and those desirous of *Swaraj* to stop the Hindu *Sangathan*,<sup>35</sup> initiated by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861-1946) in the Punjab and North Western provinces, which aimed "to resist Muslim powers" and "if possible, drive them from India". Unless their activities were checked "a bloody Ganges will flow in India and wash away Hindus and Muslims alike"<sup>36</sup>

"The sacred sense of unity and fellowship that was gradually strengthening between Hindus and Muslims due to Mahatma Gandhi's determined efforts is", *Choltan*'s editor lamented one week later, "now facing ruin because of the *Sangathan* and *Suddhi* movements. It does not even seem likely that any good will be achieved for the Hindu community by the *Hindu Sabha*. The only gains will be an intensification of anti-Muslim feeling and the ruin of the high and noble aims of Congress."<sup>37</sup>

### (c) 1923-24: OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE

In May, 1923 *Choltan*'s editor reported with regret that the peace prevailing in Bengal had unfortunately been broken by a terrible riot "between (Hindu) Namah Sudra and Muslims in Faridpur over temporal matters... Alas! O unfortunate inhabitants of India! Where

<sup>34</sup> Editor, 'Aryaganer atyachar', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 5th no.; 25th *Jyaistha*, 1330 B. S., 8th June, 1923

<sup>35</sup> *Sangathan* was a militant Hindu communal movement started round about 1923. Its aim was to strive for achieving a free Hindu state in India. And the Indian Muslims would gradually be absorbed into Hinduism through *Suddhi*.

<sup>36</sup> Editor, 'Hindu *Sangathaner* bisamay phal', *Choltan*, 8th yr" 13th no.; 25th *Sraban*, 1330 B. S.; 10th August, 1923

<sup>37</sup> Editor, 'Alochana', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 14th no.; 32nd *Sraban*, 1330 B. S.; 17th August, 1923

is your *Swaraj*, and why this bloody fight amongst yourselves? Congress and *Khilafat* workers must try quickly to settle this dispute.”<sup>38</sup>

In September that year *Choltan*'s editor commented on eleven Muslims martyred in a riot in Shaharanpur, United Province (UP). “Yet our Hindu brethren are still not satisfied. Their fury persists even though thousands of Moplas have been slaughtered in Malabar and the whole race is on the brink of destruction.<sup>39</sup> Yet, is peace to be achieved only by conversion to Hinduism of crores and crores of Muslims as was proposed by the Hindu Sabha and the *Suddhi*?”<sup>40</sup>

Commenting on a recent riot in Delhi in 1924 *Islam-darsan* attributed it partly to “the insistence of Hindus on the banning of cow-sacrifice and cow-slaughter”, partly “to the inhuman oppression of Muslims by orthodox Hindus”, and partly to government “interference in Muslim religious practices... Disregarding the liberal proclamation that ‘In the British Empire every man shall be able freely to perform his religious obligations’,<sup>41</sup> the Government has in many places begun to interfere in the ordinary religious and communal rights of Muslims in order to please Hindus.”<sup>42</sup>

#### (d) 1924: BONES OF CONTENTION PERSIST

In 1924 the editor of *Samyabadi* raised the old question of ‘who are the *Yavanas*?’ Under the misconception that this term referred to Muslims, Hindus used it in their conversation and articles “and thus give vent to their abusive inclinations.” Unfortunately, however, the editor maintained, *Yavana* referred to “a part of the caste-ridden community”. He, therefore, hoped that in the interests of Hindu-

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<sup>38</sup> Editor, ‘Alochana’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 3rd no.; 11th *Jyaistha*, 1330 B. S.; 25th May, 1923

<sup>39</sup> See also W. R. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-17.

<sup>40</sup> Editor, ‘Alochana’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 18th no.; 28th *Bhadra*, 1330 B. S. 14th September, 192.”

<sup>41</sup> Ref. Queen Victoria’s proclamation on November 1, 1958.

<sup>42</sup> Mohammad Nutul Haq Choudhury, ‘Dillir gaji o sahidgan’, *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr., 3rd no.; Aswin, 1331 B. S. (1924)

Muslim fellowship this foul 'Yavanism' would cease.<sup>43</sup> That it did not cease, however, is revealed in *Saogat* in 1928, when the term *Yavana* was identified as definitely pejorative. According to *Saogat*, *Yavana* meant either some of the Greeks who entered India from the north-west or "a small number of people in India at the time of the *Mahabharata*." Thus it was possible that as descendants of "castes contemporaneous with the *Mahabharata*", some of these people, who termed Muslims *Yavana* "to create a literary reputation," might themselves be descendants of *Yavanas*. "Now the question is", *Saogat* continued, "how did this term come to be applied to the Muslims? Indians considered all those races who entered India by the North West to be *Yavanas*... Just as the Greeks called the highly civilised Egyptians and Persians barbarians, the inhabitants of India similarly designated the Mongolians, the Turks and the Arabs with the same term *Yavana*... It used not to evoke feelings of contempt: it merely meant 'foreigner'. But it is perfectly obvious that those who now use it to mean 'Muslim' feel in their hearts a very definite abhorrence.

"In Bengali literature the word '*Yavana*' is well-known in the sense of Muslim and carries a very clear feeling of distaste."<sup>44</sup>

In 1925 *Sariyat* reported on the burial of a fakir in New Market, Calcutta. The burial was witnessed by the Market and Municipal authorities. But shortly afterwards some Hindu newspapers and prominent Hindu members of the Municipality protested and conspired to get the grave removed. Commenting on this, *Sariyat* wrote, "Despite numerous outcries and appeals by Muslims against this bias and lack of sympathy... nothing is being done... If the grave is removed... Muslims will be compelled to conclude, they are already witnessing the future bitter fruits of *Swaraj*, i. e. Hindu *Swaraj* in India."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Editor, 'Yavan kahara?', *Samyabadi*, 2nd yr., 3rd no.; *Baisakh*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

<sup>44</sup> Matinuddin Ahmad, 'Yavan', *Saogat*, 6th yr., 2nd no.; *Bhadra*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>45</sup> Editor, 'Kabar samasya', *Sariyat*, 2nd yr' 5th no.: *Bhadra*, 1332 B. S. (1925)

“Despite the loud, vociferous daylong proclamations about communal harmony...,” *Raosan hedayet* asked in 1925, “how far have our Hindu brothers progressed toward unity or fellowship?” *Raosan hedayet* then went on to say that Hindus were still obsessed with the possibility of being polluted by Muslims. Hindu literature by Bankimchandra, D. L. Roy and Iswarchandra Gupta (1812-1859) still bristled with insults to Muslims. Hindus continued to “upset themselves about cow-sacrifice” despite the fact Muslims never interfered with their *Durga Puja*. Many Hindu money-lenders continued to exploit Muslims. Hindu zemindars continued to insult Muslim visitors to their offices. So “what is being done to remedy this”, *Raosan hedayet* asked, “by Hindu leaders, Congress workers and our *Swarajite* brethren?”<sup>46</sup>

A few months later *Raosan hedayet* was still lamenting the lack of sufficient show of goodwill by Hindus. Disputes were still going on over communal elections, the District Board, Local Board, Municipality and so forth. The controversy over the fakir’s grave in Calcutta was still inconclusive. Hindus were fuming over the founding of Islamia College (1924) and had not contributed to *Khilafat* Fund one fraction of what Muslims had given to the *Tilak-Swaraj* Fund.<sup>47</sup> In fact, it seemed to *Raosan hedayet* that the onus to show of goodwill was entirely or so on the Muslim side. “The anniversary of Gandhiji’s imprisonment has been celebrated, but was that of the Ali brothers (Shaokat Ali and Mohammad Ali)? So rememberd? A memorial has been raised to Mr. Das (C. R. Das), but has anything being done for B’amma (mother of Ali brothers)?” The attainment of *Swaraj* depended on communal harmony-”both communities equally united and strong must strive for the country.”<sup>48</sup>

Things seemed to have remained much the same for the next few years. Hindu remained obsessed with touchability, though *Ahmadi*

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<sup>46</sup> M. Sirajul Haq Mian, ‘Milan samasya’, *Raosan hedayet*, 2nd yr., 1st no.; Kartik, 1332 B. S. (1920)

<sup>47</sup> The Fund, organised in memory of B. G. Tilak (d. 1920), was raised to help the Freedom (*Swaraj*) Movement in India.

<sup>48</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Hindu Mochalmaner ekata’, *Raosan hedayet*., 2nd yr., 5th no.; *Falgun*, 1332 B. S. (1926)

admitted, that Muslims were also equally misguided due to the distortion of Islam “by illiterate Maolvis and *Mullas* blind with self-interest.” Hindu cultural media still bred anti-Muslim feelings. Hindus and Muslims “like hungry dogs” still fought over government jobs and still quarrelled over elections to Councils, District Boards and Municipalities. The only new feature brought to light by *Ahmadi* was that though ordinary illiterate people played the major role in communal riots the actual responsibility for them lay with the educated of both communities: “It is the educated who form the opinions of the others. Unfortunately, the more educated people in both communities do not sufficiently appreciate their responsibility in this matter.”<sup>49</sup>

(e) 1924: MUSLIM CONSCIOUSNESS OF RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS IN PROPORTION TO POPULATION

Apparently Hindus had been enjoying a monopoly of employment in a number of large public institutions such as Calcutta University and Calcutta Corporation. *Swarajite* leaders on the Calcutta Corporation had in 1924 granted a score or so “temporary, law-paid jobs to Muslims.”<sup>50</sup> This had provoked a stream of anger, grief and resentment from the Hindu press: “What injustice! Are we to deprive the long-term hereditary, eternal lease-holders of these posts, the Hindus, and give them to the Muslims, who are for ever slighted and rejected? O Hindus, arise! Your land and freedom are at stake : India faces disaster.” ‘O Muslims’, *Islam-darsan* cried, “can you not contemptuously trample on the trickery and sweet words of these crooked, treacherous, hypocritical friends, and, flinging aside all care for their pleasure and anger like a handful of dust, can you not stand upon your own feet?”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Khan Sahib Abul Hashem Khan Choudhury, M. A., ‘Hindu Musalman birodh o taha nibaraner upay’, *Ahmadi*, 2nd yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

<sup>50</sup> Political considerations induced the *Swaraja* party then controlling Calcutta Corporation, to provide jobs for Muslims. By the Bengal Pact (December 1923) it also agreed to offer Muslims certain rights in the Provincial Council and in elections to local bodies.

<sup>51</sup> Editor, ‘Chakuri o Hindu-Musalman’, *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr., 1st no.: *Sraban*, 1331 B. S C1924)

Later that same year *Islam-darsan* commented on the proportion of the seven crores of rupees paid in salaries to Government employees that the Muslims as a community and as a proportion of the country's population ought to receive; viz. about four crore and the amount and the proportion it actually received; viz. about thirty-five lacs of rupees; or roughly one twentieth of the total; and concluded, "Almost the whole of the remaining six crores sixty-five lacs of rupees is swallowed by the Hindus... The statistics are given below..."

Provincial Service	Hindu percentage	Muslim percentage
Executive	75	25
Judicial	94	6

Furthermore, it is doubtful whether or not the number of Muslim as opposed to Hindu in job-holders District Boards, Local Boards, Municipalities and other offices will be even comparable to a drop of dew in the ocean. (But) Muslims are really entitled to hold 55% of the jobs in each of these sectors."<sup>52</sup>

(f) 1925 ONWARDS: HINDU EXTREMISM WITHIN BENGAL

(i) *Suddhi Sangathan* etc.

From an editorial in *Islam-darsan* in 1925 it would seem that the Hindu leaders of the *Sangathan* movement Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Roy (1856-1928) were somewhat diplomatic in expounding the aims and intentions of their movements. But their disciples were far more straight-forward and outspoken. The editor referred to this diplomacy as 'chicanery'. Lala Lajpat Roy's leading associate, Lala Hardayal (an ex-revolutionary), had, however, recently and outspokenly ordered that "either Muslims should accept Hinduism, or quit India with their lives and honour intact."<sup>53</sup> And similarly, the Arya *Samajite* leader Swami Sradhananda's foremost associate, Swami Satya Deva, had "recently stated in even more un-

<sup>52</sup> Mohammad Abdul Hakim, 'Bharate Hindu-Musalman samasya', *Islam-Darsan*, 4th yr., 3rd no.; Aswin, 1331 B. S. (1924)

<sup>53</sup> For a detail account of Lala Hardayal's statement see *The Times of India*, July 25th, 1925.

equivocal language the aims of the *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* movements...”<sup>54</sup>

*Islam-darsan*'s editor was alarmed that the Arya Samaj and the *Suddhi Sangathan* movements were not “confined solely to Western India”; the activities of the Hindu Sabha, the *Suddhi Sabha*, the *Nari Raksa Samiti* (the association for the protection of women) in Bengal and the deep sympathy shown towards these movements by the Hindu press led the editor to surmise that preparations were being made to launch similar vigorous campaigns even in Bengal.

This prompted the editor to become sarcastic over the Hindu press. He wrote: “The Non-cooperation spokesman *The Servant*, the *Swaraj*-advocating *Forward*, the liberal *Hindustan* and the intoxicated Bengali, the hemp-addicted *Nayak*, the many-faced *Basumati* with its perverted tastes and intense anti-Muslim feelings and the flag-waver of equality and fraternity, the *Sanjibani*, are all unanimously and concertedly supporting the activities of the *Arya Samajis* and the *Suddhi Sangathan* and *Nari Raksa* movements...” He finally called upon all Muslim leaders both spiritual and political to think out a line of defence.<sup>55</sup>

The activities of the *Arya Samajites* presumably grew so alarming and disruptive of Hindu-Muslim harmony that the following year the editor of *Satyagrahi* remarked: “Many people are of the opinion that the bureaucracy (i. e. the British) expressly employs the *Arya Samajis* to stir up dissension between Hindus and Muslims. We have so far not found any reason for believing the contrary.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Satya Deva proclaimed in 1925, “When we are strong, we shall put forward the following conditions before the Muslims: ‘Do not look upon the Quran as a revealed book; do not recognise Muhammad as the Prophet of God; ... give up the observation of Muslim festivals and begin to observe Hindu festivals instead;... They (Muslims) should give up Islamic names and call themselves Ram Din, Krishna Khan etc.; they must worship in Hindi and give up praying in Arabic.’” – as quoted in *A History of the Freedom Movement*, *op. cit.*, p.262.

<sup>55</sup> Editor, ‘*Suddhi o Sangathaner svarup*’, *Islam-darsan, Agrahayan*, 1332 B. S. (1925)

<sup>56</sup> Editor, ‘*Eslam satru na des-bairi?*’, *Satyagrahi*, 14th Paus, 1333 B. S. (1926)

### (ii) Music in front of mosques<sup>57</sup>

The editor of *Moslem darpan* in June, 1926 revealed Muslim awareness of their helplessness on account of minority status in India as a whole and pleaded that Government action was needed to stop music being played by Hindus before mosques, other-wise riots would last for ever and “the twenty-three crores of Hindus will” because of their economic and cultural superiority “completely wipe out the seven crores of Muslims.”<sup>58</sup>

Similar protest was raised earlier in the same year by the editor of *Hanafī* who urged that the Governor Lord Lytton be petitioned to stop singing and playing by Hindus in front of mosques, otherwise fires of unrest would spread throughout the whole country “until the Muslim’s right according to the injunctions of *Sariyat* to protest and his strength to resist is extinguished.”<sup>59</sup>

An article in *Sikha* in 1927, however, seemed to place some of the blame on the Muslim side, It condemned Muslims for their “hatred towards the neighbouring Hindu community” arguing that Muslim “fanatics” were creating unrest over the playing of musical instruments in front of mosques unnecessarily. Muslim emperors had not hesitated to allow temples to be set up even within their palaces. “Can we not give up agitating ourselves over this playing of musical instruments in front of mosques? Obviously to do so will somewhat inconvenience us, but I am unwilling to acknowledge that by doing so we shall incur sin. It is the Hindus who will do the playing, not us. If they choose to ignore our polite requests, then in what way have we sinned?”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> As with the cow, Hindu and Muslim attitudes to music and religion were diametrically opposed: Muslims demanded absolute silence for Mosque prayers; Hindu prayers and processions were accompanied by the braying of conches, the ringing of bells and the pounding of drums. In the circumstances, the scope for mutual dissatisfaction was great and times of tension were intensified by these opposing attitudes.

<sup>58</sup> Editor, ‘Mosalman purba haitei satarka hao, nachtet dhvangsa anibarya’, *Moslem darpan*, 2nd yr 6th no.: June, 1926

<sup>59</sup> Editorial, *Hanafī*, 7th *Jyaistha*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

<sup>60</sup> Anwarul Kadir, ‘Bangali Musalmaner samajik galad’, *Sikha*, 1st yr., *Chaitra*, 1333 B. S. (1927)



In 1928 *Saogat* reported that Hindus in Bankura were “barbarously” boycotting Muslims because they had got the police to stop Hindus playing music in front of their mosques. The Muslims in Bankura were in the minority, and *Saogat*’s editor warned Hindus of the possible repercussions which this incident of “boycott, oppression and persecution” might have on Hindus in East Bengal.<sup>61</sup> “Once this tendency spreads the condition of Hindus in East Bengal will not be pleasant... This mentality of enforcing one’s own views by sheer numerical strength...will preclude the possibility of communal harmony.”<sup>62</sup>

### (iii) Books insulting Islam

In 1926 *Raosan hedayet* drew attention to a book called *Satarkikaran o Hindu Sangathaner abasyakata* (‘The need for precaution and Hindu Sangathan’) by Swami Sadananda deeming it “an anti-Muslim book”. “This vile attack” was almost certain to precipitate hostility between Hindus and Muslims, and *Raosan hedayet*, therefore, sought the intervention of the Government and the Criminal Investigation Department to get the book “confiscated” and “the author severely punished.”<sup>63</sup>

In July, 1927 *Moslem darpan* drew attention to the outcome of what it called a “miscarriage of justice” by Justice Dalip Singh in acquitting the author of *Rangila Rasul*<sup>64</sup> which the editor of *Moslem darpan* regarded as “shocking abuse and bitter innuendoes against

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<sup>61</sup> Here the editor hinted at the numerical strength of Muslims in East Bengal.

<sup>62</sup> Editor, ‘Bakuray Hindu-Musalman samvandha’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 1st no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>63</sup> Sheikh Mohammad Jamiruddin, ‘Swami Sadanander saytani; o Islame bhisana aghat’, *Raosan hedayet*, 2nd yr., 6th no.; Chaitra, 1332 B. S. (1926)

<sup>64</sup> The publication of the Urdu book, *Rangila Rasul* (‘The Merry or Debauched Prophet’), containing, as it did, scurrilous attacks upon the Prophet, and composed by Mahashe Rajpal, Lahore *Arya Samajite*, created violent reactions in Muslim society. Rajpal was sued and sentenced, but upon subsequently appealing to the High Court was acquitted. His acquittal shocked and enraged Muslims. The Muslim press severely censured Mr. Justice Dalip Singh. Stormy controversy raged for over two years, provoking communal riots and leading in 1929 to Rajpal’s assassination.

the Prophet.” As a result of the author’s acquittal some Hindu newspapers were “now openly publishing attacks on the Prophet and anti-Muslim articles”, and disturbances had “meanwhile burst out throughout the whole country.”<sup>65</sup>

#### (iv) Riots in Dacca

In 1930 the editors of *Saogat* and *Masik Mohammadi* expressed deep regret over the communal riots which had recently taken place in Dacca. Neither editor placed the whole blame on either community. *Saogat* stated, “In accordance with long-standing tradition the Hindus and Muslims tried to prove their own innocence by placing all the blame on each other.”<sup>66</sup> And *Masik Mohammadi* stated that “it will be wrong to call this a riot; actually it is a very low type of hooliganism by a number of cowards calling themselves Hindus and Muslims.”<sup>67</sup> Apparently, according to *Saogat*, some Hindu newspapers had “described the hooliganism of the Dacca Hindus as indicative of heroism”. *Saogat* condemned “this kind of mentality on the part of journalists” which did “terrible harm to the country.”<sup>68</sup>

#### (g) DISSATISFACTION WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF ALL COMMUNITIES

*Islam-darsan* in 1924 expressed dissatisfaction with all community leaders alleging that each of them was out merely for cheap publicity: “The all-destroying fires of quarrelsomeness animosity and conflict between Hindus and Muslims that were once extinguished have recently burst into sprodadic flames in India... Mr. Gandhi tries to put out these flames of contention by fasting, Mr. Mohammad Ali by abandoning religious observances and Mr. Das (C. R. Das) by making pacts. Yet none of them has the ability nor the

<sup>65</sup> Editor, ‘*Rangila Rasul*’, Moslem darpan, 3rd yr., 7th no.; July, 1937

<sup>66</sup> Editor, ‘Dhaka o Kisorganja’, *Saogat*, 7th yr., 9th-10th no.; 13aisakh-Jaistha, 1337 B. S. (1930)

<sup>67</sup> Editor, ‘Dhakar danga’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr., 10th no.; *Sraban*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

<sup>68</sup> Editor, ‘Dhaka o Kisorganj’, *op. cit.*

moral courage to state where the mainspring of this animosity and quarrelsomeness lies, or the means by which these disputes may be permanently silenced. They are ever busy in getting heaps of cheap praise and publicity from the press by flattering each other. Consequently, how can the grievances of their communities find any place in their hearts?"<sup>69</sup>

## V

### THE IDEALISTIC STREAM

On the whole, people in this category tend to have over-simplified problems. For example, in 1888 an article in *Ahmadi* by Mir Mosharraf Hossain attempted to foster goodwill between Hindus and Muslims by persuading Muslims to give up eating beef since many other varieties of meat were available. According to him, though differing in religion, in heart and deed Hindus and Muslims were one and in practical affairs virtually brothers. "At times of trouble, happiness and distress, and in good times we cannot do without each other... What is the point of hurting the feelings of those who are such constant companions to us, and with whom we have such an intimate relationship?"<sup>70</sup>

Ten years later in an article in *Kohinur* Mir Mosharraf Hossain belittled communal friction regarding it as no more than the occasional quarrels that erupted between women in families and neighbourhoods and in sectarian groups like the *Hari Sabha* and the *Brahma Sabha* – "The quarrel boils down to this. The side of the leaf the Hindus consider clean is disliked by us. And if we go near a Hindu's bed at that very moment the water in his hookah is spoiled". Admittedly there was friction between Hindu and Muslim Government job-holders, but regarding complaints about Hindu favouritism, Mir Mosharraf Hossain says, "Everyone favours people from his own community."<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Al Haq, 'Dillir milan sabhay amilaner bij bapan', *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr., 4th no.; *Kartik*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

<sup>70</sup> 'Gokul nirmmul asanka', *Ahmadi*, 1st no.; 1295 B. S. (1888)

<sup>71</sup> Mir Mosharraf Hossain, 'Sat prasanga', *Kohinur*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Bhadra*, 1305 B. S. (1898)

A similar note is struck in an article in *Al-Eslam* in 1916, which maintained that the sole difference between Hindus and Muslims was religion; otherwise they were fellow-countrymen and ought as brothers to collaborate: "It is inevitable that we are bound to be united whether it takes one day or two or even a century; the only surprising thing is that we are not already united."<sup>72</sup>

Once again in 1920, the fact that harmony between Hindus and Muslims was impeded solely by religion, was reiterated by *Banga Nur*: "To remove this impediment either both communities must remain completely impartial and detached in regard to each other's religious observances, or they must each be liberal enough to abandon observances and practices which are objectionable to the other."<sup>73</sup>

1926 brought from Kazi Nazrul Islam an eloquent denunciation of fanaticism in both the Hindu and Muslim camps. The narrow-minded on both sides were, in Nazrul's view, fighting over mere meaningless symbols: "Hindutwa and Muslimness are both tolerable. But the emphasis put on their 'tuft' and 'beard' is intolerable; as because it is those two things alone which cause fights. All that 'tuft' is not Hinduism, though it may be 'Panditism'; similarly all that the 'beard' perse is not Islamism, but 'Mullatism'. All this hair-splitting business now-a-days concerns only these two bunches of hair marked 'ism'. The fights that have broken out now are fights between *Pandits* and *Mullas*, not between Hindus and Muslims. The club of *Naryana* will never clash with the sword of Allah. For the Gods are one and the same, and the weapon in one of His hands will not strike that on the other...

"None of the avatars or prophets have said, I have come for the Hindus, or for the Muslims, or for the Christians. They said, we have come for mankind like light for everyone. But the devotees of Krishna said, Krishna belonged to the Hindus; the devotees of Mohammad said, Mohammad belonged to the Muslims; the disciples

<sup>72</sup> S. M. Akbaruddin, B. A., 'Bartaman Bangala sahitye Musalmaner sthan', *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1323 B. S. (1915)

<sup>73</sup> Mohammad Abdul Hakim; 'Hindu Mosalmaner milaner antaray', *Banga Nur*, 1st yr.; 3rd no.; *Magh*, 1326 (1920)

of Christ said, Christ belonged to the Christians. Christ, Mohammad and Krishna have all become communal property. And all this trouble concerns that property alone...

“Man has now degenerated into an animal and had forgotten his age-long kinship. Animals’ tails have sprouted on the heads of some and on the whole faces of others... They are striking the *Lungi* (generally worn by Bengali Muslims), the *nergoti* (worn by Hindu ascetics), the tuft and the beard. Will these fools never stop fighting over external symbols?”<sup>74</sup>

A similar note is struck in *Sikha* in 1927 accusing some Muslims of fanaticism over music in front of mosques when a polite protest would suffice.<sup>75</sup> And earlier, in 1926 Nazrul Islam in *Gana bani* came out strongly against fanaticism, arguing that once wounded, all men were the same and neither the mosque nor the temple was moved by their cries of anguish. According to him, “Strike the wretched *Yavanas*’, ‘strike the wretched *kafirs*’ – once more trouble has broken out between Hindus and Muslims. They fought with words at first, and then with blows. I saw that when those who had been shouting frenziedly for the prestige of *Allah* and mother *Kali* to be protected began to fall beneath blows, they ceased uttering the name of *Allah Miya* or *Kali Thakurani*. Hindus and Muslims lay side by side groaning in the same words ‘O father, O mother’ as two children of different religions left by their mothers wail in the same voice to call their mothers. I saw that the mosque was not moved by the wailing of the dead and wounded, and the stone images in the temples made no response; only their altars remained eternally stained with the blood of foolish men. Who, O hero, will wipe out this stigma written in blood on the brows of the mosques and temples?”<sup>76</sup>

In 1930 an anonymous B. A. B. T., in *Moyajjin*, put forward a view similar to Nazrul Islam’s in *Gana bani* about the fundamental sameness of Hinduism and Islam claiming that Sri Krishna in the

<sup>74</sup> Kazi Nazrul Islam, ‘Hindu-Musalman’, *Gana bani*, 2nd September, 1926

<sup>75</sup> Anwarul Kadir, ‘Bangali Musalmaner samaik galad’, *Sikha*, 1st yr.; *Chaitra*, 1333 B. S. (1927)

<sup>76</sup> Kazi Nazrul Islam, ‘Mandir o Masjid’, *Gana bani*, 26th August, 1926

*Mahabharata* might well have been a prophet as also might Buddha and Ramchandra: "All of them preached the Islamic religion and whatever their followers may call themselves they are actually Muslims... If Indian Muslims could take their Hindu brothers to their hearts acknowledging them to be believers in the same religion and if Hindus could forget their pettiness and believing the religions of both communities to be basically the same could embrace the Muslims then a new age would truly dawn in India."<sup>77</sup>

A few months earlier another graduate in *Saogat* had put forward an idealistic plea for the development of Hindu-Muslim unity by as far as possible eradicating Hindu-Muslim distinctions: separate educational institutions ought to be abolished; Muslims ought to cease dreaming of Arabia, Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan and acknowledge themselves to be sons of Bengal's soil. "They must forget these two words, Hindu and Muslim. They must feel the same pride in Hindu achievements that Hindus feel, because these achievements have distinguished their mother-land... On the other hand, Hindus have an equal right with Muslims to feel proud of Indian Muslim achievements, since those achievements have enriched India. All must...melt down in a fire of love and knowledge this sense of discrimination between Hindus and Muslims, and forge from it a unified feeling,...otherwise this aggressive mentality which besets us both will drive us on through clash after clash creating an intolerable atmosphere."<sup>78</sup>

Even after the riots in Dacca in 1930 the editor of *Masik Mohammadi* was able to keep a level head and condemned the hooliganism underlying the disturbances: "If this is the way to preserve the prestige of one community then it is time we performed the *sraddha* and *chehlam* (the last rites) of such prestige... Dacca Muslims have set fire to Hindu homes, Dacca Hindus have burnt down Muslim dwellings... People are still working out how many

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<sup>77</sup> Mohammad Abdur Rashid. B. A., B. T., 'Bharatbarse ki paygambar prerita han nai?', *Moyajjin*, 2nd yr., 2nd no. and 4th no.; *Paus and Magh*, 1336 B. S. (1930)

<sup>78</sup> Abul Hussain, M. A., B. L. 'Taruner sadhana', *Saogat*, 6th yr.; 12th no.; *Asarh*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

Hindu and Muslim casualties there were. But most unfortunately few people think it necessary to consider how many citizens of Dacca died in the hands of citizens of Dacca, how many Bengalis were murdered by Bengalis, and how many of their own fellow-countrymen they have slaughtered...?"<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Editor, 'Dhakar danga', *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr., 10th no.: *Sraban*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

## CHAPTER IV LITERATURE

One of the bones of contention preventing harmonious Hindu-Muslim relations was literature. Bengali literature has never catered to the whole Bengali nation. From the outset it has been communal and sectarian, each community or sect having a literature exclusively of its own. Folk literature alone was common property. Nevertheless, this communal, sectarian nature of Bengali literature was until the nineteenth century no problem. It was probably only during the later half of the nineteenth century that a problem arose, principally because of educational institutions, literature and the theatre.

The first half of the nineteenth century in Bengal witnessed the germination of a Hindu renaissance, whose literary flowering and fruition occurred in the second half of the century, when Bengali Muslims were beginning for the first time in any numbers to enter the westernised schools and colleges, whose curricula were dominated by Hindu teachers, administrators and text-book authors. The exposure of Muslims to these heavily-Hinduised texts had one of two results: some Muslims became Hinduised; others reacted strongly and sought to retaliate. Undoubtedly, there was much to retaliate against. In most Hindu texts, fiction and dramas of the period historical Muslim personages, even *Begums* and princesses, were maligned and vilified. Offensive epithets like *Yavana* and *Mleccha* were applied to them. All their faults, possible and impossible, were magnified; and their virtues totally ignored. It was all part of the build-up of Hindu national prestige. The effect on Muslims, however, was deplorable, no matter which way they reacted. To acquiesce was, of course, ignoble; to retaliate was in the particular political circumstances explosive. A placatory middle path was for all but the bravest of spirits like Mir Mosharraf Hossain and Kazi Nazrul Islam virtually impossible.

In the following pages attempts have been made to systematise press comments on literature and the arts in general during the period.



# I

## GENERAL: THE PURITANICAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ARTS

### (a) PAINTING

There seems to have been a puritanical attitude towards the arts in general in strictly orthodox Muslim society. Painting, fiction and drama were regarded by these people as reprehensible or indeed even forbidden.

In 1920, for example, the periodical *Nur* was censured for having a picture of a horseman on its front page. This was described by *Banga Nur* as “an offence to Islam”.<sup>1</sup> That same year *Al-Eslam* proclaimed: “The painting of human and other sentient beings is forbidden by the Islamic religion”. It then went on to censure monthly periodicals for carrying “pictures of beautiful women to attract readers” and also young writers who seemed to “approve of such pictures on the plea of art... The painting of pictures...is a prominent part of Hinduism... Consequently, to imitate Hindu taste is for a religious Muslim impossible”.<sup>2</sup>

### (b) MUSIC

“Music”, *Islam-darsan* proclaimed in 1921, “is strictly forbidden by the Islamic scriptures. The *Quran* and *Hadith* describe it as the ‘sound of Satan’ and an ‘instrument of immorality’...because it...arouses...quiescent lusts and desires...Consequently, in this licentious age...every God-fearing Muslim should preserve the Muslim nation from... dancing, singing and playing the musical instruments”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Al Faruk, ‘Anubiksan’, *Banga Nur*, 1st yr., 6th no.; *Baisakh*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>2</sup> Farrokh Ahmad Nejpuri, ‘Sahityer gati’, *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 4th no.; *Sraban*, 1327 (1920)

<sup>3</sup> Editor, ‘Islam o stri swadhinatar adarsa’, *Islam-darsan*, 2nd yr., 6th no; *Aswin*, 1328 F3. 5, (1921)

It is to be noted that this puritanical attitude of discouraging dancing and singing, held sway over Bengali Muslim society until quite recent times.

Apparently some followers of *Marfat*<sup>4</sup> had tried to legitimise musical instruments. But *Islam Nur* in 1926 condemned this attempt, alleging that its authors had “attributed astonishing lies to God, the Prophet, the Sahaba and to God-fearing scholars.” In *Islam Nur*’s opinion, “the playing of musical instruments” had not taken place “in the time of the Prophet.”<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, however, *Masik Mohammadi* in 1928 maintained that there was not a single verse in the *Quran* condemning music, nor indeed was there a single authentic *Hadith* indicating that the Prophet had declared music forbidden or illegitimate. On the contrary, Masik Mohammadi contended, it could be incontrovertibly proved that the Prophet himself had listened to music, and not only permitted it, but ordered it. Furthermore, many of his disciples had practised it. And *Imams* such as Abu Hanifa (699-767), Malik ibn Anas (713-795), Al-Shafi’i (767-819), Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855) and so forth had themselves deemed music legitimate and had listened to it. Indeed, the Imam Malik had actually been an expert of musicology.<sup>6</sup>

*Sariyate Eslam*, however, categorically rejected the arguments put forward by *Masik Mohammadi* and stated that “The *Quran* and *Hadith* contain ample evidence of singing and playing musical instruments being *haram*.”<sup>7</sup>

The following year, however, *Saogat* related an interesting story illustrating the Prophet’s interest in music: “It cannot be said that our Prophet never liked singing. The girls of Hazrat Umar’s (the second great Caliph of Islam) family were reciting poetry and singing at the top of their voices on *Idd* day. Returning home Hazrat Umar scolded them; but the Prophet Mohammad said: “Do not stop them today, Umar. Today is the day of greatest rejoicing, the *Idd*.” Furthermore,

<sup>4</sup> A Muslim *Faqir* sect, whose rites are accompanied by both vocal and instrumental music.

<sup>5</sup> Maolana Mohammad Ruhul Amin, ‘Gitabadya haram haibar praman’, *Islam Nur*, 1st yr., 2nd no.; *Falgun*, 1332 B. S. (1926)

<sup>6</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan. ‘Samasya o samadhan’, *Masik Moham.madi*, 1st yr., 12th no.: *Aswin*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>7</sup> Maolana Afsaruddin Ahmad, ‘Sangit samasya’, *Sariyate Eslam*, 3rd yr., 12th no.; *Paus*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

as *Saogat* indicated, it was the Muslims who had taken the lead in classical Indian music<sup>8</sup> and they continued to do so.<sup>9</sup>

### (C) FICTION

Music had been described as being harmful as drugs, and in 1920 *Al-Eslam* condemned novels also for being as addictive, destructive and wasteful of national energies as drug, blaming them for the “disinclination...in our society towards...agriculture, commerce, science, philosophy, history and religion” and also for inclining the young towards “bad thoughts and evil desires” by inflaming them with “enticing descriptions...(of) the joys of union, the tender *tetes-a-tetes* of lovers” and other titillating allusions to “physical beauty”.<sup>10</sup>

That same year *Al-Eslam* accused novels of making people irresponsible, lazy and work-shy, and undermining their aspirations towards nation-building. The whole country was “in danger of being flooded by novels”. Everyone, even women, were eager to read them. Authors were “prospering and spawning them with redoubled enthusiasm” and publishers were “making a fat profit”. The “poison from novels” was rendering Bengali Muslims “absolutely weak and exhausted.”<sup>11</sup>

*Choltan* in 1923 described novel-reading as “one of the contagious diseases ... it is as difficult to get people to give up this craze as it is to give up betel or cigarettes. By reading non-Muslim novels, which insult our religion and society and lower our national prestige, Muslim readers are becoming ... unpatriotic and apathetic ... accustomed to think that, to be a Muslim is a sign of inferiority...”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For further accounts of Muslim patronage of music in India see M. Mujeeb, *op. cit.* pp. 350-51, 518-19.

<sup>9</sup> M. Rahimunnisa Khanam ‘Sangit charcha’, *Saogat*, 7th yr., 1st no.; *Bhadra*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

<sup>10</sup> Nazir Ahmad, ‘Upanyas’, *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 2nd no.; *Jyaishta*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>11</sup> Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad, ‘Bangiya Mochalman samaje upanyaser banya’, *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 6th no.; *Aswin*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>12</sup> Editor, ‘Sahitya swarup’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 9th no.; 21st *Asarh*, 1330 B. S., 6th July, 1923

## (d) DRAMA

“Even though it is forbidden by our religion”, *Saogat* declared in 1919, “many of our Muslim brothers now-a days feel no compunction about dressing up like typical Hindu babus and sitting in the theatre bare-headed”.<sup>13</sup> In 1920 a contributor to *Al-Eslam* attacked the theatre as sexually-titillating and morally-subversive: “The intention of most of the audience is to see the radiant beauty of the prostitutes (i. e. actresses) and enjoy their singing and dancing. I do not suppose even one per cent go (to the theatre) for the moral”. Apparently theatrical performances were so attractive that *Al-Eslam’s* contributor suspected young men of “stealing from their parents’ boxes” in order to attend and “becoming addicted to prostitutes, catching alarming diseases and auctioning their paternal homes and homesteads.”<sup>14</sup>

## II

## COMMUNALISM IN BENGALI LITERATURE

(a) ON THE HINDU SIDE<sup>15</sup>

- (i) **The allegation that some Hindu authors disparage Muslim characters and exalt Hindus; and also that they disparage Muslim institutions.**

*Islam-pracharak* in 1903 reported that at a session of the Muslim Education Society in 1898 Syed Nabab Ali Choudhury had got a

<sup>13</sup> Editor, ‘Bangiya natyakatha’, *Saogat*, 1st yr., 7th no.; *Jyaishta*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>14</sup> Nazir Ahmad, ‘Upanyas’, *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 2nd no.; *Jyaishta*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>15</sup> Hindu authors had since the mid-nineteenth century been awakening a spirit of nationalism in Bengal. Their vision was, however, largely limited to their own community. Thus to them ‘national’ renaissance and Hindu revival were virtually synonymous. Their invigoration of their co-religionists antagonised almost to the point of alienation their Muslim neighbours, whom they regularly depicted as enemies and villains. “Patriotic (Hindu) writers invariably glorified not merely the ancient Indian culture with its predominantly Hindu structure, they also began to dwell upon the struggles of the Rajputs, the Marathas, the Sikhs as instances of the freedom urge. As it happened, all these people had as their adversaries-the Muslims... Amit Sen, *Notes on the Bengal Renaissance*, 1957, p. 50.

resolution passed condemning “the animosity towards Muslims... found in Bengali literature”. This resolution had later been published in English under the title *Vernacular Education in Bengal*. Though submitted for review to many Hindu editors it had received serious attention from none: indeed, *Bharati* (1877) had merely mocked and ridiculed it.<sup>16</sup>

The kind of anti-Muslim sentiment to be found in Bengali literature was outlined in the same article of *Islam Pracharak* :

“Everyone, beginning from the poet Iswar Gupta, Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, novelist Bankimchandra, the poet Hem (Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay), and Nabinchandra right down to the disciples of their disciples, which means any Hindu Tom, Dick and Harry, does not hesitate diabolically to abuse the Muslim race and to vilify their glorious ancestors. They take immense pleasure in exhuming from their peaceful marble tombs the Muslim emperors of Delhi and depicting them in the pages of their novels and poems as wicked, tyrannical, dissolute devils and hateful lecherous dogs, and these distortions are, when staged in Calcutta and various places in the provinces, earning the praise of countless Hindus....

“They have dragged out from their solitary rooms in the *harem* even the daughters of the *Badshahs*, who had been kept in strict *pardah*, and by the help of their hemp-addicted imaginations they have depicted some of them as desirous of the love of Shivaji,<sup>17</sup> that devil in human form, that mountain-rat and slayer of women, and some of them as languishing for the love of pig-eating Rajputs<sup>18</sup> and

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<sup>16</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Musalman o Hindu lekhak’, *Islam. pracharak*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; *Agrahayan-Paus*, 1310 B. S. (1.903)

‘This refers to an article by Rabindranath Tagore in the *Kartik* issue of *Bharati* in 1307 B. S. (1900).

<sup>17</sup> The Maratha general, who fought the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and eventually founded a Hindu empire in the Deccan. About two hundred years later Shivaji was rediscovered by Hindu enthusiasts and installed as an ideal Hindu hero.

The heroic portrayal in novels and dramas by Hindus of Shivaji as in love with a Muslim heroine and at war with Muslim powers provoked bitter criticism from the Muslim press.

<sup>18</sup> The reference here is to Bankimchandra’s novel *Rajsinha* (1882)

some as the hand-maids of the Hindu slaves; and they get great pleasure from staging the stories in the theatre...It seems as if Hindu authors, orators, poets and novelists have been born only to slay the *Yavanas* (i. e. the Muslims). The first word a Hindu author has to write, when taking up his pen, is *Yavana*, otherwise his pen simply does not move. Consequently, no matter how much you Muslims may object, the Hindus will be unable to abandon the word *Yavana*...

“Open your eyes and you will see that each Hindu author is either a second Bankim or a second Nabinchandra, both of whom were enemies of the Muslims. Each one of them are enemies of the *Yavana*. We had thought that in time this evil nature of their’s would right itself...But alas, all our hopes have been in vain.”<sup>19</sup>

An earlier article in *Islam-pracharak* in 1903 to some extent corroborated these allegations, specially the point about Muslim girls falling in love with Hindus: “Ayesa in *Durgesnandini*, Rosinara in *Rosenara* and Zulekha in *Madhabikankan* were all three languishing for the love of Hindus and unfortunate. Those who have polluted the hearts of the lovely women...may be commended as ideal authors but they can never earn the gratitude .of their readers.”<sup>20</sup>

Commenting on the performance of (*Banger*) *Pratapaditya* (1903) at the Grand Theatre, *Naba Nur* in 1905 stated that “we were unfortunately unable to watch...with complete sympathy. The aspects of Muslims (it depicts)...are not founded upon...any very high ideals.” It then deplored “the disagreeable spectacle of old Torap falling head-over-heels in love with a Hindu young lady, named Fuljani” and elsewhere the “mauling” of a young Brahmin wife by the foot soldiers of Sher Khan. *Naba Nur* contemptuously supposed these scenes and the maligning of Muslims with, “such sweet sounding epithets as *Yavana* and *Mleccha*’ were necessary “to warm the ice-cold blood of the Hindus... The purpose behind the portrayal of the low character of Muslims...is to denigrate the Muslims... The

<sup>19</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Sri Tapah, ‘Hindu sahitya’, *Islam-prackarak*, 5th yr., 9th-10th no.; Aswin-Kartik, 1310 B. S. (1903)

aim of these authors is to exalt Hindu ideals at the expense of Muslims.”<sup>21</sup>

That same year *Naba Nur* alleged that Bankimchandra distorted historical Muslim personages in *Durgensandini* (1865) making Katlu Khan cruel and lecherous whereas “history is completely silent about this... History fames Osman as the son of Katlu Khan. Did Bankim babu do right in changing that relationship? By mentioning in a foot note the historical relationship between Katlu Khan and Osman he has done nothing but fire arrows of derision at Muslim society”, i. e. the distortions were not accidental or due to ignorance but, *Naba Nur* implied, deliberate.<sup>22</sup>

In 1916 *Al-Eslam* drew attention to the “loathsome despicable” portrait of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) in D. L. Roy’s plays *Durgadas* (1906) and *Shajahan* (1909). The only respect in which his play *Nurjahan* (1908) was more palatable than *Pratnp Sinha* (1905) was in its containing less “racial hatred... He (D. L. Roy) has throughout attempted to demonstrate the superiority of the Hindus. This attitude is discernible in *Shajahan* and *Mebar Patan* and is precisely what people call prejudice.”<sup>23</sup>

Six months earlier *Al-Eslam* had complained that “Hindu literature” had “so diminished the...(self-respect) of even our

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<sup>21</sup> Maolvi Imdadul Haq, B. A., ‘Gryand thiyetare Pratapaditya’, *Naba Nur*, 3rd yr., 6th no.; *Aswin*, 1312 B. S. (1905)

<sup>22</sup> Mohammad Habibar Rahman, ‘Osman o Jagatsinha’, *Naba Nur*, 3rd yr., 2nd no.; *Jyaistha*, 1312 B. S. (1905) The vigorous anti-Bankim campaign which characterises the Muslim press of this period stemmed directly from Bankim’s “deliberate” maligning of Muslims. Professor T. W. Clark writes: “... usually they (Muslim characters) are cast in the roles of tyrant and oppressor. They are the abductors of women, and the rapacious collectors of taxes. ... The Muslims are par excellence the foe. They are tricked in several places by superior Hindu intelligence, and routed in others by the heroism of Hindu soldiers, inspired by their divine supporters, *Hari* and *Chandi* (*Kali*). They are often presented as sub-humans, fit only for slaughter”. ‘The role of Bankimchandra in the development of nationalism’, *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, (ed. C. H. Philips). 1961, pp. 439-40.

This clearly demonstrates why Bengali Muslims found Bankim’s *Durgensandini*, *Sitaram*, *Anandamath* and *Rajsinha* so offensive.

<sup>23</sup> S. M. Akbaruddin, B. A., ‘Bartaman Bangala sahitye Musalmaner sthan, .Al-Eslam, 2nd 9r., 9th no.; *Paus*, 1323 B. S. (1916)

educated young men and...inculcated in them such a sense of Muslim inferiority that their pulses” were “unmoved even by...dramas showing the imaginary, yet abominable and hateful, character of Muslim heroes”; it then asked why Muslims could not get “these vile novels and plays” either burnt or banned by the British Government.<sup>24</sup>

In 1917 *Al-Eslam* questioned Bankimchandra’s patriotism. “Love for the Bengalis”, *Al-Eslam* argued must mean “love for all the inhabitants whether they be Hindu, Muslim or members of other communities... If he had been a real patriot he would have depicted the glorious character of Mir Kasim (in Chandrasekhar) ... (But instead) like a traitor he depicted it in a most heartlessly distorted way... It has not crossed his mind even once that Muslims are also Bengalis, Muslims also dwell in this country and Muslims are also brothers and neighbours to the Hindus. If he had glanced at the census report then his biased love of the Bengalis would have been cured.”<sup>25</sup>

Despite attacking Bankimchandra for his anti-Muslim bias, Muslims were, nevertheless, aware of the excellence of Bankim’s style which was, according to *Bangiya-Musalman sahitya-patrika* in 1918, “simple, straightforward and lucid.” It should be “our ideal, for no one needs take pains to understand it.”<sup>26</sup>

That same year *Al-Eslam* again attacked Bankim alleging that “it was through this hatred of the Muslims that he sought to enrich his patriotism and for this reason his patriotism never came off...since he has conceived Bengali Muslims to be his enemies, the Bengali Muslims consider him a self-interested traitor.”<sup>27</sup>

In 1919 *Saogat* returned to the theme of the maligning of historical Muslim personages in plays and the harm this caused to

<sup>24</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Sahitya o Jatiya jiban’, *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1323 B. S. (1916)

<sup>25</sup> Abul Kalam Mohammad Shamsuddin, ‘Sahityagurur Bangali priti’, *Al-Eslam*, 3rd yr., 2nd no.; *Jyaistha*. 1324 B. S. (1917)

<sup>26</sup> Syed Emdad Ali, ‘Banga bhasa o Musalman’, ‘*Bangiya-Musabnan-sahitya-patrika*’, 1st yr., 2nd no.; *Sraban*, 1325 B. S. (1918)

<sup>27</sup> Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, ‘Sahitya gurur Bangali priti’, *Al-Eslam*, 4th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1325 B. S. (1918)



Muslim young men: “they lose faith in their own nation and through seeing their own degradation assume they have nothing to be proud of.”<sup>28</sup>

*Islam-darsan* in 1921 alleged that through Bankim’s influence foreign fashions (‘blouses and chemises’) were being adopted by Bengali women and also that Bankim’s “communalism” had alienated the “love, sympathy and respect of a large community”<sup>29</sup>; i. e. the Bengali Muslims.

In 1923 *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* complained that Bankimchandra enhanced Hindu characters and made Muslims “so unpleasant...no Muslim would wish to acknowledge them.” He also imagined that Muslim girls went “crazy” over Hindu boys, who, being as controlled as *Siva*, rejected them.<sup>30</sup>

In 1927 *Masik Mohammadi* regretted that “the greatest novelist in modern Bengali, Saratchandra Chatterji should have expressed erroneous opinions about Islamic education... being desirous to know about the place of women in Islamic society.”<sup>31</sup> It was unfair, *Masik Mohammadi* argued, “to attack Islamic ethics basing his opinions upon the conclusions of *Padri Sell* (Rev. Edward Sell), the arch enemy of Islam.”<sup>32</sup>

## (ii) Anti-Muslim political attitudes attributed to Rabindranath Tagore

In 1923 *Choltan* reported on a recent manifestation of “a very great alarming disease” called “dread of the Muslims”. *Choltan* could readily see how this disease might affect Bipin Chandra Pal

<sup>28</sup> Editor, ‘Bangiya natyakatha’, *Saogat*, 1st yr., 7th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Abdul Hakim, ‘Banga sahitye Musalman’, *Islam-darsan*, 1st yr., 11th no.; *Falgun*, 1327 B. S. (1921)

<sup>30</sup> Safiya Khatun, B. A., ‘Bangla sahitye anudarata’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 5th yr., 4th no.; *Magh*, 1329 B. S. (1923)\*\*\*

<sup>31</sup> This refers to Saratchandra’s remarks on Muslim women in his book, *Narir Mulya* (1923)

<sup>32</sup> Editor, ‘Sarat babur abhimat’, *Masik Moharnmadi*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Kartik*, 1334 B. S. (1927)

(1858-1932), Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Roy and Swami Sraddhananda (1855-1926),<sup>33</sup> but was distressed to see even “the world famous, Nobel prize winner, the great poet and philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore” had also fallen a victim to the disease. Tagore (1861-1941) was alleged to fear that in the event of “India becoming self-governing, Muslim hegemony would be established... It had, he said, been a fatal mistake for the Hindus to join the *Khilafat* movement... (Mahatma Gandhi was being) manipulated like a puppet by the Muslims. The interests of the Hindus were in no way linked with Turkey and the Caliphate”. In conclusion *Choltan* commented, “We admit Rabindranath is a poet, a very great poet and a world-famous poet, but... he is no politician...having had nightmares about Muslim rule in India, he is shuddering with dread.”<sup>34</sup>

#### (b) ON THE MUSLIM SIDE

##### (i) Tendency to censure Hinduised/Pro-Hindu/anti-Muslim Muslim authors

Commenting upon a new monthly magazine called *Naba Nur* edited by Maolavi Emdad Ali (1880-1956), *Islam-pracharak* in 1903 complained that, “...despite the editor being a Muslim, some Hindu authors also contribute to it articles and novels concerning their own community.”<sup>35</sup> In its 8th yr. *Islam-pracharak* complained of a “ghost” taking possession of “young *Soltan*” and almost squeezing the life out of it. Apparently *Soltan* had rebelled “against its own religion, society and community ...even the charge of treason has indirectly been brought against that ghost. We are sorry *Soltan* has so

<sup>33</sup> These four great Hindu leaders were responsible for the spread of Hindu nationalism in India. Their championing of (i) the strenuous promotion of Hinduism in national politics” (ii) the advocacy of Hindi in the *Devanagari* script and (iii) the patronage of *Suddhi-satrgathan* movements alienated Muslims.

<sup>34</sup> Editor, ‘Rabi babur atanka’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 4th no.; 18th *Jyaistha*; 1st June, 1923

<sup>35</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Naba Nur o Jihad’, *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; *Agrahayan-Paus*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

regrettably declined. If this national newspaper is managed by some suitable manager and editor, our delight will be unlimited.”<sup>36</sup>

Kaikobad (1858-1952), the author of *Mahasman kavya* (1904), according to *Naba Nur* in 1906, was unable to “observe the development of any but brute force in Muslims...(Kaikobad has) deemed it impossible to write an epic without using the word *Yavana*, which Muslims have striven so hard and written so much to drive out of Bengali literature. How are we hereafter to tell Hindu authors to abandon this word?”<sup>37</sup>

*Saogat* in 1919, however, praised *Mahasman* in all respects: “Its language is so straightforward, simple, euphonic, poetic and easily-flowing that with the exception of the great post Nabinchandra Sen alone it is unrivalled in Bengali literature.”<sup>38</sup>

An article in the same magazine the following month, however, attacked *Mahasman*: “Not all the imagery in *Mahasman* is praiseworthy; much of it is drawn from the tales about Hindu deities... Excellence in an epic is not achieved merely by stamping upon it the imprint of Hinduism”. Kaikobad, it alleged, was even to some extent guilty of pro-Maratha sympathies.<sup>39</sup> A further article in *Saogat* in 1919 admitted that Kaikobad possessed poetic qualities but nevertheless accused him of failing “to evoke Muslim ideals” and “being Hinduised”<sup>40</sup>

“*Anoyara* by Pandit Najibar Rahman”, *Islam-darsan* reported in 1920, “was the first Muslim novel. Shortly afterwards Muslim authors enthused over novel-writing. But unfortunately the majority

<sup>36</sup> Editor, ‘Jatiya o dharma eangbad’, *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 10th no. *Islam-pracharak*, predominantly a ‘Muslim’ magazine, here criticises *Soltan* for being pro-Congress, pro-Nationalist, and holding secular views on Hindu-Muslim questions.

<sup>37</sup> Fazlar Rahman Khan, ‘Mahasman kavya’, *Naba Nur*, 3rd yr., 10th no.; *Magh*, 1312 B. S. (1906)

<sup>38</sup> Abul Kalam Mohammad Shamsuddin, ‘Mahasman kavya’, *Saogat*, 1st yr., 8th no.; *Asarh*, 1320 B. S. (1919)

<sup>39</sup> Mohammad Wajed Ali, ‘Mahasman samvandhe dui ekti katha’, *Saogat*, 1st yr., 9th no.; *Sraban*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>40</sup> Syed Emdad Ali, ‘Pratibad-amar uttar’, *Saogat*, 1st yr., 12th no.; *Kartik*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

are... unreadable... (because) not the least hesitation is felt about slighting our sacred Islam, attacking the sacred *Quran* and *Hadith*, and showering abuse upon the *Ulema*... These books are trash and pitchers of poison."<sup>41</sup>

The good qualities of "*Nur*..., a newly published monthly magazine, edited by the poet Ismail Hossain Siraji from Sirajganj", *Islam-darsan* alleged in 1920, "are destroyed by iconoclasm... Intense rebelliousness towards the *Sariyat* which characterises the personal life of (Ismail Hossain)... also permeates this magazine... We hope...*Nur* will cultivate literature with caution in regard to religion."<sup>42</sup> *Nur* was also censured by *Banga Nur* that same year for having a horse on its front page: "The person whose forehead can be embellished by such an offence against Islam naturally gives rise to doubts in people's mind about his character."<sup>43</sup>

*Islam-darsan* in 1922 castigated Kazi Nazrul Islam,<sup>44</sup> editor of *Dhumketu*, whose "bravado had already been displayed in his poem *Bidrohi*<sup>45</sup>... Ever since then *Dhumketu* has... been emitting poison against sacred Islam. Every line and page of his writings proclaim that this wild young man has received no Islamic instruction-his brain is cram full of Hindusim... The fellow is a complete incarnation of Satan... If there were a genuine Islamic regime then this Pharaoh or Nimrod would have been impaled or beheaded for certain."<sup>46</sup>

*Samyabadi* in 1924 regretted the lack of "Islamic vigour, which was Nazrul Islam's specialty", in *Dolanchapa* (1923). Muslims had

<sup>41</sup> Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad, 'Adarsa upanyas', *Islam-darsan*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>42</sup> Editor, 'Samayik sahitya', *Islam-darsan*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>43</sup> A1 Faruk, 'Anubiksan', *Banga Nur*, 1st yr., 6th no.; *Baisakh*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>44</sup> Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bengal's rebel poet and the greatest poet of the Bengali Muslims, was long neglected and despised by orthodox Muslims, presumably because of the secularist, humanistic note in his writings.

<sup>45</sup> *Bidrohi* (1921), i. e. 'the rebel', is Nazrul Islam's best known and most discussed poem: it made him famous almost overnight. Such was the sensation created following its publication in the weekly *Bijli* that the paper, in order to meet public demand, had to be printed twice in the same week.

<sup>46</sup> Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad, 'Lokta Musalman na Saytan', *Islam-darsan*, 3rd yr., 2nd no.; (1922).

previously thrilled over the “vigour” brought to the Bengali language by “the touch of Nazrul Islam’s genius”. But that “immense vitality (has)...either become moribund or actually deadened beneath the weight of a hostile, accursed atmosphere.”<sup>47</sup>

*Choltan*, too, in 1924 was disappointed with Nazrul Islam, especially with his *Bidrohi*, whose “whole spirit” was “inspired by Hindu ideals... This perversity of his is especially distressing to us, because no other poet has been born in Bengali Muslim society with talent such as his.”<sup>48</sup>

Commenting on “*Agni Bina*<sup>49</sup>... by a recalcitrant young man...highly praised by the Hindu community... Nazrul Islam,... an irreligious disgrace to our community”, *Islam-darsan* in 1926 alleged that, it “lacks the flavour of spirituality, is devoid of religious feeling.... Most of his verses are mere incoherent ravings...saturated in indications of the divisibility of God such as the worship of *Siva*, the eulogy of *Kali*, the adoration of *Durga* and the invocation of *Saraswati*,”<sup>50</sup> The previous year *Moslem darpan* censured the poet Nazrul Islam for having compared Mr. C. R. Das to Hazrat Ibrahim in his *Indra Patan*. Nazrul, *Moslem darpan* declared, ought to be punished, possibly even in the courts: “the curse of God will swiftly descend upon him.”<sup>51</sup>

Poet Golam Mostafa (1897-1964) was condemned in 1926 by *Islam-darsan* as “blatantly Hinduised”. “The majority of the poems in his *Rakta Rag*” were “virtually a rehash of the works of others...absolutely devoid of national sentiment... One even doubts whether he is a Muslim...we cannot consider... (such a person)

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<sup>47</sup> ‘Pustak parichay’, Samyabadi, 2nd yr., 2nd no.; *Falgun*, 1330 B. S. (1924)

<sup>48</sup> Syed Emdad Ali, ‘Banga bhasay Mochlem prabhab’, *Choltan* 8th yr., 41st no.; 17th *Falgun*, 133A B. S.; 29th February, 1924.

<sup>49</sup> Nazrul Islam’s best known book of verse, published in 1922, it immediately created a tremendous stir and soon went into several editions. So provocative were its poems that Government had to proscribe it for fear of spreading sedition.

<sup>50</sup> Abu Nur, ‘Bangiya Moslem sahitya o: ahityik’, *Islam-darsan*, 5th yr., 5th no.; *Falgun*, 1332 B. S (1926)

<sup>51</sup> Editor, ‘Islam-bairi Musalman kabi’, *Moslem darpan*, 1st yr., 8th no.; August, 1925

impassioned by an alien religion as anything other than the trash of our society”<sup>52</sup>

(ii) Tendency to praise pro-Muslim authors

A. Hindu authors

In 1922 *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* published an article praising Rabindranath Tagore for having diffused in his poetry so many Islamic ideas and concepts: “Any Muslim could easily accept his ideas and concepts. No other poet has been able to express so well in Bengali the feelings of the Muslims. But why do we say only Bengali, no non-Muslim poet in the world could have written such things... We do not find any antagonism towards Islam anywhere in the whole vast output of Rabindranath. On the contrary, his writings contain so many Islamic ideas and ideals that he could easily be called a Muslim. It would not be an exaggeration even to say that Rabindranath’s writings are completely free from those concepts which are intensely antagonistic to Islam, such as idolatry, polytheism, atheism, reincarnation and renunciation.”<sup>53</sup>

B. Muslim authors

In 1903 *Islam-pracharak* published an article defending Ismail Hossain Siraji: from abusive attacks by *Mihir o Sudhakar* on the grounds that “each of his articles and poems in *Islam pracharak*...is beneficial to our society. All his writings and speeches promote our interests.”<sup>54</sup>

Though attacked for showing considerable Hindu influence in his book of verses *Dali* (1912) Emdad Ali was, nevertheless, praised

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<sup>52</sup> Abu Nur, *op. cit.*

It should be noted that though attacked in the contemporary Muslim press, all these authors Emdad Ali, Ismail Hossain Siraji, Kaikobad, Nazrul Islam, Golam Mostafa etc. were subsequently acclaimed as heroes of Muslim renaissance in Bengal.

<sup>53</sup> Golam Mostafa, ‘Islam o Rabindranath’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 5th yr., 2nd no.; *Sraban*, 1329 B. S. (1922)

<sup>54</sup> Ibne Hamid, Parasrikatarata’. *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 7th-8th no.; *Sraban-Bhadra*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

by *Saogat* in 1919 for having written such “a national poem...to awaken a sense of identity amongst Muslims by releasing them from their trance of self-forgetfulness... The book is well-suited to the present state of our society. Some of the individual poems in the collection, especially the national and personal ones, greatly pleased us.”<sup>55</sup>

In 1926 *Islam-darsan* put up a similar defence for Ismail Hossain Siraji as had been put up by *Islam-pracharak* in 1903. It was admitted that Siraji was strongly influenced by Hemchandra but, nevertheless, *Islam-darsan* maintained; “his poems and epics... (do) contain Islamic ideas. It ought, therefore, to be acknowledged that his writings are conducive to the construction of our national life. And so he is undoubtedly one of our leading national poets.”<sup>56</sup>

Though admitting that Kazi Nazrul Islam had now (1926) strayed as a *Bidrohi* (rebel) from his previous tendency to write “beautiful poems...instinct with Islamic sentiment... such as *Moharam*, *Sat-il-Arab*, *Korbani*, *Fatehai-doyaj daham* etc.”, *Islam-darsan* maintained that, had he been criticised with patience and generosity, he might well have been brought back to the true path once more.<sup>57</sup>

“When we ask ourselves who ushered in the new age in our literature...”, *Islam-darsan* mused in 1925, “the name which automatically peeps at the door of our mind is that of the late Mir Mosharraf Hossain...the father of our modern literature and...the literary preceptor of the Muslims of Bengal. It was he who pushed aside the impure *dobhasi* verse...and established on the golden throne of our literature tender and chaste prose and verse.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Mohammad Abdul Hakim, ‘Dali’, *Saogat*, 1st yr., 10th no.; *Bhadra*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>56</sup> Abu Nur, ‘Bangiya Moslem sahitya o sahityik’, *Islam-darsan*, 5th yr., 5th no.; *Falgun*, 1332 B. S. (1926)

<sup>57</sup> Pathik, ‘Sahitya samalochanar kayekti katha’, *Islam-darsan*, 5th yr., 7th no.; *Baisakh*, 1.333 B. S. (1926)

<sup>58</sup> Abu Nur, ‘Bangiya Musalman sahitya o sahityik’, *Islam-darsan*, 5th yr., 3rd no.; *Paus*, 1332 B. S. (1925)

### C. *Puthi literature*<sup>59</sup>

Despite the praise heaped on Mir Mosharraf Hossain for ending “impure *dobhasi*”, *Al-Eslam* was five years earlier (1920) stating that *Puthi* literature in *dobhasi* was “a hundred times better than novels in modern Hinduised literary Bengali”. This literature was once fashionable in Bengali Muslim society and from it people learnt much about religion, the lives of prophets and saints and heroic Muslim men and women. Besides being thereby inspired with national feeling and religious fervour they were instructed in ethics by reading *Kitabs* on *Machla* (texts on religious problems) and *Sati nama*, *Nur nama*, *Nabi nama*, *Kachachal Ambiya* (four popular titles in *Puthi* literature).<sup>60</sup>

“It will not do”, *Choltan* declared in 1923, “to ridicule *Puthi* literature. For it is that which is the source of our pride... In the past fifty or sixty years you have not been able to show one tenth of what the authors of *Puthi* literature revealed in Bengali concerning the Muslim nation and Islamic religion.”<sup>61</sup>

Similar ideas were expressed in *Choltan* the following year where it was regretted that these “Muslim authors of *Puthi*...have virtually been driven from sophisticated society... Their work was going well, it was we who destroyed it. By selling ourselves to purified Bengali we have lost whatever capital we possessed as Muslims.”<sup>62</sup>

A similar note of regret was sounded in *Samyabadi* in 1925: “(*Puthis*) contained in full measure the Islamic ideas which sustained

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<sup>59</sup> *Puthi* means ‘manuscript book’, but *puthi sahitya* or *puthi* literature has come to mean a special kind of Bengali Muslim verse literature in mixed diction or *dobhasi* Bengali, made up of lexical items from Bengali, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Hindi and Sanskrit. The main themes of this literature are Islamic religion, rituals, history, legends, romances, epics and hagiographies. This literature attained great popularity in the 18th and 19th centuries.

<sup>60</sup> Farrokh Ahmad Nejmepuri, ‘Sahityer gati’, *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 4th no.; *Srahan*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>61</sup> ‘Bangla sahitya o Hindu Mochalman’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 9th no.; 21st *Asarh*, 1330 B. S.; 6th July, 1923

<sup>62</sup> Syed Emdad Ali, ‘Banga bhasay Mochlem prabhab’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 41st no.; 17th *Falgun*, 1330 B. S.; 29th February, 1924



them... One day we became exceedingly eager to strangle that literature...and devoted ourselves to the cultivation of Bengali inspired by Hindu ideas. Consequently, we became separated from the Muslim masses. Nevertheless, the publishers of *Puthis* of Battala and Sibdaha maintained contact with them... It was the composers of *Puthis* who first began trading in Islamic ideas and it is as a result of their strenuous efforts that Muslim Bengali literature began to grow.”<sup>63</sup>

(iii) Tendency to exhort authors to write on pro-Islamic themes

Commenting upon a poetry magazine called *Lahari* (1900) *Islam-pracharak* regretted that so little Muslim poetry was included: “The main aim of this journal ought to be to encourage his fellow Muslims (and)...to discuss the works of old Muslim poets... from East Bengal that are filled with beautiful imaginary verses...They ought all, we think, to be collected and published...Works containing the national diction of the Muslims ought not to be ignored.”<sup>64</sup>

“We must show by our novels and dramas”, *Al-Eslam* declared in 1916, “how Muslims ought to be, how their domestic life ought to be, how their political life ought to be. There is no point in merely writing love stories. Muslim novels and dramas should contain a Muslim flavour. Otherwise, as far as our national life is concerned, they are useless.”<sup>65</sup>

In the same article the contributor continued to argue that not only should Muslims cultivate their ‘national literature’ but also their ‘national history’ so as to refute “with incontrovertible historical evidence the base, farfetched tales about our princesses and queens.”<sup>66</sup> The study of history would bring another benefit: “No other branch of literature can inspire people, can awaken their self-

<sup>63</sup> Syed Emdad Ali. ‘Bangalar Musalman sahitya-sebiganer prati’, *Samyabadi*, 3rd yr., 6th no.; Kartik, 1332 B. S. (1925)

<sup>64</sup> Editor, ‘Prapta granthadir samalochana’, *Islam-pracharak*, 3rd yr., 5th-6th no.

<sup>65</sup> Mohammad Shahidullah M. A., B. L., ‘Amader (sahityik) daridrtta’, *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 2nd no.; *Jyaisth*. 1323 B. S. (1916)

<sup>66</sup> This refers to Muslim heroines as depicted in historical novels and dramas by Hindu authors.

respect and can bring high aspirations into their hearts as can ancient national history.”

Returning to the theme of “Islam’s erring genius”, Kazi Nazrul Islam, *Choltan* in 1924 expressed the hope that “in future he will enrich Bengali literature by composing works characterised by Islamic ideas.”<sup>67</sup>

(iv) Tendency to disparage Hindu authors and exalt Muslims

In 1918 *Al-Eslam* published an article eulogising Mir Mosharraf Hossain who “set fluttering our national flag marked with the crescent moon beside the Hindu flag in the literary sky of Bengal... His language was more simple and straightforward than Bankimchandra’s and yet, nevertheless, powerful. His book could be read by Hindus, Muslims and Christians alike. Amongst the innumerable books of this age his was like the full moon.”<sup>68</sup>

“Even in the presence of Hindu artists and poets”, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* declared in 1920, the first book of Kazi Abdul Wadud (1894-1970), Mir Paribar (1918) was something of which Muslims could be proud displaying, as it did, “a clear glow of talent... (not) obtained from any Muslim author before.”<sup>69</sup>

“Those who can not restrain their passion for novelreading,” *Choltan* argued in 1923, “ought to satisfy it by reading the social novel called *Maleka*. Whereas by reading novels by Bankimchandra and his famous imitators, Muslims are forced to lower their heads and look glum, by reading books like *Maleka* their heads will be high, their minds ennobled and gladdened.”<sup>70</sup> Another serious contribution to Muslim Bengali literature was sympathetically received by *Choltan* the following year: “in its purity of language, its facile flow, its skill in description” Mohammad Barkatullah’s (1898–) *Parasya-pratibha* (1924) reminded *Choltan* “of a Persian garden.”

<sup>67</sup> Editor, ‘Alochana’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 39th no.; 3rd *Falgun*, 1330 B. S.; 15th February, 1924

<sup>68</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Bangala bhasar paricharya’, *Al-Eslam* 3rd yr., 10th no.; *Magh*, 1324 B. S. (1918)

<sup>69</sup> Khaiyam, ‘Mir Paribar’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 3rd yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>70</sup> ‘Maleka’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 9th no.; 21st *Asarh*, 1330 B. S. 6th July, 1923

By 1928 Muslim confidence had grown to such an extent that the editor of *Masik Mohammadi* did not hesitate to compare Tagore's *Gitanjali* (1910) unfavourably with "many second and third-rate Persian and Urdu poets"<sup>71</sup> and *Moyajjin* declared that Nazrul Islam had not only fulfilled Muslim society's lack of an epic poet but was also gradually enlivening it with his proud piping from his *Bisher basi* (1924), which had "brought a new pulsation of life... not only to Muslims but to non-Muslim as well. His skill in diction, his adroitness in versification...have like a bright, wildly stimulating flame brought to Bengali literature a new age, so that Muslims, seeing one of their brothers enthroned on high,... now feel their national existence."<sup>72</sup>

By the following year Nazrul Islam was completely rehabilitated in Bengali Muslim society. A public meeting in Chittagong accepted him as "the young Muslim leader of Bengal" and censured all the "groundless allegations against him."<sup>73</sup>

### III

#### ATTEMPTS TO BREAK AWAY FROM COMMUNALISM

##### (a) ON THE HINDU SIDE

As early as 1904 *Kohinur* was paying tribute to Dineshchandra Sen (1866-1939) for the sympathy he had shown towards Muslims not only in his *Banga bhasa, o sahitya* (1896) but also in his account of Timur,<sup>74</sup> who until then had been thought of "as merely a Muslim black sheep, wicked and avaricious... The respect and devotion of Muslims towards" Dineshchandra Sen would, therefore, be further

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<sup>71</sup> Editor, 'Alochana', *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Magh*, 1334 B. S. (1928)

<sup>72</sup> Editor, 'Nazrul samvardhana prasange ekti katha', *Moyajjin*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Kartik*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>73</sup> 'Chattagram Nazrul samvardhana', *Saptahik Soogat*, 1st yr., 36th no.; 11th *Magh*, 1335 B. S.; 25th January, 1929

<sup>74</sup> Bengali Muslims, it would seem, intended to inspire themselves from the exploits of a Muslim hero in Timur Lane (1336-1405), who invaded India in 1398-99.

enhanced. "Our sincere wish is that Dinesh Babu may live long and continue in this way to enrich his mother-tongue."<sup>75</sup>

The "national" literatures of the Hindus and Muslims had, *Al-Eslam* argued in 1916, been "moving in completely different directions." There had been no contact between them and, indeed they had each been attempting to move further away from the other. This was deplorable, "but fortunately a group of Hindu writers have realised it. They are, as far as possible, using Muslim thoughts and words in Bengali literature"<sup>76</sup> and for this they deserve the thanks of all Muslims... Rabindranath's lyrics now echo the immortal love songs of the Persian poets.<sup>77</sup>... Many Hindu writers... frequently quote Persian verse. Dear Muslim authors,... do not harbour a grudge against the whole of Hindu society because some Hindu authors have maligned you."<sup>78</sup>

The following year *Al-Eslam* paid tribute to Aksay Kumar Maitreya for eradicating the "disrepute into which Siraj (Sirajuddaula) and Kasim (Mir Kasim) had fallen."<sup>79</sup> Is not this the best way to establish sincere affection between the two communities?<sup>80</sup>

#### (b) ON THE MUSLIM SIDE

After lamenting the bias exhibited in *Pratapaditya, Naba Nur* in 1905 pleaded for the exercise of restraint and caution by both Muslim and Hindu authors when depicting low characters from each

<sup>75</sup> Manuyar Hossain, 'Masik sahitya samalochana', Kohinur, 5th yr., 4th no.: *Sraban*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>76</sup> A notable instance is Satyendranath Datta (1882-1922), who utilised Muslim history and Perso-Arabic diction in such well-known poems as *Taj, Itmad-uddaula* and *Kabar-i-Nurjahan*.

<sup>77</sup> Many of Tagore's love lyrics seem to re-echo Persian Sufistic mysticism.

<sup>78</sup> Sheikh Habibar Rahman, 'Jatiya sahitye Hindu-Musalman', *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1323 B. S. (1916)

<sup>79</sup> This refers to Aksay Kumar Maitreya's two historical works, *Sirajuddaula* (1898) and *Mir Kasim* (1906), which were the first serious attempt successfully to exonerate Nawab Sirajuddaula and Nawab Mir Kasim from the charges brought against them by foreign historians.

<sup>80</sup> Editorial comment, *Al-Eslam*, 3rd yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1324 B. S. (1917)

other's communities. "Is it not our duty", *Naba Nur* argued, "to study the best parts of our past history so that the social ideals of both communities may receive appropriate... respect?"<sup>81</sup> Commenting on other plays by D. L. Roy, *Al-Eslam* in 1916 put in a similar plea for mutual tolerance and compassion between the two communities: "(Both) are brothers and must, therefore, be depicted side by side on an equal footing. Otherwise, neither of our communities will fare well."<sup>82</sup>

Mutual tolerance was again the theme of a public address published in *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* in 1919, where it was claimed that novelists should be "idealistic" not "destructive"; i. e. they should not "through ignorance or childish quarrelsomeness" expend all their energies in attacking others. "If we fling all the stones that we possess upon our enemies", the author asked, "then what are we to repair our own dilapidated house with?"<sup>83</sup>

*Saogat* in 1919 lamented the deleterious effect of drama upon Muslim young men and commented: "The past glories of all us, irrespective of our nation or religion, ought to be held up before us so that our nation would be directed towards good ideals. If this happened then the birth of the play and theatre would be worthwhile."<sup>84</sup>

It was noted earlier that Bankimchandra had a predilection for making Muslim girls fall madly in love with Siva-like Hindu boys. *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* in 1921 deplored the spirit of retaliation on the Muslim side. It observed, "Many of these novels by Muslims show the love of a Muslim hero for a Hindu heroine. In the realm of love there may be no communal discrimination and from the literary standpoint this may create variety. But the composition of literature is one thing and retaliation is another. I sincerely hope that

<sup>81</sup> Maolvi Imdadul Haq, B. A., 'Gryand thiyetare Pratapaditya', *Natia Nur*, 3rd yr., 6th no.; *Aswin*, 1312 B. S. (1905)

<sup>82</sup> S. M. Akbaruddin, B. A., 'Bartaman Bangala sahitye Musalmaner sthan', *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 9th no.; *Paus*, 1323 B.S.(1916)

<sup>83</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, 'Sabhapatir abhibhasan', *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Magh*, 1325 B. S. (1919)

<sup>84</sup> Editor, 'Bangiya natyakatha', *Saogat*, 1st yr., 7th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

no one will introduce this kind of variety merely out of a wish for retaliation.”<sup>85</sup> The same theme is touched on again by the same journal in the same issue: “Up till now we were acquainted only with the misrepresentations of the characters of Muslim men and women as presented by Hindu authors...some of our authors, out of a desire to humiliate the enemy, even attempted to retaliate as is proved by such books as *Bankim duhita*.”<sup>86</sup>

In 1926 *Saogat* held Nazrul Islam to be “the national poet of Bengal. His poetry expresses the sufferings of our whole nation, both Bengali Muslims and Bengali Hindus. To express the sufferings of this nation one’s compositions must bear the impress of both Islamic and Hindu sentiment.”<sup>87</sup>

#### IV

#### ALLIED TOPICS

##### (a) THE CRITICISM OF LITERATURE ON PURELY LITERARY CRITERIA

In 1903 *Mihir o Sudhakar* contemptuously dismissed much of the literature issuing from cheap presses as trash: “we have no need of the second-rate. We may not possess... any distinguished author, but this bad reputation is better than permitting the emergence of bad authors. (For they would) only increase trashy literature of cheap presses.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> M. Ansari, ‘Sahitye baichitra’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 4th yr., 3rd no.; *Kartik*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

In retaliation against the unsympathetic treatment of Muslim characters by Hindu authors, some Muslim authors produced historical novels, in which Muslims were the victors, Hindus the vanquished; Muslims displayed heroism, Hindus cowardice; Hindu heroines fell madly in love with Muslim heroes and eventually embraced Islam.

<sup>86</sup> Syed Emdad Ali, ‘Sekh Andu’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 4th yr., 3rd no.; *Kartik*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

<sup>87</sup> Abul Kalam Mohammad Shamsuddin, ‘Kavya sahitye Bangali Musalman’, *Saogat*, 4th yr., 7th no.; *Paus*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

<sup>88</sup> Spastabadi, ‘Asani sampat’, ‘Mihir o Sudhakar’, 11th *Bhadra*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

In 1904 *Naba Nur* cried, "If a poem could be created merely by heaping together a collection of rarely-used lexical items then even this poem (*Paritran*)<sup>89</sup> could doubtless be considered excellent. The author's faults could have been forgiven at least on account of the importance of his theme, if only his description had not been rendered ugly and lifeless by empty pretentiousness. It is extremely regrettable that through lack of restraint he has dissipated his own natural powers. A new author ought not to be so unrestrained, pretentious and cocky when writing poetry."<sup>90</sup>

In 1919 *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* praised *Anoyara* for its beauty and lucidity of description concluding that it was "one of the best novels on the market."<sup>91</sup> And in 1924 a book similar to Samuel Smiles' *Self-help* namely *Unnata jiban* by (Doctor) Lutfar Rahman (1889-1936) was described as "an invaluable addition to Bengali literature... We are delighted to see that Dacca University has included it in its Matriculation syllabus."<sup>92</sup>

An article in *Saogat* in 1926 compared Muslim authors with Hindus without condemning either. When describing Kaikobad as "the true pupil of the great poet Nabinchandra," *Saogat* obviously intended it as a compliment. And, similarly in describing Mozammel Haq (1860-1933), Ismail Hossain Siraji and Abul Ma'Ali Mohammad Hamid Ali (1875-?) as disciples of Madhusudan Datta's (1824-73) genius, the journal was clearly complimenting them on the poetic power and power of language and patriotism they had managed to imbibe from their master. Objective considerations, nevertheless, forced *Saogat* to conclude that, despite certain inspiring qualities, these attempts to imitate *Madhusudan's Meghnad badh kavya* (1861) failed to achieve the same standard.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> This is a poetical work (1903) by Sheikh Fazlul Karim (1882-1936), where the Poet narrates life history of Prophet Mohammad.

<sup>90</sup> 'Grantha samalochana', *Naba Nur*, 2nd yr., 7th no.; Kartik, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>91</sup> Golam Mostafa, 'Anoyara', *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 2nd yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>92</sup> 'Sahitya swarup', *Choltan*, 8th 9r., 37th no.; 18th *Magh*, 1330 B. S. 1st February, 1924

<sup>93</sup> Abul Kalam Mohammad Shamsuddin, 'Kavya sahitye Bangali Musalman'. *Saogat*, 4th yr., 3rd no.; *Bhadra*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

(b) THE COMPARATIVE POSITION OF MUSLIM PRESS AND LITERATURE

As early as 1898 *Kohinur* was acknowledging the Muslim and Hindu communities as the twin sons of Mother India. The Muslims had, however, so far failed to achieve equality with Hindus in regard to literature. But they now saw that their hopes of achieving national improvement would remain forever unrealised unless they paid heed to the cultivation of literature.<sup>94</sup>

A similar note was sounded by *Naba Nur* in 1903 with this difference – *Naba Nur* saw Bengali Muslims' best hopes of genuine progress in the construction of a national literature of their own, rather than in imitating Hindus. Bengali must be enriched with "Muslim thought, aesthetics and vigour imported from our sacred national languages Arabic, Persian and Urdu... Muslim literature, history, biographies, theology and philosophy should be translated into Bengali on a very large scale..."<sup>95</sup> *Naba Nur* had been saying the same thing two months earlier urging each and every Bengali Muslim to "invigorate" and "embellish" Muslim Bengali literature with translations of "sparkling jewels" from Arabic and Persian.<sup>96</sup>

*Islam-pracharak* that same year gave some indication of why it was that Bengali Muslim society was so backward in regard to literature: altogether their writers still probably numbered less than a hundred and their readers scarcely exceeded two thousand. Furthermore, the general level of education in Bengali Muslim society was low. Few authors would have reached Matriculation standard in English and the one or two graduates then writing were still students. Whether they would continue cultivating literature later was uncertain. "Consequently we must remain dependent upon these semi-educated young men."<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Editor, 'Amader nibedan', *Kohinur*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Asarh*, 1305 B. S. (1898)

<sup>95</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, 'Sahitya sakti o jati sangathan', *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>96</sup> Editorial, *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>97</sup> Ibne Hamid, 'Parasrikatarata', *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 7th-8th no.; *Sraban-Bhadra*, 1310 B. S. (1903)



In 1916 *Al-Eslam* proposed that Bengali be taught in Arabic *Madrassas* so that pupils could translate into Bengali from Arabic, Persian and Urdu. It was shameful that the *Quran* and *Hadith* were first translated into Bengali by a Brahma and that *Golesta* and *Hafiz* had similarly been translated by non-Muslims as also had the *Siyar-ul-Mutaksarin* and *Riyaz-us-Salatin*.<sup>98</sup>

In April, 1918 *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* reported on the *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-samiti*<sup>99</sup> (Beangal Muslim Literary Association) and in January, 1919 the *Patrika* published an address where the author demonstrated the need for such a *Samiti* to stimulate Muslim authors to enrich their mother-tongue with translations from Arabic and Persian, “to concert the scattered energies of Muslim writers” and to save them from the humiliation inherent in attending Hindu-dominated organisations like the *Bangiya sahitya parishad* (Academy for Bengali literature) and *Banga sahitya sammelan* (Bengali literary conference).<sup>100</sup>

Reporting on the comparative position of the Muslim press in 1923 *Choltan* lamented that Bengali Muslims still did not possess a single daily in Bengali despite there being seventeen dailies put out in Calcutta, and that of Calcutta’s twenty-two weeklies *Mohammadi* alone was worth-mentioning by Muslims. Though there were fifty monthlies none worth-mentioning was by a Muslim. “To guide this

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<sup>98</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Sahitya o jatiya jiban’, *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 3rd no.: *Asarh*, 1323 B. S. (1916)

The first translator of the *Quran* and *Hadith* into Bengali was Girishchandra Sen. He also rendered *Diwan-i-Hafiz*, *Golesta* and *Busta* from Persian into Bengali. The *Siyar-ul-Mutaksarin* was translated by Gaurasundar Mitra and *Riyaz-us-Saletin* by Rampran Gupta.

<sup>99</sup> An association of Bengali Muslim writers, founded on September 4, 1911 in Calcutta with the specific aims of “preserving Muslims’ own individuality, and demonstrating their individual identity” in Bengali literature. Presumably owing to Hindu dominance in *Bangiya sahitya parishad* Muslims were prompted to set up an exclusively Muslim association which held annual conferences (*Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya sammelan*), and published a journal, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*.

<sup>100</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, ‘Sabhapatir abhিবহাসan’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Magh*, 1325 B. S. (1919)

vast community more dailies, weeklies, and monthlies are needed.”<sup>101</sup>

In 1920 the editor of *Banga Nur* expressed, in his desire for the emergence of a vast Muslim national literature, a new aspect of the question: there could, he concluded, be no national improvement (i. e. for both Hindus and Muslims) until both communities recognised each other’s worth. The emergence of a Muslim literature would help Hindus recognise the value of their Muslim brothers.<sup>102</sup> The same theme was continued by Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah in 1929 in *Saogat*: “We have often spoken of Muslim literature. Some people may say, ‘what fanaticism’! How on earth can there be communal discrimination in literature’... Literature does not become Muslim simply because the authors are Muslim... Our literature will draw its inspiration from the Quran and Hadith, Muslim history and Muslim biographies... Unlike temples and mosques, Hindu and Muslim literatures are, however, not the monopolies of single communities... Indeed, Bengali, literature will constitute the imperishable meeting-house of Hindus and Muslims of which Hindu and Muslim literature will farm its two wings. Admittance will be open to all, but that meetinghouse will not be completed till Muslim literature is fully developed.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Editor, ‘Bangalar Mochalman’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 1st no.; 28th Baisakh, 1330 B. S. 11th May, 1923

<sup>102</sup> Editor, ‘Bangala sarnayik patre Musalmaner sthan’, *Banga Nur*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Magh*, 1326 B. S. (1920)

<sup>103</sup> Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah, M. A., B. L., D. Litt.; ‘Abhibhasan’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 10th no.; *Baisakh*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

## CHAPTER V EDUCATION

Since Bengal was under Muslim rule, when the British first came there, it was natural that the British should at first adopt Muslim institutions: they acquired Persian, and upon gaining control of Bengal retained for some considerable time the Muslim system of administration. The assimilation was thus at first all on the British side, as it had been on the Hindu side before them. Gradually, however, the British anglicised the administration, education and the cosmopolitan capital of Bengal, Calcutta. Muslims remained largely aloof from this anglicisation. From the abolition of Persian as the official language in 1837, their influence rapidly declined. Whereas previously they had virtually monopolised top, non-British administrative posts, by the 1860s the Hindus, thanks to their assiduous westernisation, had virtually replaced them.

Thus it was that towards the end of the nineteenth century Muslims experienced great heart-searchings over their failure to accept western education and the consequences ensuing from that failure. Obviously to survive and prosper as a community a renaissance, similar to that achieved by Hindus, was necessary. The question was how was it to be attained? How were Muslims, on the one hand, to retain their individuality as a religious community, and, on the other, to achieve an equal degree of advancement with Hindus? The educational system in schools and colleges established by the British had by the 1860s a heavy Hindu-Christian bias. Such education was, orthodox society feared, likely to lead either to conversion to Christianity or to Hinduisation. On the other hand, education in traditional *Maktabs* and *Madrassas* was unlikely to result in employment. In the end, sheer economic necessity made the Muslim community accept western education. Nevertheless, during the period under study interesting attempts were made to develop a peculiarly Muslim national education to University level. This attempt was, however, eventually rendered abortive by a growing

awareness of the importance to the Bengali Muslim community of western education and the Bengali language itself. The linguistic burden imposed on Bengali Muslims by this attempt to develop national Muslim education was increasingly felt to be excessive. Ultimately the wisest path seemed to be to opt merely for English and Bengali.

This chapter will fall into two parts: the first being concerned with the educational system introduced by the British, and the second with the attempts of Muslims to retain and modify their system of “National Education”.

## I

### WESTERN EDUCATION

#### (i) EDUCATION VIA ENGLISH AND BENGALI

Numerous articles draw attention to the indifference of the Muslim community towards western education. Various attempts were made to analyse the reasons for this indifference and to suggest ways of overcoming it. The first known analysis via the Bengali Muslim press came in *Mihir o Sudhakar* in 1899. The reasons given are:

- the superstitious attitude of regarding the learning of the official language (English) as anti-religious;
- the neglect and lack of foresight of guardians;
- shortage of money;
- the reluctance and disrespect toward religion displayed by Muslims educated in the official language;
- the animosity of the Hindus;
- lack of Government encouragement;
- Muslim extravagance on ostentatious display;
- disenchantment with hard work;
- the shortage of Muslim officials in educational institutions; and
- the door to official employment being placed in the hands of Hindus.<sup>1</sup>

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Sri Syed Abdul Gaffar, ‘Prerita patra’, *Mihir o Sudhakar*, 8th Paus, 1306 B. S. (1899)

## (a) THE SUPERSTITIOUS ATTITUDE

*Islam-pracharak* in 1902 confirmed this: "Our elders in previous generations did not allow their sons to be educated in English. They felt that once educated in English their sons would lack religious knowledge and indeed become irreligious or infidel."<sup>2</sup>

Again in 1904: "The common belief is that it (English education) is...intensely inimical to our religion."<sup>3</sup>

And once more in 1906: "In a recent speech in the Muslim Institute in Calcutta Allama Shibli (Nomani) clearly stated that if Muslims were educated in accordance with the present system (i. e. in English schools) then the mosques would soon be deserted."<sup>4</sup>

Again *Islam-pracharak* in the same year: "The minds of Muslims were dominated by such superstitions as English was a foreign language, the language of infidels, and if one learnt it one would have to go to hell."<sup>5</sup>

And finally *Sikha* in 1927: "(A group of guardians) issued *fatwa* banning English education as the education of infidels."<sup>6</sup>

## (b) THE NEGLECT AND LACK OF FORESIGHT OF GUARDIANS

This found confirmation

– in *Islam-pracharak* in 1902: "They (Muslims) failed to seek out any means of blocking the road to perdition. No plan occurred to their simple minds whereby their sons might acquire the official language English without losing their religion. Their descendants have had to suffer the consequences of this error of theirs."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ebne Ma'az, 'Musalman bording ba chhatrabas', *Islam-pracharak*, 4th yr., 9th-10th no.; *Falgun-Chaitra*, 1308 B. S. (1902)

<sup>3</sup> M. Aftabuddin Ahmad, 'Bangiya Musalmaner siksa', *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>4</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1313 B. S. (1906)

<sup>5</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, 'Musalman sampraday o tahar patan', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.; 1313 B. S. (1906)

<sup>6</sup> Anwarul Kadir, 'Bangali Musalmaner samajik galad', *Sikha*, 1st yr., *Chaitra*, 1333 B. S. (1927)

<sup>7</sup> Ebne Ma'az; *op. cit.*

– in *Islam-pracharak* again in 1904: “The present younger generation is like drifting, aimless grass on the river. The cause of this is largely the opposition given to English education. Who can turn the clock back? The present situation would probably not have arisen if we had acted in accordance with prevailing tendencies at the time. We are all lost because of indifference shown to English education and the fierce opposition put up against it.”<sup>8</sup>

– in *Kohinur* in 1904: “There are a group of old-fashioned orthodox Muslims who are opposed to Bengali Muslims’ learning Bengali. They converse in Urdu and correspondent in Persian.”<sup>9</sup>

– in *Islam-pracharak* that same year: “It was probably the British who first introduced mass education in this country. But most regrettably the Muslims from the very first displayed indifference towards it and thereby applied an axe to their own feet. At the beginning of English rule the majority of highly-placed officials were Muslims. But since their successors were negligent of English education, they were gradually driven from their own preserves.”<sup>10</sup>

– in *Sikha* in 1927: “There are a group of guardians who are still opposed to the kind of education that is given in [English] schools and colleges.”<sup>11</sup>

### (c) SHORTAGE OF MONEY

This found support in *Basana* in 1909: “Poor Muslim boys are obliged to help their parents by earning money by manual work right from childhood. (In such circumstances) what time do such children have to attend schools? The number of such Muslim boys is great.... Their first consideration is their daily bread-the *Pathsala* (lower primary school) comes second.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Aftabuddin Ahmad, ‘Bangiya Musalmaner siksa’, *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>9</sup> Sheikh Fazlal Karim, ‘Dharmahinata o samaj-sanskar’, *Kohinur*, 5th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>10</sup> M. Aftabuddin Ahmed, ‘Bangiya Musalmaner siksa’, *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>11</sup> Anwarul Kadir, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Amiruddin Ahmad, ‘Musalman siksa samiti’, *Basana*, 2nd vol., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1316 R. S. (1909)

It also seemed to find support in *Al-Eslam* in 1920, where an article complained that “superficial display has now become one of the chief parts of education. The numbers of Inspectors and Administrators and their salaries are gradually increasing....

“The outward show in syllabuses is now even more astonishing. The excessive number of books required, the changing of them each year, the enlarging of them, and in addition to this the insistence on having, and increasing, the number of note-books and exercise-books and so forth is flabbergasting.”<sup>13</sup>

The poverty of some Muslim students was again hinted at in *Choltan* in 1923, where it was pointed out that “Unless Bengali Muslim students learn Urdu well, they will in future be deprived of free lodgings and in consequence the door to education for many of them (i. e. poor students) will close.”<sup>14</sup>

(d) THE RELUCTANCE AND DISRESPECT TOWARDS RELIGION DISPLAYED BY MUSLIMS EDUCATED IN THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE (i. e. ENGLISH)

This found support

– in *Islam-pracharak*, 1902: “In the North-Western provinces and in the Punjab, though not in Bengal, many Muslims were converted to Christianity owing to acquiring English education... Due to it many English-educated Muslims have become tinged with serious faults-chief of which are an aversion to practise their religion and a lack of any sense of morality. Many of them are deficient even in religious faith. Their religious outlook approaches atheism.”<sup>15</sup>

– in the same journal in 1903: “Muslim youths who become engaged in English education become so completely absorbed in

<sup>13</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, ‘Mochalman nimna siksap unnati bidhaner prastab’, *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 6th no.; *Aswin*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>14</sup> Editor, ‘Bangali chhatrer jaygir lop’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 13th no.; 25th Sraban, 1330 B. S.; 10th August, 1923 Urdu-speaking Muslim residents in Calcutta provided free board and lodging as a charity to poor Muslim students from the *mofussil*. In the interests of communication and goodwill, fluency in Urdu was advantageous.

<sup>15</sup> Ebne Ma’az, up. cit.

learning this alien language alone that they are reluctant to receive religious instruction from competent religious people, or to read their own national scriptures”<sup>16</sup>

– and once more in 1906: “...some of the irreligious young men who bear the name of Muslims are about to sever the sacred bonds of religion. Their dreams are exactly like those of European atheists and their aim is worldly advancement alone. They do not seem to have any faith in the after-life.”<sup>17</sup>

#### (e) THE ANIMOSITY OF THE HINDUS

According to *Naba Nur* in 1903: “... Hindu predominance there (in Calcutta University) ... prevails even in the Faculties. As soon as the responsibility for the distribution of State scholarships fell into the hands of Hindus, talented Muslim pupils were deprived from getting them.”<sup>18</sup>

And *Al-Eslam* in 1920 wrote: “In class the Hindu teachers and pupils will address Muslims in such abusive terms as *Mochla*, *Mleccha*, *Yavana*, *Nere*, *Mama* and the comments given vent to by the teachers in the course of the class laughingly and with their faces screwed up like owls will almost invariably be tainted with anti-Muslim sentiments.”<sup>19</sup>

#### (f) LACK OF GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

*Islam-darsan* in 1924 pointed out: “The Bengal Government spends from its revenue one crore thirty-nine lacs of rupees on the spread of education... From the point of view of their percentage in the total population-Muslims are entitled to at least seventy lacs of rupees out of that amount, but actually receive only thirty-one lacs...”

“Muslim students are virtually denied government scholarships. Of the several lacs of rupees awarded in scholarships of various

<sup>16</sup> Ebne Ma’az, ‘Amader ki kara uchit’, *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; *Agrahayan-Paus*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>17</sup> Editor, ‘Jatiya o dharma sangbad’, *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 1st no.; Baisakh, 1313 B. S. (1906)

<sup>18</sup> Editorial comment, *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1810 B. S. (1903)

<sup>19</sup> M. Idrish, ‘Kaifiyat’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 11th no.; *Falgun*, 1326 E. S. (1920)



kinds Muslims received only ten thousand rupees... This year Calcutta University had granted 121 Matriculate scholarships, Muslims have got only one of these worth Rs. 15... What more shameful proof of unjust partiality could there be?"<sup>20</sup>

And Masik Mohammadi in 1930 commented: "The Government has so far made no practical provision whatsoever for the rapid educational advance of the Muslim community. On the contrary, in most instances their doings have merely impeded Muslim progress...

"The Government by the establishment of Islamia College provided to keep Muslims deprived of the higher standard of education available in general Colleges."<sup>21</sup>

#### (g) MUSLIM EXTRAVAGANCE ON OSTENTATIOUS DISPLAY

A contributor to *Islam-pracharak* in 1906 asked his readers: "If you desire your own welfare, then resolve to give up extravagance on...food and clothing, stop bankrupting yourselves...on useless litigations... and instead spend your money on the education of your children."<sup>22</sup>

#### (h) THE SHORTAGE OF MUSLIM OFFICIALS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

*Naba Nur's* editor in 1903 said: "Calcutta University is virtually a Hindu University."<sup>23</sup>

And *Islam-darsan* in 1924 wrote: "Calcutta University is the main centre of higher education for the whole of Bengal but Muslims are denied entrance there. Hindu graduates become members of the University and of the Senate and Syndicate Committees, but old, tried Muslim graduates are not entitled to do so. The number of

<sup>20</sup> Mohammad Abdul Hakim, 'Bharate Hindu Musalman samasya', *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr., 3rd no.; *Aswin*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

<sup>21</sup> Editor, 'Siksa o Muchalman', *Masik Molrammadi*, 3rd yr., 12th no.; *Aswin*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

<sup>22</sup> Mohammad K. Chand, 'Musalmander bidya šiksay abanatir karan', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.; 1313 B. S. (1906)

<sup>23</sup> Editorial comment, *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

Muslim High School teachers, College lecturers and professors is negligible.”<sup>24</sup>

*Saogat* in 1928 commented: “At the 9th of August session of the Bengal Legislative Council a bill to reform Calcutta University was introduced by Dr. Pramatha Nath Banerjee... It makes no provision for Muslims.... Such representation is indispensable for the success of the University... respectable and dignified bodies like the Sadler Commission, the Post Graduate Council of the Calcutta University and the Dacca Intermediate Board have also pointed out the need for Muslim representation in the (Calcutta University) Senate.”<sup>25</sup>

*Saogat* that same year said again: “Not a single Muslim has occupied this post (of Vice-Chancellor) since Calcutta University was established...” It seems to be inconceivable that any Muslim could occupy the post... Thus the other community has established a monopoly to it... We believe that... Sir Abdur Rahim, Sir Guznavi, Mr. A. K. Fazlul Haq, Maolvi Abdul Karim, Mr. A. F. Rahman could occupy the post and discharge its duties with competence. We hope that the Minister for Education will give the matter his consideration.”<sup>26</sup>

- (i) The door to official employment being placed in the hands of Hindus

This found support in *Pracharak*, 1900:

“Muslims of India beware,...  
Don't you see that the Hindus  
Have got all the top jobs,  
They are studying the official language with  
great determination.”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Mohammad Abdul Hakim, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> Editor, ‘Kalikata bisvabidyalay sanskar ain’, *Saogat*; 6th yr., 2nd no.; *Bhadra*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>26</sup> Editor, ‘Kalikata bisvabidyalayer bhais chyanselar’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 1st no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)’

<sup>27</sup> Khademol Moslemin Sri Kazi Golam Maola, ‘Basanta sahachar’, *Pracharak*, 2nd yr., 9th no.; *Aswin*, 1307 B. S. (1900)

Efforts were made as early as 1900 to break down this indifference to English education. For example, in that year the ballad quoted above from *Pracharak* concluded:

"So all of you with might and main study now,  
Give your minds to English, the official language."

The chief objection to English was the religious one. For religious reasons Muslims wished to cling to Arabic. A contributor to *Naba Nur* in 1504 stated however, "We shall learn English not merely to acquire jobs but to extend our knowledge and to gain access to science. I request those who favour acquiring and diffusing knowledge through Arabic alone to the exclusion of all other foreign languages to emigrate to Arabia... Islam is not confined to the Arabic language alone."<sup>28</sup>

From 1901 to 1904, however, compromise seemed to be in the air. *Islam-pracharak* in 1904 wrote: "Why should we lose our religion through English education?... I believe that the more Muslims go on educating themselves in Arabic and Persian alongside their English education, the more strength of mind they will acquire and the stronger they will become nationally."<sup>29</sup> A similar viewpoint had been put forward two years earlier in *Islam-pracharak*: "It does not mean that once we are educated in English we must abandon our national education."<sup>30</sup>

In 1904 *Islam-pracharak* rebuked the *Maolvīs* and *Mullas* for not having realised the possibility of such a compromise earlier. "If our missionary *Maolvīs* and *Mullas* had advised us...to receive English education along with acquiring religious learning instead of declaring war against education via English and Bengali, then probably our society would have been presenting a completely different appearance."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Imdadul Haq, 'Dharma ebang siksa', *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 11th no.; *Falgun*, 1310 B. S. (1904)

<sup>29</sup> M. Aftabuddin Ahmad, 'Bangiya Musalmaner siksa', *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>30</sup> Ebne Ma'az, 'Musalman bording ba chatrabas', *Islam-pracharak*, 4th yr., 9th-10th no.; *Falgun-Chaitra*, 1508 B. S. (1902)

<sup>31</sup> Aftabuddin Ahmad 'Bangiya Musalmaner siksa', *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

Probably, however, the economic argument in favour of English proved strongest in the end. *Islam-pracharak* in 1906 wrote: "But being defeated in life's struggle and suffering the pangs of hunger they (the Muslims)...now realise full well what poisonous fruits come of ignorance and superstition. All educated Muslims are acquainted with the teachings of the Prophet... If knowledge is available even in China then go there and acquire it... Then why should Muslims be indifferent to the English language?"<sup>32</sup>

### (ii) Hinduised text-books in schools and colleges

According to some journals, one of the defects of western education, stemming directly from the earlier Muslim indifference to it, was that the educational system had become Christian and Hindu-oriented.<sup>33</sup> For example, in 1903 *Islam-pracharak* cried, "Who can stem the course of this western educational system introduced by an alien Christian Government into a land teeming with Hindus?"<sup>34</sup>; and the following year elucidated, "Those employed to administer our education, being members of different religious communities, compelled us to follow courses consonant with Christianity and Hinduism rather than devising for us courses consonant with Muslim scriptures." Elsewhere the same article lamented, "We were forced to learn parrot-fashion three languages, Bengali, English and Sanskrit, that were devoid of the least trace of Islamic religion."<sup>35</sup>

The difficulty was that in most educational institutions the text books were written by Hindus. In 1891 *Islam-pracharak* complained, "Being misled by their education, they (Muslim students) are becoming completely ignorant of their national religion... (English

<sup>32</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> The Education Commission, 1882 referred to Muslim objections to "the use in Government schools of books whose tone was hostile or scornful towards the Muhammadan religion" – Report, p. 483. And in 1900 Abdul Karim pointed out that "Muhammadan boys reading these Bengali books (in schools) imbibe unpalatable ideas with regard to their religion and nationality." See Abdul Karim, *Muhammadan Education in Bengal*, 1900, pp. 44-46.

<sup>34</sup> Ebne Ma'az, 'Amader ki kara uchit', *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 11th-12th no.; *Agrahayan-Paus*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>35</sup> Aftabuddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*

education is) gradually anglicising (their) sensibilities... How many of these boys and young men are acquainted with the life story of... Hazrat Mohammad?"<sup>36</sup>

*Nur-al-Iman* in 1900 similarly complained that "There are no particular books included in the *Pathshala*-syllabuses to teach Muslim boys about their religion, etiquette, ethics and customs... (They) are instructed by the educated Hinduised Muslims, who have been substituted for Hindu teachers... (The texts) contain Hindu mythological stories... (They are) exposed to the maligning of Muslims...the reviling of Islamic codes of conduct, and smearing of the Muslim race with such names as *Mleccha* and *Yavana*."<sup>37</sup>

In 1909 *Basana* made the same complaint and added, "It is the duty of every Muslim to strive to get incorporated in our school curriculum the basic essentials published in simple Bengali about Muslim historical events, accounts of our heroes and heroines, tales about our saints and dervishes, histories of the prophets, narratives about our religious men and women, the lives of rulers and kings and stories about the virtues of chaste women (*sati ramani*), the essence of the Islamic religion, the substance of Hadith and religious documents (*dalil*), the utility of prayer and fast and accounts of Muslim festivals..."<sup>38</sup>

Mohammad Shahidullah in 1916 made a similar complaint and then asked, "What can be more shameful than that even in *Maktabs* and Muslim girls schools our children have to read books by Hindus?" Commenting on school history books, he complained, "These devote four pages to the life of Buddha and a mere half page to the life of Mohammad, yet not a single pupil in the class will be Buddhist, whereas half of them will be Muslims... School history text-books generally conceal anything derogatory to the Hindu kings, yet loudly publicise Muslim defects whilst remaining virtually silent about their virtues. The consequence is that the study of Indian

<sup>36</sup> Editor, 'Suchana', *Islam-pracharak*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Bhadra*, 1298 B. S. (1891)

<sup>37</sup> Editor, 'Hemayet Eslam', *Nur-al-Iman*, 1st yr., 2nd no; *Sraban*. 1307 B. S., (1900) See also chapters on Hindu-Muslim Relations and Literature.

<sup>38</sup> Mohammad Fakiruddin Sarkar, 'Chatra Jibane naitik siksa', *Basana*, 2nd vol., 2nd no.; *Jyaistha*, 1316 B. S. (1909)

history leads children to conclude that the Muslims are a useless, untrustworthy, oppressive and cruel people which it would be in the world's interests to become extinct."<sup>39</sup> A similar point is again made in *Al-Eslam* in 1920: "The most of the text-books in class will have been based on fantastic yarns from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and quoted from writings of great anti-Muslim authors like Bankim."<sup>40</sup> But probably the worst offence committed by a Hindu was that of Sri Bholanath Sen in writing his *Prachin Kahini* containing "an imaginary picture of the Prophet of the world, Hazrat Mohammad and Hazrat Jibrail (Gabriel)." *Sariyate Eslam* warned the Education authority to withdraw this book. "Otherwise if...fresh unrest and dissatisfaction flares up...the responsibility for it will rest solely with the Education Department and the Government."<sup>41</sup>

Discontent with western, Hindu-oriented education resulted in two demands: one, a demand for reform; and two, a demand for some other means of protecting the national religion of the Muslims.

### (iii) Educational Reforms<sup>42</sup>

The reforms mentioned are in text-books, in greater representation in Calcutta University, enlarged aid for Muslim education and also changes in the educational system itself. *Moslem Bharat* in 1921 wanted primary education via Bengali only; emphasis on physical training and mental adroitness; and secondary education rendered self-complete; i. e. sufficient to lead to employment rather than being a mere step towards higher education.<sup>43</sup> *Samyabadi* in 1924 wished to breakdown the feeling that "it is degrading for educated people to do manual work." It

<sup>39</sup> Mohammad Shahidullah, M. A., B. L., 'Amader (sahityik) daridrata', *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 2nd no.; Jyaistha, 1323 B. S. (1916)

<sup>40</sup> M. Idris, *op. cit.*,

<sup>41</sup> Editor, 'Bibidha prasanga', *Sariyate Eslam*, 6th yr., 2nd no.; *Falgun*, 1337 11. S. (1931)

<sup>42</sup> Regarding Muslim demands for educational reforms see also M. Azizul Haq, *op. cit.*, Appendix L, and Memorandum by Sir Abdul Karim Guznavi to Hartog Committee, p. IX.

<sup>43</sup> Tariqul Alam, B. A. B. L., 'Amader siksa samasya', *Muslem Bharat*, 1st yr., 2nd vol., 5th no.; *Falgun*, 1327 B. S. 1921

advocated technical education: instruction in skilled trades such as advanced agriculture, weaving, carpentry, tailoring and various trades and crafts.<sup>44</sup> In 1928 a Primary Education bill was introduced by the Education Minister Nawab Mosharraf Hossain. It failed to mention “whether primary education in the rural areas (was) to be free and compulsory.”<sup>45</sup> *Saogat* commented, “unless it is free and compulsory it will have no real result.”<sup>46</sup>

The feeling, in general, was that Hindu-oriented western education, as at present instituted, militated against “patriotism”,<sup>47</sup> inculcated “disrespect and intense dislike towards their (Muslims’) own nation, instead of...pride...and national prestige”;<sup>48</sup> for, as Mohammad Shahidullah pointed out, “These books (text-books by Hindus) destroy their (Muslim students’) sense of nationhood.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, in order to preserve the Muslim sense of nationality, another form of education was needed.

## II

### “NATIONAL EDUCATION”

All thinking people in the Muslim community desired to goad their more lethargic co-religionists into activity in order to diffuse education throughout their community and thus stimulate unity and a sense of nationhood. The differences lay in approach. Some favoured Urdu, Arabic and Persian; some Bengali and English; some stressed Muslim religion and culture to the exclusion of all else/others desired

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<sup>44</sup> Mohammad Wajed Ali, ‘Lekhapara siksar uddesya’, Samyabadi, 2nd yr., 6th no.; *Kartik*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

<sup>45</sup> Editor, ‘Prathamik siksa bil’, *Moyajjin*, 1st yr., 3rd no.: *Kartik*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>46</sup> Editor, ‘Prathamik siksa bil’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 2nd no.; *Bhadra*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>47</sup> Editor, ‘Hemayet Eslam’, *Nur-al-Iman*, 1st yr., 2nd no.: *Sraban*, 1307 B. S. (1900)

<sup>48</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Itihas charchar absyakata’, *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr.” 5th no.; *Bhadra*, 1323 B. S. (1916)

<sup>49</sup> Mohammad Shahidullah, *op. cit.*

general education plus sufficient Islamic background culture to enable Muslims to identify themselves as such. But gradually towards the 1930s disenchantment with separatist efforts set in: the majority of intellectuals seemed by then to favour integration with the western-type system (though presumably with sufficient modifications to retain their individuality); there are, however, indications that for the ordinary god-fearing masses *Maktabs* and *Madrasahs* still retained their fascination<sup>50</sup> at the expense of free primary schools which were said in some areas to be closing down.

(i) The need for Arabic, Persian and Urdu

Though Muslims were by 1901 to some extent aware that their decline as a nation was linked with their clinging to Persian, nevertheless, Persian, Arabic and Urdu remained indispensable for some of them. For example, *Islam-pracharak* early in 1902 seemed, on the one hand, to deprecate the fact that many Muslims continued to educate their sons in Arabic and Persian – “The decline of the Muslim nation dates from the time when English replaced Persian as the official language of this country’. The above kind of thinking rendered aristocratic Muslims averse to educating their sons in English. Many of them continued to educate them in Arabic and Persian as before” – yet, nevertheless, stated the same article – “unfortunately many people are abandoning three (Arabic, Persian and Urdu) of our five languages and educating their children only in Bengali and English before allowing them to go out into the world.”<sup>51</sup>

Criticising guardians who educated their children only in English and Bengali, *Islam-pracharak* pointed out that “Whereas Hindus have to learn two or three languages, Bengali Muslims have of necessity to master five”, arguing that for a Hindu child Sanskrit, English and Bengali were sufficient, whereas for a Bengali Muslim

<sup>50</sup> *Maktab-Madrasah* education alone was presumably catering to the majority of Muslim students even until the end of 1920s. – Guznavi, *op. cit.*, pp. III-IV.

<sup>51</sup> Ebne Ma’az, ‘Musalman bording ba chatrabas’, *Islam-pracharak*, 4th yr., 9th-10th no.; *Falgun-Chaitra*, 1308 B. S. (1902)



Arabic was needed so as "to read the Quran correctly", Persian for "national culture", "etiquette", "national poetry and history", "Urdu to converse with urban, aristocratic Muslims" and finally English, "the official language."<sup>52</sup>

In 1900, however, *Nur-al-Iman* had pointed out the difficulty of learning Arabic and Persian firstly because the syllabary was confusing and secondly, because "pupils have to read books printed by cheap lithographs on bad paper. Not only is the paper dirty, but the cheap lithograph does not print with complete legibility."<sup>53</sup> And by 1919 *Al-Eslam* had realised what a heavy linguistic burden was being placed upon Muslim students "in the form of English, Bengali, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu etc." Students were, therefore, "failing to acquire full proficiency in any language at all." "It is better to be proficient in one language than to possess a smattering of four or five.... There is no particular necessity for Persian or Urdu." *Al-Eslam*, therefore, concluded that Bengali, Arabic and English would suffice.<sup>54</sup>

Reporting on the position of Arabic, *Choltan* in November, 1923, stated, "Arabic education does not seem to have made any particular progress in the last fifty years." In West and Central Bengal it was "virtually neglected." "Pride of place in regard to the cultivation of Arabic in East Bengal goes to Chittagong division, and within that division to the district of Chittagong where there are at present seven or eight thousand *Ulema*."<sup>55</sup>

Possibly one of the causes of the decline of Arabic was the fact that, as *Al-Eslam* reported in 1919, as a result of reforms the

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<sup>52</sup> Ebne Ma'az, *ibid*. The language problem for Bengali Muslims was not only educational, but also religious and cultural; and, even more important, political. It was a problem concerning their very identity and future, the significant side-issues being: what was the mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims; what ought their lingua franca to be; and what should be their 'national' or 'state language'? See also chapter on Language.

<sup>53</sup> Editor, 'Hemayet Eslam', *op. cit*.

<sup>54</sup> Sheikh Abdul Gafur Jalali, 'Siksa bistarer upay', *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>55</sup> Editor, 'Bangiya Mochalman samaj', *Choltan*, 8th y.:., 24th no.; 16th Kartik, 1330 B. S.; 2nd November, 1923

dominance of Arabic in some Government *Madrasahs* had much diminished. "In those institutions every subject with the exception of Arabic is taught through the medium of English". Consequently, the journal commented, "It does not seem as if the poor Arabic language will be able to do much against pompous English". *Al-Eslam* then attacked the "slavish and imitative" attitude of students in these *Madrasahs*, and concluded, "in slavishness of outlook they exceed everyone."<sup>56</sup>

The two main causes of the decline of Arabic, however, were probably the medium through which it was generally taught, namely Urdu, and the advocacy of Bengali.

#### (ii) Advocacy of Bengali

In 1900 *Pracharak* stressed the need for "grammars and dictionaries of the Arabic and Persian languages written in Bengali", indicating that these languages needed to be taught "in unmixed Bengali".<sup>57</sup>

*Al-Eslam* in 1917 again alluded to the inability of "our venerable *Maolvis*" to speak, "let alone write, one or two words in Bengali... If they do ever happen to say a couple of words in fluent Bengali then they do not feel...at ease unless they add 'I mean, I mean', and then translate one or two unnecessary words into Urdu."<sup>58</sup> Pursuing the same theme in 1919 *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* stated, "(Every nation) acquires education via its mother-tongue. Yet, above the *Madrasahs* in this country is written in large letters, 'Entrance forbidden to the mother-tongue' ". It then censured the reformed *Madrasahs* under Dacca University, and the Chittagong and Dacca *Madrasahs* for teaching and examining Arabic via Urdu; "instead of...Urdu or Persian, it (the medium of instruction) should be Ben-

<sup>56</sup> Mohammad Abdul Malek Khan, 'Ekti nibedan', *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 7th no.; *Kartik*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>57</sup> Editor, 'Tangail bhraman', *Pracharak*, 2nd yr., 10th no.; *Kartik*, 1307 B. S. (1900)

<sup>58</sup> Mohammad Wajed Ali, 'Sahitya prasanga', *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 10th no.; *Magh*, 1323 B. S. (1917)

gali.”<sup>59</sup> In 1926 *Saogat* expressed great satisfaction that “arrangements will shortly be made to teach in the Calcutta Madrassa through the medium of Bengali... At present Persian and Arabic are taught there only via Urdu, whereas the majority of students are Bengali.”<sup>60</sup>

### (iii) Arabic University

The Hindu-orientedness and Hindu predominance in the western educational system left to Muslims, *Naba Nur* claimed in 1903, two alternatives: either, the western system would have to be modified, so as to drive out from syllabuses the pro-Hindu, anti-Muslim content; or, Muslims would “have no other option but to make their educational arrangements completely separate from those of the Hindus.”<sup>61</sup> It was from thinking such as this that the demand for a separate Arabic University stemmed. In 1919 *Al-Eslam* saw the dissemination of “effective national higher education” as possible only through “a national Arabic University”. All subjects “taught in the advanced universities of the developed nations” plus “Islamic monotheism, socialism, civilisation, politics and religion...the *Quran*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Aqaid* and national histories” were to be taught “through the medium of Arabic”. Nevertheless, the media of “Urdu, English and Bengali” were also to be utilised.<sup>62</sup> *Al-Eslam* in 1920 saw the purpose of an Arabic University as “to create worthwhile human beings...people of character with religious faith, a devotion to their country, desirous of the welfare of their community and dedicated to their own nation”; i. e. “missionaries of a modern type who would establish the ascendancy of Islam throughout the world.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Mozaffar Ahmad, ‘Banga dese Madrasar siksa’. *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 2nd yr., 3rd no.; *Kartik*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>60</sup> Editor, ‘Bibidha prasanga’, *Saogat*, 4th yr., 1st no.; *Asarh*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

<sup>61</sup> Editorial comment, *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>62</sup> Mohammad Abdul Malek Khan, *op. cit.*

<sup>63</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, ‘Arabi bisvabidyalay’, *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

In 1924 *Choltan* pointed out that national universities had been established in Aligarh and Lucknow, and national colleges in Lahore and Karachi,<sup>64</sup> and deplored the fact that Bengali Muslims had failed to do anything comparable.<sup>65</sup> In 1924 *Islam-darsan* was jubilant over the foundation of Islamia College, which it regarded as “the” foundation of National Education for the huge Muslim population of Bengal.”<sup>66</sup> By 1929 the Arabic University had still not materialised, though as *Saptahik Saogat* indicated, some people still believed it to be a solution of “all our problems”. Others were intent on deposing the “heathen language Bengali” and enthroning Urdu, but *Saptahik Saogat* declared, “it is impossible to forsake our mother-tongue, Bengali, and English and furthermore, if boys of between five and seven years of age are to be forced to learn Arabic and Urdu then their brains will be addled right from childhood.”<sup>67</sup>

By 1930 Muslim separatism in education was regarded by *Masik Mohammadi* as: one, a government plot; and two, a failure. The establishment of Islamia College by the Governments a trick to keep Muslims deprived of the higher standard of education available in general colleges.” And secondly, it stated of “Muslim students cannot be kept free from alien influences and the danger of losing their religion merely by labels like ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islamic’.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Choltan* is presumably here referring to the upgrading in university status of Aligarh M. A. O. College in 1920 and to the founding of Nadwat-ul-Ulema (1894) in Lucknow, of Islamia College (1892) in Lahore and of Sind Madrassat-ul-Islam (1885) in Karachi.

<sup>65</sup> Editor, ‘Arabi biswabidyalay’. *Choltan*, 8th yr., 38th no.; 25th *Magh*, 1330 B. S.; 8th February, 1924

<sup>66</sup> Editor, ‘Kalikata Islamiya Kalej’, *Islam-darsan*, 4th yr., 5th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1331 B. S. (L924)

<sup>67</sup> Editor, ‘Musalmaner siksa samasya’, *Saptahik Saogat*, 1st yr., 36th no.; 11th *Magh*, 1335 B. S. (1929)

<sup>68</sup> Editor, ‘Siksa o Muchalman’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr., 12th no.; *Aswin*, 1337 B. S.? 1930)

Though rational, when considered from a secular stand-point, *Masik Mohammadi*’s views were unlikely to find favour in Muslim society at that time; for by then Hindu-Muslim relations had declined to their lowest ebb, and politically Muslims were then pursuing their own separate line.

(iv) *Maktabs* and *Madrassas*<sup>69</sup>

*Maktabs* and *Madrassas* were said to have kept alive the Muslim 'national language' and 'national education'. Writing in 1900 *Nur-al-Iman* said, "it is by depending upon the feeble blood circulation of this educational system that the Muslim community has until now somehow managed to survive almost at its last breath moribund and helpless in the jungles of Bengal."<sup>70</sup>

Actually two types of education were available to Muslim society: one, "that of the Government *Madrassas*, Schools and Colleges; and the other, our national education; or, the education imparted in non-Government Arabic Persian and Urdu *Madrassas*." *Al-Eslam* in 1920 deemed "both types of education to be deficient". Graduates from Government Arabic *Madrassas* were ignorant of history and geography and unable to discuss "the rise and decline of their own nation and country." On the other hand, those from non-Government *Madrassas*, though to some extent instructed in *Hadith* and *Tafsir*, were unable to disseminate their religion adequately because of their ignorance of "science, philosophy, chemistry, geography, astronomy, the comparative study of various religious texts, ethnology and the history of ancient and modern nations."<sup>71</sup> According to *Al-Eslam* the same year, boys educated in the old-type *Madrassas* and *Maktabs* contiguous to mosques were competent merely to "write a petition and a letter, to read *puthis*, learn catechisms, to read the *Quran* and to say their prayers."<sup>72</sup> On the other hand according to *Choltan* in 1923, the "New-scheme junior *Madrassas*...are unfit to be called schools (i. e. Western-type

<sup>69</sup> There were the two types of peculiarly Muslim institutions, which had for so long been responsible for the dissemination of education amongst Muslims in Bengal. Their curricula aimed to encourage the study of Arabic, Persian and Urdu language and literature, and Muslim theology, in accordance with the traditional Islamic system of education.

For *Maktab-Madrassa* education in Bengal, see Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, chapters VI - IX and M. Azizul Haq, *op. cit.*

<sup>70</sup> Editor, 'Hemayet Eslam', *op. cit.*

<sup>71</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, *op. cit.*

<sup>72</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, 'Mochalman nimna siksay unnati bidhaner prastab', *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 6th no; *Aswin*, 1327 B. S.(1920)

schools) and I cannot call them Arabic *Madrassas* either. They are a weird kind of hotchpotch which imparts no kind of education properly.”<sup>73</sup>

This dissatisfaction with *Maktabs* and *Madrassas* both Government and private, led to demands for further reforms. In 1927 *Sikha* opposed the teaching of Arabic, Persian and Urdu at the primary level and suggested that *Madrassas* and *Maktabs* of all types be abolished and western education adopted. “The Hindus do not possess special institutions for Sanskrit, yet are they failing to learn Sanskrit on that account? Why can we not manage without *Madrassas*?” *Madrassas* were cheap and Muslim society was poor, but “no education at all is preferable to a bad education in our *Madrassas*. Because if you make no attempt to acquire education, you do not dissipate national energies.”<sup>74</sup> *Masik Mohammadi* in 1928 analysed why Muslim missionaries were ineffective. Government Arabic *Madrassas* excluded the *Quran* and *Hadith* and were “at first founded with the sole object of creating clerks.” *Ulema*, who graduated from these institutions were “most deplorably deprived of the ethical, practical and spiritual thinking which derives from a study of the *Quran* and *Hadith*, and they had been very carefully protected from contact with modern education, civilisation and thinking. In consequence, the religion they propounded brought them day by day into open conflict with modern Science.”<sup>75</sup> *Masik Mohammadi* two months earlier deplored the standard of education in *Maktab* primary schools — “The teachers are probably the Imam of the local mosque, or the *Mulla* of that locality.” They merely “memorised the reading of the *Quran* and one or two catechisms. Their pupils cannot expect much else”.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Editor, ‘Bangiya Mochalman samaj’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 24th no.; 16th *Kartik*, 1330 B. S., 2nd November, 1923

<sup>74</sup> Momtazuddin Ahmad, ‘Siksa samasya’, *Sikha*, 1st yr.; *Chaitra*, 1333 B. S. (1927)

<sup>75</sup> Editor, ‘Taratamyer karan ki?’ *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Magh*, 1334 B. S. (1928)

<sup>76</sup> Anwar Hossain, ‘Banglar Mochalman o prathamik siksa’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 2nd no.; *Agrahayan*, 1334 B. S. (1927)

In 1928 *Saogat* indicated that the Calcutta Madrassa,<sup>77</sup> established by the East India Company, was intended to train people “to administer the Law... Since *Fiqh* and *Mantiq* were especially needed for this purpose the course of study there was based (on these)”. The same course was introduced in *Madrassas* established in Hooghly (1836), Dacca and Chittagong, i. e. “the *Hadith* and the *Quran* found no place there”. *Saogat* apparently wished these texts to be introduced into the Madrassa-syllabuses. It regretted that despite the establishment of Aligarh University, Dacca University and Islamia College, the increase in Mahomedan Inspectors of Schools, the creation of a post of Assistant Director of Mahomedan education, the annual Educational conferences, the Sadler Commission (1917), the Hartog Committee (1928-29), and educational committees up and down the country, composed of “gentlemen highly educated and conversant with Mill and Bentham”, no one had made any noteworthy attempt to reform the educational system in *Madrassas*.<sup>78</sup>

*Saogat* five months later took a contrary view, however. It suggested that old-type *Maktabs* and *Madrassas* be abolished; new-scheme *Madrassas* be converted into schools; religious instruction be given via Bengali rather than Arabic; and that “nothing else should be taught (in these institutions) except the mother-tongue, Mathematics, History and Geography and in the higher forms, English”, though a specific number of institutions ought to be retained for the training of specialists in scriptures.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Calcutta Madrassa, founded in 1780 by Warren Hastings, was the first educational institution for the instruction of Muslim boys founded under British patronage. It has since then been a very important seat of Perso-Arabic studies in India. The Madrassa was established with the express purpose of promoting Muslim law “to qualify the Mohammadans of Bengal for the Public Service, chiefly in the courts of justice.”

See also S. C. Sanial, ‘History of the Calcutta Madrassa’, *Bengal Past and Present*, January-June, 1914.

<sup>78</sup> Ahsanullah, ‘Mollader prabhab o siksita samaj’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 3rd no.; *Aswin*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>79</sup> Editor ‘Musalmander siksa samasya’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 8th no.; *Falgun*, 1335 B. S. (1929)

*Saogat* in 1929 regarded the 1927-28 Report of the Department of Public Instruction for the Government of Bengal as disappointing, as far as the Muslim community was concerned. The Muslim attraction to education was “being misdirected. The number of persons in the Muslim community seeking education is considerable, it is only the number at school and college level that is slight...’ The number in the *Khareji Maktab*s and *Madrassas*<sup>80</sup> is far greater... We must abolish *Madrassa* education.”<sup>81</sup>

The following year *Saogat* published an Address by Mr. S. Wajed Ali (1890-1951), a Cambridge graduate, who opposed Arabic and Urdu in junior *Madrassas*; suggested that Muslim Primaries teach Bengali only; and that the Secondary teach English; alleged that *Maktab* and *Madrassa* education impeded students entering High Schools; and claimed that graduates from Senior *Madrassas* were unemployable – “It is impossible for them to earn a living. They would have been able to make a living as labourers or factory workers, but their *Madrassa*-education has closed these avenues to them. Yet, unlike High School pupils, they are unfitted...(for) Law, Medicine or Commerce.”<sup>82</sup> An M. A., B. L. writing in *Saogat* that same year claimed that the “infatuation (of Muslims) with Arabic, Persian and Urdu and *Madrassas* and *Maktab*s” was causing “indescribable harm”. He ridiculed a proposal that New-Scheme *Madrassas* be turned into Old-Scheme *Madrassas* based on the allegation that boys in New-Scheme *Madrassas* “were unable to lead funeral prayers”, from which, he alleged, one might suppose that the whole of Muslim Bengal was either dead or moribund, and all that now remained to be done was for the Maolvi Shahibs “to bury us by kindly reciting the funeral prayers”. To disseminate religion, Bengali translations of the scriptures were required; and Arabic and Persian could be taught in schools and colleges “as

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<sup>80</sup> These are special institutions outside the Jurisdiction of both the Old-Scheme and the Reformed-Scheme *Madrassas*. They normally follow a traditional Muslim curriculum.

<sup>81</sup> Editor, ‘Siksakseire Musalman’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 12th no.; *Asarh*, 1336 B S. (1929)

<sup>82</sup> S. Wajed Ali, B. A. (Cantab.), ‘Abhibhashan’, *Saogat*, 7th y r., 6th no.; *Magh*, 1336 B. 5. (1930)



classics". There was no need for *Madrassas*. Indeed, it was the *Madrassas* alone which were causing Muslims to fall behind their Hindu neighbours.<sup>83</sup>

(v) Associations and conferences

Throughout our period associations and conferences were active stimulating the promotion of Muslim Education, the founding of libraries and reading rooms, hostels and other institutions and Funds for helping poor Muslim students with their studies. In 1903 *Islam-pracharak* reported the foundation of one such society, Mosalman Siksa Sabha in Chittagong and also the preparation for, and holding of, the session of the Provincial Education Conference in Rajshahi district. On the 15th of February, 1903 at a meeting of the Calcutta Mahomedan Union it was resolved to set up a *Moslem Siksa Samiti*. Its aims included the propagation of Islam, female education, Commercial education, institutions for Arts and Crafts, a well-equipped residential college to teach Arabic, Persian, Urdu, English and Bengali, a translation department to translate into Bengali first-rate books from Arabic, Persian and English "particularly beneficial to Bengali Muslims", and the re-publication of valuable old Arabic and Persian classics to enrich Muslim literature and enhance the prestige of the Muslim community.<sup>84</sup>

In 1904 *Islam-pracharak* reported on the session of the Bangiya *Pradesik Siksa Samiti* in Rajshahi, which had resolved to set up District Funds, to found local schools and assist poor students, to promote industrial and agricultural training, to institute religious instruction for Muslim pupils, to cultivate physical training and health, campaign for female education, encourage with prizes and subventions the production of suitably Muslim text-books and to get them incorporated in syllabuses by the Text-Book Committee and to

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<sup>83</sup> Khan Bahadur Nasiruddin Ahmad, M. A. B. L., 'Islam o Musalman', *Saogat*, 9th Sr., 8th no; Chaitra, 1336 B. S. (1930)

<sup>84</sup> S W. Hossain, 'Bangiya Pradesik Musalman Siksa Samiti', *Islam-prachark*, 5th yr., 9th-10th & 11th-12th nos.; *Aswin-Kartik & Agrahayan-Paus*; 1310 B. S. (1903)

prepare a draft scheme of reforms for *Maktabs* and *Madrassas* for submission to the Department of Public Instruction.<sup>85</sup>

In 1907 *Islam-pracharak* reported on a meeting of the *Musalman Siksa Samiti* held at Barisal. It was attended by many distinguished people including the District Judge, the Magistrate and Settlement Officer, the Director of Land Acquisition and Agriculture Department, numerous local Hindu gentlemen and leading zemindars, landed gentry and almost all the Muslim officers in the Department of Public Instruction, as well as officers and clerks from the town, teachers and students, *Ulema* and members of the general public.<sup>86</sup>

#### (vi) Hostels

In 1902 *Islam-pracharak* reported on the founding of various Muslim students' hostels throughout Bengal—the Bell Islamia Boarding in Barisal, the Islamia Boarding in Chittagong and one such in Rajshahi, and efforts to set up some in Kustia, Nadiya, Rajbari, Faridpur and Naogaon.<sup>87</sup>

It may be pointed out in this connection that one of the chief obstacles to Muslim education was shortage of suitable accommodation. This shortage grew acute in direct proportion to the increase in Muslim students seeking to acquire modern education. According to the survey made in 1914, out of total 66,5,850 Muslim students in mofussil schools only 3089 could manage to find hostel accommodation. The situation in Calcutta was even worse.<sup>88</sup>

#### (vii) Concession for Prayers

Rejoicing over the decision of the Department of Public Instruction in the Punjab to grant half an hour recess each Friday so that Muslim teachers and students could attend weekly *Juma* prayer,

<sup>85</sup> 'Bangiya Pradesik Musalman Siksa Samiti', *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 1st-2nd no.; *Baisakh-Jyaistha*, 1311 B, S. (1904)

<sup>86</sup> Reporter, 'Bakarganj Jelar Musalman Siksa Samiti', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 3rd no.

<sup>87</sup> Ebne Ma'az., *op. cit.*

<sup>88</sup> For details see M. Azizul Haq, *op. cit.*

*Islam-pracharak* in 1904 expressed the hope that Muslims would press for a similar concession in Bengal.<sup>89</sup>

(viii) Female education

In 1903 *Mihir o Sudhakar* expressed surprise that according to the 1901 census 400 Muslim women knew English. "Since it is possible for the teaching of English to penetrate our *zenanas*, what objection is there to setting up schools for the instruction of our girls?" It then suggested that English be taught in girls' *Madrassas*.<sup>90</sup> In 1919, however, *Al-Eslam* suggested that Muslim women needed "a type of education suited to Muslim society". It was impossible for Muslim girls "to attend education institutions till well beyond maturity, travelling by carriage and dressed in tight-fitting chemises and blouses... The reading of trashy dramas and novels, the writing of graphic love letters, attending the theatre and enhancing physical beauty with colourful garments and cosmetics have become part of (western type) education. That kind of education perverts taste, undermines religious faith and gives rise to bad behaviour." The course suggested would cover six years and lead to knowledge of "Urdu, Religious Instruction, Bengali, History and Geography, Arithmetic, Physical environment, Hygiene, Moral training, Arts and Crafts, Embroidery, Cooking (ways of preparing many delicious dishes), Child-care and looking after the members of the household, lousekeeping and handwriting."<sup>91</sup>

Apparently even in 1929 female education was still meeting opposition from orthodox religious leaders; for *Saogat*, defending it from their attacks, then wrote, "The chief impediment to female education are the *Mullas*. They think that the diffusion of female education in our society will lead inevitably to its downfall. According to them, once enlightened by education, women will

<sup>89</sup> Editor. 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 1st-2nd no.; *Baisakh-Jvaistha*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>90</sup> 'Musalman stri samaje Ingreji siksa', *Mihir o Sudhakar*, 23rd *Magh*, 1309 B. S. (1903)

<sup>91</sup> Sheikh Abdur Rahman, 'Siksar bhitti', *Al-Eslam*; 5th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

become uncontrollable, their faith in religion will cease, their respect for their husbands will decrease, and instead of being virtuous women they will degenerate into sources of evil. All these fears of the *Mullas* are groundless. By female education we do not necessarily mean the acquisition of education in the Western mould... Probably it was through seeing this western-type that our *Mullas* have grown alarmed... But they do not realise that if our womenfolk are properly educated then they will not only become worthy mothers and housewives but also true mates to their husbands and competent advisers to them.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Firoza Begum, 'Amader siksar prayojaniyata', *Saogat*, 7th yr., 1st no.; *Bhadra*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

## CHAPTER VI ECONOMICS

Bengali Muslim society was economically weak. The causes of its weakness were perhaps two-fold:

- (i) the consequences of the loss of Bengal's sovereignty to Britain; and
- (ii) the Islamic religion.

As we have seen in previous chapters, the influence of Muslims in the administration of Bengal after the abolition of Persian as the official language rapidly declined. The more flexible Hindus availed themselves of the existing commercial, educational and professional opportunities. Thus beneath the British the second rank in commerce, education and the professions was occupied in the latter half of the last century almost exclusively by Hindus. Through collaboration with Britishers, Hindus were able to begin manipulating the economy to their advantage. As we shall see in the following chapter, the legal profession was largely Hindu. Bengali Muslims were mainly peasants. Legislation governing tenancy and property was complex. Muslims through ignorance had to turn to Hindu lawyers. The results were predictable.

Under British rule, the Islamic religion was a disadvantage. The British had introduced a mercantile economy. Islam forbade usury. This rendered investment in industry and commerce impossible for God-fearing Muslims, who tended to maintain their traditional way of life. For the landed gentry this meant merely indulgence in ostentatious extravagance, which bankrupted both themselves and their community. Furthermore, though professedly egalitarian, Bengali Muslim society was to some extent 'caste-conscious': certain trades and professions were despised. As a result, such occupations either became Hindu monopolies or the Muslims engaged in them were, through the contempt of their co-religionists,

rendered prone to re-absorption in the Hindu community via the *Suddhi* movement.

The difficulties facing thinking Muslims during our period were, therefore, two-fold:

- (i) to adjust themselves to the British mercantile economy; and
- (ii) to persuade their orthodox section to facilitate this adjustment.

Strangely enough, as we shall see below, it was probably the *Swadesi* movement that educated Bengali Muslims in economic thinking. In pointing out to Muslims the ways in which they were being exploited by the British, Hindu propagandists seem to have unwittingly revealed to Bengali Muslims only how they as a community were being milked by the Hindus. Thus under cover of the *Swadesi* movement, a *Swa-sampraday* movement, aimed at protecting and promoting the interests of Muslims alone, appears to have emerged.

## I

### PRE-1919

#### (a) DRAINS ON COMMUNAL WEALTH

It would seem that prior to 1919 Muslims were conscious of two drains on their communal wealth: litigation and extravagance.

##### (i) Litigation

An article in *Naba Nur* in 1904 implied that Muslim society was enriching both the Government and the Hindu legal profession by its proclivity for litigation<sup>1</sup>: "If Muslim society were poor, the Government trade in stamp paper would by now have ceased," and "Hindu lawyers would not be obliged to live in large mansions and

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<sup>1</sup> Bengali Muslims are primarily a rural agricultural community. Laws of inheritance and tenancy are complex, and ignorance wide-spread. The scope for litigation is, therefore, great.

drive round in huge two – and four-horse carriages... Very few Hindus ruin themselves in litigations the way Muslims do.”<sup>2</sup>

### (ii) Extravagance

The same article in *Naba Nur* in 1904, claimed that Muslims were extremely extravagant: “Muslims pride themselves on spending all they have on sumptuous meals for their guests.”

### (b) ATTITUDE TO TRADE

Though wasting money in the two above ways, Muslims appear to have been disinclined to engage in trade. *Islampracharak*, commenting on Muslim zemindars, stated that: “Not a single section of them engage in trade; for the moment a Muslim acquires a little status, business is beneath him.”<sup>3</sup>

### (c) MUSLIM ZEMINDARS

Another defect in Muslim society was that their wealthiest and most influential class, namely the zemindars, were less educated and business-minded than their Hindu counterparts. Thus Muslim estates tended to be mismanaged, and their owners were apparently often faced with bankruptcy. *Islam-pracharak* reported: “To compare Muslim and Hindu zemindars is at present ridiculous. None will deny they are as different as chalk and cheese. Whilst Hindu zemindars fill their treasuries with wealth, Muslims empty theirs. Whilst hundreds and hundreds of B. A.s and M. A.s will be found among Hindu zemindars, amongst Muslims it is difficult to find a single Entrance-pass. Muslim zemindars place all their affairs in the hands of bailiffs and managers and give themselves up to sensual enjoyment, never learning to keep daily, monthly or yearly accounts. They are constantly deceived by a pack of avaricious, obsequious, self-centred sycophants, whose sole object is to enjoy themselves at the zemindar’s expense... They (Muslim zemindars) do nothing but

<sup>2</sup> Imdadul Haq, ‘Dharma ebang siksa’, *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 11th no.; *Falgun*, 1310 B. S. (1904)

<sup>3</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, ‘Musalman sampraday o tahar patan’, *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

feed their faces. It is heart-breaking to estimate how many *Dewans* and *Choudhury sahibs* (i. e. Muslim zemindars) have been reduced to beggary..."<sup>4</sup>

#### (d) SWADESI MOVEMENT

It is possible that it was the *Swadesi* movement which first awakened business-mindedness in Muslim society. The boycott of British goods gave a fillip to Indian industry by negating British competition. Even whilst urging readers to bear in mind, whether or not, when shopping, the money they spent would remain within the homeland, and even whilst reporting on the vast number of small articles India had begun producing during 1906, *Naba Nur* could not help commenting with pride upon a Steamer Company founded in Chittagong by Muslim merchants to provide a service between Chittagong and Rangoon.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that in the foundation of such a company lay the seeds of future Muslim commercial enterprise. But for the moment *Naba Nur* concentrated upon the conservation of India's wealth by the development of indigenous industry. It stated: "We must stand on our own two feet. Foreign merchants sell us crores and crores of rupees' worth of goods and thereby exploit India's wealth. Last year twenty-two crores of rupees' worth of foreign textiles were sold in Bengal alone. We must increase indigenous industries and stem the import of goods from abroad."<sup>6</sup>

The way in which even during the *Swadesi* movement Muslim thoughts were turning towards a kind of unofficial and undeclared '*Swa-sampraday*' (i. e. an exclusive concern with the interests of one's own community) movement can be deduced from an article in *Islam-pracharak*, reporting on an 'Islamic Conference' in Keraniganj, Dacca. The main purpose of the Conference had been to establish a 'National High English School' in Keraniganj, but a subsidiary purpose seems, nevertheless, to have emerged: "As a

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<sup>4</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Khayer Khan Munsif, 'Swadesi Mangal', *Naba Nur*, 4th yr., 5th no. ; *Bhadra*, 1313 B. S. (1906)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



result of holding the Conference, the Muslim inhabitants of Keraniganj, Jinjira and surrounding districts have stopped buying sweets from Hindu confectioners, and in many places groceries etc. are being opened.”<sup>7</sup>

The editor of *Islam-pracharak* welcomed the news that thanks to the *Anjuman-e-Muselmanane* Bangala (Bengali Muslim Association), more than forty scholarships had been ear-marked for Muslim students. In *Islam-pracharak*'s view it was desirable that a number of these students be sent to Europe, America and Japan to study industry, science and modern agriculture, as these constituted the best path to economic progress. “Merely increasing the number of Pleaders, *Mukhtiar*s and office-workers will not achieve national progress. To prosper we must make a determined effort to improve our industry, commerce and agriculture.”<sup>8</sup>

## II

1919-1923

### (a) INTEREST

The two drains on the wealth of Bengali Muslim society, namely litigation and extravagance, were apparently still operative in 1919, and their consequences, were becoming much clearer, as also was their underlying mechanism. The finance for both these activities came mainly from Hindu money-lenders on the security of Muslim property. Unpaid debts resulted in auctioning of Muslim possessions to non-Muslims. *Al-Eslam* in 1919 wrote: “Debt causes an average of more than three hundred Muslims a day to lose their property in auction to non-Muslims. Just look at the towns where Muslims predominate. Whole Muslim villages have fallen desolate and been repopulated by Hindus, and this is still going on. There are two main reasons for these evil trends. The first is unnecessary litigations: Muslims quarrel with each other over nothing, go to court, borrow money at interest to conduct their case, and end up losing all they

<sup>7</sup> Editor, ‘Jatiya o dharma sangbad’, *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 10th no.

<sup>8</sup> Editor, ‘Jatiya o dharma sangbad’, *Islam-pracharak*, 9th yr., 4th no.

own through debt. Secondly, Muslims give their sons and daughters in marriage too early, spend too much on the weddings, and, borrowing at interest for such wasteful things as dances, singing, bands, fireworks, feasts, excessive dowries, jewelry and costly clothes, fling their money away. Thus because of debts all their property and possessions pass into the hands of others and many of them are jailed for bankruptcy.” To prevent these catastrophes, *Al-Eslam* urged that stringent social sanctions be instituted to prevent Muslims from “engaging in unnecessary litigation and from extravagance over weddings. Society should ostracise those who unnecessarily borrow money at interest... If Muslim society continues for much longer to pour crores and crores of rupees into the clutches of non-Muslim money-lenders, its continued survival will be in doubt.”<sup>9</sup>

Despite advocating social sanctions against interest payers,<sup>10</sup> *Al-Eslam*, nevertheless, drew an important distinction; for it realised that to penalise all interest-payers would strike at the very roots of commercial enterprise in Bengali Muslim society. The Muslim attitude to interest itself was, in fact, one of the chief impediments to the commercial development of Muslim society. Though perhaps aware of this *Al-Eslam* confined itself to stating, “It would greatly harm our society if in accordance with the *Sariyat* stringent social sanctions were taken against those who borrow at interest in order to earn money by commerce.”<sup>11</sup>

#### (b) JUTE

*Al-Eslam* was clearly aware that the key to changing Muslim attitudes towards trade and commerce lay mainly in the hands of the *Ulema* and *Pirs* and also presumably the richer zemindars; for, in order to develop industry in Muslim society, two things were apparently necessary: religious approval and finance.

<sup>9</sup> Manirazzaman Ialamabadi, ‘Anjamane Olama o samaj sanskar’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th y r., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1326 B. S. (919)

<sup>10</sup> The *Quran* regards *riba* (i. e. usury and interest) as a practice of unbelievers and demands that it should be abandoned by Muslims.

<sup>11</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, *op. cit.*

Commenting upon the jute trade in 1919 *Al-Eslam* indicated that most of the profit was going into the hands of non-Muslims. "White merchants are now becoming millionaires by trading in Bengal's jute, Hindu homes are becoming two and three storeyed, *Marwari* stomachs are gradually being inflated, and their mansions are gradually raising their tops to the sky." Unfortunately, however, half the Muslims who cultivated the jute<sup>12</sup> had scarcely enough to feed and clothe themselves. "But if the *Ulema* and the leading Muslims of Bengal were to combine in a concerted effort, then the Muslims would not only monopolise the cultivation of jute, but also the trade in it." The same applied to a number of other trades too. The only impediment to Muslim commercial progress was, it would seem, the disinclination of *Mullas* and *Pirs* to encourage people to take up such trades. Consequently, *Al-Eslam* maintained, "If our *Mullas* and *Pirs* wished, then within one or two years the backward condition of the Muslims could be transformed. Within that brief space of time Muslims could virtually monopolise such excellent and profitable trades as those of the blacksmiths, potters, confectioners, dairy men, dealers in betel-leaves, goldsmiths, weavers, carpenters, grocers, money-changers etc."<sup>13</sup>

### (c) ATTITUDES TO TRADE

The same note was struck in a further article in that same issue of *Al-Eslam*. Muslim indifference to trade and commerce had allowed many profitable trades to become non-Muslim monopolies. "There are amongst Muslims virtually no blacksmiths, potters, goldsmiths, dealers in betel-leaves, dairy men or fishermen... We must totally eradicate such attitudes, as worrying what people will think of us if we trade in fish. It should, on the contrary, be regarded as a great sin for Muslims to refuse to engage in religiously

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<sup>12</sup> Jute has since the middle of nineteenth century, been Bengal's principal cash crop and main source of foreign exchange. Bengal's economy, therefore, depended largely on the prosperity of her Jute industry, whose labour was drawn mainly from the Muslim peasantry. The Muslim-majority districts were the province's main Jute-producing areas.

<sup>13</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, 'Echlam o dhanabal', *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

sanctioned trades. The Prophet himself especially urged us to engage in trade and commerce, and bestowed great praise on these activities. He declared that 'tradesmen will on the day of judgement rise up and stand beside the martyrs and trustworthies.'<sup>14</sup> Thus by 1919 there were indications of a desire in some sections of Muslim society for a reformed attitude towards trade and commerce.

### III

#### 1923 ONWARDS

##### (a) DRAINS ON WEALTH

The drains on Muslim wealth were still operative from 1923 onwards, though around that date Muslims became aware of a further drain on their wealth, namely horseracing. In 1923 the editor of *Choltan* made a move to stop it. "According to Western law, betting on horse-races is not gambling, but it is according to Islamic law... What remedy is there to save the remnants of the Muslim zemindar class, Muslim businessmen and office workers from this epidemic disease?"<sup>15</sup>

To combat extravagance *Raason hedayet* in 1926 urged Muslims to be thrifty. They should be discouraged from performing charitable acts on borrowed money, from demanding excessive dowries and wedding gifts, and from ostentatious display at their children's marriages. Furthermore, to conserve the wealth of the community, co-operative stores ought to be established in each village and a communal paddy store in every two or three villages. The financing of social functions ought also to be on a communal basis, each Muslim contributing according to his means, but no one ruining himself by attempting to finance the whole function alone.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, 'Samaj Sanskar', *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>15</sup> Editor, 'Ghor dause Mochalman', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 30th no.; 28th *Agrahayan*, 1330 B. S. (1923)

<sup>16</sup> Resolutions, *Raason hedayet*, 2nd yr., 5th no.; *Falgun*, 1332 B. S. (1926)

The Muslim passion for litigation continued unabated even in 1928. The editor of *Moyazjijn* regretted that “from the 1st of April, 1927 to the 31st of March, 1928 in the district of Faridpur alone Rs. 1,404,179 and As. 11 had been spent on Court Fees, Non-judicial Stamps (ordinary and revenue), Copies and plain papers. Not only that, but goodness knows how much was also spent on building mansions for Pleaders and *Mukhtiar*s and on hotel accommodation for the witness for the defence and prosecution... Just consider, readers, how much money is being wasted in this way in the whole of Bengal as a result of dispute between brothers. And what is more, most of them are Muslim.”<sup>17</sup>

### (b) INTEREST

In 1923 *Choltan* reported that through paying interest during the last one hundred years Muslims had lost to Hindus more than ten thousand small and large *zemindaries*, fifty thousand *taluks* (estates), three lacs and fifteen thousand *jots* (landed property), sixty three thousand parcels of *lakheraj* (rent-free land), and also six hundred crores fifteen lacs and forty two thousand rupees in cash. “Bengali Muslim are now up to their necks in debt through paying interest.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite the harm done to Muslim society by interest-paying, *Choltan*, nevertheless, stressed its determination to oppose usury: “We do not intend to sanction usury; on the contrary, by stressing that it is forbidden, it is our intention to bring in stringent rules against both those who give and receive interest, and prevent both.”<sup>19</sup>

*Sikha* in 1927, however, maintained that the condemnation of usury was outmoded. It said, “The world has not stopped still in the position where it was thirteen hundred years ago.” The Islamic *Sariyat* forbade usury, it is true, but Muslims were “fattening the other community by paying them interest, whilst at the same time arguing ourselves to death over whether or not it is permissible to accept interest... The economics of the modern age emphasize that to

<sup>17</sup> Editor, ‘Harek rakam’, *Moyajjin*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>18</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Mochalmandiger daridrya samasyar samadhan’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 5th no.; 25th *Jyaistha*, 1330 B.S.(1923)

<sup>19</sup> Editor, ‘Sud samasya’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 31st no.; 8th *Paus*, 1330 E. S. (1923)

create capital one must sanction the practice of interest... the word 'interest' excites our emotion and the taint of interest is unbearable to us. Many of us are unwilling to accept even the interest given by the savings banks. Life Insurance finds no favour with us... But it is going to be difficult for us to survive if we remain indifferent much longer. The banking system has a great influence on the modern world. But since these activities are connected with interest, Muslims shun them. Our community virtually possesses no capital... To survive our farmers are absolutely forced to borrow...(to survive) economic competition in the modern world we must immediately solve this interest problem."<sup>20</sup>

A further article in that same issue of *Sikha* implied that the Muslim attitude to usury was one of the main causes of the decline of Muslim society. Consequently, the magazine suggested: "To solve our economic difficulties it is even preferable that Muslims should take up usury than lose everything and become dependent on others."<sup>21</sup>

In 1928 *Saogat* suggested that in view of the present complexity of the world-wide economic system it was now virtually impossible "to determine what kind of profit constitutes interest as forbidden by our religion." *Saogat* pointed out that the prohibition of usury by Islam was intended to protect the poor from oppression. "The root cause of interest being forbidden and objectionable is that it harms society." Nevertheless, the world-wide banking system, international trade and other economic dealings had rendered the problem of interest exceedingly complex. No harm was done to society by income from promissory notes, Government securities, insurance and provident funds. It was, therefore, necessary to re-define *riba*. As Muslims, *Saogat* maintained, people simply had to avoid contact with what ever constituted interest in the true sense. It was, therefore, necessary to prepare a list of things "free from the taint of interest for

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<sup>20</sup> Anwar Hossain 'Musalmaner arthik samasya', *Sikha*, 1st yr., *Chaitra*, 1333 B. S. (1927)

<sup>21</sup> Rakibuddin Ahmad, 'Bangali Musalmaner arthik samasya:

the information of the general public by testing these things by religious criteria.”<sup>22</sup>

Up till 1928 most journals seem to have implied that people borrowed, not from necessity, but from a pernicious urge either to engage in litigation or in ostentatious extravagance. *Masik Mohammadi* in 1928, however, maintained that Muslims were compelled to borrow out of necessity. “It is a useless and unnatural farce to forbid people to borrow as long as no facility exists of fulfilling their temporary needs. Our *Ulema* have ceaselessly enacted this useless farce, but all their sermons have failed to alleviate the sufferings of the needy, and prevent them from resorting to usurious money-lenders.”<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, even in 1930 Muslims were still suffering at the hands of money-lenders as was revealed by the report of the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee which demonstrated that money-lenders were gradually dispossessing farmers of their land throughout Bengal. “The rural cultivators are gradually being turned into day-labourers. Can the Muslim members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly not do anything to check this devastation?”<sup>24</sup>

### (c) CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

As early as 1926 *Raosan hedayet* had suggested that a ‘Cooperative store’ be established in each village as a means of preventing people from ruining themselves through ostentatious extravagance, and in 1928 *Moyajjin* suggested that the foundation of co-operative funds might “save rural farmers from the clutches of oppressive money-lenders.” To obviate the possibility of embezzlement, the Fund might be used as capital to “open a branch

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<sup>22</sup> Abdul Majid, ‘Sud samasya’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 1st no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>23</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, “Samasya o samadhan’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 10th no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>24</sup> Editor, ‘Banglar mahajan’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr., 11th no.; *Bhadra*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

of the Central Cooperative Bank.” The establishment of such banks would facilitate the borrowing of money at low interest.<sup>25</sup>

Another article in *Moyajjin* in 1929 outlined the value of the Co-operative movement. The movement would, *Moyajjin* stated, stimulate the growth of mutual brotherhood, sympathy and collaboration; infuse thrift, business mindedness and astuteness; and facilitate the taking-over of large trading enterprises on a co-operative basis: “There would not be any shortage of capital.”<sup>26</sup>

#### (d) ATTITUDE TO TRADE

According to *Choltan*, writing in 1923, with the exception of Muslims in the districts of Dacca and Chittagong, Bengali Muslims were indifferent to trade and commerce. Their indifference had presumably facilitated the “extraordinary and unprecedented progress achieved by *Marwaris* in trade and commerce in Bengal and Assam during the last thirty to forty years.” *Choltan* feared that “the way things are going, in twenty-five year’ time Hindus and *Marwaris* will have become our complete masters, and our whole race will have been reduced to a race of porters, labourers, bookbinders, watchmen and servants.”<sup>27</sup>

In 1925 *Raosan Hedayet* indicated that there was indeed a strong religious sanction for the opening of shops by Muslims: “ ‘Buying and selling by you’, has been declared in the Holy *Quran* by *Allah* Himself, ‘to be permitted’... So we must open Muslim shops in every village and market... If one man’s money does not suffice to do so, then they should be opened as joint ventures. Unless you do this, you will be a sinner.”<sup>28</sup>

The following month *Raosan hedayet* pursued a similar theme declaring that without money the proper performance of a Muslim’s religious duty was impossible. *Hajj, Zakat Fitra, Korbani* etc., the

<sup>25</sup> Mohammad Abdur Rashid, B. A., B. T., ‘Mosalman samajer durabastha o tahar pratikar’, *Moyajjin*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>26</sup> Anwar Hossain, ‘Samabay samiti’, *Moyajjin*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Magh*, 1335 B. S. (1929)

<sup>27</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Editor, ‘Ahban’, *Raosan hedayet*, 2nd yr., 3rd no.; *Paus*, 1332 B. S. (1925)



founding of *Madrassas* and *Makhtabs*, the propagation of Islam, social reform and the patronage of literature and cultivation of knowledge all required money. It was, therefore, imperative that Muslims should engage in agriculture, industry, trade, commerce and business, working as commission agents, opening shops and becoming artisans. Firms, trading companies, stores, pharmacies and factories all led to the acquisition of wealth which was essential to Islam. "If you are once more to enjoy good fortune and become the lords of the world," *Raosan hedayet* maintained, then the acquisition of wealth through commerce and trade was imperative.<sup>29</sup>

A month later *Raosan hedayet* attacked two other impediments to commercial progress, namely, the disrepute associated with certain trades and the possibility of commercial failure. It said, "No one should regard those engaging in these trades (i. e. blacksmiths, goldsmiths, tanners, barbers, milkmen, potters, confectioners, fish-mongers and limeproducers) as socially inferior or ostracized. Muslim society must be particularly vigilant that the trades carried on by their people are patronised extensively by their own community."<sup>30</sup>

*Moyajjin* in 1928 seemed to feel that Muslim society could be more productive provided it dedicated its whole energies to working with assiduity. Fifty to sixty per cent of the vitality of the peasantry was, according to *Moyajjin*, "wasted in gossiping, marketing and litigations." The more affluent leisured classes, which constituted 1/6th of the community, "have as a class at no time felt the urge to work, and still do not." *Moyajjin* placed part of the blame for this on the lack of a law of primogeniture, as practised in England. Since in Muslim society every son was entitled to inner it part of the family's ancestral property, none felt it necessary to earn a living. "If only one son were to inherit,... then probably very few of our people would have the opportunity of remaining lazy."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> M. Serajul Haq Mian, 'Echlam o arthaniti', *Raosan hedayet*, 2nd yr., 4th no.; *Magh* 1332 B. S. (1926)

<sup>30</sup> Resolutions, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Byathatur, 'Saktir apachay', *Moyajjin*, 1st yr., 2nd no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

Six months later *Moyajjin* lamented the lack of Muslims in the Faridpur Agricultural Institute, where practical training in agriculture was being given to five young men per year. "Some people maintain that Muslims are... already peasants, so there is no need for them to undergo training in order to become peasants again. In our view, however, every household in the rural areas desperately needs a trained agriculturist. Muslims throughout Bengal may be peasants, but without exception they are ignorant, and nothing can be done well by an ignoramus."<sup>32</sup>

#### (e) MUSLIM COMPANIES

In 1923 *Choltan* reported on a proposal to form a Joint Stock Company called the 'Bombay Moslem Company'. It was on the one hand to "cement relations between Turkish and Indian Muslims", and on the other "both to free and widen the path to the achievement of trading-investments between the peoples of both countries".<sup>33</sup> Presumably the proposal was in part motivated by the *Khilafat* movement of which *Choltan* was the chief organ in Bengal. Later that same year *Choltan* was advocating a campaign to launch companies with capitals of between five and ten lacs of rupees in every trading centre and every headquarter and subdivision in each district. To enable even the poor to participate, share-prices were to be between five and ten rupees a piece. *Choltan* was optimistic about the outcome of the campaign; for, it maintained, since virtually every where the small traders were Muslims, it ought not to be difficult to induce them to buy shares.<sup>34</sup>

#### (f) SWADESI

In 1924 *Sammyabadi* was reporting regretfully on the failure of political leaders to persuade people to abandon foreign textiles, even after three years of unremitting campaigning. "What clearer sign can there be of the impending doom of our nation, if even those who do

<sup>32</sup> Editor, 'Faridpure bekar samasya-samadhan', *Moyajjin*, 1st yr., 4th no; *Magh*, 1335 B. S. (1929)

<sup>33</sup> Editor, 'Mochalman Kompani', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 1st no.; 28th *Baisakh*, 1330 B. S. (1923)

<sup>34</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji. *op. cit.*

not get sufficient to eat are indifferent to making clothes with homespun thread?"<sup>35</sup> Those without the leisure to spin, such as urban gentlemen and students, could, nevertheless, help to popularise *Khaddar* merely by buying them. Nevertheless, it would seem that underlying *Samyabadi's* campaign to popularise *Khaddar* was a desire to stimulate production within Bengal; for *Samyabadi* appears to have regarded Manchester and *Marwari* mill-owners as virtually synonymous. "Before we put our money into the pockets of Manchester or *Marwari* mill-owners, why do not we ask ourselves whether or not the cloth made by our poor fellow-countrymen is lying unsold?"<sup>36</sup> *Samyabadi* continued on the same theme some months later claiming that even the one or two mills Bengal did possess were doing little good for the country since all the thread was imported from abroad. To bring back prosperity to Bengal *Samyabadi* advocated the founding of throughout the Province and the making of the primary stages in weaving a cottage industry. This would provide work not only for Bengali women but also unemployed males.<sup>37</sup>

In 1930 *Moyajjin* deplored the apathy of Muslims in regard to the development of indigenous commerce and industry as part of the Independence movement. Muslims, according to *Moyajjin*, "seem to have taken a vow not to touch *Khaddar* at any price. Yet a glance at Bengal and Assam clearly shows that the majority of weavers are Muslims. This vast Muslim artisan class could begin virtually to

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<sup>35</sup> During the Non-cooperation – *Swaraj* movement, *Swadesi* agitations were revived by the new fervour of nationalism: 'The spinning wheel (i. e. *Charka*) should become the symbol of India's new life and the wearing of *Khadi* (or *Khaddar*, i. e. cloth made of homespun thread) a gesture of the nation's rejection of imperialism'. But the comparative high price of *Khaddar* made it unpopular particularly among the poor. Furthermore, rational and radical politicians had little faith in *Khaddar* alone bringing *Swaraj*. Intellectuals, too, were peeved by excessive Gandhian regrade for the *Charka*.

See Rabindranath Tagore, 'Charka', 'Swaraj sadhana', *Kalantar*; and Nazrul Islam, 'Sabyasachi', *Sanchita*.

<sup>36</sup> Abul Mansur Ahmad, B. A., 'Khaddar pariba kena?' *Samyabadi*, 2nd yr., 2nd no.; *Falgun*, 1330 B. S. (1924)

<sup>37</sup> Maolvi Mohammad Nurul Haq, 'Bayan silpa', *Samyabadi*, 2nd yr., 4th-5th no.; *Asarh-Bhadra*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

monopolise the Khaddar trade in this country by producing it themselves.”<sup>38</sup>

Some time earlier in 1929 *Moyajjin* had been lamenting the failure of the *Swadesi* movement in cigarettes: “Despite the endless imprecations to boycott foreign goods made during the *Swadesi* movement, the country is now importing  $2\frac{1}{2}$  crores of rupees’ worth of cigarettes; i. e. more than fourteen times the amount (before the *Swadesi* movement commenced).”<sup>39</sup>

#### (g) INSURANCE

An article by a Muslim graduate in *Saogat* in 1929 urged Muslim young men to take up insurance as a means of gaining a livelihood. He maintained, “There is no reason to be upset if Hindu gentlefolk do not insure their lives through Muslim agents. The number of Muslim policyholders nowadays is constantly increasing. It is, therefore, merely a confession of ignorance to state that Muslim agents would not earn a living or that Muslim young men who launched insurance companies would not get business.”<sup>40</sup>

## IV

### FEAR OF HINDU ECONOMIC DOMINANCE

It would seem that throughout our period the Muslim press had, in their economic thinking, been motivated largely by a fear of Hindu economic dominance in Bengal.<sup>41</sup> The lawyers benefiting by the drain on wealth of Muslims through litigations were largely Hindu. Hindu zemindars were better educated and more business-minded than their Muslim counterparts, whose estates through mismanagement were often auctioned off to redeem unpaid debts. Unpaid debts were resulting in the repopulation of Muslim towns

<sup>38</sup> Editor, ‘Khaddar o Musalman samaj’, *Moajjin*, 2nd yr., 7th- 8th no.; *Baisakh Jyaishta*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

<sup>39</sup> Editor, ‘Bidesi barjan’, *Moyajjin*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Magh*, 1335 B. S. (1929)

<sup>40</sup> Sadat Ali Akhand, B. L., ‘Jiban bima’, *Saogat*, 7th yr., 2nd no.; *Aswin*, 1336 B. S (1929)

<sup>41</sup> It was, one may recall, the threat of Hindu economic ascendancy that prevented Muslims joining the *Swadesi* movement. See also chapter on Politics.

and villages by Hindus; for the money-lenders to whom Muslim homesteads and houses were mortgaged were almost invariably Hindu. Muslim apathy to trade had allowed Hindus virtually to monopolise such profitable trades as those of blacksmiths, potters, goldsmiths, betel-leaf dealers, dairymen and fishermen. The profits from jute not taken by whites presumably went to Hindu *Marwaris*.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it was feared that within twenty-five years' time the Hindus and *Marwaris* would be virtually masters of Bengal and the Muslims reduced to a mere unskilled working class. As was seen above, mill-owners were not only the British in Manchester but also the Hindu *Marwaris* in India. Both were seen as equally bad. The anger of Hindus, envisaged at the opening of Muslim shops, would tend to suggest that Bengali shopkeepers were mainly Hindu.<sup>43</sup> Up till 1929 the Hindus seemed to have been dominating the insurance business. In fact, the position of Muslims in Bengal seems to have been summed up largely by *Sikha* in 1927: "The number of Muslims in occupations other than farming is insignificant. In comparison to Hindus they are about one to five. There are virtually no Muslims in the main commercial centres of Bengal ... The main centres of industry and commerce are the towns, and the number of Muslims in towns is gradually diminishing. Whereas twenty years ago there were 457 Muslims and 535 Hindus to each square mile in Dacca, there are now 413 Muslims and 579 Hindus. The majority of Muslim tradesmen (in Dacca) are coachmen, boatmen, and tailors, though if you search hard enough you might come across a Muslim draper or stationer. The Dacca Muslims monopolise the hide trade, but no Muslim there aspires to open a tannery, employing skilled tanners. Whereas twice as many Muslims as Hindus are peasants, twice as many Hindus as Muslims are zemindars. Most of the powerful landlords are Hindus... Through lack of foresight almost all Muslim zemindars are bankrupt, and those few who are not are on the way there."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, 'Echlam o dhanabal', *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>43</sup> Editor, *Raosan hedayet* in its *Paus* issue, 1332 B. S. (1925) the opening of refers to the Hindus' dissatisfaction at Muslim shops.

<sup>44</sup> Rakibuddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*

## CHAPTER VII LANGUAGE

The underlying theme of this work is, we should say, the gradual clarification of the identity of Bengali Muslims. So far, in the six foregoing chapters, two major tendencies are discernible:

- (i) on the part of orthodox Muslim society, supported by some intellectuals, to identify Bengali Muslims with the Muslim World of the Middle-East; and
- (ii) on the part of most Hindus, to identify Bengali Muslims as aliens to Bengal, whose existence and interests could, as far as education, literature, politics and the economy were concerned, be largely ignored.

There was, however, a third tendency, which was gradually to gain attention: namely, on the part of Bengalis, both Hindu and Muslim, of a more rational, secular outlook to seek in tolerance and mutual respect a path, whereby people of all persuasions might peacefully co-exist in Bengal.

The name by which the Bengali Muslim is identified consists of two parts: 'Bengali' and 'Muslim'. The two major tendencies stress the second part: 'Muslim'. This, according to the orthodox, identified Bengali Muslims as 'included in the Muslim World of the Middle-East' and according to most Bengali Hindus, as 'excluded from Bengal'. These conflicting tendencies between inclusion and exclusion were at the root of the Bengali Muslim linguistic dilemma. Inclusion in the Middle Eastern Muslim World meant clinging to Arabic, Persian (and Urdu). Exclusion from Bengal meant the banning by Hindus of the use of Perso-Arabic-Urdu diction in Bengali language and literature.

Inclusion in the Middle-East and exclusion from Bengal were complementary tendencies, whose inevitable outcome was Muslim separatism in politics, literature, education and economics. As we

have seen in the foregoing chapters, the tendency towards Muslim separatism in these spheres was strong. In the explosively-communal atmosphere of our period the third tendency, emphasising the first element in the Bengali Muslim title, no matter how rational, was none the less weak. The vast majority of Bengali Muslims were ethnically Bengali. Their western-educated wing was culturally Bengali also, which at this period meant 'to some extent Hinduised in outlook'. It was only the aristocratic section with their upper-middle class, urban hangers-on, who were non-Bengali in outlook. These were the people, who in collaboration with orthodox religious leaders stressed the 'Muslim' element in the Bengali Muslim title.

It was natural that they should do so. All their prestige and pride was linked with the Middle-East, from which they claimed to have derived, and with which they strove to maintain political, economic, cultural and religious links. On the other hand, it was equally natural that the more educated, enlightened sections of Bengali Muslim society should stress the 'Bengali' element in their make-up. World-wide religious allegiances were a characteristic of the Middle Ages, not the Middle-East. The Ottoman empire was crumbling from within. Geographic nationalism was sprouting. Islam was being rebuilt in a form to facilitate adjustment to twentieth-century political and economic conditions. To imagine Bengali Muslims having more in common with the Middle-East than Bengal was a phantasy. Bengali Muslims must awaken from dreams of mediaeval splendour and realistically adjust to Modern Bengal.

The analysis and presentation of Bengali Muslim expressions of opinion in regard to language are difficult. Several contemporaneous, criss-crossing trends of opinion can be discerned relating to: the mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims; the role of Urdu; the position of Arabic; the identity of the Bengali Muslim community, as, possibly part of a Bengali nation; or, part of an all-India Muslim nation; or, part of a world-wide Muslim nation or brotherhood; and lastly, the strength of the Bengali Muslim claim to the Bengali language, and what they needed to do in order to accommodate that language and its literature to their own national, communal needs.

This chapter will, therefore, fall into two parts: one, the identity of the Bengali Muslim community and its linguistic problems; two, the need to modify the Bengali language and its literature in order to render it suitable for the Bengali Muslim people.

## I

### BENGALI, URDU AND ARABIC

(i) The mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims: Bengali or Urdu?

Controversy over this question continued throughout the whole of our period. The debate does seem, however, to comprise two phases: one, 1900 to 1917; two, 1917 to 1930.

(a) THE FIRST PHASE: 1900 TO 1917

During the first phase Bengali Muslim society seemed to consist of broadly three sections: an urban, aristocratic section, reinforced by the *Ulema*; the Western educated class; and the rural masses.

#### *1. The urban aristocratic Muslims and the Ulema*

(a) Who were they?

According to *Nur-al-Iman* in 1900 they were: "The aristocratic Muslims and their retainers."<sup>1</sup>

*Naba Nur*, 1903: "Leaders of our society who live in town and have no connection with rural society outside..."<sup>2</sup>

*Al-Eslam*, 1917: "A few non-Bengali Muslims dwell in Calcutta for professional reasons. Many have become permanent residents..."

*Al-Eslam*, 1917 again: "These people have married Urdu-speaking women in Calcutta and out of deference to their wives forsaken their own mother (i. e. country of origin, Bengal) and address their mother-in-law (i. e. country of adoption, where Urdu is spoken) as mother instead.

<sup>1</sup> 'Nur-al-Imaner apil', *Nural-Iman*, 1st yr., 3rd no.: 1307 B. S. (1900)

<sup>2</sup> Editor, 'Matribhasha o Bangiya Musalman', *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 9th no.: *Paus*, 1310 B S. (1903)



“There is another group who become absolutely infatuated the moment they see that twisted script (i. e. Perso-Arabic-Urdu script)...”<sup>3</sup>

That is, this urban group comprised some Bengali aristocratic Muslims, some non-Bengali businessmen, some people who had married Urdu-speaking women and some people infatuated with the Arabic script.

(b) What nationality could these people claim? Or, how could they identify themselves?

According to *Basana* in 1909: “Even those whose forefathers actually came here from those lands (Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan or Turkey) cannot now identify themselves as belonging to the Arab, Persian or Afghan nations.”<sup>4</sup>

*Al-Eslam* in 1917: “A group of collaborators who are almost all genuine Bengalis.”<sup>5</sup>

(c) What language do they speak?

According to *Nur-al-Imam* in 1900: “(They) speak Urdu.”<sup>6</sup>

*Islam-pracharak*: “A handful of urban Muslims speak Urdu.”<sup>7</sup>

*Al-Eslam*, 1917: “Having seen only the hotchpotch Muslims of Calcutta, they (non-Bengali Muslims) conclude that the Muslims of Bengal have no definite language. This is a gross error on their part. Calcutta may be part of Bengal, but it is not the whole of it.”<sup>8</sup>

(d) Was the language they spoke genuine Urdu?

According to *Nur-al-Iman*, 1900: “Many of the (Bengali aristocratic Muslims and their retainers) are unable even to use those chewed,

<sup>3</sup> Mozaffar Ahmad, ‘Urdu Bhasa o Bangiya Musalman’, *Al-Eslam* 3rd yr., 4th no.: *Sraban*, 1324 B. S. (1917)

<sup>4</sup> Hamed Ali, ‘Uttar Banger Musalman sahitya’, *Basana*, 2nd vol., 1st no.: *Baisakh*, 1316 B. S. (1909)

<sup>5</sup> Mozaffar Ahmad, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> ‘Nur-al-Imaner apil’, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, ‘Musalman sampraday o tahar patan’, *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

<sup>8</sup> Mozaffar Ahmad, *op. cit.*

swallowed words of the Western Urdu-speaking people in the correct sense, correct form and correct place, let alone express in it the feelings of their hearts.”<sup>9</sup>

(e) What was their attitude to Bengali?

According to *Nur-al-Iman*, 1900: “(They) disliked the Bengali language... Even though it is easier for them to express their feelings in Bengali, they desist from doing so.”<sup>10</sup>

*Naba Nur*, 1915: “(They) label the Bengali language ‘the language of cowards’.”<sup>11</sup>

*Al-Eslam*, 1915: “The deadly disease of expressing contempt for Bengali, of proclaiming, even though they are Bengalis, that their mother-tongue is either Urdu or Arabic and of saying such things as: either, ‘I do not know Bengali’, or ‘I have forgotten it’, is confined to only one class of Muslims. Is it not extremely shameful that they should express such opinions? There is not the least doubt that those who behave like this are denigrating their own mother and motherland and are advertising the poverty and inferiority of their own mother and country.”<sup>12</sup>

*Al-Eslam*, 1916: “(Fatwas have been proclaimed, saying) the Bengali language is the language of Hindus and consequently undeserving of our respect.”<sup>13</sup>

(f) Why did they champion Urdu?

According to *Naba-Nur*, 1903: “(They) desire to create a single mother-tongue for Muslims throughout the whole of India by forcibly conferring upon Urdu the status of the mother-tongue of Bengali Muslims...”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Nur-al-Iman apil, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Editor, ‘Matribhasha o Bangiya Musalman’, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Khademol Eslam Bangabasi, ‘Bangalir matribhasha’, *Al-Eslam*, 1st yr., 7th no.: *Kartik*, 1322 B. S. (1915)

<sup>13</sup> Abdul Malek Choudhury, ‘Banga sahitye Srihatter Musalman’, *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 6th no.: *Aswin*, 1323 B- S. (1916)

<sup>14</sup> Editor, ‘Matribhasha o Bangiya Musalman’, *op. cit.*

*Islam-pracharak*: “The decline ... commenced from the day Lord William Bentinck made Bengali the language of the Courts in place of Persian. The Muslims were an imperial race: it impaired their prestige not to speak either Urdu or Persian. This feeling has, I think, not yet disappeared from the upper classes.”<sup>15</sup>

*Al-Eslam*, 1916: “ ‘Such Holy books as the *Quran* and *Hadith* cannot be translated into it (Bengali), nor can our religious ceremonies be discussed in it. It is Urdu that is the mother-tongue of the Muslims and it is in Urdu that we must converse with each other and indeed even dream’ – edicts of this kind have been proclaimed everywhere and their influence has not been vain. It is as a result of them that many people still cling to the unnatural and extraordinary desire to sow the seed of Urdu in the soil of Bengal. What can be more unnatural than this?”<sup>16</sup>

One deduces from this comment that certain *Ulema* were collaborating with Calcutta aristocrats and Urdu-speaking immigrants to propagate Urdu.

According to *Al-Eslam* in 1917: “(Non-Bengali Muslims) are trying to promote their mother-tongue...”

“There are some who think that Urdu literature has attained the peak of excellence and therefore Bengalis by virtue of being Muslim ought to learn Urdu.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus, according to their opponents, the advocates of Urdu were motivated partly by their desire to create a *lingua franca*, partly by imperial pride and partly by religious and cultural considerations.

## 2. *The Western-educated and the rural Muslim society*

Our sole source of information on the identity and characteristics of these groups is *Nur-al-Iman* in 1900. The Western-educated were presumably “those who have learnt Bengali by studying books by Hindu authors with Hindu teachers in the *Pathshalas* and have learnt

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<sup>15</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Abdul Malek Choudhury, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Muzaffar Ahmad, *op. cit.*

Sanskritic Bengali parrot-fashion.” They spoke “literary Sanskritised Bengali... When both speaking and writing they use the literary diction of Sanskrit Pundits.” Their attitude to Bengali was: “They dislike and regard as alien (*yabanik*) such words as *Wadu*, *Gochal*, *Fard*, *Wajib*, *Halal*, *Haram*, *Allah*, *Rasul* etc., which are inalienably connected with Islam. They translate all these words into Sanskritic literary Bengali.”<sup>18</sup> That is, linguistically they were completely Hinduised.

As regards rural Muslim society, all we learn of them is that they presumably spoke “vigorous natural Bengali” as opposed to the literary Sanskritic. Nevertheless, it would seem from some comments that despite their ignorance of Urdu some of the attitudes of the urban sophisticated Muslims had permeated amongst them. One deduces these conclusions from the following extracts:

#### Ignorance of Urdu

This seems implied in *Kohinur*, 1916: “... The failure of both Urdu periodicals in Bengal and of learned *Maolvis* who, though ignorant of the Bengali language, are attempting to disseminate knowledge...”<sup>19</sup>

And in *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 1919: “One of the main reasons for...the general failure of the *Ulema* to achieve success is their ignorance of their mother-tongue.”<sup>20</sup>

How deeply had the attitudes of the urban sophisticated Muslims penetrated?

The degree of penetration may be deduced from the following two extracts which obviously do not refer to urban sophisticated Muslims; e. g.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Nur-al-Imaner apil’, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Mohammad Yakub Ali Choudhury, ‘Bangali Musalmaner bhasha o sahitya’, *Kohinur, Magh*, 1332 B. S. (1916)

<sup>20</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, ‘Abhibhashan’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Magh*, 1325 B. S. (1919)

*Basana*, 1909: “Many of us are still deluded. When going to sleep in the mango groves or bamboo forests of Bengal, they still dream of Baghdad, Bokhara, Kabul and Kandahar...”<sup>21</sup>

And *Al-Eslam*, 1916: “... who, while sleeping in their huts in mango groves and in bamboo forests of Bengal in Sylhet, still dream of Baghdad, Bokhara, Kabul, Kandahar and Iran, Turan...”<sup>22</sup>

Their attitude towards Urdu

This again can be deduced from *Basana*, 1909: “Some are so grossly deluded as to wish to make Urdu their mother-tongue instead of Bengali: just as weak people dream supernatural things, so nations in decline cling to unnatural fantasies.”<sup>23</sup>

### 3. The Bengali Muslims as a whole

(a) What was their mother-tongue?

At first the journals were a little hesitant in claiming Bengali to be the mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims. *Nur-al-Iman* in 1900 stated, “We Bengali Muslims have no language of our own.”<sup>24</sup> But gradually they began to state with greater and greater firmness that their mother-tongue was Bengali. For example, *Naba Nur* in 1903 wrote:

“What else but the Bengali language could be the mother tongue of Bengali Muslims?”<sup>25</sup>

*Islam-pracharak* a few years later: “Every one admits that our mother-tongue is Bengali.”<sup>26</sup>

*Basana*, 1909: “Our mother-tongue is Bengali... The language which first entered our ears on birth, which we have used all our lives, in which we express our joys and sorrows, happiness and pain

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<sup>21</sup> Hamed Ali, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> Abdul Malek Choudhury, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Hamed Ali, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> ‘Nur-al-Imaner apil’, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> Editor, ‘Matrihasha o Bangiya Musalman’, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, *op. cit.*

and in which we converse in the market place, in business and commerce and in our professional lives and in which we dream when we are asleep, is Bengali.”<sup>27</sup>

*Kohinur*, 1916: “It is as clear as day that the mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims is Bengali.”<sup>28</sup>

*Al-Eslam*, 1917: “The mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims was Bengali even before the Urdu language was born.”<sup>29</sup>

(b) How did they identify themselves?

According to *Islam-pracharak*: “It is no exaggeration even to say that we are now natives of this country...having lived in this country for five hundred years...we are Bengali...”<sup>30</sup>

According to *Basana*, 1909: “No matter whether our forefathers came from Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan or Turkey, nor whether they were Hindus from this country, we are now Bengalis... What can be more regrettable and surprising than that we, who have lived in this country for the last seven hundred years still do not acknowledge it as our home land?”<sup>31</sup>

According to *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 1918: This much is certain: not all the ancestors of the Bengali Muslims came to Bengal from Arabia, Iran and Turan or Turkey. If you examine the genealogies of many of them you will see that the founders of their families became separated from Hindu society in Bengal and by conversion to Islam became Muslims. They have, therefore, been unable to abandon their mother-tongue...”<sup>32</sup>

Thus it would seem that the Bengali press was virtually unanimous in feeling that by language and birthplace Bengali

<sup>27</sup> Hamed Ali, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Mohammad Yakub Ali Choudhury, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Mozaffar Ahmad, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, *op. cit.* For origin of Muslims in Bengal see Imperial Gazetteer of India, Bengal, Vol. I, 1909, pp. 46-47; Sir Herbert Risley, *The People of India*, 1915, p. 122.

<sup>31</sup> Hamed Ali, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Syed Emdad Ali, ‘Banga bhasha o Musalman’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 1st yr., 2nd no.; *Sraban*, 1325 B. S. (1918)

Muslims were Bengali, and after 1917 they vigorously rejected attempts to make Urdu the mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims. Possibly if the advocates of Urdu had seen for it merely a role as a lingua franca for Indian Muslims, their case would have been accepted. It was presumably their advocacy of Urdu as the mother-tongue replacing Bengali that was unacceptable. *Naba Nur* in 1903 said, "(The urban Bengali Muslim leaders) are merely trying to perform the impossible": and furthermore, "it is no more possible to stop the prevalency of Bengali in Bengali Muslim society" than it is "to turn back the Ganges to its Himalayan source".<sup>33</sup> *Kohinur* in 1316 stated, "However necessary it may be to introduce Urdu into Bengal in order to create an All-India nationhood that attempt is as useless as trying to build a house in the sky. 'The growth of nationhood will not in the least be impeded if one releases the general public from the necessity of learning Urdu.'"<sup>34</sup> Rejecting the cultural argument in favour of Urdu, *Al-Eslam* in 1917 cried, "It is extremely difficult to ascertain in which country *bazar* in India the Urdu language was confined when the Bengali Muslim poet (Alaol circa 1607-'80) composed his *Padmavati Kavya*?... The Urdu-speakers have enriched their own language by translating Arabic works into Urdu. Why should we have to learn Urdu on that account? Is it in order that we should make translations from the translations? The original is bound to be ruined by the time the third copy is made... What is it that makes Urdu so desirable for us? More than half the Muslims in India speak Bengali, and the remainder speak various other languages. 'Nevertheless Bengali Muslims must learn Urdu'-this is a kind of oppression and there is no mistake about it. Let Urdu, the language of the *bazar* and the army camp prevail in the *bazar* and the army camp."<sup>35</sup> What necessity is there to teach it compulsorily to the whole nation? And what place in Urdu-speaking regions is so flooded with Islamic sentiment that we, Bengali Muslims, must also accept Urdu... In short, we in Bengal can never encourage Urdu. If anyone wishes

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<sup>33</sup> Editor, 'Matribhasha o Bangiya Musalman', *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Mohammad Yakub Ali Choudhury, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> 'Urdu' was originally a Turkish word, meaning 'belonging to the camp or to the royal army'.

to learn it for a hobby then let him do so, but as far as Bengal is concerned Urdu is unnecessary.”<sup>36</sup>

(b) THE SECOND PHASE: 1917 TO 1930

Actually throughout phase 1 and phase 2 of this controversy over the mother-tongue of Bengali Muslims another controversy over the role of Urdu as a *lingwa franca* in India was also gaining clearer and sharper definition. Round about 1917, as the Bengali Muslim press would seem to indicate, a further complication entered this second controversy: for, by that time Bengali Muslims had become conscious of the advocacy of Hindu nationalists, such as Gokhale (1866-1915), Gandhi (1869-1948) and Tilak (1856-1920), in favour of Hindi becoming the State language of the future independent state of India. In reaction to this, Muslims began to put forward the view that the only language fitted for this meritorious role was Urdu. Thus from about 1917 Urdu acquired a second potential role as the future State language of independent India. This naturally had the effect of mobilising greater support for Urdu in Bengal, thus to some extent affecting the earlier controversy over the mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims.

From 1917 onwards Bengali Muslims continued, however, to hammer away at these two issues, which by then ought to have been settled. They continued to state that Bengali was their mother-tongue: e. g. *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 1918: “There can be no two opinions about the fact that Bengali is the mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims despite some of them being infatuated with Urdu... both Hindus and Muslims have an equal right to claim Bengali as their mother-tongue.”<sup>37</sup>

Some months later the same journal published an ‘Address’<sup>38</sup> which declared that Bengali had always been the mother-tongue of

<sup>36</sup> Mozaffar Ahmad, *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Syed Emdad Ali, *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> The Presidential Address by Mohammad Akram Khan delivered at the third annual session of *Bangiya Musalman sahitya sammelan* (Bengal Muslim Literary Conference) held in 1918.



the Bengali Muslims and that the Bengali Muslims had always been the first to patronise and encourage Bengali literature.<sup>39</sup>

In 1920 *Banga Nur* declared that “All Bengali Muslims have now selected Bengali as their mother-tongue.”<sup>40</sup> *Moslem Bharat* that same year claimed, “Muslims have now welcomed Bengali as their mother-tongue and, indeed, the Bengali language is now ensconced in a golden throne even amongst their womenfolk. Muslims now fully realise they have no other way expressing the feelings of their hearts.”<sup>41</sup> In 1921 Mohammad Lutfar Rahman put forward a very emotional plea for Bengali. He could bear any loss except that of his mother-tongue: “Who could possibly want to render my life so paralysed and powerless by making such a preposterous proposal? Who is it sermoning me to weep in a foreign language?... Though we may constantly hear the joyous laughter of Urdu from next door,... it brings us no genuine joy or comfort.”<sup>42</sup> Yet, nevertheless, even in 1930 *Moajjin* lamented, “Though being raised in the lap of Bengal for many centuries and though they have heard Bengali from the lips of their mothers for age after age, Bengali Muslims still have not learnt to love the Bengali language. Both the language and country still seem foreign to them... Because of an abortive attempt to express our thoughts and to convey our emotions through Arabic, Persian and Urdu, we have from the start neglected the opportunity to maintain our prestige in, and to establish our imprints on our mother-tongue and its literature.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, *ibid.* Attention may in this regard be drawn to the patronage of Bengali literature by Muslim Sultans in the early mediaeval period. Muslim poets also began composing in Bengali as early as the 15th century. – For details see Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq, *Muslim Bangla sahitya*, 1957, chapter III.

<sup>40</sup> Editor, ‘Bangala samayik patre Mosalmaner sthan’, *Banga Nur*, 1st yr., 3rd no.: *Magh*, 13 26 B. S. (1920)

<sup>41</sup> Editor, ‘Amader katha’ *Moslem Bharat*, 1st yr., 1st no.: *Baisakh*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>42</sup> Mohammad Lutfar Rahman, ‘Urdu o Bangala sahitya’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 4th yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1328 B. S. (1921).

<sup>43</sup> Abdul Majid, B. A., ‘Bangla bhasha o Musalman’, *Moyajjin*, 2nd yr., 9th-10th no.; *Asarh-Sraban*, 1337 B. S. (1930).

Meanwhile Bengali Muslims were still attacking the advocates of Urdu as the mother-tongue of Bengali Muslims. In 1919 *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* claimed that the *Ulema* had a duty to cultivate their mother-tongue and disseminate religious knowledge through it. "For this reason *Allah* sent native-speakers as prophets to each nation. But most unfortunately our *Ulemas* still feel shy about showing sufficient loyalty to this divine edict laid down by the *Quran*<sup>44</sup>... What could be more regrettable than the fact that we now refuse to learn even our own mother-tongue?"<sup>45</sup>

In 1920 Nur alleged that this "unnatural and false love of the Urdu language" was deterring Muslims of Bengal from getting education in Bengali. "Unless we can dislodge Urdu from the soil of Bengal, the Bengali language will be unable to hold its head high in Bengali Muslim society. No nation can ever hope to achieve its own welfare and salvation except by a vast and vigorous cultivation of its mother-tongue."<sup>46</sup> And in 1927 *Sikha* quoting an 'Address' stated, "we hear that there are in Bengal many Muslims who feel ashamed or degraded in having to admit that their mother-tongue is Bengali. They claim that in order to qualify as aristocratic Muslims it is essential to change their mother-tongue." The speaker then goes on to ridicule the possibility of the 25 million Muslims of Bengal loading "on their shoulders their bedsteads, beddings, boxes, trunks and lands and emigrating so as to qualify as *Sarif* by settling in a land where Bengali is unknown."<sup>47</sup>

## (ii) State language and lingua franca

Summing up on the Urdu-Bengali controversy in regard to the mother-tongue, *Al-Eslam* in 1917 wrote:

"... That does not mean Bengali Muslims should desist from learning Urdu... It is extremely desirable that educated Bengali

<sup>44</sup> The *Quran* says, "The preachers and preceptors must impart religious instruction to their own nations via their mother-tongue."

<sup>45</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan. *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> Editor, 'Bangala bhashar anadar', Nur, 1st yr., 2nd-3rd nos.; *Falgun-Chaitra*, 1326 B. S. (1920)

<sup>47</sup> Tasaddak Ahmad, 'Abhibhashan', *Sikha*, 1st yr., *Chaitra*, 1333 B. S. (1927)

Muslims should acquire a working knowledge of Urdu... Hindu politicians are striving to introduce the Hindi language and the *Nagri* script on the off-chance that it will become the State language throughout the whole of India when India becomes self-governed.<sup>48</sup> Under these circumstances, is it not the duty of Muslims to attempt to place upon the head of their own language and script (i. e. Urdu language and Arabic script) the prestigious crown of the future State language of India by disseminating it everywhere? Is it not inevitable that Muslims should desire Urdu to be both the future State language and lingua-franca of India and that they should attempt to put this desire into effect?"<sup>49</sup>

In 1918 *Al-Eslam* proposed that Urdu could become a compulsory second language from the primary stage of education because of its value as a lingua franca and also because, if it were to become the State language, then this would place Bengali Muslims "in a particularly strong position". "As citizens of India and as Muslims it is...essential that we learn Urdu."<sup>50</sup>

A little later *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* carried views "about the necessity for a state language or *lingua franca* for the whole of India." It was stated that neither the heavily-Sanskritized Hindi advocated by "Hindu scholars from the North West" nor heavily Perso-Arabicized Urdu was suitable as the State language: a

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<sup>48</sup> This refers to the Hindi agitation, sponsored by such Hindu bodies as the *Arya Samaj*, the *Hindi sahitya sammelan*, the All India Common Script and Common Language Conference, *Nagri pracharini sabha* and the *Hindu Mahasabha*. The movement assumed an all-India character, when Congress finally supported it. Muslims saw in it a threat of Hindi-expansionism. To them Hindi in the Nagri script seemed to belong to Hindus alone and *ipso facto* opposed to Muslim culture.

<sup>49</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, 'Bangiya Mosalman o Urdu samasya', *Al-Eslam*, 3rd yr., 6th no.: Aswin, 1324 E. S. (1917). It may be noted that, tinged with communalism the Hindi-Urdu controversy finally became a political issue, Hindus identifying themselves with Hindi and Muslims with Urdu. Thus the advocacy of Urdu began partially to symbolise Muslim nationalism.

<sup>50</sup> Basarat Ali, 'Urdu samasya', *Al-Eslam*, 4th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1325 B. S. (1918)

compromise approximating to the language “spoken by ordinary people” should be adopted.<sup>51</sup>

As regards Urdu itself, however, it was maintained that to foster and sustain a sense of nationhood amongst Muslims throughout India, Urdu, which was neither the mother-tongue nor the “national” language of Bengali Muslims, nevertheless, had a vital role to play.<sup>52</sup>

In 1920 *Moslem Bharat* put forward a further candidate for the position of *lingua franca*, namely English. Arguing that for scientific and technical reasons English was indispensable, *Moslem Bharat* maintained that no other language was as competent as English to be their *lingua franca*. “Since we cannot absolutely give up English we should accept it not only mentally, but publicly.”<sup>53</sup>

### (iii) Concepts of nationality: the position of Arabic

#### Arabic

As regards the position of Arabic, in 1919 an article in *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* stated, “Whenever a Muslim thinks of the word ‘nation’ he can never think of himself as being an inhabitant of Bengal, or indeed as merely an inhabitant of India. For, the word ‘nation’ brings him into contact with the whole world... The bond of friendship, fellowship and love uniting Muslims throughout the whole world is the *Quran* in Arabic. Our feeling of nationhood could never survive the severing of that bond.” It was then argued that, therefore, neither Bengali nor Urdu could be regarded as the Bengali Muslim national language, that position could only be filled by Arabic: “it is necessary to give pride of place not to what we love (i. e. Bengali) but to what is best (i. e. Arabic).”<sup>54</sup>

The ‘Abhibhashan’ quoted in the same issue alleged that “extremists have now begun to call Bengali their ‘national’

<sup>51</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, *op. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Mohammad Shahidullah, M. A., B. L., ‘Bharater sadharan bhasha’, *Moslem Bharat*, 1st yr., 1st no.: *Baisakh*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>54</sup> Mohammad Wajed Ali, ‘Bangla bhasha o Musalman sahitya’, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, 1st yr.: 4th no., *Magh* 1325 “-3. S. (1919)

language". This was "absolutely illogical and dangerous... to our community... Muslim ideals in regard to nationhood are unique... (they do not derive from tribe, profession or country,... (but) solely from religion. Muslims throughout the world constitute one undivided and indivisible nation... Their national language is Arabic...(which) is the sole means of uniting Muslims throughout the world."<sup>55</sup>

The editor, however, refuted both these views in regard to the definition of nation. He took 'nation' in the English sense as "all the inhabitants of Bengal". "The universal feelings amongst Muslims throughout the world is much greater than this 'nation'. We should call this 'universal brotherhood' of Muslims. Therefore, we can never agree to call Arabic our national language. It has always been our universal language (world language)."<sup>56</sup>

## II

### BENGALI: DICTION, SCRIPT AND STYLE

#### (i) Diction

In 1900 *Nur-al-Iman* exhorted Bengali Muslims to make the Bengali language 'suitable' for their own circumstances and times "instead of disliking it as a Hindu tongue."<sup>57</sup> Earlier its editor had published 'a national book' ('*kaomi pustika*') called *Dugdha sarobar* (1895). Its style had reflected contemporary Bengali Muslim speech. Commenting on this, a Hindu journalist had wisecracked, "Hindus cannot touch milk boiled in a Muslim kitchen and so we are unable to savour this milk."<sup>58</sup> To avoid further adverse criticism of this kind *Nur-al-Iman* set out to explain that as Muslims they intended to use in their journal ordinary domestic Muslim speech. It might, therefore, put on the lovely tresses of the Bengali language "a

<sup>55</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Editorial comment, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitva-patrika*, 1st yr., 4th no.: *Magh*, 1325 B. S. (1919)

<sup>57</sup> 'Nur-al-Imaner apil', *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in *Nur-al-Iman*, 1st yr., 2nd no.: *Srabon*, 1307 B. S. (1900)

garland of Busra roses”, i. e. a linguistic embellishment of Perso-Arabic diction.<sup>59</sup>

What *Nur-al-Iman* had done became clear in Basana in 1909. *Basana* stated that hundreds and hundreds of Perso-Arabic words were now current in Bengali speech.<sup>60</sup> They had no equivalent in ‘Pure Bengali’ (*Sadhu Bangla*). They were an ‘integral’ part of the Bengali language and should be used in literature: i. e. the grammatical structure of literary Bengali should remain unchanged: merely its diction should be enriched with this Perso-Arabic element.<sup>61</sup> That is, *Nur-al-Iman* had merely introduced into literature words which were already current in Bengali Muslim speech. The controversy over Perso-Arabic diction centres on this simple point: should Perso-Arabic diction be granted literary status? According to the Muslim press most Hindus were against this, and some Bengali Muslims were in favour of a slightly stronger measure, i. e. introduction of new Perso-Arabic vocabulary: “There are many other Arabic and Persian words which have not yet gained currency in the Bengali language... and yet those words constitute the very language of our souls, and we absolutely need them.”<sup>62</sup>

#### (a) THE HINDU PURIST CASE AS REFLECTED IN THE MUSLIM PRESS

Hindus were apparently concerned to preserve the linguistic ‘purity’ of Bengali. For example, *Al-Eslam* observed in 1916, “...in their (Hindu) opinion, only Sanskrit words are entitled to enter Bengali. If words from other languages are allowed entry, the purity will be destroyed.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Editor, ‘Bhasha samvande Nur-al-Imaner kaifiyat’, *ibid*.

<sup>60</sup> According to Dr. S. K. Chatterji, present-day Bengali contains more than 2,500 Perso-Arabic words. – *Bangla bhasha tattyer bhumika*, 1936, p. 137.

<sup>61</sup> Hamed Ali, *op. cit*.

<sup>62</sup> Mohammad Ahabab Choudhury, ‘Banga Bhashar gati’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 1st no.; *Baisakh*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>63</sup> Shamsuddin Ahmad, ‘Amader sahitya’, *Al-Eslam*, 1st yr., 10th no.: *Magh*, 1322 B. S. (1916)

In 1916 *Al-Eslam* further reported that, "One sees in schools that the moment some pupil says, 'I want a drink of *pani*' (water), every one bursts out laughing. They are obliged to say *jal*, which makes one think Muslims are speaking a Hindu language, to which they themselves have no claim."<sup>64</sup>

In 1918 *Al-Eslam* commented that, "Persian has lost royal power, and so Hindi *babus* are now eager to rid the Bengali language of Persian words."<sup>65</sup> In 1919 a complaint appeared in *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* that, "Our distinguished men of letters (presumably Hindus) are advising us to evict such words as *Allah*, *Rasul*, *Namaz*, and *Roza*. The language, resulting from this eviction may be *sadhu*, but it would not be the mother-tongue of the Bengali Muslims."<sup>66</sup>

#### (b) THE MODERATE MUSLIM CASE

Bengali Muslims seemed caught between two stools. On the one hand, indifference to Bengali was alleged to be impeding their development as a community: "Candidly speaking, the indifference of Muslims to the study of Bengali is one of the root-causes of their decline."<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, studying the Bengali language and its literature in its present form endangered their individuality. "...by reading literature full of Hindu ideals and Hindu sentiments Muslim society will gradually lose its individuality and assume a queer form."<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, "...in order to live in Bengal, it is essential to learn the Bengali language."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Sheikh Habibar Rahman, 'Jatiya sahitye Hindu-Musalman', *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 1st no.: Baisakh, 1323 B. S. (1916) Both *jal* and *pani* mean 'water', and both are of Sanskrit origin. *Jal* is, however, regarded as a Bengali Hindu word, and *pani* as Bengali Muslim.

<sup>65</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, 'Bangala bhashar paricharya', *Al-Eslam*, 3rd yr., 10th no.: *Magh*, 1324 B. S. (1918)

<sup>66</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, 'Musalman sampraday o tahar patan', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 11th no.

<sup>68</sup> Editor, 'Matribhasha o Bangiya Musalman', *Naba Nur*, *op. cit.*

<sup>69</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, *op. cit.*

Bengali Muslim society was, therefore, urged to consider the utility of Bengali, – “Each of us Muslims must seriously consider, whether or not Bengali is the language of the courts, a lucrative language, an effective language, the language of this country and our mother-tongue... What harm is there in recognising the Bengali language as our mother-tongue?”<sup>70</sup>

Consequently, “we can make for ourselves a separate stronghold in the Bengali language and it is now absolutely essential that we should do so.”<sup>71</sup>

The question was: how strong was their claim to Bengali and how far did they wish to modify the language? The arguments put forward in answer to these questions between the years 1903 and 1923 may be summarised as follows:

The claim of Bengali Muslims to the Bengali language was equal to, if not greater than, that of the Hindus. It was “a thousand times more useful to infuse Muslim spirit into the language than to waste energies attempting to make the language itself Muslim”: though infusing “Islamic ideals and ideas” into Bengali literature would impregnate it with Perso-Arabic diction automatically: for, hundreds and hundreds of Perso-Arabic words had already been “naturally and imperceptibly assimilated” in Bengali Muslim speech, “as a result of seven hundred years of Muslim rule.” Consequently, as Pandit Haraprasad Shastri (1853-1931) himself had admitted, Bengali was a mixed language: Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and English words were now current in it, either as embellishments or to satisfy “some deficiency in Bengali.” Such Perso-Arabic diction could not be abandoned. Its use was “habitual”, not “forced” and “unnatural”, because of the need to discuss religion. Indeed, many of these Perso-Arabic words had no equivalent in pure Hindu Bengali, e. g. *Namaz*, *Zakat* etc. Attempts to translate them with Sanskrit equivalents devitalised and distorted “the nation’s diction.” To drive them out would leave Bengalis “dumb”. Since, however, they were in any case already used in Bengali literature, to exclude them would impair

<sup>70</sup> Abdul Haq Choudhury, *op. cit.*

<sup>71</sup> Editor, “Matribhasba o Bangiya Musalman’, *Naba Nur*, *op cit.*



verisimilitude. Therefore, their use was “unavoidable”. Nevertheless, no non-current Perso-Arabic words should be introduced, only elements “familiar” to both Bengali Hindus and Muslims, which were “commonly understood.” No “deliberate” attempts would be made to introduce rare Perso-Arabic diction. Any such obstinate attempts to introduce unnecessary Perso-Arabic diction was worthless. Both Bengali Hindus and Muslims had enriched, and could enrich, Bengali literature with their own cultural and religious vocabulary. Bengali Muslims understood Hindu religious terminology: they could not understand why Hindus refused to learn theirs. Bengali Muslims desired neither heavily Sanskritized *Vidyasagari* Bengali, nor Bengali “over-burdened...with unnecessary words from Persian and Urdu.”

Up to about 1923 the Bengali Muslim attitude appears to have been moderate and, indeed, conciliatory. Bengali Muslims were prepared to admit that though Bengali literature contained much diction objectionable to them on religious grounds and though Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar’s (1820-91) “making Bengali the daughter of Sanskrit” had halted Muslim Bengali literature “midway”,<sup>72</sup> it was nevertheless, Muslim apathy and indifference that was responsible for the heavy Sanskritization of Bengali.<sup>73</sup> After 1923, however, extremism appears to have entered the lists (presumably due to worsening of Hindu-Muslim relations after 1923-24).

### (c) EXTREMISM

Where the extremist point of view came from and what it implied was brought out in an article in *Islam-darsan* in 1921—“One class of *Ulema* say that even those Arabic and Persian words which can be translated into simple Bengali intelligible to Hindus ought not to be translated but should be retained in the original Arabic or Persian form. Unless we retain them, our Islamic nationhood will be humiliated through fear of the Hindus. Consequently, there is a danger of this immersing us in great sin by denial of faith.”

<sup>72</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, *op. cit.*

<sup>73</sup> Ahdul Malek Choudhury, *op. cit.*

*Islam-darsan* regretted this, however, "There is no logical reason to suppose that the use of some Bengali term implies that we are either afraid of the Hindus or are trying to placate them."

After discussing specific examples of words, which could be regarded as offensive to Islam, *Islam-darsan* concluded: "the greatest drawback is this that by abandoning such terms as *nandan kanan*, *tridiva*, *sudha*, *amiya*, *mandar* and *parijat* the Muslim poet would of necessity be reduced to despair sitting destitute and streaming in tears..."

*Islam-darsan*, therefore, sums up its attitude as: "I am in favour of using all Bengali words and expressions. Nevertheless, there are some words which are directly contrary to Islamic belief...Such expressions as *bodhan na haitel ki mangal ghat bhangiya gela?* (has the auspicious vessel got broken before the invocation is complete?) can find no place in Islamic literature. We may use the term *Iswara* or *Parameswara* in the sense of Allah but we can never use the term *Maheswara*, for *Maheswara* means *Siva* alone."<sup>74</sup>

In 1923 *Choltan*, alleging that for the last forty or fifty years Hindus had been driving Perso-Arabic diction from Bengali literature and heavily Sanskritizing it, claimed that this heavily-Sanskritized Bengali was "virtually a foreign language" to Bengali Muslims and had no relation to "commonly-used" and "universally-understood" Bengali. It was better to enrich Bengali with Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English vocabulary. *Choltan* had no objection to concepts from Sanskrit literature, "when they serve a particular need," but "we object to making the Bengali language a second edition of Sanskrit."<sup>75</sup> The following month *Choltan* proposed that Bengali could be enriched from Urdu, Arabic and Persian as in the past and also from modern European languages, but "our literature will not be improved by searching out rare, incomprehensible

<sup>74</sup> Sheikh Habibar Rahman Sahityaratna, 'Banga sahitye Islami sabda', *Islam-darsan*, 2nd yr., 8th no.: *Agrahayan*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

<sup>75</sup> 'Bangala bhashar gati', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 7th no.: 7th *Asarh*, 1330 B. S. 22nd June, 1923

Sanskrit words and forcibly inserting them in Bengali literature.”<sup>76</sup> Referring to this issue once more *Choltan* argued in August of that year that Arabic was a “heroic language” and Persian “exquisitely sweet, yet...very profound”. Muslim imitators of Tagore were rendering Bengali “sickly and enfeebled...To make Bengali strong, firm and heroic we must, teach it to parade and maneuver on the field of battle astride a spirited Arabian stallion, bearing an unsheathed scimitar.”<sup>77</sup>

In December that year (1923) *Choltan* maintained, “It is a disgrace to Islam and to the Muslim nation to write or speak words expressing idolatry.”<sup>78</sup> And in 1926 *Raosan hedayet*, reacting strongly to Hindu religious terminology dogmatically maintained that it was “preferable to use *dobhasi*... rather than Hinduised Bengali. No article containing such non-Islamic words as *swarga*, *naraka*, *yuga*...will be published (in *Raosan hedayet*)...The main purpose of *Raosan hedayet* is to teach Islam...Infidel speech ought not to be published.”<sup>79</sup>

Condemning this attitude, *Sahityik* in 1927 replied: “There seems to be a kind of fanaticism...tied up with this use of Arabic or Urdu words in place of Bengali... I greatly dislike this latent sympathy for other languages and these feelings of contempt and ignorant dislike of our own Bengali language...We have been held back in the field of education for half a century already by religious fanaticism. I only hope that this infatuation with *Musalmani* Bengali will not make us lose the path altogether.”<sup>80</sup>

Whilst desiring moderation from their own side, and prepared to be conciliatory towards the Hindu predilection for Sanskrit, moderate

<sup>76</sup> Editor, ‘Bangala sahitya o Hindu-Mochalman’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 9th no.: 21st *Asarh*, 1330 B I.: 6th July, 1923

<sup>77</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Sahityer prabhab o prerana’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 13th no.: 25th *Sraban*, 1330 B. S.; 10th August, 1923

<sup>78</sup> Abdus Sattar Choudhury, ‘Jatiya bhasha o *Choltan*,’ *Choltan*, 8th yr., 31st no.: 5th *Paus*, 1330 B. S. 21st December, 1923.

<sup>79</sup> Editor, ‘Lekhak lekhikaganer prati’, *Raosan hedayet*, 2nd yr., 9th no.: *Asarh*, 1333 B. S. (1926)

<sup>80</sup> Mohammad Golam Maola, ‘Bangala sahitya o Musalman’ *Sahityik*, 1st yr., 11th no.: *Aswin*, 1334 B. S. (1927)

Bengali Muslims, nevertheless, desired an answering moderation in the Hindu camp. *Choltan* in 1923 wrote: "Probably no orthodox Hindu has a greater love and affection for Sanskrit than we have. Sanskrit is the world's most ancient language, the language of the world's most ancient text, the Vedas. It has a very close affinity with Arabic: the grammatical system of both languages rests upon the same rules and principles. We greatly encourage Muslims to learn Sanskrit. The Hindu philosophic texts are unique-in order to know and understand them and in order to acquire knowledge about education and civilization in those ancient times, it is essential to know Sanskrit. The monism which is the very foundation of Islam is incorporated in the *Vedas* – to appreciate this and thereby to establish the truth of Islam a knowledge of Sanskrit is absolutely essential. But we ought not to drag Sanskrit from its grave merely because it was an excellent language and we ought not to set it upon the seat of the living language of a living people. And we ought not to search the burning grounds for charred bones in order to enrich Bengali literature with them. No impartial man of letters and no well-wisher of the Bengali language could wish it."<sup>81</sup>

Towards the end of our period, however, *Moyajjin*, in 1929 published an 'Address' which condemned extremism in both camps: "To one class of people Bengali means Sanskrit without the *Anuswara* and *Visarga*. Fortunately for Bengali that class has now almost disappeared. At the other extreme there is another group who understand by Bengali a wonderful mixture of Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Bengali...It is absolutely necessary for us to save the Bengali language from both these groups. Only then can Bengali survive."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Editor, 'Bangala sahitya o Hindu-Mochalman', *op. cit.* *Choltan* vacillated in regard to language. At times it praised Arabic as '~ heroic language' and Persian as 'exquisitely sweet': and above it eulogized Sanskrit. *Choltan* was a vigorous Muslim national organ. Its praise of Arabic and Persian stemmed from this. It was also a champion of Congress and Hindu-Muslim political co-operation. Hence its conciliatory attitude towards Sanskrit, which other Muslim journals would have tended to dismiss as 'idolatrous'.

<sup>82</sup> Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah, 'Abhibhashan', *Moyajjin*, 2nd yr., 1st 8: 2nd no.: *Kartik and Agrahayan*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

## (ii) Script

## (a) A PROPOSAL TO WRITE BENGALI IN THE ARABIC SCRIPT

In 1900 Nur-al-Iman had promised to remedy the difficulties of reflecting 'exact pronunciation' of some Islamic words in Bengali.<sup>83</sup> In 1915 *Al-Eslam* proposed that if Bengali were "stylishly written" in the Arabic script, it would facilitate the mutual learning of Muslim languages and growth of "intimacy and affection amongst the people of Asia." Since Punjabi Muslims, who were numerically less than Bengali Muslims, could keep intact their Urdu in its Arabic script and with its Perso-Arabic vocabulary, then it was inconceivable that Bengali Muslims, who in some areas formed 80% of the population and possessed "such famous Muslim places as Islamabad, Sylhet, Dacca and Murshidabad," would not be able to introduce the Arabic script for Bengali.<sup>84</sup>

Commenting on this article, in 1921 *Islam-darsan* condemned as impracticable the proposal made in the interests of worldwide Islamic unity to write "the Bengali language, in the Arabic script rather than in the Hindu script."<sup>85</sup> *Choltan* however, in 1923 disagreed and regarded it as disrespectful to distort Muslim vocabulary by writing it in anything but the Arabic script.<sup>86</sup>

In 1930 an article in *Masik Mohammadi* again alluded to this question, bringing out a latent political significance. *Masik Mohammadi* traced the backwardness of Muslims, in comparison to Hindus, in literature and education to "a single stroke of an English pen" by which in 1837 the Persian language was replaced by English. *Masik Mohammadi* argued that the British had "tried to foster Hindu society at the expense of the Muslims... Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar took this opportunity to introduce the *Devanagari* script in place of Arabic and to establish idolatrous Hindu ideals in Bengali literature. The inhabitants of a country may

<sup>83</sup> Editor, 'Bhasha samvande Nur-al-Imaner kaifiyat', *Nur-al-Iman*, 1st yr., 2nd no.: *Sraban*, 1307 B. S. (1900)

<sup>84</sup> Khademol Ensan, 'Bangalir matribhasha', '*Al-Eslam*, 1st yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1322 B. S. (1915)

<sup>85</sup> Sheikh Habibar Rahman Sahityaratna, *op. cit.*

<sup>86</sup> Abdus Sattar Choudhury, *op. cit.*

regain their political independence...but once a nation has lost its cultural individuality there is no hope of its survival. In order to save Muslim Bengal it is necessary to save it via a revival of the Arabic script and Islamic culture. The Irish nation regained its political independence by reviving the Gaelic language and Gaelic culture. The Muslims of Bengal have, by accepting the *Devanagari* script, become separated from Muslim culture throughout the world. This can be called cultural isolation.”<sup>87</sup> The assumption that Bengali was, prior to *Vidyasagar*, written in the Arabic script is false,<sup>88</sup> as also is the assumption that immediately after Plassey the British (East India Company) adopted an anti-Muslim policy.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, this article is important: it is concerned only partly with script, but mainly with independence and the importance of retaining cultural individuality for political reasons. There are strong feelings of Britain having deliberately harmed Bengali Muslims in the interests of Hindus. These feelings may have been genuine in certain quarters of Bengali Muslim society. The mention of Ireland and of cultural revival being linked to the gaining of political independence is also important. For it shows how some Muslims were studying parallel cases in contemporary history and modelling their behaviour on that of other nations whose tactics had succeeded.

#### (b) SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION

Between 1921 and 1930 several articles appeared on the spelling ‘(i. e. transliteration and/or phonetic transcription) of Perso-Arabic words in Bengali. In 1921 *Islam-darsan* complained of the way Hindu authors “distorted Muslim names and words...(e. g.) *Namaz* as *Nemaj*, *Hadith* as *Hadis*, *Paygambar* as *Pyagambar*, *Fatema* as *Fatima*, *Aorangzeb* as *Ourangib*, *Shahjahan* as *Sajihan*, etc...” Apparently Muslims had on numerous occasions pointed out to Hindus errors of this kind but no notice had been taken. “One, therefore,

<sup>87</sup> Mohammad Ahab Choudhury Bidyabinode B. A., ‘Kalcharer larai’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr., 12th no.: Aswin, 133? B. S. (1930)

<sup>88</sup> A few mediaeval Bengali works were, however, transcribed in the Arabic script: For details see Munshi Abdul Karim Sahityabisharad, *Puthi-parichiti* 1958, p.169

<sup>89</sup> See W. W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 165

feels inclined to ask, whether this is due to ignorance or deliberate intention.”<sup>90</sup>

*Choltan* on the same theme in 1923 alleged that highly-educated Muslims with B. A.s, M. A.s, and B. L.s were equally guilty of such oppression to “their national vocabulary”.<sup>91</sup> It then commented on mispronunciations resulting from the tendency to write dental Sa for Arabic and Persian *Sin*. Continuing on the same theme the following year *Choltan* proposed to obviate this mispronunciation of Perso-Arabic words by transcribing the dental S” in Arabic as *Chha* in Bengali, since *Chha* in Bengali is “throughout almost the whole of Bengal...like the English ‘S’”.<sup>92</sup> The editor of *Masik Mohammadi* in 1930 ridiculed this tendency, however, citing the example *Chhahar Kalikata* (for *Sahar Kalikata* i. e. the city of Calcutta), arguing that in their “enthusiasm of their new-fangled opinions they (the ‘newly initiated authors’) do not remember that in the original Arabic and Persian the word *Sahar* is written with *Shin*.”<sup>93</sup>

This attempt to reflect faithfully in Bengali the pronunciation and spelling of original Persian and Arabic words may have seemed ridiculous to the editor of *Masik Mohammadi*, but it was precisely the kind of thing that Hindu purists had been doing during the nineteenth century in Sanskritizing Bengali spelling.

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<sup>90</sup> Editor, ‘Sahitye svecchachar’, *Islam-darsan*, 2nd yr., 4th no.: *Sraban*, 1328 B. S. (1921)

<sup>91</sup> Editor, ‘Arabi o Farachhi sabder Bangala banan’, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 6th no.: 32nd *Jyaishta*, 1330 B. S.: 15th June, 1923

<sup>92</sup> Editorial comment, *Choltan*, 8th yr., 43rd no.: 1st *Chaitra*, 1330 B. S., 14th March, 1924

<sup>93</sup> Editor, ‘Banan bibhrat’ *Masik Mohammadi*, 3rd yr., 10th no.: *Sraban*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

## CHAPTER VIII SOCIETY

In the first six chapters of this book, Bengali Muslim society was seen to operate more or less in concert, due to a unity imposed upon it partly by external Hindu pressures, and partly by the coercion of its own orthodox religious leaders, who were determined to safeguard what they conceived to be Islam. Nevertheless, as we have seen, a more moderate wing of somewhat secular sentiments had begun to emerge. Then in the last chapter we saw Bengali Muslim society divided not merely by degrees of orthodoxy, but also by differences of culture, class and language: the upper-class minority being Urdu-speakers and the remainder Bengali. The present chapter further explores the fissiparous tendencies and also the respective reaction of traditionalists and modernists towards the position of women.

### I

#### FISSIPAROUS TENDENCIES

##### (i) Aristocrat and commoner<sup>1</sup>

Two journals *Islam-pracharak*, and *Al-Eslam*, tended at first to see the problem of social division in Bengali Muslim society between aristocrat and commoner in Hindu terms. In the mid-nineteenth century Hindus had campaigned against the evil effects of *Kaulinya*<sup>2</sup> (nobility of birth) in their society. *Islam-pracharak* saw

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<sup>1</sup> There are two major social divisions in Bengali Muslim society: *Ashraf* and *Atraf*. The former, descendants of Muslim immigrants, constitutes the aristocracy. The latter, low-caste indigenous converts constitute the commoners. See also Sir Herbert Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 122

<sup>2</sup> *Kaulinya* or 'Kulinism' was instituted amongst *Rarhi* and *Varendra* Brahmins by King Vallal Sen in the twelfth century. By the nineteenth century, however, it had degenerated into an oppressive form of polygamy.



the *Sharifs* (i. e. aristocrats) of Muslim Bengal as another manifestation of this *Kaulinya* and drew attention to the way in which, in the district of Barisal in East Bengal, Muslim aristocrats “when accepting a bride from a peasant family, or when giving in marriage one of their daughters to a lower class family (demanded) a ‘marriage-settlement’.” “Trading such as this”, declared *Islam-pracharak*, “is diametrically opposed to Islam.”<sup>3</sup>

*Al-Eslam* (in 1919) inveighed against “the sense of Brahminhood amongst high-born Muslims”, who regarded themselves as differing in every respect from commoners, as if they were a completely different species. *Al-Eslam* condemned their attempt to monopolise culture and education, denying such things to commoners “for fear that they may claim aristocratic status.”<sup>4</sup>

The same year *Al-Eslam* again attacked the arrogance of aristocrats in Chittagong, whose sense of superiority gave rise to disputes over seating arrangements at weddings. These disputes sometimes lasted for one or two days and occasionally prevented “the meal and even the marriage from taking place.” In parts of Murshidabad, Birbhum and Burdwan, aristocrats regarded “commoners as even less than dogs and jackals.” *Al-Eslam* roundly condemned such arrogance.<sup>5</sup>

Four years later in 1923 *Samyabadi* put forward a re-interpretation of aristocracy claiming that it derived not from birth or hereditary titles, but “from religious faith, knowledge and culture...Aristocrats without religion and culture are, as it were, a disgrace and constitute the trash of society...The blessings of God will descend from Heaven only when aristocrats and commoners, hunters, fishermen, weavers, oilmen, *Sheikhs* and *Syeds*<sup>6</sup> feel

<sup>3</sup> Editor, ‘Samaj kalima’, *Islam-pracharak*, 2nd yr., 2nd no.; *Jyaistha*, 1299 B. S. (1892)

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Mayjar Rahman, ‘Samaj chitra’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 5th no.; *Bhadra*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>5</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, ‘Samaj sanskar’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>6</sup> *Skeikhs* and *Syeds* constitute the top hereditary groupings in Bengali Muslim society.

themselves to be united in common brotherhood by religion and knowledge.”<sup>7</sup>

*Saogat* in 1928 openly attacked the *Ashrafs* as a source of social disunity. Condemning them as social parasites, who “regard working class people with contempt, because, instead of being social parasites, they feed and clothe themselves and their families on their own earnings. The ‘*Ashrafs*’ in our country think it beneath them to work for a living.”<sup>8</sup> *Saogat*, also condemned aristocrats for non-Islamic practices.

In the following year *Saogat* continued its attack presenting a re-definition of aristocracy in favour of the educated, asking “in what sense are...intelligent, educated, religious and cultured people from Muslim families born in Bengal inferior to the so-called aristocracy, which came here from abroad and is illiterate, uncultured and lacking in intellect?” *Saogat* further stated, “to me an ‘*Ashraf*’ means a person of good taste and religious faith, who, having savoured culture, disseminates it generously to others: all the rest are ‘*Atrafs*’.”<sup>9</sup>

Underlying each of these comments on aristocracy was the oft-repeated fear of Muslim society degenerating into two irrevocably-divided groups like the Hindus, severed by their concept of touchability, based on the impossibility of commensality and inter-marriage. Most far-sighted Muslims appear to have been determined to evade these twin pitfalls. The arrogance of the *Ashraf* seems, however, to have presented a perpetual danger. There were other dangers too, though.

(ii) The high-born and the low: the need for social integration

It would seem that in Nadiya and the Twenty-Four Parganas of Central Bengal low-caste Hindu converts to Islam failed to gain full acceptance in Muslim society and were even debarred from attending mass prayers. In North Bengal and Assam other occupational groups,

<sup>7</sup> Maolvi Shafiuddin Ahmad, ‘Abhijatya gaurab’, *Sanayabadi*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Magh*, 1329 B. S. (1923)

<sup>8</sup> A. M. Torab Ali, ‘*Ashraf-Atraf*’, *Saogat*, 6th yr., 1st no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>9</sup> Syed Emdad Ali, ‘*Ashraf-Atraf*’, *Saogat*, 7th yr., 5th no.; *Paus*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

the *Badiyas*, *Nikaris* and *Matiyas* suffered the same fate.<sup>10</sup> The *Abdals* and *Sandars* were similarly discriminated against. Despite doing “almost everything in accordance with the *Quran* and *Hadith*” the *Abdals* were forbidden to draw water from wells, and were treated almost like the *Pariyas* of Madras. The *Ostas* suffered similar discrimination, being debarred “from dining or mixing socially with our society”, because of their profession (circumcision).<sup>11</sup> A trading community, the *Sandars* also suffered similar social rejection, because of failing to observe *pardah*.<sup>12</sup> Making a spirited plea on their behalf, *Samyabadi* pointed out the danger of such discrimination: unless Muslim society took steps to assimilate these despised, occupational classes, they might be re converted to Hinduism, “like the *Malkan* Rajputs, (who) became Hindu via the *Arya Samaj*.”<sup>13</sup>

### (iii) The Western-Educated

The western-educated came in for little praise and much abuse. *Nur-al-Iman* first mentioned them in 1900 as playing a valuable social role as the spokesman for Muslim society in official circles; – “If government officials from abroad, who speak a different language and believe in a different religion, suddenly and unwittingly attempt to harm Muslims by introducing prejudicial legislation, then it is these people who put those officials right, and by averting trouble earn the thanks of both king and subject. It is these people who organise and guide the various committees and associations which benefit our country-men...it was they who first realised that all the evils of the Muslim community could automatically be removed, provided Muslims could achieve educational progress.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Maolvi Mohammad Jasmatullah, ‘Abdal o Osta srenir katha’, *Samyabadi*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Sraban*, 1330 B. S. (1923)

<sup>12</sup> Maolvi Ahsanullah, ‘Sandarder prati abichar’, *Samyabadi*, 1st yr., 4th no.; *Kartik*, 1330 B. S. (1923)

<sup>13</sup> Maolvi Mohammad Jasmatullah, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Editor, ‘Hemayete Eslam’, *Nur-al-Iman*, 1st yr., 2nd no.; *Sraban*., 1307 B. S. (1900)

This panegyric had a sting in its tail, for it ended with a prayer that “they may be free from all vices”. Presumably this prayer failed, for from then on the Muslim press had nothing but abuse for the western-educated class. *Naba Nur* in 1903 pointed out that educated Muslims in high official positions squandered all their earnings on foreign ostentation: “Dawson’s shoes and Laidlaw’s bodices, jackets and golden jewellery... No other community exhibits such selfish, ungrateful, self-indulgent spend-thrifts.” Apparently many such Muslims had achieved their advancement on grants from Haji Muhammad Muhsin (1732-1812), but none of them now seemed eager to repay this debt by contributing towards the education of other poor Muslim students. “O you ungrateful Muslim magistrates and lawyers,” *Naba Nur* cried, “do you not realise the extent of your debt and are you not prepared to repay it?”<sup>15</sup>

A year later *Kohinur* lambasted the western-educated for being “half Hindu and half European”, crying, “you are Muslims. Why do you dress up in this odd attire, when you possess such beautiful clothes of your own?”<sup>16</sup> *Islam-pracharak* continued the attack, accusing the western-educated of ignorance of their religion, of a failure to perform *Namaz* and *Roza*, of being unable to speak Urdu<sup>17</sup> and of disdaining to listen to the advice of *Maolvis* “out of conceit and for fear of slighting their new science.” Indeed, the western-educated were so backward in religious instruction that even in their presence the *Khutba* (book of sermon) often had to be read by less well-educated individuals.<sup>18</sup>

During the next eighteen years this theme of the aping of western dress and the semi-atheism of the western-educated was to gain more and more momentum. It appeared in *Islam-pracharak* in January,

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<sup>15</sup> Aziz Meser, ‘Siksita Musalmaner phato’, *Naba Nur*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

<sup>16</sup> Sheikh Fazlal Karim, ‘Dharmmahinata o samaj sanskar ‘ Kohinur, 5th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

<sup>17</sup> Until recently the Bengali Muslim elite was supposed to converse in Urdu. See chapter on Language.

<sup>18</sup> Aftabuddin Ahmad, ‘Bangiya Musalmaner siksa,’ *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1311 B. S. (1904)

1908 (*Magh*, 1314 B. S.), in *Al-Eslam* in June, 1919 (*Asarh*, 1326 B. S.) and again in January, 1920 (*Magh*, 1326 B. S.), in *Islam-darsan* in May, 1920 (*Jyaistha*, 1327 B. S.), in *Al-Eslam* once more in July, 1920 (*Sraban*, 1327 B. S.), in *Choltan* in April, 1924 (*Chaitra*, 1330 B. S.), once more in *Islam-darsan* in September, 1925 (*Aswin*, 1332 B. S.), and in *Moslem darpan* in January, 1926. The western-educated were criticised for: shaving the face as “smooth as a woman’s”; dressing the hair in the “*Oriya* fashion”; being bare-headed instead of wearing the cap; and abandoning ‘Muslim dress’. *Islam-pracharak* put forward an interesting argument, explaining why the semi-educated aped Hindus. Through seeing Hindus so advanced economically, professionally and culturally, and so respected in society, whilst Muslims were confined mainly to menial employment, the semi-educated concluded, “Hindus are the bosses and we are the servants...the Hindus are advanced...We are born to execute their orders...and put up with their high-handedness...”<sup>19</sup>

*Islam-pracharak* continued, “In these circumstances they feel compelled to regard Hindus as cultured, well-bred and advanced. In consequence they easily assume the Hindu style of dress. Muslims of this type long to become *babus* by imitating Hindu *babus*... But the Hindu *babus* continue to regard them with contempt – for contact with them spoils the water in the *babu’s hookahs* and contact with *Neres* desecrates their bodies and bedding...Many Muslims cut off their beards in the hope of becoming ‘*bhadra lok*’ (gentlefolk) and grow long moustaches. To see them it is difficult to tell that they are Muslim...Even in their speech mannerisms they express the same Hinduisation and they deliberately try to conceal the fact that they are Muslim. They long to be able to get a little space on the corner of the *babu’s* carpet and think themselves lucky to be able to attend the *babu’s* musical evenings... Many of them screw up their noses at the mention of eating beef and pull faces when they hear of widow-remarriage. Many of them do not hesitate even to mock religious Muslims dressed in *lungis* as *Mullaji* or *Kath Mulla*. Many of these

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<sup>19</sup> Ebne Ma’az, ‘Bhai Musalman jaga’, *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 8th no.; *Magh*, 1314 B. S. (1908)

rascals ridicule the *Ulema* in turbans as large basket-carrying porters...This is the picture of our educated people.”

A satirical picture of the western-educated, strongly reminiscent of the *babu* theme in mid-nineteenth century Hindu Bengali literature, was presented by Mohammad Shahidullah in *Al-Eslam*. “How deeply regrettable! Our educated young men seem to regard religion as completely unnecessary. Look at that young gentleman; his face is clean-shaven and smooth as a woman’s; he is wearing on his nose a pair of unnecessary artificial eyes; his hair is dressed in the Oriya fashion; and he is wearing a coat and *dhuti* in the Bengali Hindu manner. Can you recognise what he is? Please do not ask him his name. That would embarrass him exceedingly. Only by enquiring into his parentage can you identify him as a Muslim... Alas! Are such young men the basis of our future hopes and aspirations? ...What can you expect to find inside him when his outside is so non-Muslim?”<sup>20</sup>

Even the eating habits and recreations of the western-educated were attacked. “Educated society, when dining, has, in imitation of the English adopted knives, forks and spoons instead of hands, and tables and chairs instead of *faras*, and the smoking of cigars and cigarettes instead of *hookahs* and tobacco.”<sup>21</sup>

According to *Islam-darsan*, not only were educated Muslim males dressing up “like any Hindu Ram, Shyam, Jadu or Madhu,” but also Muslim girls of good family were rejecting traditional Muslim dress in favour of “fine, semitransparent saris from Farasdanga.” They were modelling themselves apparently upon Hindu novel-heroines “Ashalata, Premlata, Anupama and Nirupama. But alas!... they have managed only to assume the clothing, and failed to absorb anything more from these models.”<sup>22</sup>

One of the main points of contention seems to have been the cap. *Choltan* averred that the cap was obligatory on virtually all

<sup>20</sup> Mohammad Shahidullah, ‘Abhibhashan’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 3rd no.; *Asarh*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>21</sup> Farrokh Ahmad Nejpuri, ‘Sahityer gati’, *Al-Eslam*, 6th yr., 4th no.; *Sraban*, 1327 B. S. (1920)

<sup>22</sup> Eshak Mian, ‘Moselman chatrer Hindu bhab’, *Islam-darsan*, 5th yr., 1st no.; *Aswin*, 1332 B. S. (1925)

occasions; "Indeed, even when going to the lavatory",<sup>23</sup> and in another article that "The newly-educated have become the arch enemies of the cap... Everywhere the *dhuti* has ousted *achkan*, *pajama* and *lungi* and the plight of the cap does not bear thinking of."<sup>24</sup> *Choltan* suggested that it was time Muslim religious teachers exerted their moral influence in a holy campaign "to re-introduce into society our cap and national costume."<sup>25</sup>

By January, 1926, however, the position remained unchanged. Muslim young men in general were adopting the fashions of their Hindu fellow-students, abandoning moustaches and beards, wearing fine *dhutis* and *panjabis* and creating "in sophisticated male society the illusion of being women", whilst the highly-educated were dressing like Europeans "in hats, coats and neckties".<sup>26</sup>

Obviously highly-educated and semi-educated Muslims had become a source of intense irritation to orthodox Muslims. "... the fantastic appearance of our semi-educated, slightly-educated and boys still at school makes our readers hang their heads in shame. Furthermore, these cultured people (obviously modern) ridicule *Sufis*, *Mullas* and *Musullis* who sport long beards without moustaches and do not exhibit the now fashionable *dhuti*."<sup>27</sup>

This discussion of the western-educated in the Muslim Bengali press was entirely one-sided. It presented merely the orthodox point of view. Orthodox Muslims clearly held in their mind's eye a picture of the ideal Muslim: whose face bore no moustache but a beard of a specified length; whose hair was dressed in traditional Muslim fashion; and who wore the Muslim dress introduced into Bengal by the Turks, Pathans and Mughals. The orthodox saw no reason why a

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<sup>23</sup> Mohammad Shamuazzaman Islamabadi, 'Banglar Mochalman', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 8th no.; 14th *Asarh*, 1330 B. S., 29th June, 1923

<sup>24</sup> It may be pointed out that *dhuti* is primarily Hindu dress and *achkan*, *pajama* and *lungi* are claimed to be Muslim dress.

<sup>25</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya poshak', *Choltan*, 8th yr., 46th no.; 22nd *Chaitra*, 1330 B. S.; 4th April, 1924

<sup>26</sup> Mohammad Iliyas, 'Bangali Musalman', *Moslem darpan*, 2nd yr., 1st no.; January, 1926

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

man educated in English should not remain Muslim in every other respect: "Is the aim of the education of our English-knowing brethren mere slavery, mere boot licking, mere flattery? ... No, never. A person, despite English education, can become religious, patriotic, moral and independent-minded. The examples being such people as the great Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and the late Gokhale. But why are such examples missing from the present-day Muslim, community?"<sup>28</sup>

## II

### THE POSITION OF WOMEN

#### (e) Female emancipation

The position of women was first raised by Pracharak in January, 1900 (*Magh*, 1306 B. S.), when it pleaded for their emancipation on the grounds that "the cause of Islam's present plight is the neglect and contempt we show to our womenfolk in contravention of scriptural edicts."<sup>29</sup>

The issue continued to be aired with increasing clamour during the next three decades in such journals as *Naba Nur*, *Kohinur*, *Al-Eslam*, *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika*, *Moslem Bharat*, *Sahachar*, *Samyabadi*, *Nari-sakti*, *Sikha*, *Saogat*, *Moyajjin*, *Masik Mohammadi* etc. In 1928 *Moyajjin* protested violently against the treatment of women, claiming "the chains of subjection and disgrace", in which womenfolk were kept, were the direct opposite of the "freedom and dignity" granted them by the Islamic religion. "The way that a woman is given in marriage in Bengali Muslim society is exactly the same as that in which a domestic pet taken to market with a rope round its neck." *Moyajjin* then went on to censure the despotism, "injustice" and brutality characterising marriage in

<sup>28</sup> M. A. Wahed, 'Moslem samajer laksa bhrastata', *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 10th no.; *Magh*, 1326 B, S. (1920)

<sup>29</sup> S. O. Ali, 'Ramani', Pracharak, *Magh*, 1306 B. S. (1900)



Muslim society. Marriages were arranged by the guardian, without consulting the bride, and without regard for her future happiness.<sup>30</sup>

The issue of female emancipation was pursued the following year (in 1929) by *Saogat*, which argued that chastity, and freedom were not incompatible: "What value has the 'word chaste' (*Sati*) when applied to a woman confined... behind bolted doors and windows?... Muslim scriptures do not entitle us to keep women in cages... Women ought to enjoy the freedom to become educated, attain their rights and manage their own affairs, by judging for themselves what is good or bad."<sup>31</sup>

In that same issue of *Saogat*, Mrs. M. Rahman spiritedly demanded "the rights due to us according to our religion... Islam did not specify that we should be confined within prison walls, or should remain household furnishings like lifeless dolls. It ordained that we had a clear duty to acquire knowledge. We are partners in Islam, auxiliaries on the field of battle... What little justice do we get by Islamic law? To what other use are we able to put the *Kabin* (Marriage deed), except perhaps, if need be, to light the stove with it?"<sup>32</sup>

Another woman, Ayesha Ahmad, in that same issue of *Saogat* pleaded for emancipation. Tired of being "helpless" "like lifeless dolls and dependent on others", she desired like Hindu women to climb "the ladder of advancement" blaming *purdah* for the backwardness of Muslim women. She declared, "Chastity is an inner thing and its preservation requires mental faculties, a sense of duty and the power to discriminate between good and bad. These faculties can be fully developed only through education." She then alleged that Muslim social practices, especially child marriage and premature motherhood, impeded the development of women's potentialities. Both practices needed banning as soon as possible. She saw no

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<sup>30</sup> 'Banga Moslem samaje mahila jiban', Moyajjin, 1st yr., 2nd no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>31</sup> 'Muslim narir mulya', *Saogat*, 7th yr., 1st no.; *Bhadra*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

<sup>32</sup> Mrs. M. Rahman, 'Parda banam prabanchana', *ibid*.

indignity in ladies earning a genteel living independently, and free from being married off “to unworthy or undesirable grooms”<sup>33</sup>

(ii) Early marriage

One of the “chief impediments to the emancipation and education of women” was “early marriage”. This issue was raised by *Al-Eslam* in 1917. It argued that early marriage was “more harmful to girls” than to boys; for it deprived them “of the freedom and joy natural to childhood” and impeded their development. Furthermore, it disrupted their studies and exposed them to premature pregnancy; such pregnancies resulted in weak children and racial decline. Furthermore, upon attaining maturity-married couples often discovered they were incompatible.<sup>34</sup>

Two years later *Al-Eslam* again attacked early marriage on both “medical and economic grounds”, claiming boys ought not to marry till economically mature.<sup>35</sup> A month later it claimed, “the most scientifically-approved method of marriage is for the bride and groom to select each other upon attaining maturity.” This method accorded with Islamic principles. Marriage disrupted studies and was, therefore, inadvisable “for young men...before the age of 23 or 24 and for girls before 14 or 15.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1928 a draft bill to determine the age of marriage was under discussion in the Indian Legislature. The bill said, it would be a punishable offence to give in marriage boys under 18 years of age and girls under 14. This was seen by *Masik Mohammadi* to accord with Islamic principles: the *Ijab-Kabul* implied that both bride and groom were mature; otherwise “according to *Sariyat* law, the consent of an immature boy or girl is invalid.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ayesha Ahmad, ‘Muslim samaje unnatir antaray’, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Nari jatir durgati’, *Al-Eslam*, 3rd yr., 5th no.; *Bhadra*, 1324 B. S. (1917)

<sup>35</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, ‘Samaj sanskar’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 6th no.; *Aswin*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>36</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, ‘Bibaha niti’, *Al-Eslam*, 5th yr., 7th no., *Kartik*, 1326 B. S. (1919)

<sup>37</sup> Editor, ‘Bibaher bayas nirdharan’, *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 7th no.; *Baisakh*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

*Moyajjin*, however, took a contrary view: "If this draft bill is passed, the religions and people of this country will be seriously harmed." It, therefore, praised Khan Bahadur Maolvi Kajemuddin Sahib, an influential zemindar of Baliyadi, Dacca for protesting against it. *Moyajjin* felt that the government had "arbitrarily included in its legal provisions only the few "*Sariyat* principles...that it thought best." *Moyajjin* contended that "all the provisions of the *Sariyat*" should be included.<sup>38</sup>

Commenting upon the passage of this Act (The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 popularly called the *Sarda Act*) the following year, *Moyajjin* in an editorial predicted that "from the very moment that this law comes into effect, "society will be plagued with indescribably horrid immoral practices." It then called upon Muslims to campaign to get the Act rescinded: "It is now our social duty to hold meetings everywhere, and by protesting against this law to bring all powers together to annul it."<sup>39</sup>

Such a campaign was, indeed, launched.<sup>40</sup> Three months later in *Sariyate Eslam* a ballad appeared condemning the Act:

"We will never obey the Act of Sarda,  
 If it comes into effect immorality will increase,  
 Sin will spread, and there will be no  
respectability left,  
 We will never obey the Act of Sarda.  
 ... ..  
 We humbly entreat to the Governor General  
 To rescind this Act without delay  
 We do not want the Act of Sarda."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Editor, 'Bibaha ain sanskar', *Moyajjin* 1st yr., 2nd no.; *Sraban*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>39</sup> Editorial comment, *Moyajjin*, 1st and 2nd nos.; *Kartik and Agrahayan*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

<sup>40</sup> Orthodox *Maolanas* (and conservative Hindus) launched a large-scale campaign against the Act. They demanded that Muslims be excluded from the Act's jurisdiction, because Islamic scriptures did not restrict early marriage. Even great political leaders like Maolana Mohammad Ali prophesied, the Act would rouse 70 million Muslims to open revolt: See M. Mujeeb, op- cit. p. 539

Thus over this issue two diametrically-opposed viewpoints emerged: one, that of the humanitarians, who based their case on psychological and genetic criteria, though, generally, also claiming scriptural support; and two, the orthodox viewpoint, which stressed the moral aspect, fearing that post-pubic marriage would leave a loophole for fornication.

### (iii) Widow re-marriage

In 1898 *Kohinur* deplored the fact that most Muslims in North India, west of Calcutta both within Bengal and without, “do not practice widow re-marriage”. It claimed that the Prophet Mohammad by personal example had indicated the path in this respect and urged the Ulema to do all in their power to counter this deep-rooted aversion to widow re-marriage, which, it said, derived from Hindu influence.<sup>42</sup>

### (iv) Marriage abuses: ill-treatment of wives

#### (a) POLYGAMY

In 1903 *Islam-pracharak* attacked polygamy as giving rise to intolerable distress to ladies of good family and leading to suicide by “poison, hanging, opium or other means.” Apparently the combination of “tyrannical husbands” and “disgraceful, fiendish co-wives” proved too much for them. *Islam-pracharak* no longer saw any political or religious justification for polygamy: it had apparently first started as a means of increasing Muslim power and spreading Islam; but “at present Muslims practice polygamy solely to serve their passions”. The increased birth-rate, resulting from it, was now impoverishing Muslims and keeping them “uneducated and uncultured”. Polygamy ought, therefore, to be abolished.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Dewan Shamsuddin Ahmad Nitpuri, ‘Sardar Sarda ain’, *Sariyate Eslam*, 5th yr., 2nd no.; *Falgun*, 1336 B. S. (1930)

<sup>42</sup> Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad, ‘Muslim samaj sanskar’, *Kohinur*, 1st yr., 1st no.; *Asarh*, 1305 B. S. (1898)

<sup>43</sup> Sheikh Jamiruddin, ‘Musalman samaje stri jatir prati bhishan atyachar’, *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 7th-8th no., *Sraban-Bhadra*, 1310 B. S. (1903)

*Naba Nur* in 1905 alleged that polygamy “was not’ originally ordained by the scriptures”: it had been instituted by priests merely to serve their own economic interests, as also had the practice of keeping bondswomen.<sup>44</sup>

By 126-27 polygamy had fallen into such disrepute that indulgence in it by “aristocratic and semi-aristocratic families” had become the subject of scurrilous newspaper articles and was linked by Sikha with the increasing tendency of profligate Muslims to marry Hindu women of easy virute. “Can such women of easy virtue ever become mothers of strong, intelligent, educated and virtuous children?... (We do not) possess the resources to increase our social burden by importing depraved men and women from outside.”<sup>45</sup>

#### (b) ILL TREATMENT AND DIVORCE

*Al-Eslam* in 1919 alleged that it was common practice for men “to beat or torture their wives simply because there was either too much or too little salt in the curry; indeed, they do not even hesitate to divorce their wives for trivial reasons.”<sup>46</sup> The same theme had been raised about a decade earlier by *Islam-pracharak* which had stated: “Muslims now-a-days regard their wives as part of their immovable property.” They frequently divorced them “in the hope of getting a better-looking one, on whom to satisfy their lowly, animal passions.” This kind of behaviour was “not countenanced by the *Quran, Hadith* and *Fiqh*.”<sup>47</sup>

By 1927 attitudes to divorce and polygamy had presumably so hardened that Masik Mohammadi could describe as “misconceptions” the widespread belief that men had an “unconditional and unregulated right to take more than one wife”, and were “not obliged to observe any rules or regulations regarding

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<sup>44</sup> Maolvi Imdadul Haq, B. A., ‘Bahu bibaha’, *Naba Nur*, 3rd cr., 8th no.; *Agrahayan*, 1312 B. S. (1905)

<sup>45</sup> Anwarul Kadir, Bangali Musalmaner samajik galad’, *Sikha*, 1st yr., *Chaitra*, 1333 B. S. (1927)

<sup>46</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Mohammad K. Chand, ‘Tafak ba Moslem stri barjan’, *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 12th no.

their right to divorce". These misconceptions, *Masik Mohammadi* alleged, were created by "those claiming to monopolize religious affairs." *Masik Mohammadi* suggested that legislation be introduced to regulate marriage laws as in Egypt, and called upon the Muslim League, the *Jamiyat-i-Ulema* and other Muslim organizations to attend to the matter.<sup>48</sup>

### (c) DOWRIES (MAHAR)

In 1919 *Al-Eslam* attributed the ruin of numerous zemindaries and landed estates to excessive demands as *Mahar* from the groom's family and called upon the *Ulema* and *Fazils* to eradicate these evils.<sup>49</sup> The same article condemned ostentatious weddings with "fireworks, singing, dancing, and drum parties". These, too, impoverished the whole of Muslim society and were "forbidden by Islam."

In 1924 *Samyabadi* alleged that the practice of demanding bride or groom-prices had penetrated Muslim society in imitation of Hindus. Efforts had been made by *Ulema* to eradicate it, but without avail. The craze for dowries was also spreading. The moment a man's son got "a little education, or the moment anyone begins to feel...superior in family prestige, he expects the father of his future daughter-in-law to give the boy cash and the girl jewellery and so forth." These practices needed nipping in the bud; otherwise their consequences would be deadly.<sup>50</sup>

### (v) *Purdah*

#### (a) IN FAVOUR

In 1903 *Islam-pracharak* saw *purdah* as safeguarding family honour and ensuring the orderly running of households; as neither a manifestation of "male suspiciousness" nor a source of "mental distress and discomfort to women". On the contrary, *purdah*

<sup>48</sup> Mohammad Akram Khan, 'Eslame narir maryada o adhikar', *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Paus*, 1334 B. S. (1927)

<sup>49</sup> Manirazzaman Islamabadi, op. cit.

<sup>50</sup> Editor, Bibahe barpan, *Samyabadi*, 2nd yr., 4th and 5th nos.; *Asarh o Bhadra*, 1331 B. S. (1924)

enhanced the dignity of women and saved them from rough, out-door work. "To compare this beautiful, praiseworthy system with imprisonment is nothing more than kicking at the head of truth and justice and proving oneself ignorant and insane. All the cries for female emancipation and female education, and all the protests against *pardah* are nothing but the ravings of a lunatic."<sup>51</sup>

Two years later, commenting on the attendance at the Provincial Moslem Education Conference of Mrs. Aziz Sahiba, "a new Muslim convert from Liverpool" and wife of a Lucknow barrister, *Islam-pracharak* sighed, "it would have been better, if she had observed *pardah*."<sup>52</sup>

*Islam-pracharak* was again invoked the issue of *pardah* in an article commenting on the Presidential Address of the Aga Khan (1875-1957) at the Mohammedan Educational Conference of 1903, when he "attacked *pardah* as extremely harmful." "Many of these modern (educated) Muslims", *Islam-pracharak* alleged, wanted "to give Indian Muslim ladies the same freedom as western women to mix with strangers", and regarded *pardah* as an impediment towards "Muslim advancement" and "female education". Reviewing the history of *pardah* from the days of the Prophet, *Islam-pracharak* admitted that the modern system in India was a little more strict than the "simple and liberal" one in the days of Mohammad. Nevertheless, it maintained, "in modern times a somewhat stricter system is undoubtedly required. Because now, owing to the spread of western education, which is atheistic, immoral and irreligious, social ties are gradually slackening." To facilitate female education and enable poor women to earn a living, however, slight modifications did seem indicated.<sup>53</sup> These views were echoed in an editorial in the same issue, with an additional comment that, "Egypt has advanced a little too far in this respect and is now absolutely ruined.

<sup>51</sup> Alauddin Ahmad, 'Islam darsan', *Islam-pracharak*, 5th yr., 3rd-4th no.; *Chaitra-Baisakh*, 1309-10 B. S. (1903)

<sup>52</sup> Editor, 'Jatiya o dharma sangbad', *Islam-pracharak*, 6th yr., 12th no.; *Chaitra*, 1321 B. S. (1905)

<sup>53</sup> Mohammad K. Chand, 'Hejabannesa ba Moslem ramanir parda', *Islam-pracharak*, 8th yr., 8th & 10th nos.

Another noteworthy article appeared in *Islam-darsan* in 1922. Here the author poured scorn on romantic modernists, who desired to translate into reality via such institutions as *Nari Swadhinata Mission* and *Nari Tirtha*<sup>54</sup> the free mixing of the sexes depicted in novelettes. "Can the feeble heart of man remain free from evil thoughts when viewing women?... Lest sin enter the heart through the eyes, and in order that the hearts of men and women might remain pure, it has been arranged that women be kept in *pardah*."<sup>55</sup>

Six years later (1928) *Moyajjin* again defended *pardah*. The newly-educated "strongly influenced by alien sentiments" and "bent on abolishing *pardah*" were misguided. *Pardah* exalted, rather than humiliated, women. Islam had no place for reformers. The respect accorded women under Islam was a mark of advanced civilization. *Moyajjin* wished neither to impede women in "their good and honest endeavours" nor to keep them in "drawing rooms dressed as dolls." The "free mixing of the sexes" was contrary to *pardah*. "It would be wrong to deviate from it before the men of this country become properly educated. Who would be so foolish to let loose ten sheep in front of a tiger?"<sup>56</sup>

#### (b) AGAINST

In 1917 *Al-Eslam*, put forward a proposal for a slight modification of the *pardah* system suggesting that "in each town and village gardens, open spaces or parks be established suitable for women to take the air in." Only women and children were to be admitted and the sole entertainment mentioned was the holding of meetings to "discuss movements for the improvement and welfare of their country, nation, community and religion."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> These movements were initiated in the early twenties by a handful of young Muslim social workers prominent amongst whom was the author Lutfar Rahman, who in 1922 launched *Nari-sakti*, an organ for female emancipation.

<sup>55</sup> Mohammad Golam Hossain, B. A., 'Islamer parda-tattva', *Islam-darsan*, 3rd yr., 2nd no.: *Kartik*, 1329 B. S. (1922)

<sup>56</sup> Shahadat Ali Khan, 'Islame parda-pratha', *Moyajjin* 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Kartik*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>57</sup> Ismail Hossain Siraji, 'Stri Jatir swadhinata', *Al-Eslam*, 2nd yr., 10th no.; *Magh*, 1323 E. S. (1917)



In 1927 *Tablig* suggested that “the present *purdah* system is not approved by Islam.” Implying that its strictness in India was due to imitation of Hindus, it stated that in independent Muslim realms like Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and so forth, the *purdah* system was not so excessive; there ladies were still free to go shopping.<sup>58</sup>

*Masik Mohammadi* the following year “failed to find... any authority for keeping women confined in seclusion... This murderous system is not in vogue anywhere outside India... We no more believe that women’s characters will be ruined the moment they leave seclusion, than we believe that the moment our womenfolk start rushing around the *maidan* and on trains and steamers... Muslims will rise a metre or two higher each day.”<sup>59</sup>

*Saogat* in 1929 published an ‘Address’ which advocated that Bengali Muslims emulate Turkey, where “free access is open to Turkish women ... in commerce and trade, offices, law-courts, schools, colleges and universities.” *Purdah*, it was alleged, was lowering Bengali Muslim vitality. “The abolition of this pernicious system” would be an act of patriotism.<sup>60</sup>

In 1930 *Saogat* again condemned *purdah* on medical grounds citing Dr. Bentley and others who had reported that Muslim women were “dying of consumption at an alarming rate”, the sole cause being lack of fresh air and light. These unhealthy girls naturally bore sickly children and were thus “weakening the whole race.” This “odious” institution, constantly reminded one that “girls have no other life than sex life ... Because of its keeping these ugly customs alive Indian Muslim society seems to be simply a museum of the mediaeval age ... Human intelligence has never created a more harmful institution anywhere.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Maolvi A. Lohani ‘Islame nari’, *Tablig*, 1st yr., 3rd no.; *Sraban*, 1334 B. S. (1927)

<sup>59</sup> Editor, ‘Sangbadpatre mahila chitra’ *Masik Mohammadi*, 1st yr., 8th no.; *Jyaistha*, 1335 B. S. (1928)

<sup>60</sup> Abul Mozaffar Ahmad, B. A., B. C. L., Bar-at-Law. ‘Abhibhashan’, *Saogat*, 6th yr. 10th no.; *Baisakh*, 1336 B. S. (1929)

<sup>61</sup> Khan Bahadur Nasiruddin Ahmad, M. A., B. L. ‘Islam o Musalman’, *Saogat*, 7th yr., 8th no; *Chaitra*, 1336 B. S. (1930)

## (c) SYNTHESIS

In 1929 *Saogat* put forward a re-interpretation of *purdah* stating that Muslim intellectuals were divided over the matter, “both sides ... quoting scriptures to prove their points.” The most important thing, *Saogat* maintained, was the development of human potentialities: “Whatever promotes that development ought to be adopted... When the heart is closed and impure, what point can there be in seclusion. We want *purdah*, not seclusion. We want the kind *purdah*, which develops a woman to the fullest extent and gives her the opportunity and capacity to become perfect.”<sup>62</sup>

*Sariyate Eslam* the following year pursued the same line in desiring *purdah* in accordance with “the *Sariyat*”, but being “against the system of seclusion.” Obedience to the *Sariyat* itself would safeguard women from mixing with strange men.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Editor, ‘Parda banam abarodh’, *Saogat*, 7th yr., 1st no.; *Bhadra*, 1936 B. S. (1929)

<sup>63</sup> Maolvi Mohammad Entajuddin, ‘Nari siksa o swadhinata,’ *Sariyate Eslam*, 5th yr., 9th no.; *Aswin*, 1337 B. S. (1930)

## CONCLUSION

### I

Throughout our period, and indeed since long before it, the attention of Bengali Muslims through their own indigenous educational system, their *Dobhasi* literature, their mosques and pilgrimages and finally through their newly emergent press was focussed on the Muslim world, at the centre of which stood the Sultan of Turkey, who exercised both temporal and spiritual power as Emperor and Caliph. The attitude of Bengali Muslims to other nations was largely determined by the relations of those nations with the Ottoman Empire: Russia was seen as arch villain, because of her constant aggressiveness; France was almost as bad, because of her 'atheistic' influence on Young Turks; and Britain as the best of a bad lot.

Bengali Muslim political attitudes were strongly influenced by events in the Middle East. Towards Britain in the early part of our period Bengali Muslims strove to be loyal, regarding Britain as friendly to the Muslim World in general and beneficial to themselves in particular. The interest of Britons and Muslims were seen as interdependent and mutually advantageous. From 1911 onwards, however, relations with Britain deteriorated, contributory factors being the ending of the partition of Bengal (December, 1911), hostilities against Turkey during the First World War, the signing by Britain of the treaty dismembering the Ottoman Empire, and Britain's mishandling of the Caliphate question. From then onwards anti-British feeling amongst Bengali Muslims generally intensified, and independence finally became their political goal.

Hindu-Muslim relations were not easy. Though some sophisticated Muslims constantly sought compromise in the hope of improving relations, Muslims on the whole were suspicious of Hindu motives. They objected to Hindu interference with their religious observances. They saw no reason to abandon cow-sacrifice. They generally opposed Congress in its early stages from 1885 to 1909, regarding it as anti-British and therefore detrimental to Muslim inter-

ests. They were equally opposed to *Swadesi* agitations. And they regarded Muslim members of Congress and Muslim participants in the *Swadesi* movement as Hindu lackeys. Though deteriorating relations with Britain brought them into political collaboration with Congressite Hindus, their suspicions remained roused. Orthodox religious leaders were quick to denounce as idolatrous Hindu paintings featuring Muslim leaders; to condemn the singing of *Bande Mataram* and the display of pictures of mosques at joint Hindu-Muslim meetings. And after the collapse of the *Khilafat* movement *fatwas* were issued condemning Muslim leaders who had through *Khilafat* collaborated with Congress.

Hindu-Muslim relations had always been bedeviled by a number of persistent irritants: opposition to Muslim religious practices by Hindu zemindars; coercion of Muslims into buying *Swadesi* commodities; the playing of musical instruments before mosques; the maligning of historical Muslim personages in Hindu literature; the application of Muslims of such pejorative epithets as *Mleccha*, *Yavana* and *Nere*; the exclusion from literature of Perso-Arabic diction and forcible intrusion of archaic Sanskrit terminology; the Hindu orientation of the Western educational system introduced by the British; the exploitation of Muslims by Hindu lawyers and money-lenders; and the refusal of Hindus to understand the Bengali Muslim word for water, which was itself of Sanskrit origin, namely *pani*, which Muslims used in preferences to *jal*.

At times of collaboration attempts were made to play down these irritants, but at others they were intensified. The obsession of Hindus with ritual purity was seen as a constant insult to Muslims. The attempts of Hindu extremists to 'purify' Muslims via the *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* movements and thus 're-absorb' them into Hinduism infuriated Muslims. Insults to Islam and the Prophet in Hindu textbooks and in the press were regarded as deliberate provocation-as indeed they must have been-and invariably resulted in protests to the authorities, sometimes in general riots and, on rare occasions, in the assassination of the Hindu perpetrator.

## II

The underlying theme of this work is the gradual clarification of the identity of the Bengali Muslims. The concept of identity has, we think, two aspects, positive and negative. The positive aspects of Bengali Muslim identity were allegedly stressed by orthodox Muslims in their tendency intimately to associate them with the religion, culture and politics of the Middle East, their claimed region of origin. The negative aspects of Bengali Muslim identity were supposedly stressed by orthodox Hindus in their tendency to dissociate Muslims from the culture of India. These complimentary tendencies, both in our view equally unrealistic, nevertheless, had real consequences: the creation, firstly, of Muslim separatism and, ultimately, of the Muslim state of Pakistan.

Muslim separatism has, of course, a long history. Its ultimate basis is religion, which differentiates between Muslim and infidel. Ideally an Islamic state discriminated between Muslims and infidels: in the defence of the State, for example, Muslims being eligible for military service, contributed physically, whereas infidels, being exempt, contributed only financially. Nevertheless, enlightened Muslim rulers such as Akbar (1556-1605) had through tolerance managed to rule successfully large empires where the majority of subjects were infidels.

Bengali converts to Islam tended through ignorance at first to retain non-Muslim attitudes, values and practices, as can be seen in *Dobhasi* literature, where sometimes the names of particular works and the behaviour of particular heroes betray conscious or unconscious Hindu influence. Muslim missionaries strove long to eradicate such vestiges of Hinduism, and continued to do so during our period: witness the controversy in regard to marriage; the quarrelling over seating at weddings; the unwillingness to accept socially people engaged in what Hindus would regard as ritually impure occupations.

On the other hand, at earlier periods Hindus had consciously assimilated Muslim culture: they had acquired Persian in *Maktabs* and *Madrassas*; their Vaishnavism had become tinged with Sufism; their architecture, their literary tastes, and indeed their clothing had

assumed a Muslim character: witness Rammohan's remarkable proficiency in Persian that earned him the unofficial title of *Maolvi*; the fluent recitation of Hafiz by Rabindranath Tagore's father Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905); the adoption of *pardah* by Hindu ladies in north India; the turbans and flowing robes of Raja Rammohan Roy and Rabindranath's grandfather Dwarakanath Tagore (1794-1846), and indeed even of the 'sternly anti-Muslim' Bankimchandra himself.

It was indeed part of the negative aspect of the orthodox assertion of Hindu identity in the early part of the nineteenth century that condemned these various manifestations of Muslim influence. Much of the satire in the *babu* theme in Hindu literature rests on this condemnation of Muslim influence.<sup>1</sup> The *babu* was alleged to eat bread baked by Muslims and to be versed in, or at least to possess volumes printed in, Arabic and Persian. These attacks were of course aimed at Rammohan Roy, who is in fact the prime example of the successful synthesis of Hindu, Islamic and Christian culture; and who may truly be acclaimed as the first genuine Bengali, a gargantuan figure with a foot planted impossibly, yet deeply in each of Bengal's three major cultures. The very concept of such a synthesis was of course anathema to all three cultures; orthodox Hindus, Muslims and Christians alike were equally opposed to it. Rammohan's inspiration came from Islamic monism; it was only his belated justification and rationalisation that found a basis in the *Upanishadas*. Thus in our view it was out of a desire to assert the positive aspects of Hindu identity by reaffirming their religious and cultural origins that orthodox Hindus were led to attack the Muslimised *babu*; to purge Bengali of Perso-Arabic diction; to try to make Bengali the 'daughter of Sanskrit'; to malign Muslim rulers, heroes, womenfolk, beliefs, practices and institutions; in short, to initiate the process, known as the Hindu renaissance, but which might equally well have been known as Hindu separatism.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, *Naba babubilas*, 1830.

### III

There are many parallels between the period 1817 to 1867 for Hindus and the period 1880 to 1930 for Muslims. Both were characterised by strong separatist tendencies. These separatist tendencies were in each case initiated by the orthodox section of society. The Hindus in the early nineteenth century were eager on the one hand to negate Muslim and Christian influences on Hindu society and on the other to reaffirm Hindu attitudes, values and traditions in social conduct, education and literature. Orthodox Hindus detested Missionary schools and European clothing in the early nineteenth century, no less than did orthodox Muslims detest Hindu-oriented schools and Hindu fashions of dress, shaving, hair-style and speech in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Just as early in the nineteenth century orthodox Hindus were eager to publish Sanskrit classics both in the original and translation, so during our period orthodox Muslims wished to publish Arabic and Persian classics. Indeed, in their degree of orthodoxy in clinging to and re-asserting their own particular traditions, early nineteenth century Hindu bigots and late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Muslim fanatics were much the same.

Other features of the two periods also coincide: the flourishing of Hindu journals from 1818 to 1867 and Muslim ones from 1880 onwards; the insistence of Hindu social reformers on the need to abandon polygamy and child-marriage, and to institute widow-remarriage is paralleled in the later period by the efforts of Muslim moderates to abolish child-marriage, to regulate divorce, to modify purdah and generally to ameliorate the lot of women in Muslim society. Orthodox Hindu society was as equally convinced in the earlier period as orthodox Muslim society was in the later period that nothing but an increase in licentiousness could result from reforms so subversive to public morality.

In some respects, however, it is dangerous to press the analogy between the two periods too far. The moderate reforming wing in early nineteenth century Hindu society was secure and strong. It sprang either from a newly emergent capitalist class like Rammohan and Dwarakanath Tagore or from journalists and educationists of the

calibre of Aksay Kumar Dutt (1820-86) or Vidyasagar. That is they were, either financially or intellectually, fiercely independent; and were thus an equal match for their orthodox opponents. On the other hand, there were no new capitalists emerging amongst Bengali Muslims. On the contrary, Muslim moderates were, in general, financially weak; the wealthy aristocratic classes were aligned mainly with the orthodox. One of the most significant differences between the two periods was that there was in the earlier period no culturally more advanced, politically sophisticated community pressing for a larger share in the country's administration; for the Muslims in the later period, however, there was such a community, namely the Hindus.

It was probably the combination of these factors—the weakness of Bengali Muslim moderates, the presence of the advanced Hindu community, and the backing of the *Mulla* class by orthodox Muslim zemindars—that gave to the Bengali Muslim renaissance its peculiar form. The question of the identity of the Bengali Muslims was settled mainly by a clash of Hindu and Muslim elites, operating sometimes at an all-India level and sometimes at the regional level of Bengal. At the elite level Muslim aristocrats and religious leaders were concerned solely with their dedication to the revival and diffusion of Middle Eastern Islamic culture via, preferably, Arabic and Persian, or at least, via Urdu. Bengali they dismissed as the language of infidel idolatrous Hindus. As such, it was unfit for a place in *Maktabs*, *Madrassas* and mosques, where the medium was to be Urdu, Persian or Arabic and the content from the Arab World.

Bengali Muslim society during our period stood much in need of a Rammohan Roy. The orthodox Hindu society of his day had been backward-looking, obsessed with moribund traditions; he had been forward-looking, desiring not to preserve the traditional form of Hinduism, but to revive its traditional spirit. The same outlook was required in Bengali Muslim society; and indeed was there, as our extracts show; but it was not sufficiently strong at this period to prevail. Enlightened Bengali Muslims of this period appear to have been implicitly aware of the fundamental differences between Bengali Muslim and Bengali Hindu society. The Bengali Hindu elite were in the main enlightened capitalists; the Bengali Muslim elite



were semi-illiterate feudalists.<sup>2</sup> Bengali Muslim aristocrats spent lavishly, the Bengali Hindu elite invested wisely. Enlightened Bengali Muslims spoke of the need to create capital via co-operative banks, to invest in improved agriculture and industrial methods by sending people abroad for training in modern technology rather than in traditional foreign universities, which equipped people only for personal advancement in government service and in the professions and which did little to benefit the community as a whole. The orthodox elite were in fact clinging to a mediaeval scheme of values; the enlightened moderates wished to participate in the world-wide modern capitalist economy by reforming Bengali Muslim social attitudes.

It is difficult to judge or even to guess at this period of time how far these enlightened Bengali Muslim reformers were entitled to be called Muslim.<sup>3</sup> One suspects that they were Muslim in a negative, rather than a positive, sense. The orthodox were positively Muslim: they had no desire to resemble Hindus or anyone else but Muslims. The moderates were probably Muslim merely in the sense that they were born of Muslim parents and raised in a partially Muslim environment. Their sense of identity probably rested mainly on being non-Hindu, a fact drummed into their heads by orthodox Hindus and Muslims alike. Being non-Hindu had involved them in innumerable difficulties throughout their lives in schools and colleges, and later in government offices; they had been ignored, slighted, insulted and discriminated against. To this extent they were Muslim, though not in the 'positive' sense: Urdu was not their mother-tongue, they were reluctant to encourage Arabic, Persian or *Dobhasi*; they were Hinduised.<sup>4</sup> They often could not read the *Khutba*; they could not understand the *Mulla*; some even mocked him. They were in fact virtually Muslim in name only; and apparently, as far as one can judge from our extracts, they wished to preserve Islam in name only.<sup>5</sup> They wanted *purdah*, so they said, but defined it in such a way as to alter its meaning. They despised *riba*, so they said, but wished it

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<sup>2</sup> See chapters on Economics and Society.

<sup>3</sup> See chapter on Education.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter on Society.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

redefined so as to allow the taking of certain types of interests such as would encourage the development of capitalism. That is, they appear to have wished to retain all the emotionally evocative, verbal symbols of Islam, but wished to deprive them of their mediaeval connotations. They were not alone, the whole character of the Muslim world was changing.

#### IV

No religion is either entirely good or entirely bad. Each can, given suitable conditions, operate to the complete satisfaction of its adherents. Ideally, of course, religious diktats are to be regarded as superior even to those of the government: for religion claims to control all aspects of human existence, both living and dead, from science to philosophy; since religion claims to explain not only the origin of human life, but also its ultimate purpose. Thus it was that the *Alim*-editors of the Bengali Muslim press expounded their views on all aspects of the lives of their readers: Politics, Hindu-Muslim relations, Literature, Education, Economics, Language, Society and Religion. Obviously they had before their minds' eye a model of the ideal society. At its head was the Caliph, the defender and preserver of the Islamic religion, who ideally held not only spiritual, but also temporal, sway over his subjects. Under his beneficent rule the whole of life was to be ordered on Islamic principles: birth, education, occupation, marriage, marital life, the arts, literature, entertainment, finance, the economy and finally death. The principles were stern, puritanical and, as far as Bengal was concerned, undoubtedly feudal. But, provided they could be applied uniformly, there was no reason why life in accordance with those precepts could not be peaceful, happy and prosperous. The trouble was: they could not be applied uniformly.

In the twentieth century no state can exist in complete isolation from the rest of the world. To operate successfully, Islam, or for that matter, any other religion, needs to be the one and only, universally recognised world-religion. Otherwise, members of other religious communities are bound to impinge upon it and disrupt it. The Ottoman empire was not without its Christian and Jewish subjects: to

treat them as equals was non-Islamic<sup>6</sup>; to oppress them invited danger from Russia, who was ever watchful for a pretext to interfere in Ottoman affairs. Then, of course, there were Turkish students educated abroad. Their views, too, conflicted with those of the orthodox. Within the subcontinent of India, the position of Islam was even worse.

Here, with the fall of the Mughals, Islam had ceased to be the state-religion. Once that happened, many of its virtues became disadvantages. The puritanical attitude of Islam towards the arts and society was fundamentally good. There was something to be said in favour of keeping painting and the plastic arts, literature and theatre, dress and cosmetics free from eroticism. Purdah could, as the orthodox claimed, justifiably be interpreted as enhancing, rather than diminishing, the status of women. It favoured marital stability and emotional security, which were both of psychological value to the community. The prohibition of usury, too, benefited society. Possibly, it inhibited industrial development. But industry has brought not only benefit to mankind, but some curses as well. The prohibition of usury closed at least one door to the exploitation of the poor. Similarly with education. The contribution of Islam to civilisation, in architecture, medicine, mathematics and astrology was not slight. Nor indeed had the Mughals been backward in administration or diplomacy. The West had outstripped the East as a result of the Industrial Revolution alone. Thus, there was much to be said for the orthodox point of view.

The trouble was, of course, the orthodox were swimming against the tide of the century. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have witnessed the gradual secularization of the state throughout Europe and Asia. Religions march hand-in-hand with authoritarian, monarchical, feudalistic government. All authority is seen as deriving from, and ultimately sanctioned by, God. This was true of at least the three main religions relevant to the subcontinent of India during our period: namely Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Religion underlined the legal code. The Emperor's respect for

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<sup>6</sup> Editor, 'Musalman rajya o samrajyasamuhe bhishan biplab', *Islam-pracharak*, 9th yr., 4th no.

religion was the basis of the subjects' respect for him. This was why the Caliph discriminated against Christians and the Czar of Russia glowered at the Caliph. For the sake of their own stability each felt bound to protect the interests of his own state-religion. But beneath both the Czar and the Caliph mass agitations were afoot, for the twentieth century was to become the age of democracy: the source of power was to become not God above, but the trampled masses below. The powerful man of the future was to be not the chosen representative of God, but the elected representative of the people; monarchical religious empires were to make way for the secular republic. Czarist rule in Russia enfeebled by the blood-letting of the First World War crumbled from within and was smashed beneath a revolution, which was to end in the establishment of a Socialist Republic. The Ottoman empire, long unsteady, finally tottered and fell, scarred and dismembered by the same war, to become ultimately a secular Republic in 1924. From then on geographic nationalism, accompanied by religious reform and enlightenment, spread throughout the Arab World. At times, of course, the pace of change, as, for example, in Afghanistan under Amanullah, was too swift and counter-reformation movements momentarily held sway. But the tide of events was nevertheless drifting inexorably towards reform and democratisation of the state.

Possibly, had it not been for the constant Hindu-Muslim rivalry, that tide would have reached Bengal even during our under period review. Our extracts show a considerable readiness on the part of Bengali Muslims to identify themselves as Bengali on the basis of birthplace and mother-tongue. The words of the editor, *Masik Mohammadi*, on communal riots in Dacca at the end of our period echo so pathetically: "(yet no one bothered to calculate) how many Bengalis died at the hands of Bengalis." The whisper from the whirlwind of communal hatred howling through Bengal in those days leading up to the First Round Table Conference (1930) obviously went unheard. Those two tendencies noticed earlier—the Hindu Bengali tendency to exclude Bengali Muslims from Bengal, and the orthodox Bengali Muslim tendency to include Bengali Muslims in a world-wide Muslim brotherhood – proved too strong to allow the emergence of Bengali nationalism.

## APPENDIX

### DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ON MUSLIM JOURNALS AND PERIODICALS PUBLISHED BETWEEN 1831 AND 1930

*Abhijan* – A short-lived monthly literary magazine; editor: Mohammad Kasem; first published in 1926 from Dacca.

*Ahle Hadis* – A monthly religious magazine; jointly edited by Mohammad Abdul Hakim and Mohammad Babar Ali; first published in September, 1915 (*Aswin*, 1322 B. S.) from Calcutta as the organ of the *Anjaman-i-Ahle Hadis*, appearing regularly till December, 1927, and subsequently becoming weekly.

In socio-religious matters it promoted the *Ahle Hadith* views of the *Mohammadis* and vehemently attacked other Muslim sects. Another religious organ, the *Islam-darsan*, condemned its 'sectarian narrowness and intense anti-*Hanafi* bias' as 'fatal' for the Muslim community.

*Ahmadi* – A fortnightly news and views magazine; editor: Abdul Hamid Khan Yusufji; first published in July, 1886 (*Sraban*, 1293 B. S.) from Delduyar, Mymensingh; it appears to have subsequently merged with *Nabaratna*, another local periodical, and assumed the title *Ahmadi o Nabaratna*; publication was still going on in 1889; financed and patronised by Karimunnesa Choudhurani of Delduyar estate.

Primarily concerned with Muslim socio-religious matters and politically pro-Congress, the magazine promoted communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims.

*Ahmadi* – A monthly religious magazine; jointly edited by Golam Samdani, B. A., and Daulat Ahmad Khan, B. A.; first published in May, 1925 (*Baisakh*, 1332 B. S.) from Calcutta as the organ of the 'Bengal Ahmadi Association.'

*Ahmadiya Buletin* – A monthly religious magazine; first published in February, 1922, from Calcutta as the organ of the Ahmadi sect.

*Ainul Islam* – A quarterly religious magazine; editor: Choudhury Zahedul Haq; first published in February, 1923 (*Falgun-Baisakh*, 1329-30 B. S.) from Dacca as the organ of ‘Zahed Islam Mission’, becoming monthly from its *Jyaistha* number.

Its motto was: “Our ideal is Prophet Muhammad, the *Quran* is our law, humanism is what we stand for, and the holy *Hadith* is the source of our education. Our principal aim is to rescue the fallen.”

*Ajijan Nehar* – A short-lived monthly edited by Mir I Mosharraf Hossain; launched by some Muslim students of Hooghly College in April, 1874 and published from Chinsura. Its style was commended by contemporary Hindu press.

*Akhbare Eslamiya* – A monthly religious magazine; editor: Mohammad Naimuddin; first published in 1884 (*Baisakh*, 1291 B. S.) from Karatiya, Mymensingh; still being published in 1895; financed and patronised by Mahmud Ali Khan Panni, zemindar, Karatiya.

On the one hand, it had marked sectarian bias in favour of the *Hanafites* as against the Mohammadis: on the other, it countered Hindu, Brahma and Christian religious propaganda.

*Al Busra* – A quarterly religious magazine; editor: Syed Mohammad Abdul Wahed; first published in February, 1921, from Brahmanbaria, Tippera, as an organ of the *Ahmadiyas*.

*Al-Eslam* – A monthly magazine; editor: Mohammad Akram Khan, subsequently edited by Mohammad Manirazzaman Islamabadi; first published in 1915 (*Baisakh*, 1322 B. S.) from Calcutta as the organ of the *Anjaman-i-Ulema-i-Bangala*, and continuing for six years.

Its principal aim was to arouse Bengali Muslims in all spheres by stimulating interest in such subjects as

Muslim history and tradition, religion and scriptures, language and literature, and finally Hindu-Muslim issues. It is primarily noted for organising and largely representing contemporary Muslim public opinion.

*Al Hak* – A two-monthly magazine dealing with miscellaneous subjects; editor: Maniruddin Ahmad; first published in June, 1919 (*Grishma*, 1326 B. S.) from Rangpur and running for roughly one year.

*Al Hak Myagazin* – An annual literary magazine; editor: Mahiuddin Ahmad; first published in November, 1929, from Mymensingh as an organ of *Al Hak sahitya samiti*.

*Al Kaderi* – A monthly; first published in January, 1928, (*Magh*, 1334 B. S.) from Rangpur.

*Al-Muslim* – A weekly; editor: Fazlul Haq Selbarshi; published in 1928 from Calcutta, continuing for sometime irregularly under the patronage of Pir Shah Sufi Maolana Abu Bakr Siddiqui and Maolana Ruhul Amin.

Its policy was to oppose atheism and materialism and to reform the Muslim society strictly according to Islamic scriptures.

*Angur* – A monthly juvenile magazine; editor: Maolvi Mohammad Shahidullah; first published in 1920 (*Baisakh*, 1327 B. S.) from Calcutta and continuing for about a year.

It is Bengal's first Muslim-edited juvenile magazine. The contemporary orthodox Muslim press attacked its non-communal attitude.

*Annasa* – A monthly magazine for women; editor: Begum Safia Khatun; first published in April, 1921, (*Baisakh*, 1328 B. S.) from Chittagong, and subsequently from Calcutta, apparently continuing for more than two years.

The first Bengali journal to be edited by a Muslim woman, it promoted liberal reforms in regard to marriage and *purdah*, advocated female education and campaigned for domestic and social rights for women.

*Bagurar katha* – A weekly (?); published from Bogra; current in 1925.

*Bahadur* – A monthly; jointly edited by Mohammad Zainul Abedin and Mohammad Kasimoddin Bashiri; first published in 1923 from Calcutta, and apparently continuing for about a year.

*Balak* – A weekly; editor: A. K. Fazlul Haq; first published in 1901 from Barisal.

*Bakul* – A quarterly; editor: Waresuddin; first published in 1920 (*Asarh*, 1327 B. S.) from Calcutta.

*Banga Nur* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Sheikh; Habibar Rahman; first published in December, a 1919 (*Agrahayan*, 1326 B. S.) from Calcutta and continuing irregularly till its *Magh* issue of 1328 B. S. (1922).

Though primarily concerned with Muslim interests, it, nevertheless, aimed at Hindu-Muslim harmony. It also urged Bengali Muslims to cultivate vernacular language.

*Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-patrika* – A quarterly literary magazine jointly edited by Mohammad Shahidullah and Mohammad Mozammel Haq; first published in 1918 (*Baisakh*, 1325 B. S.) from Calcutta as the organ of *Bangiya-Musalman-sahitya-samiti* and continuing for five and a half years.

Noted for its launching of a progressive literary movement in Bengal, it adopted and encouraged liberal, unorthodox views regarding Muslim socio-religious matters. It also strongly advocated Hindu-Muslim harmony.

*Bangla Gezet* – A weekly; editor: Farrokh Ahmad Nejampuri, subsequently edited by Khorshed Alam Choudhury; first published in 1929 from Rangoon, and apparently continuing for about two years.

*Barshik Mohammadi* – An Annual literary magazine; editor: Mohammad Khairul Anam Khan; first published in December, 1928 from Calcutta.



*Barshik Saogat* – An annual literary Magazine; editor: Mohammad Nasiruddin; first published from Calcutta in 1926.

*Basana* – A monthly literary magazine; editor (Sheikh Fazl-al Karim; first published in 1908 *Baisakh*, 1315 B. S.) from Rangpur, and continuing irregularly for about two years.

Though generally liberal and non-communal, it especially sought the advancement of the Muslim community. It championed Bengali as the mother-tongue of Bengali Muslims and advocated mass-education for them.

*Beduin* – A short-lived bi-weekly; editor: Ashraf Ali Khan; first published around 1930 from Calcutta.

Its extreme editorial views achieved a certain popularity with a limited range of readers.

*Begam khosh* – A monthly; founded and published by Abdur Rashid Siddiqui mainly to publicise his patent drug *Begam khosh*.

*Bhabikal* – A fortnightly; editor: Maolana Ali Ahmad Oli Islamabadis first published in January 1928, from Calcutta and apparently continuing for about two years.

*Bharat-suhrid* – Monthly, jointly edited by A. K. Fazlul Haq and Nibaranchandra Das; first published in 1901 (*Asarh*, 1308 B. S.) from Barisal.

Its chief aim was “to establish mutual love between Hindus and Muslims”.

*Bharater bhramnibarani traimasik patrika* – A quarterly; editor: Muhammad Abedin; first published in December, 1889, from Calcutta.

*Bhaskar* – A short-lived monthly; editor: Nurul Hossain Kasimpuri; first published in 1920 (*Baisakh*, 1327 B. S.) from Mymensingh.

*Bhishak-darpan* – A monthly medical journal; editor and proprietor: M. Zahiruddin Ahmad; first published in July, 1891 from Calcutta; continued until January, 1900. It carried some articles by the eminent physician Nilratan Sarkar.

*Bikas* – A monthly literary magazine; jointly edited by Bande Ali Mia and Purnachandra Vidyaratna; first published in October, 1919, from Calcutta and continuing for about five years; dedicated mainly to Hindu-Muslim harmony.

*Bisva bani* – A weekly; editor: Abu Lohani; first published around 1928 from Calcutta.

*Choltan* – See *Soltan*.

*Dainik Amir* – A short-lived daily newspaper; editor: Maolana Ali Ahmad Oli Islamabadi; first published in 1929 from Calcutta under the patronage of A. K. Fazlul Haq; aimed at serving the Bengal peasantry.

*Dainik Choltan* – A Daily newspaper; editor: Maolana Manirazzaman Islamabadi, subsequently edited by Delwar Hossain, Ashraf Ali Khan, Maqbul Hossain Choudhury and a few others; first published in 1926 from Calcutta under the patronage of a Board of Trustees composed of local Muslim traders.

Launched during the Calcutta communal riots of 1926 to defend Muslim interests from the hostile Hindu press, it later fell foul of the Government by participating in political agitations, notably the Civil Disobedience movement.

*Dainik Mohammadi* – A short-lived daily newspaper; editor: Mohammad Akram Khan; first published in 1922 from Calcutta.

*Dainik Rashtrabarta* – A Daily newspaper; editor: Loqman Khan Sherwani; published in March 1930 from Chittagong and continuing for about six months in collaboration with some local Hindu and Muslim leaders.

*Dainik Sebak* – A Daily newspaper; editor and proprietor: Mohammad Akram Khan; first published in 1921 from Calcutta and apparently continuing till 1922.

A mouthpiece for the Non-cooperation and *Swadesi* movements it was once banned for its strong anti-Government political views.

*Dainik Tarakki* – A daily newspaper; editor: Kerban Ali, subsequently edited by Serajul Islam and Delwar Hossain; published in 1926, at the time of Hindu-Muslim communal riots, from Calcutta under the patronage of A. K. Guznavi; it soon ceased publication.

*Daradi* – A fortnightly; edited and published by Syed Zahed-ul Haq Choudhury in April, 1926, from Dacca.

*Debarshi darbar* – Monthly; editor: Syed Abul Hossain M. D.; first published in August, 1920 (*Bhadra*, 1327 B. S.) from Calcutta and continuing till 1922.

Its aim was to foster unity amongst the people of India and to serve the ‘peasants and workers.’

*Deser katha* – A weekly; edited and published by Syed Nurul Hossain Kasimpuri in August, 1924, from Bogra.

*Dhrubatara* – A six monthly magazine dealing with miscellaneous subjects; editor: Mohammad Abdur Rashid, B. A., B. T.; first published in December, 1920, from Jessore as an organ of the ‘Alfadanga Students’ Association.’

*Dhumketu* – A bi-weekly news and views magazine; editor: Kazi Nazrul Islam; first published in August, 1922, (*Sraban*, 1329 B. S.) from Calcutta and still current in January, 1923.

Though short-lived, its political extremism created an unprecedented stir amongst reading public. Such moderate agitations as *Swaraj* it denounced, favouring instead terrorism and full independence for India. Its editor was eventually jailed. It had a secular outlook and advocated Hindu-Muslim unity.

*Din Duniya* – A monthly; editor: Abul Maola Mohammad Shamsul Huda; first published in June, 1929, (*Asarh*, 1336 B. S.) from Mymensingh.

*Eslam* – A monthly; edited and published by Abdul Monem in 1926 from Rangoon.

*Eslam suhrid* – A monthly; editor: Sheikh Abdus Sobhan; first published in March, 1906 from Dacca, continuing till March, 1907.

*Faridpur darpan* – A fortnightly news magazine; editor: Alaheddad Khan; first published (?) in 1861.

*Ganabani* – A weekly views magazine; editor: Muzaffar Ahmad; after a merger with the *Langal* of the ‘Labour Swaraj Party’ it appeared in August, 1926, (*Bhadra*, 1333 B. S.) from Calcutta as ‘the’ organ of the Bengal Peasant and Labour Party’, and continued publication till 1928.

It demanded full independence for India and advocated the rule of the people. It carried translated extracts from the Communist Manifesto, the writings of Karl Marx and also from Rajani Palme Dutta’s *India To-day*. The poet Nazrul Islam was associated with it, publishing in it his *Rakta patakar gan* (Song of the Red flag).

*Gurucharan* – A weekly; editor: not known; proprietor: Hakim Najat Ali Shah Kadiri; first published in 1889, (*Baisakh*, 1296 B. S.) from Calcutta.

*Hablul Matin* – A weekly; editor: Mohammad Manirazzaman Islamabadi; founder: Aga Maidul Islam (from Persia); first published around 1912 from Calcutta as the Bengali edition of its Persian number.

*Hafez* – A short-lived fortnightly journal; editor and proprietor: Sheikh Abdur Rahim; first published on November 2, 1892, from Calcutta.

*Hafez* – ‘A monthly magazine dealing with miscellaneous subjects’; editor: Sheikh Abdur Rahim; first published in January, 1897 from Calcutta, continuing till June, 1897.

Primarily intended ‘to awaken the ignorant Bengali Muslims’ by inspiring appeals to their ‘sacred religion’. Though short-lived, the magazine excited literary interest.

*Hafez sakti* – A quarterly; jointly edited by Hafez Khondakar Taheruddin and Hafez Fazlur Rahman; first published in November, 1924, from Mymensingh and continuing for about a year.

*Hakim* – ‘A monthly magazine of *Unani* medical science’ editor: Hakim Mashihar Rahman; first published in January, 1913, from Calcutta and continuing till August, 1914.

*Hanafī* – A weekly news and views magazine; founder-editor and proprietor: Maolana Mohammad Ruhul Amin, subsequently edited by Mohammad Abdul Hakim and Choudhury Mohammad Shamsur Rahman; first published in 1926 from Calcutta as an organ of the *Hanafites* and continuing till 1937.

It aimed at reforming and guiding the Muslim community in strict accordance with the *Sariyat*.

*Hanafī Jamayet* – A short-lived daily; editor: Sheikh Habibar Rahman; first published in 1926 from Calcutta.

*Hanifi* – A monthly religious magazine; editor : M. S. Nurul Hossain Kasimpuri; first published in December, 1903, from Mymensingh as an organ of the Hanafi sect, apparently current in 1905.

*Helal* – A short-lived monthly magazine; jointly edited by Mohammad Shamsur Rahman and Delwar Hossain; first published in 1926 from Calcutta.

*Hindu-Musalman* – A weekly; jointly edited by Syed Mohammad Ziaul Haq and Pannalal Dey; first published in July, 1926, from Calcutta.

*Hindu-Musalman sammilani* – A short-lived monthly magazine; editor and proprietor: Munshi Golam Kader; first published in 1887 (*Asarh*, 1294 B. S.) from Magura, Jessore; its editorial policy was the fostering of Hindu-Muslim communal harmony.

*Hitakari* – A fortnightly; editor and proprietor: Mir Mosharraf Hossain; first published in 1890 (*Baisakh*, 1297 B. S.) from Kustiya, subsequently transferred to Tangail; publication continued till 1892 (*Bhadra*, 1299 B. S.).

It fostered Hindu-Muslim harmony and urged Bengali Muslims to cultivate the Bengali language.

*Islam* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Ekinuddin Ahmad; appears to have published in 1885 from Calcutta; publication ceased after two or three numbers.

*Islam* – ‘A monthly religious journal publishing Muhammadan scriptures and their Bengali translation’; editor: Madhu Miya; first published in April, 1900 (*Baisakh*, 1307 B. S.) from Calcutta; publication was still continuing in 1901.

*Islamabad* – A weekly; editor: Maolana Farrokh Ahmad Nejpuri; founder: Abdul Khalek Choudhury; first published in 1927 from Chittagong with the financial assistance of local Muslim traders and continuing for a couple of years.

*Islam-abha* – A monthly; editor: Sheikh Abdul Majid; first published in February, 1913 (*Magh*, 1319 B. S.) from Mymensingh.

*Islam-darsan* – A monthly; editor: Sheikh Abdur Rahim; published in 1916 (*Magh*, 1322 B. S.) from Calcutta, apparently ceasing publication after six issues.

*Islam-darsan* – ‘A national monthly magazine’; jointly edited by Mohammad Abdul Hakim and Nur Ahmad; first published in 1920 (*Baisakh*, 1327 B. S.) from Calcutta under the patronage of Pir Maolana Abu Bakr Sahib as ‘the organ of the *Anjaman-i-Wayejin-i-Bangala*’ and continuing for about six years.

Though primarily a socio-religious magazine, it also dealt with history, education, politics, literature. Politically it opposed anti-government agitations, and in literature denounced secularism, yet in a limited number of socio-religious matters it condemned the superstitions and rituals prevalent in certain sections of Muslim society. Its narrow viewpoint achieved popularity with the orthodox section of the Muslim community.

*Islam Jagat* – A weekly news magazine; first published around 1923 from Calcutta and still current in 1926; mainly concerned with Muslim socio-religious matters.

*Islam Nur* – A short-lived monthly magazine; editor: A. M. Fayezzullah Ahmad; first published in 1926 (*Magh*, 1332 B. S.) from Calcutta; aimed at propagating orthodox religious views.

*Islam-pracharak* – A monthly socio-religious magazine; proprietor editor: Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad; first published from Calcutta in September, 1891 (*Bhadra*, 1298 B. S.); its publication was suspended after its 2nd year, but resumed in October, 1899 *Srabon*, 1306 B. S.). Thereafter it appeared spasmodically until 1910. The magazine was run mainly on public donations, the major contributors being zemindars as, for example, Nawab Fayezunnesa Choudhurani of Paschimgaon, Comilla. Its principal aims were: the reformation and propagation of Islam. To achieve this, it fought superstitious Muslim Fakirs, Christian Missionaries and Brahmas. On the other hand, it promoted liberal social reforms; urged Bengali Muslims to cultivate the vernacular and also encouraged them to take up Western education. Politically, it strongly opposed Congress and wholeheartedly supported the British. It took a keen interest in the affairs of the Muslim world. The magazine exercised a considerable hold on current Muslim public opinion.

*Islam Rabi* – A short-lived weekly news magazine; edited and published by Mujibur Rahman around 1900 from Calcutta.

*Jagaduddipak Bhaskar* – A weekly polygot news magazine in five languages: Bengali, English, Hindi, Persian and Urdu; editor: Maolvi Rajab Ali; published in June, 1846, from Calcutta; its publishing life did not exceed two months.

*Jagaran* – A monthly; editor: M. Ahmad Ali; first published in April, 1928, (*Baisakh*, 1335 B. S.) from Dacca and continuing only for a few months.

*Jamjam* – A short-lived monthly juvenile magazine; editor: Mainuddin Hossain; first published around 1930 from Calcutta.

*Janamat* – A weekly; founder-editor: Mohammad Abdul Monem; first published around 1926 from Chittagong and continuing for a couple of years; it was intended to serve the interests of all communities.

*Jayati* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Abdul Kadir; first published in April, 1930, (*Baisakh*, 1337 B. S.) from Calcutta, ceasing publication after two years.

It was currently acclaimed for its liberal and rational policies.

*Khadem* – A weekly news and views magazine; editor: Mujibur Rahman; first published in 1926 from Calcutta and continuing for a couple of years; it propagated non-communal progressive ideas.

*Kohinur* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: S. K. M. Mohammad Raoshan Ali; first published in July, 1898 (*Asarh*, 1305 B. S.) from Kumarkhali, Kustiya, appearing irregularly till its 4th year, reappearing in Pangsa, Faridpur from 1903 to 1907 and being revived again in Ccutta from 1911 (*Baisakh*, 1318 B. S.) till 1916 (*Chaitra*, 1322 B. S.). Despite the irregularity and disruptions in its publication, it achieved a wide circulation, including even Africa.

It aimed at Hindu-Muslim amity and championed the Bengali language and its literature. It carried compositions by a number of Hindu authors and was acclaimed as a pioneer in Muslim literary journalism.

*Lahari* – A monthly poetry magazine; editor; Mozammel Haq; first published in April, 1900 (*Baisakh*, 1307 B. S.) from Santipur, Nadiya; apparently ceasing publication after one year; it was the first Muslim-edited poetry magazine.

*Langal* – A weekly views magazine; first published in December, 1925, from Calcutta under the supervision of the poet Nazrul Islam as the 'Organ of the Labour-Swaraj Party', merging within a few months with the Ganabani.



The magazine achieved immense popularity, especially for Nazrul Islam's writings. It was probably Bengal's first noteworthy Communist journal in the vernacular. Tagore blessed it with a specially composed couplet.

*Madhu Miya* – A monthly; editor: Mayezuddin Ahmad; published in 1919 (*Kartik*, 1326 B. S.) from Howrah and still current in 1920.

*Madracha myagazin* – A bi-monthly magazine; editor: Abul Maola Mohammad Shamsul Huda; first published in February, 1930, from Mymensingh.

*Mahammadi Akhbar* – A bi-weekly bi-lingual news magazine in Bengali and Urdu; editor: Mohammad Abdul Khalek; first published in June, 1877, from Calcutta.

Stylistically heavily Perso-Arab, it continued as a bi-weekly for about ten months, becoming then weekly for about two months, before finally ceasing publication.

*Maktab* – A monthly juvenile magazine; editor: Sakhawat Hossain; first published in May, 1930, from Dacca.

*Masik Mohammadi* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Mohammad Akram Khan; first published in August, 1903, from Calcutta, apparently suspended in 1904; resumed from Dacca in 1927 (*Kartik*, 1334 B. S.) and still continuing.

Like other contemporaries it helped initiate the Bengali Muslim renaissance. On controversial socio-religious issues, it steered midway between radicals and conservatives, thus achieving constant success with moderates. Sometimes it was a distinctly liberal periodical with progressive views on many matters.

*Masjed* – A monthly religious magazine; editor: Ahmad Soban; published in May, 1917~1324 B. S.) from Satkhira, Khulna, and continuing for about a year. It aimed at expounding and propagating the *Hanafete* doctrine.

*Mihir* – A monthly magazine dealing with miscellaneous subjects; editor and proprietor: Sheikh Abdur Rahim; first

published in January, 1892, from Calcutta, appearing irregularly till August, 1893, subsequently merging with *Sudhakar* under the title *Mihir o Sudhakar*.

This publication is regarded as one of the first noteworthy literary ventures by Bengali Muslims.

*Mihir o Sudhakar* – A weekly news magazine; editor: Sheikh Abdur Rahim; subsequently edited by Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad, Matiar Rahman and Syed Osman Ali; first published in 1895 from Calcutta and apparently continuing till 1910. It was financed and patronised by a number of Muslim zemindars including Syed Nabab Ali Choudhury and Sir Kwaja Salimullah Bahadur.

It supported British rule, presumably owing to its backing by the pro-Government landed aristocracy. On social and educational matters, took a liberal, progressive line.

*Mosafur* – A short-lived monthly literary magazine; editor: Sheikh Mohammad Idris Ali; first published in 1924 (*Kartik*, 1331 B. S.) from Howrah.

*Mosalman patrika* – A monthly; edited and published by Mahtabuddin in January, 1901, from Jessore.

*Moslem bani* – A weekly; editor: Abul Kasem; first published from Calcutta as the ‘Organ of the Anjuman-i-Mainul Islam’ at the time of communal riots in 1926 and continuing for about seven months.

*Moslem Bharat* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Mozammel Haq; first published in May, 1920, (*Baisakh*, 1327 B. S.) from Calcutta, continuing till 1921 (*Paus*, 1328 B. S.).

Though short-lived, it achieved prominence in literary circle, being contributed to by many authors of renown including Rabindranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam. It sought to unite through literature ‘Mother Bengal’s’ two sons : the Hindus and Muslims. It also sought the allround awakening of Bengali Muslims.

*Moslem darpan* – A monthly religious magazine; edited and published by Hakim Mashihar Rahman Qureshi; first published in January, 192, from Calcutta continuing till July, 1931.

Religiously dogmatic, it strongly opposed the Kadiyanis and the Arya samajites and contended bitterly with the Sariyate Eslam over the interpretation of scripture and rituals.

*Moslern hitaishi* – A weekly; editor: Sheikh Abdur Rahim; published under the patronage of Pir Maolana Abu Bakr in 1911 from Calcutta, apparently continuing till 1921.

It intended by the adoption of a pro-Government policy to safeguard the interests of the Muslim community.

*Moslem-pratibha* – A monthly; jointly edited by Sheikh Abdur Rahim and Mozammel Haq; first published in December, 1907, (*Agrahyan*, 1314 B. S.) from Calcutta, ceasing publication after its first number.

*Moyajjin* – A quarterly literary magazine; editor: Syed Abdur Rab; first published in 1928 (*Baisakh*, 1335 B. S.) from Faridpur as the organ of Khademul Ensan Samiti, continuing till its 11th year.

Though noted for its non-communal, liberal attitude it desired especially to stimulate Muslim Bengali literature via a Muslim renaissance in Bengal.

*Musalman* – A weekly news magazine; editor: Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad; first published as an ‘Organ of Muslim community’ in January, 1884, from Calcutta, though actually controlled by a Hindu (Mr. Sasibhushan Mukherji of the weekly, *The Indian Echo*); it lasted for about three months.

*Musalman-bandhu* – A monthly; editor: Hasibul Hossain; apparently first published in 1885 from Calcutta.

*Musalman-siksa-samabay* – A tri-annual magazine; editor: Mirza Mohammad Yusuf Ali; first published in April, 1919, (*Baisakh*, 1326 B. S.) from Rajshahi as ‘A Report of the Mussalman Education Committee.’

*Muslim Jagat* – A weekly views magazine; editor: Abdur Rashid Siddiqui; first published in 1922 from Calcutta and apparently continuing for about two years. Primarily aimed at promoting Muslim awakening in Bengal, it bore anti-government views and its editor was jailed.

*Naba Nur* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Syed Emdad Ali; first published in May, 1903, (*Baisakh*, 1310 B. S.) from Calcutta, continuing for about four years.

It may be acclaimed as one of the first noteworthy Bengali Muslim literary ventures. Besides literature, it also handled religious and social matters, history, education, female emancipation and politics. Generally speaking, its editorial policy was liberal, being aimed at establishing communal harmony via the cultivation of literature. It is of note that its contributors included a good number of Hindus.

*Naba Sudhakar* – A short-lived weekly news magazine; editor: Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmed; founded by Munshi Abdul Moyez of the English language weekly, *The Crescent*; apparently first published in 1886 from Calcutta.

*Nabayug* – Daily news paper; edited jointly by Kazi Nazrul Islam and Muzaffar Ahmad and patronized and managed by A. K. Fazlul Haq; first published from Calcutta in May, 1920; it ceased publication in 1921.

Primarily a political organ, it supported all nationalist agitations, especially the Congressite and the Khilafat; and on this account its security deposit was forfeited. The paper's popularity was due to Nazrul Islam's inflammatory writings.

*Nakib* – A fortnightly; editor: Nur Ahmad; first published in January, 1926 (*Magh*, 1332 B. S.) from Barisal.

*Najat* – A fortnightly views magazine; editor: Mohammad Sekandar Ali; first published in November, 1926 from Comilla as an organ of *Tripura Khilafat Karmmi Sangha*.

- Nari-sakti* – A monthly; editor: Lutfar Rahman; first published in September, 1922, (*Aswin*, 1329 B. S.) from Calcutta as an organ of Nari Tirtha (Home of the fallen women); 'still current in 1923.
- Naojoyan* – A quarterly; editor: Nasiruddin Ahmad; first published in September, 1929, (*Bhadra*, 1336 B. S.) from Jalpaiguri as 'Organ of the Jalpaiguri Students' Literary Association'.
- Naoroj* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Mohammad Afzalul Haq; first published in June, 1927, (*Asarh*, 1334 B. S.) from Calcutta, continuing till November, 1927.  
Renowned for its spectacular production, aimed at disseminating liberal and rational ideas.
- Nur* – A monthly; editor: Ismail Hossain Siraji; first published in 1920 (*Magh*, 1326 B. S.) from Sirajganj and continuing for a few months only.
- Nur-al-Iman* – A monthly socio-religious magazine; editor: Mirza Mohammad Yusuf Ali; first published in 1900 (*Asarh*, 1307 B. S.) from Calcutta on behalf of the *Nur-al-Iman* society, apparently continuing for one year.  
Identifying itself as an 'Islamic magazine' ('Eslami patrika') it sought to expose the defects and vices enervating the Muslim society,
- Nural Islam* – An annual magazine; editor: Mohammad Meherullah; first published in 1901 from Jessore; owned by a Hindu, Sri Amritalal De.
- Paril bartabaha* – A short-lived fortnightly news magazine; editor: Maolvi Anisuddin Ahmad; first published in 1874 (*Paus*, 1281 B. S.) from Paril, Dacca.
- Paygam* – A weekly news magazine; editor: Abu Lohani; published in 1928 from Calcutta and soon ceasing publication.
- Prabhakar/Maslem-sahachar ba Eslam-cherag* – A monthly religious magazine; editor: Mohammad Ayub Khan; first published in 1912 (*Paus*, 1318 B. S.) from

Hooghly, apparently ceasing publication sometime after July, 1913.

*Pracharak* – A monthly religious magazine; editor and proprietor: Munshi Mayezuddin Ahmad; published in February, 1899 (*Magh*, 1305 B. S.) from Calcutta, continuing irregularly for four years; financed by some leading Muslim zemindars.

Out to stimulate Bengali Muslims in all spheres, it carried features on religion, literature, philosophy, science, education, society, Politics, and current national and international affairs. Though primarily committed to Muslim interests, nevertheless, sought to promote Hindu-Muslim harmony, and, generally speaking, on almost all vital, controversial issues maintained a liberal, unorthodox attitude.

*Pratika* – An annual literary magazine; editor: Habibullfah Bahar; first published around 1930 from Calcutta by courtesy of the ‘Khidirpore Young Muslim Association’.

*Raosan hedayet* – A monthly religious magazine; editor; Mohammad Ebrahim; first published in 1924 (*Asarh*, 1331 B. S.) from Pabna as an organ of the ‘Bengal *Ulema*’ and continuing for more than two years.

Principally intended to defend and propagate the Hanafite doctrine, it responded to the current Hindu-Muslim communal issues and political agitations, as thoroughly anti-Hindu and strongly opposed to the Suddhi movement, denouncing all anti Government activities including the SwarajKhilafat-Congressite agitations.

*Rayat bandhu* – A weekly magazine; editor: Munshi Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad; first published around 1926 from Calcutta and soon ceasing publication.

It was intended to serve the interests of the peasants and small holders.

*Sabuj Palli* – A monthly magazine; editor: Mohammad Zafar Ali; first published in 1926 from Dacca as the organ of the Palli-seba samiti, still current in 1928.

*Sadhana* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Abdur Ras id Siddiqui; published from Chittagong in April, 1919 (*Baisakh*, 1326 B. S.) and subsequently from Calcutta; it continued till 1922.

The editor took part in the Non-cooperation movement and was once imprisoned.

*Sahachar* – A monthly literary magazine; editor: Syed Naosher Ali, subsequently edited by Shahadat Hossain, Mohammad Lutfar Rahman and Emdad Ali Khan; first published in January, 1922 (*Magh*, 1328 B. S.) from Calcutta and continuing till 1923.

*Sahityik* – A monthly literary magazine; edited jointly by Mohammad Yakub Ali Choudhury and Golam Mostafa, B. A. B. T.; published from Calcutta on behalf of *Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Samiti* in January 1927; it continued for a year.

Besides literature, the magazine dealt with such subjects as Muslim history, Islamic religion, culture and civilization, and expressly avoided politics.

*Samachar Sabharajendra* – A weekly bi-lingual news magazine in Bengali and Persian; editor and proprietor: Sheikh Alimullah; first published on March 7, 1831 (*Falgun*, 1237 B. S.) from Calcutta; apparently ceasing publication prior to 1835. It was the first Muslim-edited Bengali journal, and followed a conservative policy.

*Sammilani* – A weekly magazine; edited and published by Abdul Monem, subsequently edited by Didarul Alam; first published in 1924 from Rangoon and continuing till 1928.

*Samyabadi* – A quarterly magazine; editor: Mohammad Wajed Ali, subsequently edited by Khan Mohammad Mainuddin and Ali Ahmad Oli Islamabadi; published from Calcutta

as an organ of the *Anjamane tarkkiye kaom, Bangala* in 1923 (*Magh*, 1329 B. S.); it continued for three years.

Its major aim was “to preach in our society Islamic socialism and brotherhood by attempting to ameliorate the plight of the depressed classes such as peasants, weavers, fishermen, oilmen and others.”

*Sanchay* – A monthly magazine; editor: K. M. Abdur Rahman; first published in 1928 (*Aswin*, 1335 B. S.) from Dacca and continuing till 1929 (*Paus*, 1336 B. S.).

It intended to initiate rational and free thinking in Muslim society.

*Sansari* – A monthly magazine ‘dealing with hygiene and domestic science’; editor: Syed Abdul Karim; first published in 1924 (*Baisakh*, 1331 B. S.) from Dacca, continuing till 1929.

*Saogat* – “A illustrated monthly magazine”; proprietor-editor: M. Nasiruddin; first published in December, 1918 (*Agrahayan*, 1325 B. S.) from Calcutta; publication was suspended in 1922, but resumed in 1926, and still continues from Dacca.

Its longevity has given the magazine a distinguished place in Muslim journalism. It always encouraged young free-thinking Muslim intellectuals with progressive and liberal leanings in socio-political and religious affairs. It strove especially to raise the status of women in Muslim society and strongly advocated improved Hindu-Muslim relations. The magazine is also important for its launching of a new literary movement in Bengal.

*Saptahik Mohammadi* – A weekly news and views magazine; editor: Mohammad Akram Khan, subsequently edited by Najir Ahmad Choudhury and Mohammad Khairul Anam; first published in 1908 from Calcutta, continuing intermittently till recent years.



*Saptahik Saogat* – A weekly news and views magazine; editor: Mohammad Nasiruddin; published from Calcutta in May, 1928.

The magazine opposed orthodox Mullaism on socio-religious matters; promoted nationalism in Indian politics; and strongly denounced western imperialism, particularly in Muslim countries.

*Sariyat* – A monthly religious magazine; editor: Maolana Ahmad Ali Enayetpuri; published from Calcutta as “the sole mouthpiece of the Bengal Hanafi sect” in 1924 (*Baisakh*, 1331 B. S.).

The magazine held narrow, dogmatic views and was strongly critical of the Mohammadi sect.

*Sariyate Eslam* – A monthly religious magazine; editor: Maolana Ahmad Ali Enayetpuri; published from Calcutta in February, 1926 (*Magh*, 1332 B. S.), and still current in 1931.

The magazine held orthodox views, intending to guide the Muslim community in strict accordance with the *Sariyat*. Though opposed to the Noncooperation and Civil Disobedience movements, it nevertheless condemned communal riots and promoted cordial relations between Hindus and Muslims.

*Satyagrahi* – A weekly views magazine; editor: Mohammad Abdullah hel Kafi; published in 1924 from Calcutta; it continued for about two years.

The magazine aimed primarily at defending and propagating conservative religious views and opposed the western way of life.

*Saurabh* – A monthly literary magazine; editor; Rezaul Karim; published from Behrampur, Murshidabad in 1925 (*Jyaistha*, 1332 B, S.); still current in 1926.

*Sebak* – A quarterly magazine; edited jointly by M. S. Uddin and Jyotsnamay Sarkar; published from Calcutta as the organ of Satsangha in 1928.

*Sebaker bani* – A monthly magazine; editor: Kazi Nurul Osman; published from Jessore in August, 1930.

*Sikha* – An annual literary magazine; editor: Abul Hussain, subsequently edited by Kazi Motahar Hossain, Mohammad Abdur Rashid and Abul Fazal; published from Dacca as “the organ of Muslim Sahitya Samaj” (Muslim literary society) in April, 1927; it continued for five years.

The magazine challenged many conventional beliefs and ideas on socio-religious matters concerning the Muslim community. Emphasising free rational thought, it instilled fresh ideas into the minds of young Muslim intellectuals and eventually initiated a new movement known as the ‘emancipation of intellect’.

*Siksak* – A monthly journal on educational matters; editor: Khan Shaheb Kazi Imdadul Huq, B. A., B. T.; published from Calcutta in 1920 (*Baisakh*, 1327 B. S.); still being published in 1923.

*Sisumahal* – A monthly juvenile magazine; editor: Mohammad Afzalul Haq; published from Calcutta in 1927 (*Bhadra*, 1334 B. S.).

*Sisu-Saogat* – A monthly juvenile magazine; editor: Mohammad Nasiruddin; first published in April, 1922 from Calcutta.

*Soltan* – A monthly magazine; editor: M. Najiruddin Ahmad; published from Sirajganj, Pabna, May, 1901; it soon ceased publication.

*Soltan/Choltan* – A news and views weekly; editor: Reyajuddin Ahmad, subsequently edited by Manirazzaman Islamabadi; first published from Calcutta in 1902 and continuing until around 1910; it resumed publication in April, 1923, (*Baisakh*, 1334 B. S.) with its title refashioned to Choltan and suffixed by the phrase, *naba paryay*; i. e. ‘new order’; it was later incorporated in its daily edition. (See Dainik Choltan)

Intended primarily to serve Islam by preserving 'Muslim interests', it, nevertheless, pursued a policy of promoting 'the general welfare of the country.' Despite being *Mulla*-dominated, it stood for liberal reforms in socio-religious matters. On the other hand, it advocated Hindu-Muslim harmony, favoured Congress policies and, most importantly, played a vital role as an organ of the *Khilafat-Swaraj* movements in Bengal.

*Sonar Bharat* – A two-monthly magazine dealing with literature and socio-religious matters; editor: Mohammad Javed Ali; published from Calcutta in 1923 (*Aswin*, 1330 B. S.).

*Sudhakar* – A weekly news magazine; editor: Mohammad Reyajuddin Ahmad, subsequently edited by Sheikh Abdur Rahim; first published in 1889 (*Paus*, 129C B. S.) from Calcutta, continuing for more than two years.

Patronised by both Hindu and Muslim leaders, it was financed by Muslim zemindars, and was noted for its liberal, non-communal policy.

*Suhrid* – A monthly magazine; editor: A. D. Khan; published from Cuttack, Orissa, in 1904; still current in 1906.

*Suniti* – A weekly magazine; founder-editor: Khan Bahadur Aman Ali, subsequently edited by Khan Bahadur Mohammad Anwarul Azim, M. A. (Cantab.), Bar at law, C. I. E., and Begum Tohftaunnisa Azim; first published from Chittagong in 1916.

The publication followed pro-government policies.

*Tablig* – A monthly religious magazine; edited jointly by Sheikh Mohammad Delwar Hossain and Mohammad Shamsur Rahman Choudhury; published from Calcutta in May 1927 (*Jyaistha*, 1334 B. S.).

The magazine was launched "with a vow to resist the *Suddhiwalas* in their anti-Islamic campaign". Its editors intended to give the publication a 'respectable look' like that of the *Islamic Review* put out from Woking mosque in England.

- Taide Eslam* – A monthly socio-religious magazine; editor: Shah Syed Abul Kasem Hanafi al Kaderi; published from Rangpur in January, 1928 (*Magh*, 1334 B. S.).
- Tangail Hitakari* – A weekly magazine; editor: Muslimuddin Khan, first published in 1892 from Tangail, Mymensingh.
- Tarun* – A two-monthly magazine; editor: M. Meser Ali; published from Bogra in 1928; it appears to have continued for about a year.
- Tarun patra* – A monthly magazine; edited jointly by Mohammad Fazlul Karim Mallick and Ahmad Hossain, B. A.; published from Dacca as an “organ of the Young Moslems” in 1925; it soon ceased publication.
- Taruner danda o Eslamer jhanda* – A weekly news magazine; published from Calcutta in 1930 and patronised by the *Pir* of Furfura. It promoted pro-*Sariyat* views.
- Yugabani* – A weekly magazine; editor: Makbul Hossain Choudhury; published from Sylhet in 1924 and was still current in 1925.
- Yuger alo* – A quarterly literary magazine; editor: Didarul Alam; published from Chittagong in 1926 (*Magh*, 1332 B. S.), subsequently from Rangoon as a monthly magazine; it continued till 1928.

## GLOSSARY

ABDAL: a lime producer.

ABHIBHASHAN: an address; public speech.

ACHKAN: a loose outer garment,

AHMADI/AHMADIYA : followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian in the Punjab.

ALIM : a religious scholar in Muslim society.

ALLAH : an Arabic term meaning God.

ALLAHU AKBAR : God is great.

AMIR : a ruler; prince; a rich and respectable Muslim.

AMIRUL MUMENIN : Commander of the faithful, the title of the Sultan of Turkey.

AMIYA : nectar.

ANJAMAN/ANJUMAN : A society or association.

ANUSVARA : a nasal consonant in the Sanskrit and Bengali alphabet.

AQAID : beliefs.

ASHRAF : an aristocrat.

ATRAF : a Commander.

AYAT/AYET : a verse in the *Quran*.

BABU : a title designating a Bengali Hindu gentleman.

BADSHA : an Emperor or Sovereign.

BANDE MATARAM : Hail Mother the title of a song by Bankimchandra Chatterji. It came to be used as a political slogan in the *Swadesi* and Congress movements.

BANGA LAKSMI : Bengal conceived as the goddess of wealth, *Laksmi*.

BANGLA/BANGALA : the language of Bengal.

BASTRAHARAN : disrobing.

BAZAR : a market-place.

BEGUM : a queen.

BHADRALOK : gentefolk, upper-class Hindus.

BHARAT LAKSMI : India conceived as the goddess of wealth, *Laksmi*.

**BRAHMA** : a member of the Brahma Samaj, founded by Rammohan Roy.

**CHANDI** : a Hindu mother-goddess.

**CHARKA** : a spinning wheel.

**CHEHLAM** : (Muslim) funeral ceremony.

**CRORE** : ten millions.

**DAKATI** : dacoity; armed robbery.

**DAR-UL-ISLAM** : a land of Islam.

**DEVANAGARI** : the Sanskrit script; allegedly that of the Hindu gods.

**DHUTI** : a long piece of cloth worn round the loins by Hindu males.

**DRAUPADI** : the wife of the five *Pandavas*, an important character in the *Mahabharata*.

**DUHSASAN** : the brother of Duryadhan, who disgraced Draupad in the epic Mahabharata.

**DURGA** : a Hindu mother-goddess; the wife of Siva.

**FAKIR** : a Muslim mendicant.

**FARAIDI/FARAIZI** : a reforming Muslim sect in Bengal.

**FARAS** : a carpet.

**FARD** : obligatory.

**FATWA** : a religious edict; a decision based on the Sariyat.

**FAZEL** : a scholar.

**FIQH** : Muslim jurisprudence.

**FITRA** : alms given after Ramadan.

**GAZI** : a hero; one who fights in the cause of Islam.

**GOCHAL** : a bath, bathing.

**HADITH** : traditions based on the sayings and Practice of Prophet Muhammad.

**HAJI** : one who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

**HAJJ** : a pilgrimage to Mecca.

**HALAL** : licit; lawful.

**HANAFI** : followers of Imam Abu Hanifa; one of the four schools of Islamic thought.

**HARAM** : that which is distinctly forbidden in the Quran and Hadith.

**HAREM** : an apartment of women.

**HARI** : a Hindu god.

**HINDI** : an Indian language widely spoken in North India.

**HUKKAH** : an humble-bubble

**IDD** : a Muslim festival.

**IJAB-KABUL** : a proposal of marriage and its acceptance.

**IMAM** : a religious leader.

**ISWARA** : a Sanskrit term meaning God.

**JAL** : water,

**JAYEZ** : lawful; proper.

**JIHAD/JEHAD** : holy war

**JOT** : landed property.

**JOTDAR** : a land-holder.

**JUMA** : Friday congregational midday prayers.

**KABA** : the principal Muslim shrine in Mecca.

**KABIN/KABIN-NAMA** : a marriage deed.

**KAFIR/KAFER** : an infidel.

**KALI/KALI THAKURANI** : an Hindu mother-goddess; the wife of Siva.

**KATH MULLA** : a fanatic Mulla.

**KAULINYA** : hereditary nobility.

**KHADI, KHADDAR** : indigenous cloth hand-woven from home spun thread.

**KHALIFATUL MUSLEMIN** : the Caliph of the Muslim world.

**KHILAFAT** : the Caliphate; a movement in India in support of the Turkish Sultan.

**KHUTBA** : a sermon delivered or read in mosques on Fridays and on *Idd* days.

**KITAB** : a book.

**KORBANI** : a sacrifice; Muslim sacrificial ceremony.

**KULIN** : a person of noble birth.

**LAC/LAKH** : a hundred thousand.

LAKHERAJ : rent-free; freehold.

LAMA : a Tibetan Buddhist priest.

LATHI : a bamboo stave.

LUNGI : a loincloth generally worn by Bengali Muslims.

MACHLA : A religious problem; catechism.

MADRARAJ : a king of ancient Madras.

MADRASSA : a particular type of school where the Islamic sciences (Ulum) are taught.

MAHABHARATA : the name of a great Indian epic.

MAHAR : a dowry.

MAIDAN : an open field.

MAKTAB : a junior school, usually Muslim.

MALKAN RAJPUT : known also as Muslim Rajput; converted Hindus of Rajput, Jat and Baniya descent.

MANDAR : a flower in Eden.

MANTIQ : logic.

MAOLANA : a Muslim scholar; title of respect given to a Muslim divine.

MAOLVI : a scholar; doctor of Muslim law.

MARATHA : inhabitants of Maharashtra.

MARFATI FAKIR : a particular *Fakir* sect.

MARWARI : a trading Hindu community coming from Marwar and other Rajputana states.

MAULUD/MILAD : The celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad.

MLECCHA : alien; non-Aryan; persons other than Hindus, the term acquired the derogatory connotation of Muslim.

MOFUSSILL : country-side.

MOHAMMADI : *Sunni* Muslims belonging to *Ahl Hadith*.

MOPLA : indigenous Malabar Muslims.

MUKHTIAR : an attorney in a lower court.

MULLA : a learned man.

MUSALMANI : an adjective from the noun *Musalman*; i. e. Muslim.

MUSULLI : a praying person.



NAGRI : Hindi script.

NAMAHSUDRA : a non-Aryan servile Hindu caste in Bengal.

NAMAZ : prayers.

NANDANKANAN : the garden of Eden.

NARAKA : hell.

NARAYAN : the Hindu god, Vishnu.

NENGATI : a short garment covering the private parts only.

NERE : a common epithet in Bengali for Buddhists, Vaishnavites and Muslims; some Hindu authors used it to abuse and ridicule Muslims.

NIMAI : a popular name for Sri Chaitanya, the founder of Vaishnavism in Bengal.

PADRI : a Christian priest.

PAJAMA : loose pantaloons or trousers.

PANDAVA : son of Pandu, a king in ancient India.

PANDIT : a scholar; preceptor in Hindu socio-religious matters.

PANI: water.

PANJABI : loose-sleeve shirt.

PARAMESWARA : God.

PARIJAT : the flower of Paradise.

PARIYA : a community in south India looked upon as untouchable by caste Hindus,

PASHA : a Turkish aristocrat or high official.

PATHSALA : a lower primary school.

PATI NERE : a contemptible Nere; i. e. Muslim.

PAYGAMBAR : a prophet; message-bearer.

PIR : a Muslim saint.

PRADESIK : provincial.

PUJA : Hindu worship.

PURDAH : Seclusion.

PUTHI : lit. book; *Puthi sahitya* or *Puthi* literature means Bengali Muslim verse-literature in mixed diction.

QURAN : the sacred book of the Muslims.

RAMANI : a woman

RAM RAJ : the rule of the ancient Hindu king, Ramchandra; an ideal Hindu state.

RARHI: A Brahmin belonging to or born in West Bengal.

RASUL : a messenger; Prophet.

RASUMANI : a popular name for Rani Rasmani of Calcutta, who founded the famous temple and guest house in Daksineswar.

RAYAT : a cultivator; peasant.

RIBA : usury.

ROZA : Muslim fasting.

SABHA : an assembly.

SADHU : a Hindu saint; pure.

SAHASA : a companion of the Prophet.

SAHAR : a City.

SHAHIN SHAH : a king of the kings; Emperor.

SAHITYA : literature.

SAMAYIKPATRA : a periodical.

SAMITI : an association.

SAMMELAN : a conference.

SANDAR : a trader in retail stationery goods.

SARDAR : a leader.

SARI : a garment worn by women in Bengal.

SARIF/SHARIF : an aristocrat.

SARIYAT : canonical law of Islam.

SATI : chaste.

SATYAGRAHA : a firm resolve to fight for truth and justice; the Congress-movement launched by Gandhi.

SELAMI : money presented to the landlord for a lease.

SHEIKH-UL-ISLAM : Muslim spiritual guide; foremost leader in Islamic society.

SHERBET : drink; beverage.

SHIA : a sect of Islam which recognizes Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, as the rightful successor.

SIKH : followers of Guru Nanaka and inhabitants of the Punjab.

**SIVA/SHIVA** : a Hindu god.

**SRADDHA** : the Hindu funereal ceremony.

**SUDARSAN CHAKRA** : Vishnu's discus.

**SUDDHI** : purification; an Arya Samaj movement.

**SUDDHIWALA** : Arya Samajite.

**SUDHA** : ambrosia; nectar.

**SUFI** : a Muslim mystic.

**SULTAN** : an emperor; ruler.

**SUNNAT JAMAYET** : the people of the Sunna and of the community; the term traditionally signifies the Muslim community at large.

**SUNNI** : the major sect of Muslims opposing Shiaite claims.

**SWADESI** : 'of ones own country'; the name of the campaign to boycott foreign goods.

**SWARAJ** : self-rule; self-government.

**SARGA** : heaven.

**SWA-SAMPRADAY** : of ones own community.

**TAFSIR** : commentaries on the *Quran*.

**TALUK** : an estate; a landed property.

**TALUKDAR** : possessor of an estate.

**TARAKESWAR** : a Hindu holy place in Hoogly, West Bengal, famous for its temple.

**TRIBHANGA** : the three-curve pose of Srikrishna.

**TRIDIVA** : heaven.

**ULEMA** : pl. of *Alim*; learned men; scholars; Muslim theologians.

**UPANISHADA** : Sanskrit philosophical composed after the *Vedas*.

**URDU** : lit. camp; an Indian language written in modified Arabic characters, and formed by the admixture of Arabic, Persian and Turkish and Hindi words.

**VARENDRA** : a particular group of Bengali Brahmins belonging to North Bengal.

**VEDAS** : the sacred scriptures of the Hindus.

**VIDYASAGARI** : a Bengali prose-style introduced by Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar.

**VISARGA** : a letter in the Sanskrit and Bengali alphabets.

**WADU** : religious ablution.

**WAFD** : a political party in Egypt.

**WAHABI** : followers of Abd al-Wahab, an eighteenth century Arab reformer; a movement intending to restore Islam to its original purity and order; in India the movement turned into a religio-political war against the Shikhs and the British.

**WAJIB** : obligatory.

**WAZ** : religious preaching.

**YAVANA** : lit. alien or non-Hindu; in Bengal the term acquired a derogatory connotation signifying Muslim.

**YUGA** : era.

**ZAKAT** : alms given as prescribed by Islam.

**ZENANA** : the women's apartment

**ZEMINDAR** : a land-holder; landlord.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

AGA KHAN, (1875-1957), the spiritual leader of the Borah Ismailia Shia community, was for a long time a key figure in Muslim politics in India. He headed the Simla deputation to Viceroy Lord Minto in 1906, took a leading part in founding the All-India Muslim League and was himself its President for many years.

ALI, ABUL MA'ALI MOHAMMAD HAMID (1875-?), a poet, was fairly well-known in his day. His avowed aim was to produce a 'separate literature' for Muslims. He published two narrative poems, *Kasembadh kavya* (1905) and *Jaynaloddhar kavya* (1907).

ALI, MAOLANA MOHAMMAD (1878-1931), younger brother of Maolana Shaokat Ali, was the most outstanding *Khilafat* leader, and he played an important role in arousing among Indian Muslims political consciousness. He was a strong advocate of Pan-Islamism. With Gandhi he toured all over India to organise the Non-cooperation movement. He presided over the Cocanad Congress in 1923, He had a strong pen and published the renowned journal, the *Comrade*.

ALI, MAOLANA SHAOKAT (1873-1938) came to prominence by organising pro-Turkish agitations in India, for which he was interned by the Government of India during the First World War. After his release he engaged in spreading the *Khilafat* movement. He also joined Congress and took active part in the Non-cooperation-*Swaraj* agitations. Subsequently he severed his connection with Congress and joined the Muslim League. He was a member of delegation to the Round Table Conference in London.

ALI, S. WAJED (1890-1951), a graduate from Cambridge and a barrister, began his career as a Presidency Magistrate in Calcutta. He was distinguished for the lucid style he introduced into Bengali prose. His important works include *Bangalir bhabishyat*, *Masuker darbar*, *Darbeseer doya*, *Muslim sanskritir adarsa* and *Akbarer rashtira sadhana*.

AZAD, MAOLANA ABUL KALAM (1888-1958) was a versatile genius, a theologian, a scholar, an author, a journalist, and above all, a dedicated patriot. He started his political career by supporting the Pan-Islamic movement, and published his famous Urdu journal *Al-Hilal* in 1912 from Calcutta. He took part in the *Khilafat* as well as Non-cooperation and *Swaraj* movements. He became the President of All-India Congress in

1923, and thereafter several times held the highest office in Congress. He also served as the Education Minister in Indian Cabinet.

CHOUDHURY, HOSSAM HAIDAR, a leading zemindar of Comilla, was closely connected with all major political and benevolent activities in Muslim society. He was a prominent Muslim League leader and was elected member, Eastern Bengal and Assam Provincial Council, 1909-10.

CHOUDHURY, THE HON'BLE KHAN BAHADUR SYED NABAB ALI (1863-1929), a prominent zemindar of Mymensingh, was one of the most important figures in Bengali Muslim society during the first quarter of the present century. He supported the Partition of Bengal, organised the Muslim league, was the member of the Legislative Council and subsequently became a Provincial Minister in Bengal. He always favoured the Government and strongly opposed *Khilafat* agitations.

GUZNAVI, SIR ABDEL KARIM (1872-1939), a big landlord in Mymensingh, was until 1930 an important figure in Bengal politics. He was member of the Imperial Legislative Council, and also served as a Minister for Bengal. He was closely associated with Muslim educational reform movements.

HAQ, A. K. FAZLUL (1873-1962), popularly known as Shere Bangla (i. e. 'tiger of Bengal'), was for more than half a century an outstanding political leader in the subcontinent. He joined Congress in 1904, once becoming its Secretary, was elected General Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim league in 1913, and represented Indian Muslims in the Round Table Conference in London. He moved the Pakistan resolution at the Muslim League's Lahore Conference (1940). He was also the Chief Minister of undivided Bengal, a Central Government Minister in Pakistan and Governor of former East Pakistan.

HAQ, MOZAMMEL (1860-1933) was distinguished both as a poet and a prose-writer. Like his other literary colleagues he, too, aimed at a Bengal Muslim renaissance. His works totaling about 15 in number include poetry, novels, histories and biographies. He also published the first poetry magazine, *Lahari* (1900), and edited the literary journal, *Moslem Bharat* (1920). His book of verse, *Jatiya foyara* (1912), was proscribed by government on account of its highly provocative poems.

HOSSAIN, MIR MOSHARRAF (1848-1911), a front-rank Bengali writer with about 36 works to his credit, covering the whole literary spectrum from autobiography to poetry, was also acclaimed as the 'father of Bengali Muslim literature'. His *Bishad sindhu* (1885-90) still remains a

best-seller. A firm believer in Hindu-Muslim harmony, he campaigned against cow-slaughter in his highly controversial book *Go-Jivan* (1889).

HUSSENI, AGA MAIDUL ISLAM SYED JALALUDDIN AL was a journalist-cum-politician from Persia. Due to his revolutionary political views, he was exiled by the Shah. At the time of Balkan War (1912) he fled to India and started publishing his paper *Hablul Matin* from Calcutta.

KAIKOBAD (MUHAMMAD KAZEM-AL-QORESHI) (1858-1952) became famous for his epic *Mahasman kavya* (1904). His other works include *Asrumala* (1895), *Siva mandir* (1921), *Maharam sharif* (1932) and *Smasan bhasma* (1938). Though bent on reawakening his co-religionists, Kaikobad, nevertheless, sincerely desired Hindu-Muslim harmony. His views on Hindu-Muslim relations as expressed in *Mahasman* caused him to fall a victim to serious controversies in the Muslim press.

KARIM, ABDUL (b. 1865) served as Inspector of Schools, and was a Fellow of Calcutta University. He was also a member of the Asiatic Society, the Secretary of *Bangiya Musalman sahitya samiti* in 1915 and its President in 1917-18. He published a number of books of which the important ones are: *Bharatbarshe Musalman rajatyer itibritta* (1898) and *Muhammedan Education in Bengal* (1900).

MOHANI, MAOLANA HASRAT (1875-1951) was one of the front rank leaders of the *Khilafat-Swaraj* agitations and an important figure in the Congress executive. He also presided over the All-India Muslim League session in 1921. In the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress (1921) he defined *Swaraj* as complete independence free from all foreign control for which he was imprisoned for two years.

MOSTFA, GOLAM (1897-1964), a major Muslim poet, started his literary career by assiduously adopting Tagorean style and diction; and, indeed, he was complimented upon his first volume of verse, *Raktarag* (1924), by the master himself, Rabindranath. Golam Mostafa also wrote good prose. His biography of Prophet Muhammad; *Bisva Nabi* (1942), has been, acclaimed widely.

MUHSIN, HAJI MUHAMMAD 1732-1812 is well-known in Bengal as a benefactor of education and learning. His endowments established the Hooghly Muhsin College and founded the famous 'Muhsin scholarships', which helped in raising an English-educated Bengali Muslim society.

RAHIM, SIR ABDUR (1867-1952), belonging to a zemindar family of Midnapur, started his career as a Barrister in Calcutta High court. Subsequently he was appointed Judge, Madras High Court, and then a member of the Bengal Executive Council (1921-25). He was also a member

of the Bengal Legislative Council 1926-30 and Indian Legislative Assembly (1930).

RAHMAN, MOHAMMAD LUTFAR (1889-1936) was a distinguished literator who introduced a simple and lucid style in Bengali prose. His *Jiban* series of collected essays – e. g. *Mahat*, *Jiban Manab Jiban*, *Satya Jiban* and *Unnata Jiban* – placed him high among Muslim prose writers. He also published *Nari-sakti* as the organ of *Nari Tirtha* (a home for fallen women), which he founded in Calcutta.

RAHMAN, NAJIBAR (1878-1923) (School teacher, earned immense popularity as a novelist. His *Anoyara* (1914) still remains a best seller. His other publications include *ChandTara ba Hasan Ganga Bahamani* (1917), *Parinam* (1918), *Gariber meye* (1923), *Meherunnesa* (1923) and *Premar samadhi*. Najibar Rahman aimed at social reforms consonant with Islam. Though not of high literary merit, his novels do faithfully portray contemporary social conditions, with a bias towards harmonious Hindu-Muslim relations.

RAHMAN, SIR A. F. (d. 1945) began his career as Professor of History in Aligarh in 1921, joined Dacca University that same year and was Provost, Salimullah Muslim Hal, till 1927. He also served as the Vice-Chancellor of Dacca University (1934-36).

SALIMULLAH BAHADUR, THE NAWAB OF DACCA HON'BLE SIR KHWAJA (1871-1915) was one of the most important personalities in Muslim society. He welcomed the Partition of Bengal in 1905, presided over the All-India Mahomedan Educational Conference in 1906; and it was under his patronage that the All-India Muslim League was founded in Dacca. He made great sacrifices for the promotion education among Bengali Muslims. He was member of the Legislative Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam, and believed in co-operation with Government.

SHAHIDULLAH, MUHAMAD (1885-1969) was acclaimed as an outstanding linguist in the Indian subcontinent. A life-long educationist, he taught linguistics and Bengali literature in the Universities of Dacca and Rajshahi. His important works include *Bangla sahityer katha*, 2 vols. (1953,1904), *Vidyapati satak* (1954), *Buddhist Mystic Songs* (1960), *Bangla bhashar itibritta* (1965) and *Purba Pakistani anchalik bhashar abhidhan*, 3 vols. (1965-68).

SIRAJI, SYED ISMAIL HOSSAIN (1880-1931) was eminently distinguished as an author, journalist, orator, socio-political and religious leader of his time. He published about 20 books (essays, novels and poems). Active in most anti-British political demonstrations – anti-Partition, *Swadesi*,



*Khilafat*, Non-cooperation and Civil disobedience – he once visited Turkey in 1912 with the Red Crescent delegation. *Anal prabaha* (1900), his book of patriotic verse, was proscribed by the Government; he served a two-year prison sentence for it. His greater contribution, however, was towards the launching of the Bengali Muslim renaissance.

WADUD, KAZI ABDUL (1894-1970), a well-known essayist, was among the few young Muslim intellectuals who formed the *Sikha* group in Dacca. Some of his important works are: *Rabindra kavyapath* (1928), *Kabiguru Gyete* (1946), *Sasvata Banga* (1951) and *Kabiguru Rabindranath* (1962).

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