

MAHMUD SHAH QURESHI

CRESCENT AND LOTUS :
A STUDY ON
THE INTELLECTUAL
HISTORY OF
THE MUSLIMS OF
BENGAL
(UP TO 1947)

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CONTENTS

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION	9
FOREWORD	11
INTRODUCTION	
Crescent and Lotus : Heritage of the Past	13
CHAPTER I	
Seizure of Consciousness : 1857-1905	74 47
CHAPTER II	
Problems of Thought and of Action	69
CHAPTER III	
Creative Writers of the Period	97
CHAPTER IV	
Seizure of Position : 1905-1947	121
CHAPTER V	
Muslim Writers and the Renaissance of Bengali Letters	155
GLOSSARY	
Technical Terms and Literary Genres	201
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
i. Bibliography of General Works	213
ii. Selected Bibliography of Bengali Works by Muslims	248
iii. Bibliography of Bibliographies	259
Bibliographical Supplement	261
ONOMASTIQUE INDEX	265
A Review by Suniti Kumar Chatterjee	273

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

This is a mot-à-mot, that is to say, a verbatim translation of my original French book *Étude sur l'évolution intellectuelle chez les Musulmans du Bengale 1857-1947*. The book itself was an integral version of my doctorat d'Université thesis at the University of Paris (Sorbonne), made during 1959-1965. It took rather a long time than one normally requires for completing writing such a dissertation. This is, however, during a period that I studied French language, literature, Phonetics, General - Structural and Applied Linguistics, Ethnology, Islamology, Indology, Anthropology, Sociology of Literature, Semiotics, Aesthetics of Cinema, and some other subjects which fortunately I have managed to forget now. When I say, 'studied' I should also mention that, in some cases, actually, I followed only a few courses or lectures. Besides, I attended a summer course ("England from 1870 to Present-day : Art, History and Literature with tutorial classes on Literary Criticism") at the University of Oxford in 1960, a month-long seminar on the "Mutual Appreciation of Cultural Values of the East and the West" at St. Céré (Lot) in 1961, and another month-long workshop on "Culture in the Modern Society" at Stockholm in 1963. I also enjoyed a three month study-tour around the North America in 1962 as Unesco Fellow.

Although later I was amply rewarded by my examiners who, while recommending the for the award of the doctorate degree with Mention très honorable (Highest distinction or Summe cum laude elsewhere), also expressed Felicitation du Jury and Permission to publish the thesis in its entirety. Hence, I was also lucky to obtain a subsidy from the French National Scientific Research Centre for its publication by the very famous publisher Mouton & Co. in 1971.

Translations in English and Bengali would have been of primordial necessity, which, unfortunately, I could not take up. In 1972-73, just after our liberation, Dr. Joseph T. O'Connell of the University of Toronto visited us in the University of Chittagong and spoke very highly of the book. By this time, I received also an extremely favourable review made by Dr. Sunity Kumar Chatterjee, National Professor of Humanities in India. But, Joe O'Connell was almost in love of the book. He thought that he would find someone for the translation. If not, he would do it himself. Later, we all forgot about it. By 2006, suddenly my young colleague, Terence Penheiro, Associate Professor in the department where I work - Department of Language, Communication, and Culture - at Gono Bishwabidyalay

(University) and, later, Head of the department of English, proposed that I should dictate the French text into English, and that he would compose on the PC and, that in case of any problem with my English, he was there to help me. Almost sportingly, we worked through several pages. In the meanwhile, Prof. O'Connell was also coming to Dhaka for two or three months every year. He volunteered to oversee the work and accepted my proposal to be the editor. Initially, he corrected the introductory pages. But, as ill luck would have it, soon my two friends died - Terence on April 13, 2007, and Joe on May 6, 2012. The work remained again unfinished. Recently, Syeda Quamer Jabeen, my wife, came forward and insisted that I must complete the work.

While taking up the job again, I had the feeling that almost half a century might have passed; but the issues are still lively and many of the facts stated as well as some of the references I made are not known to many of my compatriots or English-reading public.

Now, as for the English text, I must say that with my limited knowledge of English, I have not tried to change any word or sentence. Of course, I made a few corrections and introduced a new version of Kazi Nazrul Islam's poems (instead of retranslating my French text) and inserted one or two bibliographical items. This was because I wanted to be faithful to my 1965 French text. However, as the book was in many ways a novel enterprise and a challenging work for presenting Bengal and Bengali Muslims to French scholars and their *lecteurs éclairés* (enlightened readers), it could be regarded even now as a comprehensive discourse on the subject. Last but not least, I must express my heartfelt thanks to Professor Ahmed Reza and Ms. Jasmine Qureshi, who appeared more as angels, than able copy-editors, to throw out, as much as possible, the un-English elements in the text.

Mahmud Shah Qureshi

October 12, 2016

FOREWORD

This study presents, as its title indicates, the basic aspects of the intellectual history of Muslims in Bengal. Against a background constituted by the imperial British India and the contribution furnished by Hindu reformism and the Bengali literary renaissance, I have endeavored to describe and analyse philosophical and literary works along with social, religious, and political action of the Muslims with a view to sketching a relatively complete canvas of their history in the modern period.

Not being contented with a *résumé* of facts and ideas, more or less arbitrary, I have presented a rather lengthy introduction to the heritage of the past. Many a time, I have insisted on the conflict between certain profound tendencies during this period. I have tried to be as objective as possible. This is why, I have kept myself aloof from interpreting some historical facts in a personal way or extending the analysis of the events beyond 1947. Furthermore, though it may seem after reading certain pages that I have been severe towards the Hindus or the British, my real intention has always been to give with maximum precision all pertinent information concerning the subject without a polemical attitude.

Undertaken initially as a historical essay limited only to the Muslim writers in Bengali language, this work has taken a more important dimension in the course of five long years of research. This has permitted me to accumulate almost all the available documents - published or in the form of manuscripts - related to the question. However, the examined complexity of the problems, at times, prevented me from remaining myself as rigorous and systematic as I would have liked to be.

Professor Louis Renou, Director of the Institute of Indian Civilization at the Sorbonne (University of Paris) and Member of the Institute (one of the five institutes of the French Academy), kindly agreed to direct my thesis. In spite of his numerous and heavy obligations, he provided me with the most authoritative counseling which enabled me to avoid major errors of judgement and incoherence in the presentation of this study.

Professor Charles Pellat, Professor Jean Filliozat, and Professor Louis Dumont as well, offered precision, above all, regarding documentation.

The bibliography attached to the work is almost exhaustive and will facilitate further research. I could assemble it, thanks not only to the rich libraries in Paris, but also to those at Oxford, London, Copenhagen, and others across the Atlantic. During my study-tour in the United States and

Canada, facilitated by a UNESCO Fellowship, I was benefited by the rich documentation in these two countries along with the very fruitful conversation I had had with Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University (Montreal). Incidentally, my parents and friends did not hesitate to send me, up to the last moment, newspaper cuttings, reviews, and books concerning my area of research.

The finesse and difficulty of the French language are proverbial. I would not have, therefore, achieved even the first draft of this work without the help of many of my friends. I cannot, unfortunately, name all of them here. However, I should mention that it is due to Mr. André Guimbretière, Professor of Language and Civilization of Pakistan at the National School of Living Oriental Languages (now INALCO of the University of Paris), that this version of our text could happily be delivered from its ambiguities and its anglicisms. It goes without saying that these two defects have not totally disappeared because of the nature of the subject treated. It is I alone who am responsible for all the errors as well as the formulated opinions in this work.

I express my profound gratitude and my heartiest thanks to these teachers and to all those who helped me in various ways, without forgetting Madame A.M. Labrousse of the French Ministry of National Education, whose comprehensive sympathy always brought to me comfort and encouragement during my long stay in Paris.

April, 1965.

At the time of publication, I would like to express my profound thanks to the CNRS (Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques) and to the Editions Mouton & Co. for facilitating and conducting well this heavy task. I would also recall with pain three of my intellectual mentors - Messrs Louis Renou, Humayun Kabir, and Muhmmad Shahidullah, - who would have loved to see this work published and who are unfortunately not with us anymore today.

During the five years that have passed since the drafting of the study, a large number of works concerning this area of research have been published. However, I have not always found it necessary to correct my point of view or to change my perspective. I bring to the knowledge of my readers and the fellow researchers some recent titles in the bibliographical supplement. Errors could have slipped in here and there. Still, I hope that my readers would be satisfied with this updated bibliography.

M. S. Q
Chittagong
Baishakh 01, 1377
April 15, 1970

INTRODUCTION

CRESCENT AND LOTUS :

HERITAGE OF THE PAST

Civilization is less in the objects than in the usage that one makes of it.

Georges DUHAMEL

... to a remarkable degree the modern study of the history of the sub-continent of India has developed within a two dimensional framework, preoccupied with men and events and neglectful of intellectual history and of the influence of ideas. So to speak, the warp and woof of historical material is there, but we see it flat, lacking a three-dimensional view of the folds, creases, and convolutions of the cloth of history.

C. H. PHILLIPS
(*Historians of India,
Pakistan and Ceylon,*
London, 1961, p. 1)

Intellectual evolution among the Muslims of Bengal in modern times is the subject of our study. It is, however, restricted, for the reasons to be discussed below, to the years 1857-1947. These ninety years of Muslims' history in Bengal we intend to examine in relation to their social stratification, their economic-political development, and, above all, their literary and intellectual expressions through their diverse writings in Bengali. It goes without saying that by concentrating primarily on this last aspect, we cannot but elaborately

treat in a reduced manner others. Even though these aspects cannot be disassociated from the intellectual life of any human group, and certainly not of the Muslims of Bengal, the complexity of the situation compels us to narrow down our field of vision. The Muslims of Bengal are, let us not forget, members of the Muslim community of India. They are, therefore, an Islamic people in the universal sense of the term. However, they are also Bengalis, which would mean that they are the inheritors of a provincial civilization conditioned by their neighbouring communities. Further, their overall evolution during this period had known colonial yoke. Hence, the structural analysis that we propose has no ambition. Let it be said thus – *en passant* – to be complete, but would like to take in consideration all the factors which constitute the infrastructure of this intellectual life. For this purpose, we shall try to bring out the activities and the motivation of Muslim leaders and writers, and to find out, through the history of Bengal, relations between the different domains.

This intellectual evolution – it should be stated from the beginning – could not be independent from what had happened among their immediate neighbour, that is to say, the Hindus of Bengal. In the pages that follow, we shall try to sketch the picture of their history. Here it will suffice to note that well before 1857, say from the beginning years of the 19th century, reform movements had taken place among the Hindus which naturally influenced their Muslim compatriots.

The course of history of the Muslims of Bengal, however, flowed differently. They isolated themselves (as historians see it) in the years after 1857, when the British government took charge of the country by transforming its statute *de facto* to statute *de jure*. The British found the Hindus to be docile and obedient subjects while they realized that the Muslims had trained into rebels who were always putting up resistance to them. As a consequence, socio-religious, politico-economic, spiritual and intellectual conflicts erupted during these ninety years thus, resulting in 1947 in the creation of two distinct sovereign states – the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Despite the social barriers which serve as multiple forces of dissuasion in modern times, it is beyond question that the intellectual

life of the Muslims in Bengal was influenced by a number of great Bengali Hindu figures--Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, C.R. Das, Subhash Chandra Bose, to name only a few. One can also say that their political thinking likewise was profoundly stirred by the ideas of all-India leaders: Ranade, Gokhale, Naoroji, Gandhi, and Nehru. Conversely, Bengalees and other Indian Hindus were influenced during these tumultuous years by the Muslim personalities like Nawab Abdul Latif, Sayyid Amir Ali, Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Shibli Numani, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Sir Iqbal, M. A. Jinnah, and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Whatever may have been the currents and counter-currents of intellectual influences, the Muslims of Bengal seem to have stayed apart from all movements that were either recommended or organized or both by Hindus. Hence, the rare attempts for solidarity through a "Bengali renaissance" or a national awakening could not be effective.

So, we are led to ask ourselves the following questions: Why was there no synthesis and how did the unnoticed forces of dissuasion operate? Of course, a categorical reply to these queries cannot be given, it is not even desired. But, we do hope that by charting the intellectual history of the Muslims of Bengal we may find the basis of replies to the questions. There was in place an impassable barrier to any attempt to see problems in their totality because the political and intellectual leaders typically played but narrowed roles in time and space. And, this was due evidently to the conflict between, on the one side, a religion like Islam, on the other, the modern world with its scientific inventions, as well as to the resistance of the followers of Islam to all "reformation" in general. Moreover, the interaction of a turning backwards, due to the memory of Muslims' "glorious past", a ponderous and "actually present" heritage, impeded, it would seem, whatever progress and development one might have expected.

These observations, expressed in such a didactic and condensed manner, may appear vague or abstract without reading this work, which is divided into two principal parts. In the first part, we consider the events of the period 1857-1905, during which time some Muslim leaders tried to awaken their fellow co-religionists from their

"eternal slumber" and make them participate in certain social and educational activities. The leaders did not, however, encourage their participation in politics, whereas, in the case of their neighbors, the Hindus, such participation started precisely at that time. That being said, we must not fail to mention the positive and negative results of the activities of the Amir Ali group and their repercussions during the years which followed.

Thus, it appears legitimate to characterize this period as the Seizure of Consciousness. As such, it demands from us a serious study. In the first chapter, we develop the themes expressed by the activities and statements of leading Muslim personalities. Then, in the context of this Seizure of Consciousness, we shall try to present, in the two following chapters the motivation of intellectuals (journalists, polemicists, etc.), and creative writers. These thinkers and creative genius reveal to us, indeed, very interestingly, the social situation and its progressive evolution while often enough accentuating only their own personal experiences.

The more recent period, which spans between 1905 and 1947, presents to us an extremely complex picture of political and intellectual evolution. By characterizing the history of this period as the Seizure of Position, we want to describe the situation and analyze the essential facts which made the Muslims of Bengal opt in favour of separation from India. The diverse aspects of political participation which repeatedly play out in the Indian context reveal as well the role of the Muslim intellectuals in this grand undertaking. Their speculative and literary works furnish enough substantive material for us to consider them in a special chapter. The discoveries that we make from their unknown or distortedly known history have been presented in a comprehensive and composite way so that it may focus on the intellectual evolution among the Muslims of Bengal.

Before turning to examine the evidence and its interpretation – be it subjective or objective – it may not be out of place to consider some aspects of the history of Bengal concerning the place of the Muslims – their origin and their heritage that originated in their past. It is obvious that such a retrospective portrayal cannot but be partial, considering the density and richness of that history. But, its necessity as a preliminary should be evident from the nature of our study.

Bengal was invaded by the Muslims at the very beginning of the thirteenth century.¹ The Turkish general, Ikhtiyar Uddin Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji, found no difficulty in conquering it with the help of a small band of cavalry. Though the Hindu king and his dynasty continued for some decades to rule a few small principalities of East Bengal, in the neighbourhood of Dacca,² the conquest and consolidation of Muslim power in Bengal was astonishingly rapid though complicated. The historical data, collected exclusively from the Muslim sources, were frequently discussed by the historians and were always challenged by the Hindu writers of the nineteenth century, who viewed them with suspicion.³ Everyone wanted, in fact, to attribute some heroic qualities to their own "ancestors". It is not been possible to deny the fact that the invading party was small. But that is not the real issue. What one ignores, but what one should grant importance to, is that the Muslims won in the war not only because their military tactics were superior, but also because their path was prepared for by the submission of an oppressed people – the Buddhists and the Hindus of the lower castes. Also, the consternation caused by the Muslim power in other parts of India and the internal conflicts among the Hindu élites, who were not being supported by the masses, played, it seems, a capital role in favour of the Muslims.⁴ For their consolidation of power, the Muslims could count on the help and sympathy of new converts, who were mainly recruited from amongst the oppressed populace.⁵

There is no doubt that at that time the Bengalis were attracted by Islam. Even before the invasion, Arab merchants and travelers, who were in their own way missionaries, had come to Bengal and settled themselves there. The region was rich at the time and well-known for

¹ Date much debated, Cf. *Indian historical Quarterly*, June 1954, p. 133 sq.

² For more details see R. C. Majumder (ed.), *The History of Bengal*, University of Dacca, Dacca, 1953, vol. 1, p. 223.

³ Among others, writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee tried to offer new interpretation; Cf. his *Rachana Samagra*, Sahitya Sangsad, Calcutta, Vol. 2; A drama like Haralal Roy's *Banger Sukhabasan* (End of happiness in Bengal) presents the Hindu reaction.

⁴ On this point, one can consult an example of Muslim historiography, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* by Minhaj Shiraj, coll. "Bibliotheca Indica", Calcutta 1864.

⁵ This point cannot be ignored-for, one of the factors of recent conflicts between Hindus and Muslims resided in the insistence that these Muslims talked about their extra-Indian origins. See, for example Fazle Rabbi : *The Origins of the Muslims of Bengal*, translation from the Persian, Calcutta. ...

its natural products and artifacts.⁶ Afterwards, numerous *ulemas* and Sufis came here and, established their *khanqahs* (religious hostels), and propagated the idea of one God and Muhammad (p.b.u.h), His last prophet. Being attracted by the simplicity, generosity, and kindness of the Sufis, sometimes even by their miraculous deeds as well as by the democratic and egalitarian message of Islam, the people converted *en masse* to the new religion.⁷ Some rare high-caste Hindus also converted to Islamic belief; it was, however, not always for religion itself, but for experiencing the taste of something new and for making themselves acceptable to the dominant race.⁸

Thus, one can conclude that the propagation of Islam in Bengal was peaceful and that the number of new converts continued to increase through out the centuries. This was largely due to the Sufi saints who scattered throughout and the four corners of the province, as can be proved from the remains of their tombs and shrines. Accordingly, the teachings of the Sufis affected the entire literary tradition of Bengal, particularly its spiritual and intellectual life.⁹

The invaders of Turkish-Afghan origin also brought with them priests, warriors, functionaries, and servants, all co-religionists. The black slaves from Abyssinia also made their homes in Bengal. Some of them even usurped royal power from 1486 to 1493. Many other Muslims, coming from the Middle East in times of their crisis, found

⁶ A. H. Dani, "Early Muslim Contact with Bengal", *P. A. P. H. C.*, Karachi, 1951, p. 162-202; J.-J. Reinaud, *Relations des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et la Chine dans le 9^e siecle*, Paris, 1845, t. I, p. XXXIV

⁷ On this subject the most important study is perhaps T. W. Arnold's *The Preaching of Islam* (Aligarh, 1896), London, 1961, p. 280.

⁸ In the medieval literature, references abound here and there. The oft-quoted two verses are of Brindavana Das, *Chaitanya-Bhagavata* (Adi. 14):

"Hindu Kule keha hena, haiya Brahman
Apani Asiya hay Icchaya Javan"

(Among the Hindus, some ones become voluntarily "Javana" that is Muslim, although they are very much of the Brahmin caste). Hence for various reasons, the Hindus of all castes such as Bhojar Brahmin, the Piral Brahmin, or Sultan Jalal Uddin Muhammad (son of Ganesha) converted themselves to Islam. Their contribution to the composite nature of Bengali culture has been recognized by the historians.

⁹ The magistral study on this subject is the doctoral dissertation of Muhammad Enamul Haq, *Bange Sufi Prabhav* (Sufi Influence in Bengal), University of Calcutta (1932), 1935.

intellectual purposes.¹⁴ Artistic and architectural productions likewise were flourishing at that time.¹⁵

The Hindu epoch of the history of Bengal lasted scarcely one century. The Sen dynasty reigned over the major part of the province and changed the course of its culture by establishing a proper Brahmanic Hindu tradition. Orthodoxy made its way in the social hierarchy. Brahmins, who had their origins in some other parts of India, were invited to settle in Bengal where they were offered funds and land. So far as the cultural formation is concerned, classical erudition was based on the study of Sanskrit. The Bengali poets introduced *gaudiya riti* (style) into Sanskrit poetics. The *Gita-Govinda* by Javadeva was composed at the court of Laksman Sen, the last Hindu king of Bengal. With no consideration for the development of the language of the country, they put all their efforts into systematizing and Sanskritizing names, speech, and even manners. This process continued, despite some difficulties, even during the period of Muslim rule, and up to the present day.¹⁶

For more than a century after the collapse of Hindu rule, Bengal experienced dark years of war and chaos. The Turkish-Afghan invaders were not the model flag-bearers of Muslim civilization. Moreover, they were engaged in establishing their supremacy by the force of arms and by wars for dynastic succession and annexation. Peace returned a little later and a new era started when a Pathan Sultan – Shams al-Din Ilyas Shah (A.D. 1342-47) – wore the crown of Gaur upon his head, thus, unifying all the parts of Bengal which were at the hands of Muslims.¹⁷ Henceforward, as J. H. Rowlands comments:

"With the contact of the Muslims, Bengal underwent profound modification. Their influence was felt not only on the language, literature, and administration, but also on social and religious life."¹⁸

¹⁴ Muhammad Shahidullah, *Bangla Bhasar Itibritta, Sahitya Prtrika*, II, 2, University of Dacca, 1335, b. s., p. 129-308; cf. p. 136.

¹⁵ See the conclusion of the very important study of F.J. Monahan, *The Early History of Bengal*, Oxford, 1925.

¹⁶ Annandasankar et Lila Ray, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁷ For details, see N. K. Bhattasali, *Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal*, Cambridge, 1922, p. 27.

¹⁸ J. H. Rowlands, *La Femme Bengali dans la littérature du Moyen Age*, doct. diss., Paris (Sorbonne), 1930, p. 25.

in Bengal an agreeable as it was exile far from Delhi, capital of the central power.¹⁰

The province, which had long since been marked by a plurality of ethnic groups (and a great concern for ethnologists has been to determine whether or not the Aryans of the pure type existed in Bengal),¹¹ thus, became the homeland where diverse races, maintaining their distinct cultures, gathered under the Muslim rule. Prior to Muslim penetration, the Gangetic delta, which spreads out in the north-east of India, was a prominent region for indigenous Buddhism. On the other hand, Dravidians in the western Bengal and Mongolians in the eastern Bengal also occupied large tracts. The Aryans' influence there came very late. Annadasankar Ray, in his brilliant account of Bengali literature, notes that the continental part of India used to ignore the existence of Bengal at that time. But, Bengal was developing itself, thanks to the fertility of its soil and the diversity of its population. So, he writes,

"Men met and mingled on her shores, giving an impetus to her genius which has been renewed continually throughout her history by a steady influx of new ideas and new blood."¹²

From the sixth century BC, Bengal entered into contact with the Aryan civilization through the intermediacy of Jain and Buddhist ascetics. But, it was not until the third century BC (during the reign of Asoka) that it could penetrate into the interior of the country.¹³ However, the dominant power (the Buddhists) of the time created a synthesis of divergent cultures of this country of valleys and rivers where, unlike in the other regions of India, one could loathe the system of castes and other characteristics of Brahmanic orthodoxy. The Bengali language appeared in its primitive form, towards the end of the Buddhist epoch (A.D. 650-1100), it was utilized for

¹⁰ Cf. K. R. Qanungo in *History of Bengal*, ed. by Sir J. N. Sarkar, University of Dacca, 1948, Vol. II, p. 1-18; Muhammad Rasim Firishah, *Tarikh-I-Firishah*, ed. by Newal Kishore, Lucknow, 1281 A.H., Vol. II, p. 298.

¹¹ On this point, the negative reply is found in the relative works, see for example, Biren Bonnerjea, *L'Ethnologie du Bengale*, doct. diss., Paris, 1927, p. XII.

¹² Annadasankar et Lila Ray, *Bengali Literature*, Bombay, 1942, p. 3.

¹³ J.C. Gosh, *Bengali Literature*, Oxford-London, 1948, p. 5.

Obviously, we cannot describe in detail all the radical changes operative in all aspects of life in Bengal. But, The Muslim rule for nearly six hundred years presents a rich, picturesque, and quite complex history. The paucity of documents constrains us. However, the most recent researches on this subject enlighten us and oblige us to make some pertinent preliminary remarks in this regard.

Let us now begin by dividing the following period of Muslim domination into two large parts: (i) the period of independent Pathan Sultans (A.D. 1338-1576) (ii) and the Moghul period, (1576-1757).

On the Pathan epoch, the opinions of the historians are never unanimous. An extreme point of view, for example, was formulated by J.C. Ghosh :

"The Muslim conquest dealt a deadly blow to Hindu culture, and the conquerors had next to nothing to offer in its place. India has rarely known rulers so utterly barbarous as the Pathans or experienced such distress as she did under them. Muslim culture in India did not properly begin until the days of Moghul rule, and Bengal did not become a part of the Moghul Empire until 1576. Even then, Bengal was too far away from Delhi, the imperial capital, to receive the full stream of Muslim culture."¹⁹

Now, with the assistance from the authentic sources published recently, we can ascertain that the truth is altogether contrary to this view. This point of view, however being widely shared, merely reflects a premature generalization that is found to be habitual to certain historians of India. Moreover, the evidence is not presented with objectivity.

In fact, the Pathan régime, which brought about a golden age in Bengal, did not accept the authority of the central power in northern India (until the conquest of Bengal by Sher Shah in 1538).²⁰ Being independent of the authority of Delhi, they made Bengal a nation that was politically and culturally recognizable.²¹ They, the dominant power at that time, considered the country as their own homeland.²²

¹⁹ J. C. Ghosh *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²⁰ Cf. J.N. Sarkar, ed.: *op. cit.*, p. 167.

²¹ The magistral study of Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Down to A.D. 1538)* doct. diss., University of Dacca, (published by the Asiatic Society, 1959) is the latest research work on this subject.

²² Diya al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-I-Firuzshahi*, Calcutta, Coll. "Bibliotheca Indica", 1890, p. 593.

The religious and social life of the Hindus and that of the Muslims underwent changes and remained open to new ideas along with the political and economic trends in the country. The Hindu orthodoxy certainly lost ground in Gaur, the then capital, but continued to exert its influence in the town of Navadvip and all over Bengal. Thanks must go to its impressive schools and its renowned pundits. With the advent of the great Hindu saint, Sri Chaitanya (1486-1533 A.D.), who propagated *Vaishnava bhakti* (Vaishnavist devotion) with perfect freedom of spirit, there emerged a rebirth of Hinduism along with a cultural renewal in the country.²³ Furthermore, obscure religious cults emanating from Tantrik Buddhism and indigenous Hinduism, such as the cults of Dharma, Manasa, etc, also were in full bloom, and these were together producing a vast literature.²⁴ The influence of these movements on the intellectual life of Bengal in the Middle Ages was enormous. It goes without saying that the dominant power, as attested to by the literature of the epoch, did not put obstacles to these developments.

The Muslims, in their turn, multiplied the number of mosques and madrasas in the four corners of Bengal and developed for themselves a profoundly religious culture. The initiatives of numerous Arab and Persian missionaries were remarkable in this regard. And, these were not fanatic in spirit. The Sufis of different schools, notably from among the Chistiya and Suhrawardiya, who came from Central Asia, propagated their ideas peacefully.²⁵ Their teachings had such an influence that neither the Muslims nor the Hindus could escape from these. And, they affected profoundly the intellectual and spiritual activities of the Bengalis.²⁶ Now, in this state of liberty, it is not surprising to see the appearance of the Bauls - the syncretists *par excellence* - even at the core of Muslim society, although their ideas on the world and life were mostly contrary to those in Islam. Being infused by the mad love of the Sufis and the esotericism of the Tantrik Buddhists, the Bauls

²³ Louis Renou, *L'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1951, p. 63, 102-103; Edward Cameron Dimock, *A Study of the Vaishnava-Sahajiya Movement of Bengal*, Doct. Diss., Harvard, 1958-1959.

²⁴ S.B. Das-Gupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta, 1946.

²⁵ Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 85-88.

²⁶ Cf. note 9.

preached a new philosophy of human existence that fascinated the indigenous people of Bengal. According to their prophets, divinity and life in the other world have been "pushed away by the *mandirs* (temples) and the mosques"²⁷

Hence, it is appropriate to note that in the Islamization of Bengal the role of the Sultans was not of the highest order. The Sultans of Bengal were neither hostile, nor pleased, by the destruction of the temples.²⁸ But, the example of the Muslim monarchies constitutes a great factor in the social evolution in Bengal. The Sultans contributed largely to the birth of Muslim civilization in Bengal. They constructed numerous mosques and madrasas and took steps to make them the real centers of erudition and theological studies.²⁹ They established contact with Baghdad and accepted the Khalifs as *Amir-al-Muminin* (commanders of the faithful) and declared themselves as *Nasir-i-Amir al-Muminin* (assistants to the commanders of the faithful) or *Gawth-al-Islam-wal-Muslimin* (aides of Islam and of the Muslims).³⁰ Likewise, they founded mosques, madrasas, and inns for pilgrims in the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina.³¹ They accorded all possible facilities to the pilgrims for the accomplishment of hajj,³² the tradition of which continues even today in this far-off region. It is right to point this out, as it accounts for the development of that orthodoxy in the nineteenth century which enveloped Bengali Muslims through a dream of the act of retuning to the purity of Islam even after the end of Muslim rule in India.

The intellectual activities of the Muslims in the Middle Ages, centered round the religious institutions, were sustained essentially by the study of Islamic sciences. The meditations of the Sufis were, likewise, appreciated by the Bengalis, who generally have an inclination towards the mystical spirit. Their compositions,

²⁷ Cf. Chapter III.

²⁸ A.H. Dani, "Early Muslim rulers in Bengal and their Non-Muslim Subjects", *J.A.S.P.*, IV, Dacca, 1959.

²⁹ N.N. Law, *Promotion of Learning in India during Muhammedan Rule by Muhammedans*, London, 1916.

³⁰ Abdul Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 45-47.

³¹ Muhammad Sirajul Haq, "Muslim Banglar Kaekti Oitihāsik tattva", *Bangla Academy Patrika*, III, I, Dacca, 1366 B.S., p. 102.

³² Abdul Karim, *op. cit.* p. 47-51.

unfortunately, have disappeared leaving no trace. Some rare manuscripts in Arabic and Persian were saved or were known through some historical chronicles of the age.³³ The Muslim scholars learned Sanskrit with the intention of appreciating Indian civilization. Some of them even tried to write in this sacred language. Only one such example of this sort of literature has reached us. It is a hymn on the Ganges by a Muslim saint of the fourteenth century – Dara' Khan Ghazi of Tribeni. It is said that his Sanskrit is that of a master of the language: lucid, elegant, and sonorous.³⁴ Before that, the example of a great dervish, Makhdum Jalal Uddin Tabrizi, who came to Bengal before the Muslim invasion, had influenced a poet of the Hindu court to consecrate a Sanskrit work entitled *Shaikh-Subhodaya* on his teachings and his miracles.³⁵

The Muslims, quite naturally, utilized Arabic first and then Persian. The inscriptions of this period were written entirely in Arabic. Among others, the *Hadiths* of the Prophet were inscribed

³³ Among these works, one can name a translation in Parsian and later in Arabic of a Sanskrit book on the system of Yoga, *Anritkund* (the Arabic version is published in the *Journal asiatique*, t. CCXIII, p. 292-344, entitled "Hawd-al Hayat" by Qadi Rukn al-Din al-Samarqandi (Ms. 1218); an work on "Tasawwuf," *Manaqib al-Asfiya* (to be found in *Makhtubat-I-Sadi*, Urdu translation, Behar, 1926), by Shah Shu, ayb; a book on "fiqh" *Nami-I-Ha'qq* (new ed. Bombay, 1885) by a disaple of Shaikh Sarf al-Din Abu Tawwamah author of *Maqamat* (ms. f 11 of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta), a Persian lexicography with important biographical notes on the Muslim poets and scholars, *Farhang-I-Ibrahim* or *Sharfnamah* (Ms. f. 2-3, Aliya Madrasah, Dacca) by Ibrahim Rawwam Faruqi (between 1459-1474), a book on Hadith, *Sahih al-Bukhari* annotated transcription, Oriental Public Library, Bankipore by Muhammad bin Yazdan Bakhsh (between 1493-1519); a book on hunting, *Hidayat al-Rami* (27 chapters and drawings, written between 1459-1474) The British Museum Manuscript, according to Specialists cannot be earlier than 17th century, is by Sayyid Mir Alawi. The writings of Sufis are not found, only few letters ("Maktubat") have been published by Prof. Hasan Askari in *Bengal: Past and Present*, LXVII, serial no. 130, 1948, p. 32-39, and in P.A.P.H.C., Dacca, 1953 the *Malfuzat* or discourses of the Sufis along with the hagiographical literature are not too many in numbers.

³⁴ Rames Basu, "The Cultural Products of Bengal: Muslim Culture during Muslim Rule". *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Calcutta, Baishakh 1355, B. S. p. 29.

³⁵ For detail, see Muhammad Enamul Haq, *Muslim Bengali Literature*, (translation from Bengali by Syed Ali Ashraf) Karachi, 1957. A critical edition of *Shaikh-Subhodaya* in Bengali was published by Sukumar Sen (Calcutta, 1927); A. H. Dani was preparing an English edition for the Asiatic society of Dacca. The author Halayudha Misra's identity and date is subject of debate; cf. *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua*, Abid Ali Khan and Stapleton, Calcutta, 1931, p. 105-106.

everywhere and fostered, so to speak, the psychological formation of the Muslims:

1. Education is obligatory for all faithful men and women.
2. The ink of scholars is valued more than the blood of martyrs.
3. Go to China, if necessary, to acquire knowledge, etc.

One nourished oneself through Persian poetry at that time and a Sultan even sought to invite the great Iranian poet Hafiz to Bengal.³⁶ Nevertheless, the intellectuals of the Middle Ages did not respect Bengali as a medium of expression because of the poverty of this language, not yet well-cultivated by men of letters. The Buddhist Siddhas, as has been indicated above, had already expressed their thoughts in archaic Bengali.³⁷ But, during the Hindu domination, Bengali language lost its place as Sanskrit only could find its cradle of development among the unlettered, indigenous people. Thereafter, its status changed. Dr. D. C. Sen, the great authority on the subject, commented thus:

"This elevation of Bengali to a literary status was brought about by several influences of which the Mohammadan conquest was undoubtedly one of the foremost. If the Hindu Kings had continued to enjoy independence, Bengali would scarcely have got an opportunity to find its way into the courts of kings."³⁸

Now, thanks to the Sultans and Muslim generals, use of Bengali was encouraged. They patronized almost all the poets of the period: Vidyapati, Candidasa, Krittivasa, Kavindra Parameshvar, to mention but few great names. In their turn, the Muslims brought to the classical literature of Bengal an important contribution. It is necessary to name here Muhammad Saghir, employed in the service of Sultan Ghyasuddin Azam Shah (A.D. 1389-1409), who composed in remarkable verses *Yusuf-Zulekha*, the famous love story adapted from the Bible and the Qur'an for Bengali readers, by putting in some

³⁶ Muhammad Enamul Haq. op. cit. p. 34, 41-42.

³⁷ Philologists discuss unconditionally on the date and the language of their works; we refer on this subject to the works of Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, notably to his article "Baudha Ganer Bhasa" *Sahitya Patrika* I, 1, University of Dacca, 1957.

³⁸ Dr. D. C. Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, Calcutta, 1911, p. 10.

local colour.³⁹ And, some other names are of equal importance as well – Zainuddin, poet laureate of Sultan Yusuf Shah (1474-1481), who presented in the Buddhist manner *Rasul-vijay*, a romanticized biography of the Prophet;⁴⁰ the works of Muzammil (15th century), *Niti-Shastra Bharta*, *Sayat-nama* (poems on morality and mysticism)⁴¹ of Afzal Ali (16th century) *Nasihah-Nama* (philosophical poem); of Sabirid Khan (16th century) *Vidya-Sundar*, *Rasul-Vijay* and *Hanifa-o-Kayra Parir Larai*; and finally, from the hand of Shaikh Faizullah (15-16 century), *Go-Raksha-Vijay*, *Ghazi-Vijay*, *Satya-Pir*, *Jaynaler Chautisha* and *Rag-nama* (on the classical music of India).

Many other authors appeared in the literary scene in even greater number during the Moghul period (1576-1757). This was not because of any lavish encouragement by the dominant power, but because of the natural progress of Bengali idioms and the recognition of this fact by the Muslim intellectuals. There is no proof that the Bengali poets were rewarded by the Moghuls, with the exception of a few feudal chiefs (Hindus and Muslims), the kings of Tippera (presently, a state in India) and Arakan (Burma/Myanmar).⁴² Sayyid Sultan (late 16th century),⁴³ author of *Nabi-Bangsha* and *Shah-i-Mehraj*, Nasrullah Khan (end of 16th century), author of *Janga-nama*, Muhammad Khan (beginning of the 17th century), author of *Satya-Kali-Bibad- Sangbad* and *Makhtul-Hussain*, and the poets – Daulat Kazi, Qureshi Magan Thakur, Alaol, Sheikh Chand, and Haji Muhammad – are among the great names in all of Bengali literature.⁴⁴

³⁹ Saghir's source was the *Quran* (XIII). Persian poets Firdausi and Shaikh Abd' Allah Ansari (E.G. Browne, *A literary History of Persia*, Vol. II, Cambridge, 1928, p. 131-270). He added their a Bengali name for the person who purchased Yusuf as well as a Bengali scene for the occasion of Zulekha's marriage (ms. 225-227, Dacca University); Dr. M. Enamul Haq was preparing an edition from the manuscript under his possession.

⁴⁰ Ms. 594 of the University of Dacca.

⁴¹ Mss 237 and 119 of the University of Dacca.

⁴² Cf Abdul Karim (Sahitya Visharad) and Dr. M. Enamul Haq, *Arakan Raj-Sabhay Bangala Sahitya*, Calcutta, 1935. See, also our "bibliography of bibliographies"

⁴³ One of his works, *Ophate Rasul* (Wafat-l-Rasul), is edited by Ali Ahmad, Noakhali, 1356 b.s.

⁴⁴ Satyendra Gosal, "Muslim Contribution to Medieval Bengali Literature, 1622 - 1672. *The Journal of the Visva-Bharati Study Circle*, I, I, Calcutta, 1959.

It is not possible for us to cite in few lines all the names of the Muslim poets or to appreciate all their works. In addition to the few authors and their works mentioned above, there existed more than a hundred Muslim poets most of whom composed songs which are considered as Vaishnava hymns for their themes and inspiration.

Muslim works, as a whole, could be classified into three large categories: (i) romantic tales drawn from the contents of the Qur'an, from Persian poetry, or from the legendary literature of India, where one finds metaphysical inquiry of human interest; (ii) religious works written for their co-religionist readers so that they could better understand the philosophy, laws, and history of Islam; and, (iii) finally, the mystic works inspired initially by Sufi thoughts and then by mixing this with similar Bengali currents: Vaishnava, Baul, Murshidi, etc. Almost all the poets contributed to these three categories. They brought new forms, styles, and Arabic-Persian neologisms and, especially, interest in human beings and human life. The Muslim poets introduced love-stories focusing on jealousy as well as human sufferings without making any attempts to transform their heroes into divine characters as was the case with their Hindu counterparts. In all these categories, especially the third one, we have before us a kind of literature that tries to synthesize Bengali culture and ideas and to transpose this synthesis into a beautiful form. It was here that a common civilization of the Hindus and the Muslims was being formed which was distinct from, even contrary to the "Indo-Muslim" civilization, created by the Moghuls.⁴⁵

Over and beyond social and spiritual life, Muslim literary creativity illustrates and reinforces this synthetic civilization. The poet Sayyid Sultan, for example, in his *magnum opus*, *Nabibangsha* (Genealogy of the Prophets), considered Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshvar, and Krishna as prophets who appeared prior to those mentioned in the Qur'an. Just as the Muslims participated in the Vaishnava devotion, so the Hindus likewise venerated Muslim *pirs* (Saints) as immediate and intermediary spiritual guides. Alaol, a Muslim, was one of the most celebrated poets of the seventeenth century, and a great master of Hindu sciences; he became "the pioneer of the Bengali neo-classicism."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See, S. Abid Hussain, "National Culture of India", in *Traditional Cultures in South-East Asia*. Bombay (UNESCO), 1958.

⁴⁶ J.C. Gosh, op. cit., p. 83.

Bengali architecture, developed during the period of independent Sultans, similarly exhibits this cultural synthesis. The most ancient of Hindu temples still standing are of this period. Notwithstanding their traditional form of Bengali house, these temples are influenced by Indo-Saracenic architecture as attested to by the dimensions of vaults, the numerous domes and towers, and the multiple roses and geometric designs.⁴⁷ On the other hand, mosques, madrasas, and monuments constructed by the sultans borrowed certain forms and details from the local architecture.⁴⁸ This is manifested clearly by the Adina mosque at Pandua (the second largest in all of India), which was constructed between 1364 and 1374.⁴⁹ One notices in other old mosques an admixture of Muslim geometrical art and of floral designs inspired by Hindu forms and *alpanas*. Better yet, the symbol of the lotus is adapted in an "Islamized" form wherein the word "Allah" is engraved in Arabic; one also sees, here and there, a multitude of crescents with stars. This symbol, we should point out here, has since become very popular among the Muslims of Bengal.⁵⁰

As for the pictorial art, it can be said here that it is well-known that Muslim orthodoxy does not favour any figurative art. Accordingly, as is the case elsewhere in the Islamic world, Muslim Bengal did not produce objects of art of exceptional value. All the same, the folk art of Bengal inherited by the Muslims had a flourishing, limited, of course; but it developed in a new direction. It is in the art of tapestry, picture scrolls of the hero-saints (*Ghazir pat*), and works of ceramics and pottery that this flourishing is remarkable.⁵¹

These developments in art, architecture, and literature under the Pathans were not always patronized by the regime in power, but were rather fostered by the socio-political climate that prevailed in that epoch. The tolerance and ambiance of liberalism to which the

⁴⁷ Bimal Kumar Dutt, "Bengal Temples", *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, XXI, 1, 1955, p. 43; Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Doct. Diss. Allahabad, (1922), 1954, p. 255.

⁴⁸ R. E. M. Wheeler, *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*, London, 1950, p. 110; A. H. Dani, *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*...

⁴⁹ Abid Ali Khan and Stapleton, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁵⁰ Muhammad Enamul Haq, *Muslim Bengali Literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 44-45.

⁵¹ M. Rahman, *Arts and Crafts of Muslim Bengal*, Rajshahi University, 1962.

medieval literature attests helped the Bengali genius find the synthesis it sought. The arrival of the Moghuls, may, perhaps not have been decisive in this respect. Moreover, a new fusion, which might have had good results, was not possible, it seemed, because of the resistance that Bengal posed to them.⁵²

If the good relationship between the lotus and the crescent, which was making the diverse cultures in Bengal into one civilization, was not directly threatened by the Moghul invasion, it was so threatened by the continuous wars and by internal conflicts among the feudal chiefs and by the great epidemic of 1575.⁵³ Gaur, the prestigious capital of Bengal under the Sultans, was destroyed. And, other cities which claimed the title could never attain the glory of Gaur or of the cities of central and northern India. Henceforth, the new capitals of Bengal identified their culture with that of Agra and Delhi, without preserving their own distinct features.⁵⁴ The poet Mukunda Rama traces for us a pathetic picture of that epoch.⁵⁵ Bengali poets were not patronized by the Moghul emperors even though they did not hesitate to eulogize them when peace returned during the reigns of Shah Jahan (1627-1657) and Aurangzeb (1657-1707).⁵⁶

Socially, the Moghuls introduced a new element represented by the Shi'ites.⁵⁷ Their heroic and tragic poetry were born out of the

⁵² Narahari Kaviraj, *Swadhinata Sangrame Bangla*, (Bengal in the struggle of independence, a marxist-study and translated in Russian), Calcutta, 1961 (1954); p. 15; The Moghul input in the literature and in the customs was, however, very marked since the 18th century; there exists even Urdu and Persian works by Bengali writers (S. M. Ikram and P. Spear, *The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan*, Karachi, 1955; N. I. M. Sufian *Bangla Sahityer Nutan Itihas*, Dacca, n. d., p. 247-250.

⁵³ Muhammad Enamul Haq, *op. cit.*, p. 95

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁵⁵ Cf. Kavikankan Chandi (16th century), University of Calcutta, 1924; Dr. M. Enamul Haq observes, "Morality was at a low ebb, famine was rampant and the starving peasantry were selling of their cattle and plots of land. In short, there was no atmosphere for the growth of culture. Literature remained static; some minor writers were indeed born, but their works were wanting in life and fire, and there is hardly a significant name to mention among them." (*op. cit.*, p. 96.)

⁵⁶ Cf. *Kalikamangal* (1676). Poet Krishna Rama Das makes an interesting comment on the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb, known as a fanatic and cruel towards the Hindus, that he was loved by the people like Rama.

⁵⁷ James Wise, *Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal*, London, 1883, p. 6, 27, 107 & sq.

events in Karbala and their social and religious festivals prove the existence of this element, which was very powerful up to the fall of the Muslims.⁵⁸ The generous distribution of land, especially to the Hindu feudal chiefs, and the birth of a middle class of businessmen, bankers, and intermediaries (mostly Hindus), caused a social stratification in this period.⁵⁹ Generally, the newcomers and the indigenous converts to Islam are to be found respectively either at the top or at the bottom of the social ladder.⁶⁰ There was certainly a Muslim middle class—first of all the civil servants, and then the intellectuals and businessmen. But, being numerically weak and habitually comfort-loving, it did not play a significant role in social transformation. It associated for the most part with the upper class, but during times of crisis with the lower class.⁶¹ One should keep these points in mind because in the intellectual evolution of the Muslims during the recent times, interaction between the social classes has been a decisive factor.

Economically, Bengal was a viable country. It abounded in diverse vegetal products which used to nourish and clothe the inhabitants as well as help them do business with foreigners.⁶² In addition to the references we find in Muslim historiography and Bengali literature, the chronicles made by Arab, Chinese, and European travellers over the centuries reveal to us the richness of this alluvial land.⁶³ The abundance of its agricultural products and the excellence of its indigenous industries enabled Bengal from the

⁵⁸ Muhammad Enamul Haq, *op. cit.*, p. 102-104.

⁵⁹ See Ksitish Chandra Chowdhury, *The History and Economics of Land System in Bengal*, preface by Sir P. C. Ray, Calcutta, 1927; see also note 61.

⁶⁰ A. K. Nazmul Karim, *Changing Society in India and Pakistan*, Dacca, 1956, p. 140

⁶¹ B. B. M. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes: their Growth in Modern Times*, London, 1961, p. 58, 78 & 186.

⁶² W.W. Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, t. II : *Bengal to Cutwa*, London, 1881, p. 4 : "The people of the Eastern districts of the Province are as a rule much better off than those of the Western districts." (p. 301.)

⁶³ See, for example the chronicles of the Moorish, Ibn Battutah in (French translation by C. Defremery & B. R. Sanguinetti, Paris, 1853 - 1859); of six Chinese travellers from the 14th to 16th century, translated by P. C. Bagchi in *Visva-Bharati Annals*, I, 1945, p. 96-134. Among the chronicles of Europeans travellers Samuel Purchus, *Hakluytus Posthumus* (Venetian traveller Nicolo di Conti), Glasgow, 1906; *The Itinerary of Ludovico di Verthema of Bologna*, London, 1928; *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, London, 1921.

beginning of the eighteenth century to engage itself in virtually unilateral foreign export trade. Bengal accumulated wealth in gold from selling its merchandise to European countries.⁶⁴

But, due to the poor condition of administration at that time, the wealth of the country was utilized only to benefit the upper class, which frustrated the lower class and retarded the evolution of the middle class. One might think that the flourishing of the latter would have constituted the most solid pillar of a balanced social system. Now, the evolution of this middle class became delayed. And, this was due in large measure to the British – the new masters of the country. They reversed the system of external commerce as the national wealth was transferred to Great Britain.⁶⁵ An English civil servant explains well of the situation:

"During the Muslim administration, individuals spent their fortune in place from where they acquired them and even when severe measures might have been undertaken by the State for its accumulation, the rapid circulation of money permitted to largely ameliorate and to embellish the country without diminution of the value of money."⁶⁶

Notwithstanding its flourishing economy, the situation in Bengal started to deteriorate from the early years of the eighteenth century. The Moghul regime became weak at the center and internal conflicts engulfed the country. The feudal chiefs declared themselves independent and a chaotic condition prevailed all through Bengal.⁶⁷ In this state of affairs, cultural development consequently found itself at an impasse. The Muslim poets did not find original inspiration, with the exception of writers like Gariibullah and Sayyid Hamza, who introduced a new literary style called *dobhashi* (bilingual), that is to say, a Muslim literature of rustic tendency.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Sukumar Bhattacharya, *The East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, from 1704 to 1740*, doct. diss. London, 1954, p. 222-223.

⁶⁵ Harry Verelest, *A View of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the Growth of English Government in Bengal*, London, 1772.

⁶⁶ George Forster (Civil Service of the Honourable East India Company), *A Journey from Bengal to England*, London, Vol. I, p. 5. (New note : This is an approximate retranslation of the French as the original text is not available at home).

⁶⁷ For details, Cf. J. N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II.

⁶⁸ Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed All Ahsan, *Bangla Sahityer Itibritta*, University of Dacca, 1956, p. 21-32, and *infra*, chap. III.

The literary scene was enriched, as well, by the appearance of a great Hindu poet, Bharat Chandra (d. 1760), who earned his celebrity by exalting the neo-classicism of Alaol.⁶⁹ Bharat Chandra was able to accept *jabani-mishal* language (i.e., Bengali mixed with Arabic and Persian words used by the Muslims) in his poetic expression. But subsequently, towards the end of the eighteenth century, due to the efforts of the Christian missionaries and the English administrators to bring about the birth of Bengali prose, an intellectual transformation took place. Then Bengali poetry took a new turn and clothed itself with something that was more urban than ever before. The Muslim intellectuals (together with many Hindu village-dwellers) found themselves alienated from this new trend. A sudden change in all aspects of life in Bengal appeared imminent once again.⁷⁰

This change was due essentially to the appearance of a third force - a political, economic, and cultural force in Bengal, and a little later, throughout India. This force represented in large measure the new Occident: commercial, imperialist, Christian, and scientific. We know that from the sixteenth century the traders and then the missionaries (Portuguese, French, Danish, and English) came successively to the soil of Bengal.⁷¹ Being motivated by commercial interests and imperial ambitions, the British proved the superiority of their power of organization. And, being aided by certain ministers, by generals, and by the emerging Hindu bourgeoisie,⁷² they inflicted defeat upon Sirajuddowla, the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.⁷³ This defeat, as is well-known, brought to the Bengalis, and later to the Indians, nearly two centuries of foreign domination. Soon after

⁶⁹ J.C. Gosh, *op. cit.*, p. 95, 96-100; Muhammad Abdul Hai & Syed Ali Ahsan, *op. cit.*, p.23.

⁷⁰ By underlining the attachment of eminent Bengali personalities to Calcutta, the new capital, Arthur Geddes justly observes: "This centralization was so that one envisage, in general, in regard to this, the development of Bengal in the 19th century, and that one forgets the rural origins and their relationship with the historical tradition." (*Au pays de Tagore : La civilisation rurale du Bengale Occidental et ses facteurs géographiques*, Montpellier, 1927, p. 195-196.)

⁷¹ Cf. J. A. Campos, *Portuguese in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1919; *Précis historique sur les établissements français dans l'Inde*, Pondichery 1865. Georg Norregaard, "The English Purchase of the Danish Possessions in the East Indies and Africa, 1845 and 1850". *Revue d'histoire des colonies*, Paris, 1933. cf. bibliogr.

⁷² Cf. B. B. Misra, *op. cit.*, p.78.

⁷³ A. K. Mitra, *Sirajuddowla*, Calcutta, 1897.

this event, a Hindu "renaissance" manifested itself in Bengal. But the Muslims disappeared from the national scene for a century (1757-1857). Now we must take into account the events that took place during all these years, without which the Muslim renewal towards the end of the nineteenth century as well as the currents and counter-currents of more immediate recent history may elude our understanding.

British imperialism in India starts with the Nawab's defeat at Plassey in Bengal in 1757.⁷⁴ But, it is well-known to the historians that this did not directly bestow privileges of power on the English and did not, by itself, affect the political destiny of the country. No new commercial advantage was demanded from Mir Zafar, the new Nawab of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.

The East India Company did not desire much advantages from him, as it was being satisfied with the accords previously agreed upon. For a considerable time, it did not show any enthusiasm for controlling the administration of the country, but was satisfied with exploiting its wealth.⁷⁵ Other developments, however, like, the diarchy (introduced by Clive in 1765) and the act of shifting the capital from Murshidabad (last Muslim capital) to Calcutta (1768) had great repercussions for the political and economic life of the country. The devastating famine in 1769 destroyed the economic equilibrium among the masses.⁷⁶ And, the Permanent Settlement in 1793 ruined all the high bourgeois Muslim families.⁷⁷ A yet more severe blow to Muslim interests came in 1820 with the Resumption Proceedings, which resulted in the ruin of thousands of cultured

⁷⁴ Arbitrary choice, but generally accepted. For further light on this point, one can consult P. Spear, *The Oxford History of India*, London 1958, p. 446-454.

⁷⁵ Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company*, Berlin, 1955, p. 189-206.

⁷⁶ The first consequence of the British domination was put the country in a state of abject poverty. It is said that, this famine reduced one third of the Bengal population; as it occurred in the Bengali year 1176, it is commonly known as the tragedy of 76 (*chitturer mannantar*) and had already taken place in literature.

⁷⁷ By the Permanent Settlement, the former bankers, agents of the *treasury* of the Muslim courts, business men, and sometimes men of little social importance but having rendered some service to the British, form a new feudal clan (generally coming out of the Hindu middle class), the zamindars (*Briggs, Land Taxation in India*, London, 1930, p. 182; Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society - A Study of the Economic Structure in Bengal Villages*, Berlin, 1957, p. 22-51).

families and innumerable prospering educational organizations.⁷⁸ Lord Cornwallis, author of these reforms, ostensibly introduced these in the economic interest of the country, and admitted that these were also in the political interest of the imperial power.⁷⁹

The enduring effects of these changes have not always been recognized. An artisan class destroyed, industry ruined,⁸⁰ commerce passed altogether into the hands of the foreigner, a "return to the land," following the unanticipated changes to the system of rural property, but with the cultivators yet more miserable, a new middle class seeking favour from the British who had created it – a class division ever more visible between the literate and the illiterate, the extinction of moral and spiritual enterprises, and the decline of creative power, finally the rapid decadence of rural civilization – such is the balance sheet of these reforms. In the end, it was the Muslims who, more than all their compatriots, became the victims.

In the religio-cultural domain, the situation was even worse. Although Warren Hastings, the then Viceroy, founded an Islamic College in 1781⁸¹ in response to the desire and demand of the Muslims, systematic patronage of the Hindus was manifest from the beginning of British administration in the programmes of Fort William College⁸² and the educational activities in the Hindu College (1817), the Sanskrit College (1829), the Calcutta School Book

⁷⁸ "The Resumption Proceedings, although destined to apply to all races, fell very heavily on the Muslims. The Hindus, for the most part, had recent titles, so well maintained up. But all the Muslim families and foundations who could not produce the "Sanads" having certified that they possessed the right of the properties granted by the Imperial Court of Delhi, were immediately confiscated of their belongings" (Sayyid Amir Ali, *The Mohammedans of India*, London, 1872, p. 9; retranslated).

⁷⁹ Briggs, *op. cit.*, 1830, p.182.

⁸⁰ Pierre Meile, *Histoire de l'Inde*, Paris, 1951, p. 95-98. Consequently, Dacca was not exporting muslin since 1817 although in 1787, Dacca exported muslin worth of more than 3 million rupees. The population of this city passed from 150,000 inhabitants to 30,000 or 40,000 in the beginning of the 19th century (R. C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age (1757-1857)*, London, 1902, Vol. II, p. 105).

⁸¹ W. Hastings also instituted the Act of Settlement in 1781 to administer the country in conformity with the Muslim law or Hindu "Shastra" as the case may be. The reforms had had a long term consequence : to turn the social evaluation into a reactionary sense and to reaffirm the Brahmanique and Islamic orthodoxies.

⁸² Cf. C. R. Wilson, *Old Fort William in Bengal : Selection of Official Documents dealing with its History*, London, 1906.

Society, and the Committee of Public Instruction (1823). The Muslims were yet to lose their trump asset in 1836, when English replaced Persian as the official language. English education spread gradually in the country. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, the Hindus began to take advantage of it. The Muslims, on the contrary, proudly kept themselves aloof because of their antipathy towards foreign intermediary. It was not their only motive; they were suspicious of the demoralizing effects because already the Christian missionaries had launched vigorous attack against their religion while without neglecting to convert the local people.⁸³ Also, in a frightened and demoralized population there were born distrust and hostile fear towards the British, thus leading finally to a battle unto death. The Wahabi revolt together with the great struggle of 1857 are the proofs of this, both of which had an aspect of nationalist aspiration and an eminently religious character.⁸⁴

One is amazed and disheartened to witness the decadence of the Islamic populace of the subcontinent, which corresponded with a more global phenomenon in this period of history.⁸⁵ As far as the Muslims of Bengal are concerned, it seemed that they were submerged in an "eternal slumber". Their political, economic, and social degradation was even worse than the situation of a people who had just lost their liberty. Being distanced from all the good things of life, the Muslims of this epoch did not even immerse themselves in the stream of their own civilization. They were in utter social, cultural, and intellectual decadence at that time.

They had forgotten their revolutionary democratic ideas and the ideas of social equality and spiritual unity of Islam, which previously had created a new current in the Indian civilization. In place of this,

⁸³ For more details, see Mohammad Hamidullah, "Défense de la culture islamique pendant la domination anglaise de l'Inde", *Prof. Saaffi Presentation Volume*, Lahore, p.8-9.

⁸⁴ Julien Vinson remarks in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France (1906) "this révolte, mutiny as the Englishmen say, had an essentially Muslim character" (*L'Inde et le Mahométisme*, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes, Paris, p. 21.)

⁸⁵ Cf. *Classicisme et déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'Islam*, Collective work, Paris, 1957.

bigotry and divisiveness in the form of a system of castes and other social evils had embedded themselves in all corners of the Muslim society.⁸⁶ This condition persisted, although to a lesser degree, up to the first decade of the twentieth century, even after numerous reforms. This led the poet Muhammad Iqbal to say in disgust:

"Surely we have out-Hindued the Hindu himself; we are suffering from a double caste system, sectarianism and the social caste system which we have either learned or inherited from the Hindus. This is one of the quiet ways in which the conquered nations revenge themselves on their conquerors."⁸⁷

The vast masses of the Muslim proletariat in Bengal⁸⁸, illiterate and miserable, possessed nothing of the Islamic social system in its pure state, unless it is the "golden rule": one God, mission of the Prophet, truth of the Qu'ran. They were accustomed to join in Hindu festivals, not merely as spectators, but as enthusiastic participants. When epidemics broke out, they would indirectly join the *pūja* (worship) of Shitala and Rakhsakali, the goddesses of epidemics, in order to be spared. In remote villages, many other Hindu gods and goddesses were worshipped right up to the twentieth century. Devotion to *pīrs* (Saints) or *murshids* (spiritual directors), living or dead, became an institution which turned into a form of idolatry.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, these social aberrations should not be confused with the spiritual and intellectual synthesis undertaken during the Middle Ages by various forces of which we have already spoken.

Dates for marriage were fixed regularly by Hindu astrologers. Polygamy and divorce generally went hand in hand. Excessive expenditures for marriages threw the Muslim peasants into the cruel hands of Hindu money-lenders. Often they lost their land, their homes, and all their belongings. Quarrels with their neighbours led

⁸⁶ Jean Filliozat. "L'attitude des musulmans de l'Inde à l'égard des castes (nouvelles recherches)", *Annuaire du Collège de France*, Paris, 1961, t. LXI, p. 281.

⁸⁷ Quoted by Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed All Ahsan, *Bangla Sahityer Itibritta* (Dacca 4th edition, 1974, p. 8.) from *Census of India*, Report : 1911, XIV Punjab, pt. I, p. 165.

⁸⁸ The first census report gave us the figure of the Muslim population of Bengal (28 District & Sylhet) 17, 534, 774 on a total of 36, 564, 708 (W.W. Hunter, op. cit., p. 137).

⁸⁹ Cf. Mohammad Enamul Haq, *Purba Pakistane Islam*, Dacca, 1948.

them to the courts of law, where they spent their last farthing on Hindu lawyers. This situation was noted and criticized by many Muslim intellectuals; but, due to the abnormal condition in the society, none could avoid totally these machinations. On the contrary, all had become their prey.⁹⁰

This grave situation poses a difficult problem for the historian. Had there been no education on the part of the Muslims, who were for a long time responsible for the administration of the country and who possessed a rich heritage? Nor among their heirs and those who followed them? No amount of historical evidence can satisfy our desire to resolve the problem. But, one thing is beyond any doubt: the country was not illiterate, even though evidently it lacked the scientific education of modern Western nations. A thorough study of the state of cultural and social development and of the enormous quantity of available documents would confirm this. On the basis of only official British records and the report made by a missionary, Professor Max Muller ascertained that there were 80,000 indigenous schools in Bengal prior to the British occupation.⁹¹ But, because of the changes mentioned above, the Muslim community preferred to restrict itself to religious instructions and to nourish itself on popular traditional and religious literature, rather than make the best use of modern education – scientific or literary.

We have already mentioned that the cultural or pedagogic institutions of the Muslims had been ruined by various reforms. We have got reasons to believe that all élite (*sharif*) Muslim families maintained a scholarly establishment wherein the members of their families and their poor neighbours received a free and liberal education. Some of these establishments survived even into the twentieth century, although the greater part of these important centers had disappeared after the imposition of the political reforms. That had two absolutely tragic consequences. In the first place, the Muslims were altogether absent from Indian history in the first half of the nineteenth century, and more particularly, from the events of

⁹⁰ Cf. Chap. II.

⁹¹ Quoted by Tarak Das, *India in World politics*, Calcutta, 1931, p. 239; he compares this situation with that of 1921-1922 when there were only 39 colleges, 881 high schools and 35,621 primary schools, being the total 36,541 institutions (Cf. *India Year Book*, 1924, edited by Sir Stanley Read), and comments that as far as the Knowledge of the 3 R, the country was more developed previously.

the period of the Bengali "renaissance". Secondly, in place of participating in this "renaissance" or attempting an alternative one, they developed among themselves a movement that went counter to the dominant modernist tendency on the principle of returning to early Islam. Before treating in detail the religious movements of the time, we wish to emphasize an intellectual trait of the Muslims noticed by Dr. W.W. Hunter who, by virtue of his being a member of the civil service, had involved himself for a long time with the Muslim peasantry and aristocracy of Bengal in order to observe the situation. His study, *The Indian Mussalmans* (1871), although written from an imperial perspective with a desire to know whether the Muslims were "constrained by their religion to revolt against the Queen" (the subtitle of the first edition; the study was inspired by the Viceroy of the time, Lord Mayo), was welcomed by historians as the best document on the Wahabi movement of India and on the social state of the Muslims in India, in general, and in Bengal, in particular.

According to Hunter,

"The Hindu has unquestionably a high order of intellect but an universal and immeasurable superiority on the part of the Hindus, such as would be required to explain their monopoly of official preferment, is unknown at the present day, and is in direct contradiction to their past history. The truth is that when the country passed under our rule, the Musulmans were the superior race, and superior not only in stoutness of heart and strength of arm, but in power of political organization, and in the science of practical government."⁹²

Hunter was also of the opinion that the Muslim educational system, although somewhat outdated and inferior to the English system, was infinitely superior to other systems existing in India. Despite that, the British government introduced a policy of public instructions and quickly formed a generation of educated people (incidentally, not the Muslims) to staff the operations of the various colonial offices. The old Muslim system was abandoned and the Muslim youth found all approaches to public life closed to them. Hunter further observed that :

⁹² Cf. *The Indian Mussalmans*, Calcutta, 1945, p.162. Lahore edition, p. 168.

"Had the Musalmans been wise, they would have perceived the change, and accepted their fate. But an ancient conquering race cannot easily divest itself of the traditions of its nobler days."⁹³

His criticism of the initial English system of education is also noteworthy :

"No youngman, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, passes through our Anglo-Indian school without learning to disbelieve the faith of his father. ... In addition to the rising generation of sceptics, we have the support of the comfortable classes: men of inert convictions and of some property, who say their prayers, decorously attend the mosque, and think very little about the matter. But important as these two sections of the Muhammedans may be from a political point of view, it has always seemed to me an inexpressibly painful incident of our position in India that the best men are not on our side."⁹⁴

Now, it is helpful to consider briefly the ideas and action of the "best men", who, when their Hindu compatriots were on the British side and taking advantage of this liaison, were themselves working against the foreign power and were creating a "chronic hostility" towards them. Although totally crushed in 1868 (by the famous Wahabi trials) and again in 1871, when Hunter was writing this book and when other currents had already penetrated the society,⁹⁵ the British regime could expect no more than that they would limit themselves to inaction. The "best men" were represented by the *Wahabi* heroes. The reformist movements, religious and social, which they had launched and these which one can criticize as aggressive, reactionary, and xenophobic, had definitely left their stamp on the subsequent evolution of the society.⁹⁶

Although these movements were for a long time thought to be an enterprise directed by the Wahabis, whether of the left or of the right, recent researches reveal that there were two movements in Bengal

⁹³ *Ibid* p. 170. Lahore edition, p. 176.

⁹⁴ *Ibid* p. 136. Lahore edition, p. 138.

⁹⁵ Cf. Chap. I.

⁹⁶ Mahmud Shah Qureshi, "Unish Shatake Muslim Dharmandolan". *Masik Mohammadi*, Dacca, 1958, t. XXX, 11, p. 816-821.

which were quite distinct from the Arab movement and divergent in their programmes and objectives.⁹⁷ The first, called the *Faraidi* Movement, was very much in the line of Wahabism, whereas the second, the *Tariqat-i-Muhammadiya*, had its origin in Delhi in the teachings of Shah Waliyullah (1703-1762).⁹⁸ As both of these developed into large mass movements, they became very active in the events that stirred the entire nineteenth century, especially in its earlier half.

The *Faraidi* presented itself as a movement of socio-economic reforms among the lower strata of the Muslims, primarily in Bengal, being inspired by the same motives as the Wahabis, but without the ferocity of their iconoclasm. The *Tariqat*, on the other hand, tried to develop a programme of politico-religious renewal in all sectors of the Muslims in India. Despite the similarity of their condemnation of polytheistic customs (*shirk*) and heretical innovations (*bid'ah*) of contemporary society, the *Tariqat* differed with the *Faraidi* on certain fundamental doctrinal matters. The *Faraidis* were in favour of *taqlid*, that is to say, adherence to traditional Muslim laws without reexamination. The *Tariqatis*, on the contrary, advocated *ijtihad*, that is to say, the critical and novel examination of the teachings of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet.

It was a Bengali, Haji Shariat Allah (1781-1840), who launched the *Faraidi* movement around 1818.⁹⁹ Twenty years of his residence

⁹⁷ On the Wahabis, issues of the great Arab reformer Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1787), see the article in the *Encyclopædia of Islam*, Mann, *Description du Pacholik de Bagdad, Suivie d'une notice historique sur les wahhabis*, Paris, 1809; Mahdi Hussain, "Origin of Indian Wahhabism" (excerpt), *P. I. H. C.*, 3^o session, Calcutta, 1939, p. 1459, *History of the Freedom Movement*, collective work, Karachi, 1957, vol. I; Muin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, "Researches in the Islamic Revivalism of the 19th century and its effect on the Muslim society of Bengal", *Social Researches in East Pakistan*, Asiatic Society, Dacca, 1960, p. 30-51.

⁹⁸ Freeland Abbott compares Shah Waliyullah (alias Ahmad ibn' Abd-al-Rahim) to Dante and Erasmus. He further remarks, "in today's Pakistan, all the groups, whether they are *fundamentalist* or not, would claim to be intellectually affiliated to him" ("The Decline of the Mughal Empire and Shah Waliyullah", *Muslim World*, Hartford, 1962, LII, 2, p. 115-123; retranslated).

⁹⁹ Muin-ud-Din Ahmad Khan, "Tomb Inscriptions of Haji Shariat-Allah", *J. A. S. P.* Vol. III, Dacca, 1958, p. 187; A. S. Tritton, *Islam: Belief and Practices*, London, 1951, p. 160, and two communications: "Part played by Haji Shariat-Allah and his Son in the Socio-Political history of East Bengal" by Prof. Nurul Amin and "The *Faraidi* Movement" by Prof. Abdul Bari in *P. A. P. H. C.*, Karachi, 1955, p. 174-181 and 197-208.

and religious studies in Mecca made him a new person, intellectually. There, he was initiated into the methods of organization exemplified by the Wahabis of his contemporary Arabia. On his return to Bengal, he was able to gather around himself quickly numerous co-religionists with whom he acted as the *ustad* (teacher) while they his *shagrids* (students), thus distancing himself from the time-honored system of *pir* (master) and *murids* (disciples). He condemned this latter system, which, in his opinion, carried the risk that the disciples would finally offer submission to their spiritual master and fall into the domain of *shirk* (worship of another, besides Allah).

He had the merit of resuscitating the religious fervour of the Muslims of Bengal, until then "docile and apathetic". Gradually, these believers returned to the true Islamic belief by rejecting the socio-religious aberrations that have been already described. But, by doing this they suppressed the landmarks that they had set up in respect of the synthesis of culture in Bengal, already menaced by other forces since the arrival of the British. The literary production of this period and, above all, the interest that the public showed in religious and communal literature confirm this observation. The ignorance of Hindus about this clandestine development among the Muslims is in large measure the origin of the latter social schism.

The Muslim attitude, naturally, was hostile towards the British political power. But, Shariat Allah did not advocate a programme of *jihad* (holy war) against it. Even so, he declared that the British India had become a *dar-ul-harb* (an abode of war), wherein one should not perform congregational prayers on Friday, nor of those belonging to the grand religious festivals.

His son, Mohammad Mohsin (1819-1861), was more inclined towards politics. Better known as Dudu Mian, he incited his co-religionists, especially those of East Bengal, to resist by all means the tyranny and exactions of Hindu zamindars, money-lenders, and European indigo planters. He was arrested during the revolt of 1857. But, his disciples remained united in communal solidarity and maintained for a long time an anti-British sentiment.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ His grand son Badsha Mia manifested this sentiment by collaborating directly with Gandhi and Mohamed Ali during the Non-cooperation and the Khilafat Movements.

The *Tariqat* movement struggled on two fronts: against internal decline and against the danger of foreign domination. The rich thoughts of Waliyullah served as the basis for regenerating classical Islam, while without losing medieval values.¹⁰¹ We have already discussed about the reformist activities during the movement. Due to the political climate, the leaders manifested more of the spirit of *jihad*. Under the leadership of Shah Ismail Shahid (1781-1831), grandson of his predecessor¹⁰² Sayyid Ahmad Brelawi (1782-1831),¹⁰³ the partisans of the movement engaged in a long and harsh struggle against the Sikhs and the British. They even won a few battles. Sayyid Ahmad was installed at Peshawar as *Khalifah* (Caliph) before being martyred in 1831.¹⁰⁴

Thousands of Muslims sent their sons to fight in the movement and donated millions of rupees.¹⁰⁵ The Bengalis, who traditionally had been considered timid in the eyes of the courageous Punjabis and Pathans, went more than 2,000 kilometers on foot to reach the field of battle and struggled bravely there until their death. Likewise in Bengal, Titu Mir (alias Muhammad Nisar Ali), an ardent partisan of the movement, fought in 1831 against a Hindu zamindar who levied a tax on those who wore beards, thus humiliating the pious Muslims. He was crushed in the end by the English.¹⁰⁶ W.W. Hunter observes that, in spite of this,

“Everywhere they stirred the Muhammadan population to its depths; and although the keen intellect of the Bengali eventually gave its present tone to the movement,¹⁰⁷ the revival burst forth with equal heat for a time in all provinces of India.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ M. Daud Rahbar, “Shah Waliyullah and Ijtihad”, *The Muslim World*, Hartford, 1955, n^o 44, p. 346-358.

¹⁰² Abdullah Butt, *Aspects of Shah Ismail Shahid. Essays on his Literary, Political and Religious Activities*, Lahore 1943.

¹⁰³ Cf. An important study in Urdu by Golam Rasul Mihr, *Sayyid Ahmed Shahid*, etc. Lahore, n.d. [1953-1954], 2 Vol.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *History of the Freedom Movement*, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 55.

¹⁰⁵ W.W. Hunter, op. cit. Also our Chapter III.

¹⁰⁶ Biharilal Sarkar, *Titu Mir*, Calcutta, 1304 b.s., Sharif al-Mujahid, “The Bengali Mujahidin”, *Morning News*, Dacca 23th March, 1962. Let us underline that this point is important to understand later events.

¹⁰⁷ The true tune was given by the movement of Karamat All and Abdul Latif, Cf. *Infra* and Chap. I.

¹⁰⁸ W. W. Hunter, op. cit., p. 42, Lahore edition, p. 49-50

It is difficult to say if there existed any direct relationship between these *mujahidins*, or holy warriors, and the *sepoys* (soldiers) who launched the “mutiny” (1857) to recover their religious, political, and human rights through restoring the Moghul power. However, modern historians are unanimous in thinking that they had voluntarily participated in the insurrection, which was extended from Delhi to Bengal. Moreover, these *mujahidins* undertook secretly to restore Muslim power. After suppressing the sepoys, it was not difficult for the British to break the efforts of the *mujahidins*.

New currents of thought had also appeared in the Muslim community that rather aided the English. Under the direction of a great religious leader, Karamat Ali (died in 1873), a large portion of the movement sought merely to promote reforms which concerned only the Muslim society. Karamat Ali adhered to orthodoxy; but, he equally retained sufism that left its mark on the social evolution of the Muslims in Bengal.¹⁰⁹

On the political level, the association of Karamat Ali with Nawab Abdul Latif on the one hand and with the Anglo-Muslim *entente* of Sir Sayyid Ahmed on the other, constituted new elements of a Muslim awakening in modern India. Karamat Ali managed to produce a *fatwa*¹¹⁰ whereby the British India henceforth could be considered as *dar al islam* (an abode of peace), where the faithful Muslims could continue to enjoy the *aman-i-awwal* (religious security and Islamic statute). His efforts to get the fanatic *ulemas* to accept this *fatwa* constituted a major achievement. Thus, despite the crushing collapse, the Muslims in Bengal (and in India as well) rediscovered their political life – and, this fact was expressed theologically as good subjects of the British Empire. And, it is from this point that we begin our study of the intellectual development among the Muslims, which was aided as well by other modern currents.

Before terminating these remarks, it will be befitting to repeat the statement that the influence of these religious movements did not stop at with that period, but have subsisted further to our own day. Intellectually it has always sought to regenerate an authentic Islam while weakening the burdens of medieval authorities on the Muslim spirit. Socially and politically, it inspired the Muslims, not only of

¹⁰⁹ A. Yusuf Ali, *A Cultural History of India*, Bombay, 1940, p. 137-142.

¹¹⁰ W.W. Hunter, op. cit., Also, on chap. I.

Bengal but of all India, to affirm with a Seizure of Consciousness to sharpen their religious and political unity.

Thus, it is in the spirit of extreme exclusivity that the Muslim modernism was advancing and with which we shall be concerned. But, the Hindu reforms and the rebirth of Bengali letters - we use these two terms to refer to what is called the "Bengali renaissance" - became constricted by an opposing exclusivity. The liberal ideas of Brahmoism,¹¹¹ which had been at the base of the Hindu reawakening, were similarly stifled by tendencies of "aggressive Hinduism".¹¹² The new literature manifested itself principally in opposition to the Muslims - "the former masters of the country". Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Nabin Chandra Sen, Rangalal Bandyopadhyaya, to cite only the apostles of the rebirth of Bengali literature, exhibited consciously or unconsciously, a kind of hostility towards Islam, and its adherents for the benefice of Hindu contribution to "Aryan" India.¹¹³ Successive generations, following the examples of this tendency, remained hostile or totally indifferent to the Muslims. The movements called "national", beginning from 1860, grew in an ever increasing number; but it remained basically exclusivist, if not Hinduist.¹¹⁴ The observations made by two Hindu leaders, intellectuals, and men of action, will enable us to assess the situation better. Rajnarayan Bose proposed:

"We shall participate to the extent possible with the Muslims and other Indians in the political and other aspects of life. As a peasant cultivates not the entire country but a limited plot of land, our field of action will consist of Hindu society. We will consecrate our life to the fraternal reunion of Bengalis, Hindusthanis, Punjabis, Rajputs, Marathis, and Madrasis in order to form one Hindu spirit and to find the way to liberate ourselves."¹¹⁵

In an article, Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya, for his part, praised the egalitarian forces of Islam; however, he remarked that,

¹¹¹ Louis Renou, *op. cit.* p. 114-115.

¹¹² François Léger, *Les influences occidentales dans la révolution de l'Orient: Inde, Malaisie, Chine (1850-1950)*, Paris, 1955. Vol. I, p. 41-51.

¹¹³ Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan, *op. cit.*, p. 68, 219-220, 236 and 242-243. *cf.* one chapter II and III.

¹¹⁴ *Cf.* chap. I.

¹¹⁵ Quoted by Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Banglar Jagaran*, Calcutta, 1956. p. 127; Raj Narayan Basu, *Hindu Dharmar Shrestatva Visayak Prastab*, Calcutta, 1873.

"Given time it is altogether possible that the Muslims will be identified as a caste of the Hindu society more or less as the Jains and the Sikhs are so considered".¹¹⁶

Juxtaposed to the Muslim awakening, the political nationalism during that time gave rise to the national hymn - "Bande Mataram" (Hail to Mother)¹¹⁷ - the cow protection societies¹¹⁸ and the Shivaji festivals.¹¹⁹ All these things went counter to Muslim aspirations in India. A very small minority of the enlightened Muslims (especially the writers) tried to accommodate themselves to the Hindu manifestations. But, by a large majority, the intellectuals of the Muslim community were vehemently opposed to this sort of nationalism in order to establish a definitive separatism. The complexity of the problem was great. Let us consider, for example, the case of the Shivaji festival. Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932), a very popular liberal leader, even among the Muslims, consciously tried to create a "composite nationalism".¹²⁰ However, he commented regarding this festival:

¹¹⁶ Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya *Samajik Pravandha*, Calcutta, 1892, p. 9-12; Mukhopadhyaya also underlines that the Muslims might develop themselves in a self-protecting society because they possessed a retentive memory of their glorious past and of their domination (in India), and maintain amongst themselves an extraordinary sympathy (*Ibid.*, p. 12); on him, *cf.* J.C. Gosh, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹¹⁷ The hymn of the "Sannyasi" (*cf.* S. B. Chowdhury, *Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India: 1765-1857*, Calcutta, 1955) who were dreaming, according to the author Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (*Anandamath*, 1882) to establish Hindu empire on the ruins of that of the Muslims. The opinions on this song are divided; Benoy Sarkar characterizes this as a positivist song (*Cf. Villages and Towns as Social Patterns*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 351); Francois Leger, on the other hand, underlines its religious aspect and opines that one can interpret it as a hymn to Kali (*op. cit.*, p. 118). Nevertheless, the Muslims condemned violently this song for its contents as well as for its context.

¹¹⁸ *Cf.* chap. II.

¹¹⁹ It relates to the festival commemorating the creation of the Marhatta State. The accession of Shivaji to power, outcome of his conflict with the Mughol emperor Aurangzeb had always been a subject of admiration for the Hindus ("Victorious champion of Hinduism in the 18th century"), whereas the Muslims condemned him as "bandit - chief, traitor to the regime". Instituted by the Hindu leader B. G. Tilak, this festival towards the 19th century, had been a veiled anti-British manifestation. Besides the general sympathy of the Hindus even Tagore himself expressed his sentiment on it in a poem of the same title. It goes without saying that the Muslim intellectuals, still searching a *modus vivendi* in India, were hurt by these so called "nationalist" enterprises.

¹²⁰ *Cf. Studies in the Bengal Renaissance. In Commemoration of the Birth Centenary of B. C. Pal*, Jadavpur, 1958, p. 201.

"Shivaji was the symbol of Hindu nationalist sentiment. Without symbolism one cannot build a national movement. This symbol does not express antagonism against Muslims. The Hindus would readily accept that the latter celebrate a similar festival in the name of Akbar."¹²¹

Nevertheless, these arguments, although expressed in good faith, did not convince the Muslims because they knew very well that the historic confrontation between the Emperor and Shivaji was not with Akbar (1572-1605), the great Moghul Emperor of the spirit of synthesis, but with Aurangzeb (1658-1707), the last great Moghul and champion of Islamic orthodoxy. Being imbued with the religious ideas of the Traditionalists (which we have just considered) and the teachings of the Modernists (which we shall be considering in the chapters that follow), the Muslims cherished Aurangzeb, and not Akbar, despite the scholarly books written by Hindus which instructed them to the contrary.¹²² The multiple efforts made by the Muslims to write novels and epics with an exclusivist tendency, the hagiographic writings and, above all, the journals and reviews, reveal the position that they had taken vis-à-vis the encounter with the Hindu society more than they demonstrated their creative genius.

Literary success, however, crowned only their writings that were inspired by personal or social experiences. In this respect, the Muslim writers were influenced by the great masters of Bengali literature: Rabindranath Tagore, Satyendranath Dutt, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyaya, Manik Bandyopadhyaya, and others, while not always sharing their socio-political ideas. In other respects, they were eclipsed by these Hindu writers.

To study them, we must place them in the proper perspectives of social and political life that conditioned the intellectual evolution of the Muslims of Bengal during that period of nearly one hundred years. We shall now make attempts to present the scene in the pages that follow.

¹²¹ As quoted by Kazi. Abdul Wadud, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

¹²² We have already talked about the situation of Bengali prose. Muslims serve with the prose only in the last half of the 19th century. By this time, the text books written by Hindu authors, some of which are still in use, were sometimes condemned by Muslims. In this regard, the first systematic criticism is of S. N. A. Chowdhury *Vernacular Education in Bengal* (cf. *infra*, chap. III, note 47).

CHAPTER I

SEIZURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS : 1857-1905

Humanity, in all its stages of evolution, has always been a functional structure in which the most energetic men - whatever may be the form of this energy - have operated on the masses by giving them a determined configuration. This implies a certain basic community between the superior individuals and the ordinary multitude.

José ORTEGA Y GASSET
El tema de nuestro tiempo,
Madrid, 1955, p. 14.

One can approach the events that took place in of 1857 to trace the origin of the modern history of the Muslims of Bengal. Although the intellectual movements started a little later, it is convenient to take for the point of departure the year 1857 – “the date which served for India as the precarious and fragmented crystallization of a fiery agitation encountering the occupying power¹.” Of course, these events did not provoke an immediate renewal, but rather a modification of the social situation, a remodelling of the existing ideas, limited to the higher strata of the society, and mostly superficial, if these are to be judged from the developments that took place later. But, these latter developments, as will be found hereafter, were not the results of these events or their consequences. Also, we can describe the developments between 1857 to 1905 under the umbrella of the Seizure of Consciousness of the Muslims of Bengal.

¹ André Guimbreière, “Le réformisme Musulman en Inde,” *Orient*, Paris, 1960, 4^e trim., n° 16, p. 15.

Before entering into detail, two remarks could be made in this regard. The first is the comparison of the situation of the Muslims with that of the Hindus during the second half of the nineteenth century. In fact, the Hindus of the middle strata reconciled with the foreign power, took to Western education, and started to reform the society under the active direction of Raja Rammohun Ray and other reformers. These movements in their entirety were the driving force of the "Bengali renaissance," to which we have already alluded and which was spread all over India. It touched only the Hindus, however, and did not at that time influence the Muslims in Bengal. The movement in respect of its religious aspects had grand success. It brought, consequently, numerous reforms in the socio-religious domain of the Hindus (eg. prohibition of child marriage and the suttee, authorization of widows to remarry, etc.). Likewise, the foundation of Brahmoism and its subsequent division along with the resurgence of orthodox Hinduism, preoccupied the great Hindu mind.² But, the two large Hindu and Muslim communities did never form one Bengali society, nor did they participate together in any historical movement. They evolved in their respective ways, that is to say, without worrying much about the wider national interest. The Bengali renaissance, on the other hand, made a priority of English education which felicitated access to employment and other benefits of Western culture. Many a time, the Hindus of Bengal tried to acquire different European cultural patterns, which were contradictory to the Renaissance and the Reform of the French and the Industrial Revolution. The partisans of the renewal studied with great zeal both the Veda and the Bible, Kalidasa and Shakespeare. But, no one tried, at this stage, to integrate in an essentially national synthesis the tenets of the Muslims and the heritage of the golden age of the great Moghuls.³ One cannot ignore a historical coincidence : the Orientalist initiatives among the European intellectuals;⁴ in fact, eventually induced the Hindu renewal to transform itself into an aggressive "neo-Hinduism." After 1857,

² On this subject, there exists a number of studies; we indicate two best works of synthesis : Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Banglar Jagaran*, Calcutta 1959 & Amit Sen, *Notes on Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta 1957.

³ Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims: A Political History* (1858-1947), Bombay, 1959, p. 61.

⁴ See on this subject, Louis Renou, *Les littératures de l'Inde*, Paris, 1951, p. 114-120.

whenever the Muslims attempted to catch hold of the Hindu community, the latter preoccupied itself with various movements "national" in appearance, but which in reality remained strictly Hindu in nature.⁵

It is necessary, on the other hand, to observe that the Muslims had become conscious of their failures. They forced themselves to undertake a social renewal by launching religious movements. But, they did not advance much because of the military defeats⁶ they had experienced. The most remarkable one is the so-called Sepoy Mutiny (1857-1858), which left the Muslim community weakened and which nourished unrealistic revolutionary ideas. The result was that the British became more discriminating and the Hindus more enterprising in all spheres. W. W. Hunter remarks on this point that he had never seen such a pitiful condition as that was depicted in the private letters and the articles published in the journals of the Bengali Muslims. He, then, quotes an extract from the *Durbin*, a journal in Persian language published at Calcutta (July 1869) which reveals a grave state of affairs:

"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. The government is bound to look upon all classes of its subjects with an equal eye, yet the time has now come when it publicly singles out the Muhammadans in its gazettes for exclusion from official posts. Recently, when several vacancies occurred in the office of the Sundarbans Commissioner, that official, in advertising them in the government gazettes stated that the appointments would be given to none but Hindus.

⁵ Series of manifestations from the foundation of Hindu College (1817) to Hindu Mela (1867) would prove this comment. One of the organizers of the "Mela" or fair, Nabagopal Mitra, founded a national school, a national press, a national journal and a national gymnasium (without any participation from the Muslim community). Later the founder was named as "National Mitra" (Cf. Amit Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 52). Mitra was helped in his enterprises by Rajnarayan and Bhudev whose motivation has already been clear to us; (Cf. notes 109 & 110 in our "Introduction").

⁶ We have summarily analyzed these conflicts in the last pages of our introduction. See also Muhammad Hamidullah, "Défense de la culture islamique." *op. cit.*

In short, the Muhammadans have now sunk so low, that, even when qualified for Government employment they are studiously kept out of it by Government notifications. Nobody takes any notice of this helpless condition, and the higher authorities do not deign even to acknowledge their existence."⁷

In fact, it is necessary to remember the "Mutiny", which is considered today by the official historians of India and Pakistan as the first war of independence; it did not gain any help from the Hindus of Bengal.⁸ On the contrary, their social, political, and intellectual efforts reinforced the dominant power despite their protest in principle against the repression of the sepoys and the Indigo workers.⁹

The Muslim reaction facing this situation appears in the dramatic phases of this historical period; in the critical moment, few more lucid leaders preferred action. They are, in particular, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1815-1898) and Nawab Abdul Latif (1828-1893). They became conscious, first of all, of the needs of the Muslim community in the heart of a complex situation wherein the British were applying effectively the time-honoured Roman principle, "Divide ut imperes."¹⁰ Not being satisfied with the imperialist attitude inspired by "Quia non muere,"¹¹ they apprehended a fanatic re-awakening of the Muslim orthodoxy during the repression of the sepoys at a time while all Muslims became suspect.¹²

⁷ W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Mussalmans*, op. cit. p. 167. Lahore edition, p. 172-173.

⁸ The publications of the Governments of India and Pakistan to commemorate the events of 1857; see also S. N. Sen's *Eighteen Fifty Seven*, 1957.

⁹ Gopal Haldar, *Bangla Sahityer Ruprekha*, Calcutta, 1958, Vol. II, p. 64.

¹⁰ K. S. Shelvankar, *Problems of India*, London, 1940, p. 21.

¹¹ The declaration of Her Majesty's Government, after the seizure of power in 1858 indicate this attitude; The engagement to respect "the ancient laws, usages and customs of India" according to the historian retarded the progressive currents; François Léger, for example, states this in his study, *Les influences occidentales dans la révolution de l'Orient*, op. cit., t. 1, p. 28 : "the principal abuses of the Indian society shall (hereafter) be to the contrary consecrated and defended by the British authority, as if these abuses serve them to justify unconsciously their presence, as if the existence of this ills of the Indian society deliciously persuaded the average Englishman of the superiority of his civilization and his morality."

¹² Cf. note 6 and K. K. Aziz, *Britain and Muslim India, A study of British Public Opinion vis-à-vis the Development of Muslim Nationalism in India, 1857-1947*, London, 1963, p. 28.

Both Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Nawab Abdul Latif, at this critical time, had the advantage of being on the British side. They played between the two parties the role of mediators, which put them as the heads of Muslims of India. Following the exigencies of the situation, they worked for an amicable settlement on a solid terrain. Soon Sir Sayyid published his celebrated polemic writings, *Causes of the Indian Revolt* (1858) and *An Account of the Loyal Mohammedans of India* (1860-1861), to defend the Muslim point of view so far as the modernists could concieve facing an orthodox society and an all-powerful foreign regime. Nawab Abdul Latif, on his side, founded at Calcutta the famous Muhammedan Literary Society (1863) and launched a vigorous movement in favour of Western education. The first obstacle to be overcome was the prejudice against the British, which had been formulated from a religious point of view. Also, after having assumed the direction of "a distinguished fraction of Muslims of Bengal," he declared India as *Darul Islam* (an abode of peace), thus excluding the *jihad* (the holy war or "crescentade" - as suggested a little audaciously by British historians). He did it by extracting arguments from the religious codes of Islam and the *Fatwas* (religious decrees) in a celebrated publication: *Abstract of the Proceedings of the Muhammedan Literary Society of Calcutta, on Wednesday, 23rd November, 1870. Being a lecture by Maulvi Karamat Ali of Jaunpur on a Question of Muhammedan Law, involving the duty of Muhammedans in British India towards the Ruling power* (Calcutta, 1871).

W.W. Hunter, a well-known specialist on the Indian Muslims in the nineteenth century and to whom we have referred to several times, recommended this opusculé "to those who doubt the intellectual acumen of the Muslims of Bengal"¹³. However, he had some reservations about its happy results because he suspected that the masses might remain under the control of the orthodoxy and, consequently, be liable to a revolt. It is interesting to note here that the works of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan were immediately considered - despite their pro-British content - as "highly seditious" by no less a person than the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Viceroy¹⁴.

¹³ W. W. Hunter, op. cit., p. 113.

¹⁴ Cf. A. H. Albiruni, *Makers of Pakistan and Modern Muslim India*, Lahore, 1950.

This paradoxical situation might have resulted from the Muslim consciousness which was being placed socially and politically in the inferior position. One may understand this phenomenon better by reading the following pages, where we analyze the activities of Muslim leaders and the currents of social reaction. Here we shall underline the works that we have just quoted, the movement in favour of English education throughout this period, and the modernist intellectual currents which will follow. All these contributed to the founding of Anglo-Muslim reconciliation on a solid base.

In all these domains, the incessant efforts of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his brilliant success earned him the reputation of being the mentor of modern Muslim India. Three generally less-known reasons bring us to reduce his position, compared to that of his colleague Nawab Abdul Latif:

1. Originally from Delhi, he limited his activities to the north of India, where the Muslims were generally more advanced than the Hindus¹⁵.
2. His influence was not felt in Bengal, in our opinion, before the first few years of the twentieth century.
3. Chronologically, the movement of Nawab Abdul Latif started earlier in Bengal.

What we have stated so far undoubtedly gives us idea of the capital role of Nawab Abdul Latif. However, it is regrettable that "the most distinguished Muslim reformer of the day"¹⁶ should have received so little attention from the historians. Perhaps it had been rather difficult to have access to the sources. Notwithstanding this, we shall now make attempts to close in upon his figure.

Born in a cultivated family of Faridpur, Abdul Latif was the pioneer among the Muslims who were formed by Western culture. This he could become due to his sharp opposition to the wishes of his father, who had been an advocate of the old tradition and of the predominant social current of the time. After a brief period of teaching, he occupied from 1849 the prestigious post of Deputy Magistrate and served to the satisfaction of the foreign

¹⁵ W. Crooke (Bengal Civil Service), *The North Western Provinces of India, their History, Ethnology and Administration*, London, 1897, p. 261.

¹⁶ W. W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

administration and, at the same time, the local patriots. This was in the tradition of the prominent Bengalis of the period. But, the singularity of Abdul Latif is that he was the lone representative of his Muslim community. He entertained cordial relations with his Hindu colleagues, notably, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894), writer and uncontested intellectual leader but who suffered from Muslim condemnation. Abdul Latif, like his Hindu friends of long standing, did not limit his activities to the religious domain although it inevitably centered on the social development of the Muslims. His participation in the Bengal Social Science Association and the Hindu appreciation for him prove to us that he was in no way a victim of blind communalism – a malady which had already started to infect the Indian leaders. As the author of publications like *The Present Conditions of Indian Mohammedans* (1883), *A Short Account of my Public Life* (1885), *A Short Account of my Humble Efforts to Promote Education Especially Among Mohammedans* (1885), he cannot perhaps qualify as an original thinker. His merits, however, are evident in the courage with which he defended the cause of his co-religionists amidst insurmountable difficulties. Beside the esteem of his compatriots, he was well rewarded for his services; he received official honours;¹⁷ and a seat in the Legislative Assembly of Bengal. It was, undoubtedly, legitimate on his part to write:

"when I started my public life, the Muslim community did not show any inclination to create relationship with the Europeans or with their Hindu compatriots, and it was with many difficulties and great patience that I was able to change this attitude in a positive direction."¹⁸

All this leaves no doubt in our mind of his prestige as the spokesman of his community for almost half a century. But, we also must note here that the then situation in Bengal and even in India generally implies that the chief appertains essentially to a religious group and not to the entire people.

We have already mentioned about the foundation of the Mohammedan Literary Society. This rapidly became an erudite circle of the first of the kind among the Muslims of modern India. The

¹⁷ Nawab Bahadur, C. I. E. etc. The viceroy offered him also a gold medal and a complete set of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1867); Cf. F.D. Bradley Birt, *Twelve Men of Bengal in the 19th Century*, Calcutta, 1910, p. 116.

¹⁸ Quoted by Kazi Abdul Wadud in *Banglar Jagaran*, Calcutta, 1956, p. 125.

Nawab organized every month in his own residence an assembly to instruct and inform the superior and cultivated classes of the Muslim community by the way of conferences and discussion meetings on a variety of subjects - literary, scientific, and social.¹⁹ With a membership of five hundred Muslim aristocrats and the Governor of the province as its patron, the Society inscribed in its programmes of monthly gatherings the importance of history, the history of civilization, the discovery of America, the development of commerce and navigation, fundamental laws of Islam, etc. An important point is that the discussions took place - we know it from its proceedings - usually in Urdu or in English, and sometimes in Persian and in Arabic, but not in Bengali.²⁰ In its grand annual reunions, scientific exhibitions were used to assemble European, Hindu, and Muslim scientists who could advance the exchange of ideas. The most important aspect of the activities of this Society and of Abdul Latif was, however, the movement for the development of education among the Muslims, which appeared to be a major problem for the rulers of the period.

Thanks to his experience as teacher (Dacca Collegiate School and Calcutta Madrasa) and as administrator, Abdul Latif understood well the exact situation of the country. He realized the needs of his compatriots facing the Government which would complain of financial difficulties regarding granting subsidy to Muslims, but would not hesitate to finance the Hindu institutions.²¹ Abdul Latif's criticism in this regard brought very good results. He wrote that the authorities adopted for the development of educational measures dictated by the Hindus, who wanted to ensure their own advantages to the detriment of the Muslim community. The government had always argued about the Muslim prejudices against English education. This explanation by the Government did not satisfy the Muslims. Many now understood that the Government policy in the matter of education and its results had always been biased. The latter

¹⁹ Cf. Abdul Latif, *Abstract of the Proceedings of the Mohammedan Literary Society of Calcutta, November 23rd 1870*, Calcutta, 1871.

²⁰ Kazi Abdul Wadud, in his study (*op. cit.*, p. 126), mentions without reference that after 1880, Bengali was being used, too. However, there exists no publication of the Society in Bengali.

²¹ On this subject one may consult S. Mahmud, *A History of English Education in India, 1781-1893*, Aligarh, 1895; p. 202, and A. R. Mallick, *The Development of the Muslims of Bengal and Bihar (1813-1856)*, Doct. Diss. London, 1953, p. 203.

attempts to close the gaps have shown that the Muslim prejudice against the acceptance of foreign education and culture were not as strong as these had been imagined.²²

Being armed with a strong conviction, he forced himself to direct his co-religionists in the path towards obtaining the help of the government for the development of their education. Truly speaking, the progress was not as remarkable as it had been expected. But, many reforms were made at Calcutta Islamia College, Hoogly Madrasa and for more effective utilization of the Muhsin fund²³ to establish other institutions. The Hindu College founded in 1817 at Calcutta exclusively for the Hindu students was transformed into a cosmopolitan institution under the name of Presidency College on Feb 27, 1873. Special efforts were made to attract the Muslim students and to facilitate their access there. Many among them, we shall see later, became intellectual élites of the Muslim Bengal.

Nawab Abdul Latif has long been considered purely and simply as a loyalist civil servant. But, if one considers his activities in the perspective of the epoch, one finds in this very devoted man an ardent patriotism. On this aspect what we have said so far is significant enough. However, his seizure of position in two situations may be further confirmed. In 1853, he protested, at the risk of losing his post, against the Indigo planters and came forward to help the local peasantry.²⁴ In 1873, as a member of the Text Book Committee, he protested vehemently against the inclusion of texts hostile to Islam (The *Talisman* written by Sir W. Scott, for example) and to patriotism (*Reflection in Exile* written by B. Crook). Among the

²² Abdul Latif, *A Short Account of my Humble Efforts to Promote Education especially among Mohammedans*, Calcutta, 1885, p. 5-6.

²³ The Muhsin Fund was created following the will of a rich and pious Muslim named Muhammad Muhsin; ill-organized for long time, it served other communities than the Muslim. On the insistence of Nawab Abdul Latif the Government reorganized the Fund which subsequently became an inexhaustible source for all kinds of educational and cultural activities of the Muslims in Bangal. Abdul Latif, with the help of this source and other donations, created Islamic colleges at Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi where students use to pay only half of the fees. Cf. A. Vambéry, *Western Culture in Eastern Lands, a Comparison of the Methods adopted by England and Russia in the Middle-East*, London, 1906, p. 189; *Report of the Mohammedan Educational Endowments Committee*, Calcutta, 1888, p. 32-35; see also *The Calcutta Review*, 1895, p. 354-366.

²⁴ Quoted from the journal *Rais and Rayot* (15 July, 1893) by Kazi Abdul Mannan, *Adhunik Bangla Sahitye Muslim Sadhana*, Rajshahi, 1961, p. 63.

drawbacks of the English education system, the weakening of the national spirit among the youth, in particular did not escape his field of vision.²⁵

Of course, the cultivated people and the leaders of the period had yet a very vague idea of nationalism. So far as the teachings which could develop national sentiment, the Hindus preferred generally the classical Indian tradition; and a fraction among them became concerned with the Western contribution. The Muslims, at the instance of Abdul Latif, would turn towards concrete adaptation of Arabic-Persian culture.²⁶ Rarely one would make an effort of synthesis, but would rather remain with the palliative and the provisional solutions. Abdul Latif went so far as to recommend to the Government Commission for Education (1882) that the means of education should be Bengali for the middle class and Urdu for the superior class of his community. He further suggested that Bengali should be free from the hypersanscritization which was the style of the day. His recommendations might have been pragmatic, but nothing was done to implement them. Also, later the linguistic problem and the question of modalities of teaching would propose a new serious stumbling block to the intellectual development of the Muslims.

The relationship between Nawab Abdul Latif and few intellectuals representing the new current in the society, on the other hand, was estranged by an unexpected incident. Sayyid Jamal Al-Din Afghani (1838/39-1891), the great Muslim reformer, was at that time (1882) under house arrest at Calcutta by the British. He exercised a considerable influence upon the Muslims of India, in particular, by striving to rally the Bengali intellectuals to the pan-Islamic movement launched by him.²⁷ But, Nowab Abdul Latif, probably under the influence of the government, prevented him from making public speeches. It was perhaps on his demand that the book on the life and teachings of Afghani, *Samaj O Sangskarak* (Society and the Reformer, Calcutta, 1889) by Pandit Reajuddin Mash-hadi, was

²⁵ For more details, cf. *Supplementary Notes on Mohammedan Education*, by the Director of Public Instruction, Government of Bengal, Calcutta, 1883-1884, p. 44-45

²⁶ Kazi Abdul Mannan, *op. cit.*, p. 62-63.

²⁷ Sharif al-Mujahid, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani : His Role in the Nineteenth Century Muslim Awakening*, thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1954.

prohibited.²⁸ Because of this rupture, the Muslims of Bengal were deprived of the teachings of this reformer, particularly in the adaptation of Islam to modern science, that Egypt and other Muslim countries welcomed successfully not long after.

Perhaps Nawab Abdul Latif did not desire any change in the existing social order, as he had been satisfied with his aristocratic life. Otherwise, an evolution introduced in a short time and with less efforts could have brought more important results for the intellectual history of Bengali Muslims. This observation is warranted due to his insistence to keep the old type of Islamic colleges, adding only a course on English education, but not orienting them resolutely towards modern sciences.

On this question, there had been furthermore a strong protest from the intellectual leaders of the next generation – Sayyid Amir Ali and his supporters. Sayyid Amir Ali (1849-1928) had been noticed and helped by Abdul Latif when he appeared to be a very brilliant student.²⁹ But, once he had occupied a place in public life and had acquired more progressive ideas, the two men entered into conflict with each other and they could never reunite later.³⁰ Amir Ali founded in 1876 at Calcutta the Central National Mohammedan Association which sent to the Government a memorandum on Muslim education, thus, pleading for the closure of Madrasas in favour of Anglo-Muslim colleges.³¹

²⁸ Cf. Kazi Abdul Wadud : *Shashvat Banga*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 438, and "Muslim Jagate Natun Cinta," *Desh-sahitya sankhya*, Calcutta, 1367 B.S., p. 99-111. Thanks to the effort of the great Hindu leader Surendra Nath Bannerjee (1848-1925), Afghani could finally address a big public meeting. Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) writes, in his autobiography, about the influence of Afghani on Muslims of Bengal as well as on the entire India.

²⁹ Born in a poor family at Chinsura (Hoogley, West Bengal), a little Dutch colony, Amir Ali stood first in B. A. examination. Then he obtained his M. A. and B. L. degrees. With a Government scholarship, he then went to England for higher studies in Law. He returned in 1873, to start the career of an advocate and a lecturer of law in the University of Calcutta. In 1881, he was nominated to Bengal Legislative Council and later to the Imperial Council. Then he became, the first Muslim, judge at Calcutta High Court. He left for London in 1904 and there he organized the Muslim League since 1907. He became, in 1909, the first Indian member of the British Privy Council.

³⁰ These were not only the differences of conception but also jealousy, which separated the two. cf. W. S. Blunt, *India under Ripon: A Private Diary*, London 1909, p. 97-100.

³¹ Cf. *A Pamphlet on Muhammedan Education in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1880, published by Sayyid Amir Hussain, secretary of the association.

The foundation of this association was a significant event, if one measures the influence that it had, although indirectly, on the Muslim intellectual élites towards its future development. It in itself was not original because there existed many similar associations patronned by the Hindu leaders. Abdul Latif and Sir Sayyid had prohibited their co-religionists from entering into any political party, whatever its form could be. The association of Amir Ali was not an exception to the rule. Without being discouraged, the founder, however, tried to recruit a certain number of members from the newly growing bourgeoisie. He defined the reason of the existence of his organization in relation to the perspectives of the time and the social conditions in the following words:

“The association has been founded with the aim of promoting by all legitimate and constitutional means to establish the relationship between the Muslims of India. It reposes essentially on the principle of strict loyal adhesion to the British Crown. Being inspired by the noble traditions of the past, it proposes to work in harmony with the Western culture and the progressive trends of the time. It works for the political regeneration for the Muslims of India by moral renewal and thanks to constant activities to obtain from the Government the recognition of their just and legitimate vindications. The association does not lose from view, however, the fact that the prosperity of the Muslims is directly linked with the well-being of other races of India. Therefore, it does not exclude from its perspectives of cooperation and promotion of the interest of the total population of the country.”³²

It was an epoch of agitated political activities among the Indian leaders. Sayyid Amir Ali led a very energetic campaign in favour of his association. Within a brief span of time, he established fifty-three branches of it all over India. Some of these branches were helped even by some eminent Hindus. In Bengal, they were called *anjuman* which worked to reinforce Muslim aspirations – religious, social, political, and cultural. Ideals of pan-Islamism and liberty found an echo among the journalists and the writers who established other associations like the Mohammedan Friends Association (Dhaka,

³² Cf. *The Rules and Objects of the National Mohammedan Association with a List of the Members*, Calcutta, 1882.

1883), the Provincial Mohammedan Educational Association (Calcutta, 1888), and the Mohammedan Vernacular Literary Association (Calcutta, 1889), but kept close relationship with the Central National Mohammedan Association.

There were not extraordinary positive results which were equivalent, for example, to those of Aligarh. What is noteworthy is that these activities bear witnesses that the Muslim community was advancing towards a communal consciousness in the same manner as was occurring among the members of the Hindu community at that time.

In the interval was created the Indian National Congress (1885) by a retired British official. The Hindus, in general, became associated with this new organization which officially represented “Her Majesty’s Opposition.” The association of Sayyid Amir Ali adhered to it, but separated from it after the second session. Few excerpts from the report that the association published explain the political attitude of the Muslim leaders towards the Indian National Congress of that time:

“The movement of withdrawal that this association affected from the National Congress in 1886 has given rise to intense criticism in the Hindu newspapers. The association has many sympathies for some of the objectives of the Congress. But it has been firmly persuaded that by the adoption in block of the Congress programme we shall bring about the political extinction of Muslims. The principle of electoral representation should be carefully examined in relation to the rights of the minority. The committee thinks that as long as Muslims are not on an equal footing with Hindus as far as the evolution and progress of education is concerned, and as far as the affirmation and the defense of Muslim interests are not included in their programme, the objectives followed by the Congress-men shall lead to a total effacement of the Muslim community in this country.”³³

The Seizure of Consciousness among the Muslim leaders, as has been expressed in this declaration, would have a great importance for

³³ Quoted by A. Guimbretière, “Le réformisme musulman en Inde,” *Orient*, Paris, 1961, 2^e trim., n° 18, p. 33-34. (Retranslated).

the future role that they intended to play in the political life and for the decisive phase of the Indian freedom movement which started with vigorous action just after the World War I. We shall have the occasion to observe this situation more closely along with the role played by Amir Ali and his colleagues.³⁴

It is sufficient for us to note that for the Seizure of Consciousness of this period and the following periods, and particularly among the westernized intellectuals, the writings of Amir Ali had an enormous influence. Kazi Abdul Wadud, a Muslim intellectual leader of the twentieth century, observes very justly:

“Nawab Abdul Latif, Sir Sayyid Ahmed, and Sayyid Amir Ali are the three Muslim leaders who tried to efface the British prejudice towards the Muslims born out of the Wahabi ideals and revolt. Sayyid Amir Ali, among others, particularly tried to refute the Wahabi ideology by a rational definition of Islam. For a certain time, the influence of Sayyid Amir Ali had been considerable in the hearts of the Muslim élites of Bengal.”³⁵

A little modification of the above observation may be added here. It is not only “for a certain time,” but for the subsequent intellectual history of the Muslims that the influence of Amir Ali, so far as the study of the Islamic faith and theology or its past history is concerned, has remained unchanged. At the time, as we shall see in the following chapter, the Bengali writers were not yet ready to accomplish the work that their mentor had proposed. It was because there were belated developments of the cultivated middle class. Amir Ali himself tried to know the causes and briefly expressed his observations in one of his early writings thus:

“the Muslim, proud and sensible, proud of his refined civilization, is scandalized and disgusted by the results of Western education.”³⁶

As a leader of the new bourgeoisie, he would naturally want the diffusion of Western knowledge, but surely not at the cost of traditional beliefs and a prestigious past. In this perspective, he

started making brilliant works, which are still being considered by the Muslim world and the Western experts on Islam as texts containing one of the best interpretations of Islamic history and laws. Very few of the Bengali writers could profit by these works at the time of their publication because they were written in English. But, since the third decade of the twentieth century, and with the introduction of Islamic Studies at the University of Calcutta (founded in 1857) and the University of Dacca (founded in 1921), they are being considered as classics and the most essential manuals. The characteristic attitude towards the subject treated and the elegant presentation and the choice of facts which Sayyid Amir Ali cited are not only strongly appreciated, but also often imitated.

Before presenting his capital works on Islamic thoughts in modern India, a further observation is being dictated to us by the different currents of ideas which were circulating in the Muslim society. Socially, Amir Ali's point of view, as we have just seen, was distinct from that of Abdul Latif. Intellectually also, his ideas were different from those advanced by the school of Sir Sayyid at Aligarh. These differences, of course, resulted from their origins as well as from the rapid and incongruous transformation of the Muslim society. For a more complete view of the situation, we may now consider the analysis of an authoritative author:

“The new movement's rise coincided in time with the rise of a new class of men, those who were building up in India an indigenous capitalism, financed, it is true, largely by British capital, but nonetheless competing with the already flourishing British industrialism. To a lesser extent, it competed also with what other industry had been already established in India - the first and most successful Indian enterprises were set up and owned mainly by a few Hindus and Parsis. Furthermore, the whole economic system, after its early flare, was already beginning its breakdown. Before, classes for whom Sir Sayyid catered had an expanding and joyous function to perform within and because of the imperialist framework. Now the bourgeoisie had its own creative task : to build up on its own initiative a native capitalism. This task soon became one of the conflicts with the imperialist system which was confining it mercilessly. Even for the bureaucracy, still immediately dependent upon the foreign power, and for the commercial classes, partly so,

³⁴ Cf. chap. V.

³⁵ Cf. K. A. Wadud, *Banglar Jagaran*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 128.

³⁶ Cf. his lecture, *The Mohammedans of India*, *op. cit.*

the supply of posts soon fell hopelessly behind the insistent demand. In other words, the prospect before a middle-class individual now was thoroughly different : whatever his training, he had to struggle bitterly for employment of any kind; even if he be succeeded in finding a position, his task was difficult, strenuous, and more or less unpromising. The chances of his disappointment grew increasingly high. Indian bourgeois society, though created by British imperialism, was presently ruthlessly suppressed by the same from expanding as a capitalist society must expand. It, therefore, reached in a generation or two the period of frustration which Western bourgeois society has reached only after a few centuries.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the men involved in this highly competitive and probably disappointing life, turned to a religion with more substance than the Aligarh School offered. Sir Sayyid's Islam gave them permission to be bourgeois. They needed also courage, confidence, and drive to be bourgeois; and, eventually, solace. These things the new religion gave.³⁷

This is, in fact, all about the birth of a neo-Islam under the impulsion of the intellectuals of the epoch of which Amir Ali was the chief, the spokesman, and the defender. It took the form of an apologetic against the Western influence within Islam, and a means to liberate the internal forces of the community for its own progress (as was the case of neo-Hinduism).³⁸ The works of Amir Ali, notably, *The Spirit of Islam* (London, 1891, new edition revised in 1922), *The Ethics of Islam* (Calcutta, 1893), *A Short History of the Saracens* (London, 1899), and *Islam* (London, 1906), are the best expositions of this school of thoughts. In a "Mutazilite" spirit, Amir Ali wrote :

"Islam, wherever it has found its way among cultivable and progressive nations, has shown itself in complete accord with progressive tendencies, it has assisted civilization, it has idealized religion."³⁹

³⁷ William Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis*, Lahore, 1947 p. 48-49.

³⁸ F. Rahman, "Muslim Modernism in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent", *B. S. O. A. S.*, London, 1958, XXI, 1, p. 86.

³⁹ *The Spirit of Islam - A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islam, with a Life of the Prophet*, London, 1922, p. 283.

With conviction and vigour, Amir Ali evoked the classical period in the history of Islam and showed its superiority over the other existing societies. This was to prove that the degradation of Islam was but a latter deviation. According to him, the progress of the Islamic people depends not only on practicing *Ijtihad* (i.e. declaring that the law should continue to develop itself), but also on retaining the memory of the glorious past and putting interpretatively the supreme human qualities that the Prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h) had manifested.

The writings of Amir Ali had, let us repeat, an extremely stimulating influence on the middle class Muslims, in particular for getting rid of an inferiority complex born out of Hindu and Christian antagonism against their religion. We shall see later that a number of books and pamphlets were written on Islam and its diverse aspects on which the influence of the author of *the Spirit of Islam* was marked, although not always acknowledged. It would, perhaps, not be out of place to mention here that an interesting work on social polemics, *Hindu-Muslim*, of which we shall discuss in the next chapter, was dedicated by its author, Sheikh Abdus Sobhan, to Amir Ali, "the flag-bearer of the Muslim society of Bengal."

Historically, the phase of Amir Ali was preceded, in the development of Indian Islamic thought, by that of Sir Sayyid Ahmed and a vast group of his admirers and collaborators "who had made considerable efforts on the intellectual plane to put in harmony the Muslim metaphysical theology and the bases of the Islamic traditional *Weltanschauung* with that of modern *Weltanschauung* (as much as they know about it), born out of modern philosophy and science."⁴⁰

Sir Sayyid Ahmad, inspite of his numerous writings on religious questions, was not a profound religious thinker. But, he came to justify, by the interior logic of the Muslim intellectual history, his progressive attitudes on the cultural plane in theological terms.⁴¹ To judge the progressive character of the religion by the criteria of "conformity to the nature" was not savoured by his successor; and, it

⁴⁰ F. Rahman, *op. cit.*, p.88

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

received little attention from the Bengali intelligentsia.⁴² We have seen earlier the Bengalis were more influenced by Afghani and Amir Ali. Nevertheless, as the real intention of Sir Sayyid Ahmad was social advancement and material progress of the Muslims of India, the Muslims of Bengal also had to accept the direction that he and his successors had made.

The numerous socio-cultural activities of Sir Sayyid Ahmad were centered on the northern part of India and the influence was exercised on the Urdu-speaking population. In Bengal, when the influences of the modernists belonging to the Aligarh movement was spread principally after the second decade of the twentieth century, the policy of its founder was on the way of transformation. It excluded the renouncement of all political activities.

In spite of this, it is legitimate to indicate here that it was under the influence of this illustrious personality that the new class of bourgeois intellectuals was born. It was not only the case in Punjab or in the United Provinces, but also in Bengal. In the last-named province, this class of bourgeois intellectuals was quite far from being united; the subjects of discord were numerous. This was due to the conflict between the attraction exercised by the West and their nostalgic pride for the past. Paradoxically, the competition to get government posts and the fundamental objection towards English education entailed a kind of hatred for the traditional culture as well as for pure research in the domain of physical or human sciences and, consequently, it prevented their natural progress.

As an witness to this Seizure of Consciousness of the situation, a Bengali educator of the time wrote:

“Indeed, the English Government has proved a great blessing to the Mussalmans as well as to all other nationalities inhabiting this country.

⁴² On Sir Sayyid's thought, one is advised to consult the works of W. C. Smith, A Guimbretière, and A. J. M. S. Baljon (cf. Bibliography). In this context, Sufia Ahmed, analysing the situation in her doct. diss. (*Some Aspects of the History of the Muslim Community in Bengal: 1884-1912*, University of London, 1955), opines that the Muslims of Bengal preferred the Islam of Arabia and of Iran than that of Aligarh. They felt not only distinct from the Hindus but also from other Muslims of India (p. 532-533). Bengalis, non-acceptance of the ideas propagated by Sir Sayyid has also been signaled in an article, see M. Habibullah, “Maulana Islamabadi,” *Mah-i-Nau*, Dacca, October, 1952, p. 24.

Experience should have taught the Mussalman leaders that the Mussalmans had less cause to fear conversion through education than any other community in India. Islam is founded on principles that are too strong to be easily shaken. It has been less affected by Western education and civilization than any other system.”⁴³

This declaration made by Abdul Karim, an ardent partisan of Western education and one who was visibly happy with the progress of Muslims in this direction by the end of the nineteenth century, reflects perfectly the state of the Muslims at that time.

However, the broad idea of progress and of synthesis had been foreign to them. When they strove in quest for progress, as we shall see in the next phase, the rivalry between the Hindus and the Muslims, along with an arbitrary regime on the part of the British, occupied the front stage of the event.

It is appropriate to mention here about a parallel development in the intellectual life of the Muslims of Bengal, which particularly concerns certain relevant moral and theological aspects. A personality almost unknown outside Bengal, Munshi Meherullah (1861-1907), was its precursor. This *munshi*, with little instruction, had exercised on the co-religionists of his time an enormous influence which brought him the title – “Rammohun of Muslim Bengal.”⁴⁴ Evidently, it cannot be justified if one considers the efforts made by Raja Rammohun Roy three quarters of a century earlier to bring back his own co-religionists from Christianity. Being alarmed by the gravity of the situation and by the anti-Islamic propaganda of the missionaries and certain Muslim converts to Christianity,⁴⁵ he travelled all over Bengal and aroused the masses with passionate and fiery eloquence. But, it was after the argument of

⁴³ Cf. Abdul Karim, *Muhammedan Education in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1900, p. 5; the author was an Additional Inspector of Public Instruction, Member of the Asiatic Society, and Fellow of the University of Calcutta.

⁴⁴ Cf. Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan, *Bangla Sahityer Itibritta*, op. cit., p. 16, 125 and 128-129.

⁴⁵ The Missionaries were distributing the tracts like *Muhammedan Ceremony*, *Reasons for not being a Musulman* (Calcutta, 1837), *Muhammader Jiban-carit* (1855); these booklets are full of obscene remarks and hostile to Islam, to its Prophet and the moral of its adherents (see also our “introduction”, note 83).

exchange he had with John Jamiruddin that he became very famous and dear to the Muslim intellectuals.

John Jamiruddin, a Muslim convert, was educated at St. Paul Divinity College of Allahabad and had been surnamed *Pathak Ratna* (the gem among the preachers), for his brilliant career as a student-preacher. His article, "Asal Koran Kothay," (Where is the real Qur'an?), published in 1892, created a considerable scandal among the Muslims. It was Munshi Meherullah who first took the pen to reply in the name of Islam. In the four issues of *Sudhakar* (We shall provide in the following chapter more details about this journal and the group which was associated with it.) published in the same year, Munshi Meherullah rebutted all the attacks made by John Jamiruddin. Being satisfied with the reply, the last-named reconverted himself into Islam and became a disciple of the former. Both elaborated together a programme of propaganda in favour of Islam so as to protect the Muslims from all the anti-Islamic ideas.

The teachings of this school were spread mainly by the fiery speeches made by Munshi Meherullah. His speeches are found in the following eight volumes:

Radde Christain O Dalilul-Islam (1895)
Islami Baktrita;
Upadesh- Mala (1908);
Nabaratna Mala ba Bangla Gazal (1911);
Christan Dharmer Asharata;
Babu Ishan Chandra Mondol ebong Charles French-er Islam Grahan;
Meherul Islam
Pande Nama

The speeches delivered by John Jamiruddin are found in two important works: *Shreshta Nabi Hazrat Muhammad O Padrir Dhoka Bhanjan* (1323 B.S.) (The best Prophet Hazrat Muhammad and the Deceit of the Priest) and a biography of his mentor, *Meher-Charit* (The character of Meher) (1315 B.S.).

From the theological point of view, the school of Munshi Meherullah reinforced the Hanafi sect, which had been already

numerically very strong in Bengal. This sect acquired, henceforward, a force of organization greater than what it had possessed before.⁴⁶

From the political point of view, the master strove to prevent his co-religionists from imitating the Hindus as long as they were not equal to them in education and culture.⁴⁷

Thus, the Muslims of Bengal gradually evolved themselves as a community apart. They were different from the Wahabi militants of the previous generation, the Muslims of North-West India, and other religious communities in the province of Bengal. Whereas the intellectual works are concerned, whether these be the results of individual or collective efforts, along with the problems which eclipsed them temporarily, permit us to better grasp the cultural development of this community in the past as well as in the present.

⁴⁶ Vide *Report of the Census of India*, 1901, t. VI, p. 173; on the Hanafites, see our "Glossary."

⁴⁷ Shaikh Habibur Rahman, *Karmabir Munshi Meherullah*, Calcutta, 1934, p. 108.

CHAPTER - II

PROBLEMS OF THOUGHT AND OF ACTION

All that is done in India, speaking in literary terms, has been conditioned by religion.

Louis RENOU

(quoted in *Histoire des littératures*,
Encyclopédie de la Pléiade,
Paris, 1955, Vol. I, p.29)

This period of the Seizure of Consciousness, 1857-1905 refers particular span of time when the responsible Western-oriented Muslim leaders led the society towards playing an active part in an Islamic intellectual movement. The ideas disseminated by the thought-currents of the "traditionalists," as we have seen earlier,¹ agitated to some extent the society which, according to them, had become a place of corruption and incredulity. One can, therefore, ask why these ideas were accepted by the intellectuals and the masses. This is a problem which is very difficult to resolve, if one considers the nature and the development of these currents of thoughts. The superior class of the Muslim society and the theologians who were responsible for this state of affairs, had, to our knowledge, a foundation and an idiom that was very different from those of the masses and the newly constituted middle class. In the first place, they belong to the superior class of the *ashraf*, that is to say, the feudal

¹ Cf. Introduction, cf. notes, 92-110.

nobles, or at least having attachment with them. According to a sociologist:

“In the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century, the *sharif* class of Muslims in Bengal tried their utmost to maintain their cast pride by practising a sort of endogamy among themselves and by abstaining themselves from interdining or mixing on equal terms with the lower classes.”²

On the other part, this hostility between the castes of Indian Islam³ would not have been too large in Bengal if this superior class had utilized the popular language or at least was interested in the traditional culture. But, being proud of their foreign blue blood, and satisfied with their knowledge of sacred languages, they directed their intellectual efforts in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and even in English. They did not make any effort to develop the study of Bengali or to diffuse in the popular language their intellectual works – empirical or theological.

Here is the reason for which the Seizure of Consciousness did not transform into a Renaissance and why, despite the awakening, the Muslim society did not follow a remarkable evolution. Nevertheless, the few efforts made by the middle class show us that they accepted the teachings of their mentors by adopting English education (for example), but only to that extent which would help them get out of social impasse. In consequence, a wrong concept of the real progress created obstacles for the social cohesion, by the mistake of which the intellectual class still very recently manifested in different mediums: that of the Hinduist polemic rather mediocre or in the folklore literature completely obsolete. Now, the Bengali writings of the Muslims permit us to examine their motivation and their thoughts relatively for the social transformation, even if they do not offer us in abundance and tenable from philosophical and artistic points of view. The efforts made in the second part of the nineteenth century permit us to understand the intellectual heritage of the Muslims of today and the problems which they confronted at the time.

² A. K. Nazmul Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 127. 4th impression with slightly changed title *Changing Society in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1996, p. 171

³ On this subject, K. M. Ashraf, Levy, M. T. Titus and Abdul Wali wrote (*Cf.* bibliography) with more surprising details.

Other than the major problem of the aversion of superior classes for Bengali and of the indifference facing the illiteracy of the masses, one more question arises the nature of which is completely different. Modern intellectual activities and works of the authors or journalists had, in our knowledge, taken birth in the different capitals of the world.⁴ This is more true about the colonized regions where they had started to develop at the precise moment when the national spirit was awakened under the influence of more direct contact with foreign culture. In fact, it is in Bengal rather than in other place in India that the cultural flourishing started. It particularly began at Calcutta after the destruction of Muslim strongholds at Murshidabad, Dhaka, etc. The Muslims of certain cultural level – this is proved historically – had the custom to live in cities.⁵ But the circumstances prevented them to install in the new metropolises in Bengal. And, the members of the group, altogether restricted to the city-dwellers, were recruited from the class called *Sharif*, or from among those who had been their soldiers, domestics, slaves, or from among the religious persons, and that one can call, to accept the terminology of P. Sorokin – the “external proletariat”.⁶ This indicates that they formed a particular group by structure and functions, which was different Muslims from the Hindu middle class who were the *avant-garde* of the Bengali renaissance. Therefore, the intelligentsia of the middle class Muslims who were developing at the time and were being recruited in different regions of Bengal could not find in Calcutta a “home” (Terre d’élection) for themselves. It is in the middle of great difficulties that they could develop themselves intellectually. Naturally, the objective which appeared to them suitable for their efforts was the propagation of Islamic knowledge, which had been already started by the leaders of the society. But, on the linguistic domain, the intelligentsia was opposed to their leaders and followed the Hindus who produced at the time particularly remarkable works to which Muslims had been insensible.

⁴ *Cf.* Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1962, p. 10-11; Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, London, 1938.

⁵ R. D. Mangles in *Evidences before the Houses of Lords on Affairs of East India Company*, India Office Library, London, 1830, p. 44; *Report of the Census of India*, 1901, Vol. I, p. 28.

⁶ P. Sorokin, *Social Philosophy of an Age of Crisis*, London, 1950, p. 116. 301 and sq.

A profound analysis of the principal works in this period will show us clearly how the Muslim society defended these ideas. Thus, one can briefly study in chronological order some selected individual works and important periodicals, – intellectual efforts of individuals and groups. Of the limited works, we have kept four books or rather four different aspects of human knowledge. They present a particular interest if one looks at the first tentative made in this sense. These are also the examples of essays in modern prose which had been developed recently.

The first Muslim writing of a real value is *Bal Chikitsa* (Calcutta, 1870), written by Meer Ashraf Ali. It is a book on the treatment of child diseases. It was perhaps first undertaken in this genre of technical literature.⁷ It was a really difficult task as the equivalence of technical terms did not yet exist at that time (they are even in our days not well-defined). The author was a Professor of medicine in an English School. He defined and analyzed with great competence symptoms of diverse maladies and their treatment. His style was pure, concise, and clear. It is here also that we find the remarkable qualities, if one considers the milieu where the author was elevated⁸ and if one adds here the fact that this book of 268 pages had become popular and was republished in 1874.

The next book to be mentioned in this regard is *Zohdat Al-Machael* (The Essential of Questions, 1873), written by Muhammad Naimuddin (1832-1908).⁹ It is the first work in prose which treats the ritual duties of the Muslims. Taking as model the celebrated works in the field of Islamic Science - *Shareh Bekaya*, *Hedaya*, *Qadi Khan*, *Alamgiri*, etc. – the author presents in a new form for his co-religionists the religious norms of Islam. His work is divided into

⁷ It is, however, necessary to mention two works that James Long quotes in his famous *Catalogue of Bengali Work* (Calcutta, 1855), but we could not consult them: one is, *Pariksha-Upadesh* (examination-advise) on the local laws, published in 1852 by Maulvi Ismael, and the other, *Krishi-Darpan* (mirror of agriculture) by Munshi Kefayetullah (1853).

⁸ Muslim prejudice against modern medical science remained a taboo to sons of good families and to draw profit from the admirable facilities offered by the British in Bengal, see W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Muslims*, op. cit., p. 164-165.

⁹ On this renowned theologian, there are only few articles available on his literary activities; Abdul Qadir, "Muhammad Naimuddin", *Bangla Academy Patrika*, III, 1, 1366 B.S., p. 46-66; Abdul Gafur Siddiqui (Anusandhan- Visharad), "Maulana Muhammad Naimuddin", *Masik Mohammadi*, shraban, 1362 B. S.

four parts: the first part deals with the principal duties of a devout in his religious life - *azan* (calling the faithful to prayer), *namaj* (prayers), *roza* (fasting), etc.; the second part treats social relationships like the contract of marriage (*kabin*), the divorce, the donation (*waqf*) etc.; in the third part the writer focusses on trade and commerce associations and testaments, etc. and, the fourth part contains a long discussion on the laws of division of property (*daybhagh*). But except the last part in which the writer codifies the rules and laws regarding the distribution of land, there is no proof of the originality of his interpretation. On the contrary, his mode of expression is comparable to that of the philosophical works of the new Bengali literature; the subject is presented in the form of a dialogue between the master and his pupil. It is very interesting for a philosophical discussion. Here is an example:

Pupil : What is the essential task that needs to be accomplished in this futile world?

Master : "To spend the life in the act of distinguishing religion things that are non-religion, here is the essential." (Quran)

Pupil : What must I understand by religion and non-religion?

Master : "The religion is what we find in the *Shariah*, and the opposite path is non-religion." (Quran)

Pupil : What is to be gained by following the religion, and inversely what happens by following the contrary path?

Master : "This is the salvation (*najat*) and the eternal joy in the paradise that man will enjoy who follows the path of religion; the sinner shall have to suffer in hell (*dozakh*)"

Pupil : What is paradise and what is hell?

Master : "Paradise is the unique and incomparable garden where divine happiness is found. It has been beautifully described in the Quran. Hell is a place of burning flame where the sufferers (sinners) will be inflicted gradually." (Quran).

Pupil : What are the types of action by which one can gain the path of religion?

Master : "By good action like *Kalima, namaj, roza, zakat*; however without *iman* (faith) no good action shall be recompensed. Faith is the essential condition of everything (*akayedede nasfi*)"

Pupil : What is faith?

Master : This is the belief in the truth of the Seven points and the act to preach them.

Pupil : What are the Seven points?

- Master : 1. It is Allah who created the world.
2. The angels are his servants.
3. *Thora, Zabur, Ingil, and Forkan* are the books which are His Words.
4. The Prophets are His Messengers.
5. One should believe in the end of the world.
6. Allah is the only Creator of good and evil. What is important is that He would be satisfied when one does something good and unhappy when one does something bad.
7. He shall resuscitate Man.

These are the seven points which one has to believe and preach.¹⁰

Therefore, we see that Naimuddin, neither in this lucid exposition of traditional beliefs, nor in his translation of the Quran,¹¹ developed any new idea. And, he was not found to be influenced by the rationalist school of Sir Sayyid Ahmad. His book seems to be very popular in Bengal and had many editions. Besides, he published

several monographs and edited a religious review, which was the first of its kind in Bengal.¹²

Sheikh Abdus Sobhan's *Hindu Mussalman*¹³ is a very important book for different reasons. First of all, he informs us – in a very useful manner – about the Muslim society and Hindu-Muslim relationship during the period. His publication did not remain unnoticed in the cultivated milieu of Bengal. The author writes in his introduction that a Hindu printer refused to print his book. And, then he went to a second one to whom he explained the contents of his work. He asked the latter whether he would agree to print it. The printer accepted and took the book, but did not give him any copy. Neither the police nor the court liked to defend the author. Then the author asked for the help of Nawab Abdul Latif who promised to help him. But, being sick, the author left Calcutta and, after a while, published the book from Dhaka. We have mentioned earlier, that he dedicated his book to Sayyid Amir Ali, "the flagbearer of the Muslim Society of Bengal."

In the Introduction to his book, Sheikh Abdus Sobhan admitted in all frankness that he lacked qualifications and talents to be a real writer. He divided writers into two classes: who, first of all, remain busy with justice and religion and are less popular (evidently, one should think that he himself belonged to this group). The second group is formed by the writers who could write independently on any subject and could describe any scene based on this imagination. It is in this way that this author severely criticized Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, without mentioning his name, as the latter had depicted in his novels women of the royal Muslim families who, despite their veils, could do anything they pleased. Sheikh Abdus Sobhan blamed him for this.¹⁴ Hence, for the Hindu writers, a great emperor with

¹² Their had been about thirty monographs not to be found now. For the review, cf. "bibliography".

¹³ First edition 1888, 86 pages; second edition, Dacca, 1891; reedition in 1914, 183 pages.

¹⁴ Indeed in most of the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Muslim characters are tyrants, oppressors, seducers and collectors (possibly extractor of taxes etc.); they lack all human qualities which Sheikh and other Muslim writers vehemently protested. On this subject, see T. W. Clark, "The Role of Bankim Chandra in the Development of Nationalism", *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylan*, edited by C. H. Phillips, Oxford London, 1961, p. 439.

¹⁰ This passage is an extract from the 15th edition (Calcutta, 1333 b. S., P. 287). In 1891 the author published a 2nd edition of *Jobdatul-Machael* where one finds more details on the faith (iman), on the end of the world and on the resurrection. The author had projected to write a 3rd volume which he could not left behind.

¹¹ It contains two volumes, entitled *Banganubadita Koran Sharif* (1891 & 1892) along with other volumes one chapter each (upto 13th). It maybe mentioned here that this is the first translation by a Muslim and the 3rd in Bengali, the first was done by a Brahma, Brother (Bhai) Girish Chandra Sen, and then by a Christian, Father William Goldseck.

noble qualities like Aurangzeb appeared to be an inferior in comparison to his adversary Shivaji, "a vagabond bandit," etc.

It is interesting to note here that these lines show the first reaction of a Muslim writer to the work of the celebrated novelist Bankim Chandra whose books, as time advanced, were criticized, blamed, and even burnt in public, by the Muslim writers and politicians. The thinking of our writer was that the Hindus, who were fertile in imagination, produced such books when they were under the effect of hatred and rage. He considered himself free from such weaknesses. One can very well say without leaving the subject that the author did not like to attack Hindu religion or society. He only wanted to show the decadence of the Muslim society that was caused by ignorance and lack of consciousness on the one hand, and egotism and treachery of the Hindu *amlas* (bureaucrats) and intellectuals on the other. Apropos of the Muslim feudal class, the author writes:

"Twenty-five years ago, Muslims numerically formed the majority of the *Zamindars* of Bengal, and, if we count now we shall see that there does not exist even 1/16th of them.¹⁵ At the present moment, the persons with the titles *Ray Bahadur*, *Raja Bahadur*, *Kumar Bahadur*, etc. (titles of the Hindu aristocrats) fill up the pages of the annals of the magistrates in lieu of *Mir Shaheb*, *Khan Shaheb*, *Kazi Shaheb* (titles for the Muslim aristocrats). In ten years, if one goes to count again, one will not find any. The enquiry that we have made¹⁶ for the reasons of the disappearance of *Zamindars* confirms this situation."

Invoking his personal experience, the author recalls with the help of his thesis, the history of thirteen Muslim families belonging of *Zamindar* class. He insists later that "the role of the social leaders played by the *Zamindars*, the obligation under which they had been *vis-a-vis* the Muslim peasants and themselves, to employ Muslim *amlas* and to gain awareness of the grandeur of their Islamic religion, the only living religion in the world."

He pleads further to expand the instruction among themselves, in their families, and in the society because "only the instruction can

procure to a man the means of acquiring human condition; without this he becomes an animal."

Bringing out the problem of the ethnic differences which was the origin of cultural antagonism between the social groups who were indicated earlier, he addresses directly to these groups:

"Well! some of you often say: "We are the real foreign *ashrafs*.¹⁷ It is by bad luck that our family came to Hindusthan. How could we learn Bengali? It's a shame? How can a superior class Muslim accept to speak this undignified language?" But, it is of pure folly on your part; for four generations or even more, you inhabit in Hindustan, Bengal; Bengali is your mother tongue and the language of the country; all the documents related to your properties are written in Bengali, and thanks to the knowledge of this language that the Hindu *amlas* (bureaucrats) are on the way to do everything to dispossess you of everything you have, so that you become their slaves. The English who had passed a good number of examinations and are placed in high posts are, however, on the way to learn willingly Arabic, Persian, Bengali, and Sanskrit. How can you disapprove of the knowledge which clears away darkness and makes the path of progress in the society ... come forward, and leave these stupid ideas, make efforts to learn Bengali quickly and make arrangements so that your children also learn at the same time the official language, English."

In the pages that follow, the author gives more details of the ill-will of the Hindus towards the Muslims, particularly in public life. According to him, it became more accentuated after the creation of the National Congress (1885). Finally, he prescribes seven rules of conduct that are as follows:

1. To co-operate with the ruling class whole-heartedly, express grievances modestly, and pray to obtain what you want.
2. To renounce all the prejudices which can cause disrespect towards religion and society.
3. To snap all relations with the enemies of the society who declare: "If you study English, you shall become infidels." It is

¹⁷ Meaning the high tribes of Arabia, Turkey, Iran, etc.

¹⁵ The rupee is divided into sixteen annas from which comes this allusion.

¹⁶ We have no detail information on this private enquiry, excepting the anecdote mentioned in this work.

the Maulvis, the religious heads, who, in fact, are the real ignorants *par excellence*. They had never socialized themselves with the enlightened people, but only with the poorest peasants who would pay them. We have already reached this ultimate stage of decadence. If we still remain in this state and don't care for instructing the youth conveniently, within twenty-five years we shall have to bow down our heads to say, "I am a Muslim."

4. To avoid prejudices against the Westernized élites. "We are convinced after a serious examination that the Muslims who had gone to London for education had sincerely remained faithful to their sacred religion of Islam." Trips to Europe should not be considered as criteria of infidelity, because the Turks, "the jewels of Islam", and other Muslims are Europeans.
5. To prevent all sectarian conflicts (Sunni, Shia,¹⁸ Wahabi, all useless quarrels). None is responsible for the salvation of the souls of others. It is rather a human obligation to be united for universal progress and social peace. The unity between these opposed groups is totally possible. It is only the orthodoxy alone that is responsible for bringing about the great calamity.
6. To read the Quran with profound respect. So long the Muslims read this sacred book with respect, they will remain invincible, notwithstanding great obstacles.
7. To unify the Muslims by all means. One should create association and publish a certain number of journals in English, Urdu, and Bengali, along with the help of collective subscriptions from all classes in the Muslim society. Direct contact between the main office and its branches should be established to propagate this unity. "If all the Muslims could become united, nothing would be lost. There cannot be anything which we cannot do."

All these reflections of the author which the work reveals are the expressions of good his sense and true love for his community which

¹⁸ It may be mentioned here that in Bengal the difference between the Sunnites and the Shiites (who were very little in number), was never of that importance as it had existed between the Turks and the Iranians. Cf. Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur la particularité de la religion Musulmane dans l'Inde d'après les ouvrages hindoustanis*, Paris, 1849, p. 12. Between the Sunnites and the Wahabites, there were polemics and scuffles, even until present day.

one cannot find in the leaders, at least, so neatly. It is with the same good sense that the author starts his Introduction:

"I am of Muslim nationality (*jatite Mussalman*) and Bengali is not my national language (*jatiyo bhasha*)".

However, he realizes that it is urgent and necessary to proceed materially. And, with patience he exhorts passionately his compatriots to undertake the study of Bengali. Abdus Sobhan, who was also the editor of the journal *Islam Suhrid* (Friend of Islam) about which we do not have any detail. Perhaps this was the monthly review published by the Association of the Friends of Islam at Dhaka (1887). Abdus Sobhan merits some credit for this first sociological document written by a political tune that was characteristic of the period of the Seizure of Consciousness.

Hazrat Mohammader Jiban Charita O Dharmaniti. (Life and religious principles of Hazrat Mohammad, p.b.u.h), is the first work and a capital book of Sheikh Abdur Rahim (1859-1931), who is undoubtedly a great Muslim thinker of Bengal. This voluminous book (containing in it 958 pages) was the first of its genre in Bengali. Its author wanted to write a complete history of the Muslim world. In his work, Sheikh Abdur Rahim made attempts to write in an exquisite and vigorous language, the history of Arabia from the time of Prophet Noah; he described the conditions of life and culture in pre-Islamic Arabia, life and teachings of Muhammad (p. b. u. h.) in the context of *Quran* and the *Hadith*, with a number of quotations translated from Arabic by himself. In the preface, he says precisely that he who will read this book will be liberated from the anti-Islamic propaganda that makes one to believe that Hazrat Mohammad (p. b. u. h.) preached Islam by the sword.

In the Appendix, he cites passages from the Old and the New Testaments to prove the ascendance of Muhammad (p. b. u. h.) as the last Prophet of God. His book *Islam-er Itibritto* (1910) (History of Islam), is also a study of the development of Islam as religious, social, and cultural force from Arabia of the four caliphs to the conquest of India *en passant* through Spain, the Middle East, and South Asia. This book is totally of an original concept. However, after a minute study of it, one can discern the influences of Sayyid Amir Ali and his book *History of the Saracens*. Among other numerous studies touching Islam, two titles should be mentioned here to illustrate his literary activities: *Pranay-Zatri* (Calcutta, 1920)

– excellent translation of the story, “Pilgrimage of Love” written by Washington Irving in *Tales of Alhamra*) and *Banga Bhasha O Mussalman Samaj* (Bengali Language and Muslim Society), one of the important studies on the subject, which passes still almost unnoticed in its first publication in the first five numbers of the review, *Masik Mohammodi* (Bhadra-Paush, 1336 B.S. that is to say, in 1929).

The fame of Sheikh Abdur Rahim is, however, more radiant in a different domain. It is in the world of journalism. The clarity of expression, to which is added the vigour of Sanskrit, an extreme love for his religion and the society and being devoid of all superstitions – these are the qualities that one finds in him and in three of his colleagues with whom he founded and edited most of the first reviews of Muslim Bengal in a manner that is very significant. His efforts in this direction steered an intellectual movement at Calcutta. The group that was formed around him was known as *Sudhakor* that is justly celebrated for being the forerunner of Muslim literature in Bengal, source of the (would be) Pakistani culture.¹⁹

However, if one looks at it closely one can appreciate his real contribution to this movement. His stubborn efforts were not directed to the beginning of the intellectual movement, as it was the case, but rather to lead the Muslims of Bengal to be Bengalis and Muslims, as well and to regain contact with the sources of their culture to get back their lost dignity.

Chronologically, the publication of the journals and the periodicals started from an anterior date. In 1831, the first weekly *Samacar Sabharajendra*, edited by Maulvi Alim Ullah, was published from Calcutta. We know that during this period there were few bilingual journals published by the Christian missionaries. Two of these journals were edited by Hindus – *Sambad Kaumudi* (1819) and *Sambad Prabhakar* (1831) under the direction of Raja Rammohun Ray and the poet Ishwar Chandra Gupta (1806-1858), respectively. These journals created sensation in the cultural life of Bengal and there existed a large number of documents on this subject.²⁰ But, it is very difficult to present a complete picture of the efforts made in this direction by the Muslims, because just up to our

¹⁹ Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan, *op. cit.*, p. 127; *Cf. infra*, note 30.

²⁰ *Cf.* P. N. Bose and W. B. Morens, *A Hundred Years of Bengali Press*, Calcutta, 1920; B. N. Bandyopadhyaya, *Bangla Samayik Patra*, Calcutta, 1952.

days nothing was mentioned, and the archive did not keep trace of them. A particular research permitted us to discover the titles of a few journals (and the objectives that they lead assigned themselves) that we shall discuss here briefly.

It was Maulvi Rajab Ali who published in 1846 a journal published in five languages: Bengali (*Jagaduddipak Bhaskar*), English (*The Indian Sun*), Persian, Hindi, and Urdu. This ambitious project was of short duration.²¹ After a long interruption,²² a bi-monthly review (*Aziz-un Nahar*, April, 1874) was published by a great Muslim writer of the period – Meer Mosharaf Hossain (of whom we shall discuss in the next chapter). This review received attention from the intellectuals, notably, the Muslim students of the Hoogly College. The review was written in a chaste language and, it has been remarked in a Hindu journal,²³ “it seems that it was not written by a Muslim: “this review goes even to criticize the social abuses.” After this, came the *Akhbare Mohammadi* (Chittagong, 1877) of which the chief editor was Shah Badiul Alam. This weekly used to be published in two languages – Bengali and Urdu. In 1880, its chief editor started to publish *The Mohammadan Observer* which seemed to have the first English weekly of Muslim India and which influenced for a long time the opinion of the Westernized Muslim intellectuals.

The name of Mohammad Naimuddin is already familiar to us because of the earlier discussion on *Zobdat-al-Machael*. In 1883, he published from Mymensingh a monthly magazine of religious trend, *The Akbare Islamia* (The Islamic News). During the ten years of its publication, the editor defended energetically the sectarian cause of the *hanafi* and tried to safeguard the puritan spirit of the Muslim society against the undue influences of Christianity, Hinduism, and notably the ideas promoted by the Bhrahmos. It is interesting to signal here that the review *Akbare Islamia* started to be published, for the first time, as a strong criticism against the weekly *Ahmadi*.²⁴

²¹ The English Newspaper *Friend of India* wrote about this learned editor: “His Persian is too arabicised. His Urdu is too persianised. as his Bengali is too sanskritised.” Quoted in Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Banglar Jagaran, op. cit.*, p. 116 fn.

²² In between this time there appeared a journal, *Faridpur Darpan*, with Shree Allahdad Khan as chief editor. The most well-known newspaper of the period was, however, the *Durbin*, published in Persian.

²³ Kangal Harinath, *Grambartha Prakashika*, June 1874.

²⁴ Its chief editor, Abdul Hamid Khan Yusufzai was a poet too; his collection of poems *Udashi* (Tangail 1307 B.S.) was well-known in the literary circle.

which was published from the same district but was of short duration. The conflict was provoked essentially because of the fact that the Muslims, meat-eaters, found the Hindus against them to whom the cows were sacred animals. This controversy erupted as a result of the Sacred Cow Protection Movement, launched with great fanfare by the Hindus, and of which the *Ahmadi* became a propagandist. This quarrel arose after several articles were published by the rival camps. Hence, it so happened that many other important social problems remained neglected. We reproduce here some extracts characteristic of the articles published in the press of the epoch. One finds here the writer's vague consciousness of the political reality of that time. The anonymous writer²⁵ of an article pleads for stopping the act of killing cows and concludes:

"Brothers!, If we have to live in Bengal with other people than the Hindus, the Christians, for example, what shall we become? If we see them slaughtering pigs anywhere during their festivals, how shall we feel? We don't dare to think or to say this. The laws of the government obliges us now to bow our head. In the eyes of our king, cows and pigs are similar. That is why, all that hurts the Hindus or the Muslims does not concern them. But why should we, Muslims, hurt deeply our Hindu brothers unreasonably? Is it because that there is no prohibition to kill cows? In my view, I don't think this is logical. A day will come when we shall be separated from the king or that he will leave us. But the Hindus and the Muslims shall never be separated. We cannot be separated before the end of the world. Why not reflect again before hurting the people with whom we have such intimate relationship?"

Although from an orthodox point of view, the responses of *Akbare Islamiya* touch the more important aspect of this problem, it seems to reflect very exactly the popular sentiment of the time. It is further observed there that :

"The partisan of the protection of cows should not be afraid of the fact that these animals will not be annihilated. They must not forget that the Indians in general depend on the cow for their wellbeing. So, it is impossible for a particular community that might like to have its elimination. The carnage is not new and yet the cows are still numerous;

so, why this fear? One does not kill them as enemies. One slaughters them, but one makes efforts also to augment the number and quality of cows. What is destroyed on one side, is also augmented on the other ... A Muslim cannot hate any edible product (*halal*), mentioned in the sacred book, nor can he make fun of it. If he does it, he is considered as an infidel (*kafir*)."²⁶

The same review has taken back the theme again and was largely developed in another article:

"The number of movements is designed in our days in favour of the protection of cows. The entire India is agitated by these movements reinforced by the reunions of the newly created organizations. The actual Hindu community is invaded by the sadness for this problem of cows, the only reason being the elimination of cows by the meat-eaters. Their argument is that the only cause of the destruction of cows is the insensibility of the Christians and the Muslims... The great majority of the world population eats meat. All the inhabitants of Europe, Africa, America, and Central, Western, and Meridional Asia eat beef. However, cows have not disappeared from these countries ... Hindus advise the government to prohibit by law the massacre of cows. We cannot but laugh for this impertinence. We only eat our food. Why do you lament? Why these movements without significance? We don't go in search of your cows to kill them ... editors of some journals had proposed that the Hindu *Zamindars* and *Rajas* should prohibit extermination of cows in their states so that the race is protected. We ask ourselves if our Government, noble and just, would authorize this futile demand ... To judge from the actual conduct of our Hindu brothers, we really have the feeling that if they could come to power, they would deprive the Muslims of their right to eat meat and, consequently, to practice their religion."²⁷

²⁵ Cf. "Gokul Nirmul Ashanka", *Ahmadi*, Baishakh 1295 B. S.

²⁶ *Akbare-Islamiya*, Vol. 5, Shraban 1295 B. S.

²⁷ "Bharate Go-badh", *Akbare-Islamiya*, Vol. 5 (Pausha).

These quotations reveal to us well the motivation of the first trial of collective activities in the domain of journalism. We see that these two journals, well-edited for the period, did not publish in their columns any rich polemic of religious or social idea. The editors preferred to be preoccupied only with the problems of their own sects, leaving aside the socio-political problems as minor ones. Far from Calcutta – their great city – they were engaged in the controversy that were not of significant importance whereas, the Hindus, their compatriots, as we know, were trying to develop a veritable renewal despite the multiple problems of the similar kind they had to solve. What is important to emphasize here is that the characteristic attitude of the Muslims towards the extermination of cows, which is a problem that persisted to the dawn of independence as one of the so-called important causes of Hindu-Muslim antagonism. The popular version – the Muslims kill cows to irritate the Hindus, while the Hindus on their side play music in front of mosques²⁸ – seems to be of hasty generalization. This irritation was nothing, in fact, but the result of a very old difference aggravated by the isolated existence of the two groups of people of opposed religions, if not of different civilizations. The contact with modernism and two technology obliged them to get out of their isolation. The English historian Toynbee recalls – “the slowness of the process of psychological adaptation”²⁹ prevented them to realize a national synthesis and left them to subsist in a conflicting state of mind. In the context of the present discussion, we can, therefore, say that the Muslims had, on the one side, partially accepted the reality (as it is the case of the *Ahmadi*) and, on the other hand, defended passionately their tradition (as it was the case of the *Akbare Islamia*). But, the result was that everyone found an obstacle to the development of their material and intellectual life.

In the meanwhile, the situation took a different turn. As we have stated earlier, there was, in Calcutta, an intellectual movement that

²⁸ Kingsley Davis, for example, mentions this fact as the reasons of the conflict: *The Population of India and Pakistan*, Princeton, 1951, p. 195; Alain Petit, “La situation politique de l’Inde”, *La Revue de Paris*, 15 December 1929, p. 8.

²⁹ Cf. Arnold Toynbee in an article entitled “Pakistan as an Historian sees her”, in *Crescent and Green*, Cassel & Company Ltd., London, 1955.

was later known as the group called *Sudhakar*.³⁰ They projected to publish an anthology for a series of writings on Islam. It was *Islam Tattva* (Theories of Islam 1880) which meant to appreciate popular reaction regarding Muslim journalism before taking the risk of publishing a national journal, *The Sudhakar*. The favourable response reserved by the Muslim readers to this work in two volumes made the group decide to undertake immediately the editing of the journal. The projected third volume was abandoned. Having been persuaded that it is the religion which makes man perfect and that Islam is the true religion of the world, this group tried to bring the educated Muslims of Bengal to renounce their atheism or their indifference towards Islam. According to the group, if these Muslims had the knowledge of the true significance of Islam, they could never be indifferent, nor would they get converted to other religions which was the current phenomenon of the time. To complete this ambitious task well, the authors interpreted or translated freely the classical works on the subject. In the introduction to *Islam Tattva*, they mentioned the names of the Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and English works from which they were inspired. It is surprising to note the absence of two celebrated names – Sir Sayyid and Amir Ali of whom the first remained in the dark, being effaced by violent criticism and intellectual contribution of Afghani and the second, of

³⁰ The group *Sudhakar* was directed by Shaikh Abdur Rahim but there were also other persons no less important than him, erudite as they were, party to it. Their collective or individual works left mark on the literary history of Bengal. First, it is to Meyraj-Uddin Ahmad, professor of Arabic and Persian at Dobton & Saint-Xavier Colleges at Calcutta that the group was indebted for the work in question and the explanation of sources. Pandit Reajuddin Mash-Hadi (1859-1919), Professor of Bengali & Sanskrit at Islamia college of Calcutta, is the principal translator; his first work, *Samaj-o-Sanskarak* is a biographical & philosophical work on the life and teaching of Afghani; it should be mentioned that this book was proscribed by the Government; he published three other books, *Suriya-Vijay* (the conquest of the Syria by the first Caliph; Calcutta, 1895), *Prabandha Kaumudhi* (essays) and *Agnikukkt*. The last named work is an interesting polemic against the Muslim partisans like Meer Musharraf Hossain and others supporting the Hindu movement for the protection of cows; he tried to prove by quoting Sanskrit sources that during the Vedic period Hindus ate meat and the sages use to celebrate the festival of *Gomedha-Jagna* by killing cows. Munshi Reajuddin Ahmad (1862-1933), the fourth collaborator is also a writer of value. Among his books, one can name *Greece-Turaska Zuddha*, (Calcutta, 1898), on the war between Greece and Turkey; this is a work of Pan-Islamic tendency but abundantly documented; he wrote a biography of the Prophet (4th edition 1948), *Tohfah al-Moslemin*, *Krishak - Vandhu*, (collection of poems) and *Amar Sangsar Jivan*, (autobiography); he was editor of several journals & reviews during the last years of his life.

whom the ideas had not yet been spread by that time. The first volume of *Islam Tattva* consists of three parts: Atheism, Islam, and Faith. Following Afghani, one finds there a profound exposure of atheism and its development in different countries along with an analytical description of the situation of Islam before and after the diffusion of these ideas. Our writers search to prove that the decline of Muslim power is not imputable to the Crusades, as the historians think, but due to the influence of the teachings of Persian atheists, and these are the ideas which corrupted Bengal where the Sufis had an enormous influence on the illiterate masses.³¹

The work then consists of the philological analysis of the word – Islam. It is followed by a philosophical demonstration *à propos* of the superiority of their religion. To this end, they insisted, on many occasions, in the second part, on the human conscience (*bibek*) which is, according to them, the element permitting human beings the best way to attain plenitude. The conscience is defined as the “the faculty to distinguish the good from the evil and that for man serves as a screen against the prejudices and the erroneous beliefs.”³² On this theme, they elaborate patiently their arguments thus:

“The Islamic religion is based on the purity of knowledge – fruit of monotheism. The monotheism liberates the knowledge from prejudices and false beliefs”. First of all, it teaches that man should not consider the creator, the all-powerful and destroyer, as an animated or inanimated being or should not believe that God is substituted to man for establishing peace or for killing somebody, or multiple other beliefs of the same kind... and it is only Islam which rejects the belief without foundation; also they consider illogical the fact to follow somebody blindly. Islam teaches to the adepts of other religions that one should not believe or do anything without evidence. For everything, one has to call to the conscience which leads one to happiness... there is no other religion in the world where this quality attains its culmination.”³³

The third part is a descriptive analysis of the beliefs of Islam. It is divided into two chapters: the Angels, and The Sacred Book. All

³¹ *Islam Tattva*, Vol. I, p. 56-57.

³² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 41.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 76-80.

over the parts, the authors tried to develop the familiar ideas of the intellectual history of the Muslims, the importance of the Qur'an. The fervour they explained that the rapid growth of Muslim nations and their cultural and material progresses were due to the Qur'an. Each phrase and each counsel that one finds in it, according to our authors, are the best instruments of human progress. The major part of the second volume is consecrated to the prophets of God. The importance of the chosen moment for these prophets and their role in the expansion of human faculties in the world are described in this chapter. It is interesting to note here that there is a comparison established by the authors between the intellectuals (the scientists, the philosophers, etc.) and the prophets. The first ones are charged by God to arrange material wealth on earth, particularly by the “conduct of the human conscience,” but they cannot discover the mystery of the spiritual world. The prophets, on the other hand, are the elected ones who possess special qualities. They break the limits of the five senses and of human conscience. Under the circumstances, the role of the prophets, notably that of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) who is perfect, is well-manifested in the Islamic religion.³⁴

These extracts show us clearly the nature of the polemic which may not have anything new but was, however, very far from the apologetic type that we have mentioned in the previous chapter. These intellectual works recompensed, notwithstanding, their authors and permitted them to obtain greater literary success in this new profession of religious journalism. It is in this way that the foundation stone of a “national” literature for the Muslims of Bengal was laid which was not very much different from those in other countries of the Islamic world³⁵ and that for about fifty years the Muslims of Bengal nourished their spirit with it.³⁶

The effort of these precursors, as we have already described earlier, reached its culmination with the publication of the *Sudhakar* (1889). During its short existence, this weekly journal brought to the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81-83.

³⁵ Dominique Sourdel, *L'Islam*, Paris, 1959, p. 117-125; H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism, a Historical Survey*, New York, 1955, p. 127-145, and the very important synthesis with bibliographical details is of W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, New York, 1959, p. 47-97 (French translation by A. Guimbretière, Paris, 1962).

³⁶ Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

intellectual history of Bengali Muslims the following elements: development of a communication extended between the members of the Muslim community all over Bengal; diffusion of the socio-religious ideas of patriotism and of nationalism was spread; and, it initiated the realization of a journalistic and literary movement localized at Calcutta. The disappearance of the journal is due principally to financial crisis. However, the patrons found other means to remain in the domain of journalism. Reajuddin Ahmad, one of the four editors of *Islam Tattva* and the *Sudhakar*, soon published *Islam Pracarak* (The Preachers of Islam, 1891). For this new enterprise he enumerates ten particular following reasons:³⁷

1. to refute the propaganda of the Christian missionaries who convert people with money and with little honest means;
2. to show the illogism of the Brahmoism which was influencing the Muslims by conventional teaching and to re-expose the beauty of Islam;
3. to share precisely with the young Muslims their duties and rights;
4. to publish studies on social institutions and customs;
5. to try to retrace the national history of the Muslims of Bengal and to protect them from the pitiable situation in which they found themselves by forgetting that they were the first historians of the world;
6. to combat the *fakirs*, that is to say, the *Bauls*³⁸ and the Sufis, who are more dangerous for Islam than the Christians, Hindus, and Brahmos – “if one can call them Muslims, the word “*fakir*” has no reason to exist;”
7. to translate the Qur’an with fidelity;
8. to write the biographies of Muslim saints, in the light of *Kimaya-i-sa’dat*;
9. to get information about the various religious organizations in Bengal;
10. to publicize the news of conversions.

³⁷ Muhammad Idris Ali, “Munsi Muhammad Reajuddin Ahmad”, *Bangla Academy Patrika*, I. 3, p. 81-112.

³⁸ Cf. introduction, notes 27 & 43, and chap. III.

The chief editor and his collaborators assiduously followed these already established principles. Most of the articles furnished useful materials for the social conditions of the period.

In the March-April, 1903, volume of the *Islam Pracharak*, an article entitled “Bangiya Musalman Samaje Netar Abhav” (Penury of Leaders in the Muslim Society of Bengal) was published which throws light on the nature of the Seizure of Consciousness. While writing about the social situation of the Muslims, Syed Emdad Ali, who later became a celebrated poet, writes:

“At present, we have neither education, nor wealth, nor even unity among us. The society urgently demands an organization and, above all, a recognized leader. Someone can tell us that we have the Mohammedan Literary Society and the Central Mohammedan Association... that is exact, but they should have merged into one organization. Thus, our needs would have been satisfied... But the Muslim masses of Bengal do not have confidence in them. One could say it hundred times with conviction; they are even unaware about their existence.”

In the same issue, one finds another article that was written by the poet Sheikh Fazlul Karim. It was entitled, “Unnatir Upay Ki?” (What is the Path of Progress?). In it, the author blames the Muslims of their weakness for which the Hindus are not responsible; their folly is that they hate the Muslims although they are also under the same domination. He invokes equally the ideas of La Fayette, Adison, George Washington, Napoléon Bonaparte, and Mazzini, and calls the Muslims to work for the national cause.

Even if one can call it the national cause, already manifested by the Aligarh movement, it got no support from the *avant-garde*. On the pan-Indian plain, one knows that Shibli Nu'mani (1851-1914),³⁹ a disciple of Sir Sayyid Ahmad, launched a movement which was rather theological in nature. Being called *Nadwat-ul-Ulama* (Association of the Ulema, 1894), this movement is an antithesis of the first and obtained lively sympathy from the Bengali leaders; many articles of the review attest this.

³⁹ Poet, philosopher and historian, Shibli is the nationalist leader, who wanted a religious renaissance of the Muslims of India. Hence, he influenced the Bengali Muslim writers of the first half of the 20th century.

“There would be nearly forty thousand Maulvis of all sorts in Bengal. But it is regrettable that we don't have even forty as those of *Nadwat-al-Ulama*.”⁴⁰ This remark points towards the superiority of the leaders of Northern India and weaknesses of the religious leaders of the Muslim Bengal who could not even launch a movement of the same order in 1913, when they found the path of a government reform on Islamic education. The review advised them to follow the example of the first and propagated pan-Islamic ideals. Almost all the issues contained passionate poems and articles in favour of the *Calif* and on Turkey. Moreover, the sympathetic élite leaders thought that the National Congress was only suitable for the Hindus and founded the Bengal Mohammedan Educational Society (1903). As in the cultural domain, this group sowed the seeds of separatism in the political arena. Let us signal that it was earlier than the creation of the Muslim League (1906) that this separatism started.

In 1898, one observes a movement of reaction to develop in the publication of the monthly review *Koh-i-Noor*. The friendship and the good will of Hindus and Muslims are the mark of its ideal. Indeed, this principle has been practised in all the issues of this review with utmost sincerity, thanks to the collaboration of all the great Muslim writers and a considerable number of their Hindu colleagues. This was the first review in the cultural history of Bengal which determined this new path towards intellectual fusion. Raushan Ali directed the review conscientiously and published a number of articles contradicting those of the collaborators by adding judicious remarks on it. On one occasion, he comments:

“No zamindar should felicitate himself by profaning the Hindu deities. This sacrilege can hurt Hindu soul and religion, which is altogether contrary to the conduct of the Muslims. The sacred book prohibits this. On the other hand, the Hindu zamindars should not intervene in the religious life of the Muslims. There is no doubt that Hindu *Shastras* oppose this.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ “Nadwat-al-Ulama o Islamiya Bishva-Bidyalaya,” *Islam Pracharak*, May-June, 1900.

⁴¹ *Koh-i-Noor*, Jaishya 1306 B. S.

In another article entitled “Ekhon Kartabya Ki?” (What are the Duties Now?), Dr. Muhammad Meer Ali analysed the critical situation of the time which prevented the *entente cordiale* of the Muslims and the Hindus:

1. The religious differences, the fanatical points of view of each group along with the sectarian problems;
2. The plurality of the scholarly manuals in Bengali;
3. The absence of Muslim efforts in the literary domain;
4. The deplorable economic situation of the Muslims.

“If a Hindu writes that Fatima is the wife of Mohammad, a Muslim is shocked; it is surely ridiculous and regrettable, but who is to blame? Muslims do not say that Sita is the mother of Rama. Hence, he concludes that Muslims should expose the principles of their religion in pure Bengali, which would help disappear all prejudices and misunderstanding.”

Many other articles and poems published in the review help us pry deeper into the political conscience, perhaps a little vague, an inarticulate expression of the sufferings of the enslaved people.

In 1899, two reviews were published the objectives of which were almost the same. The first, *Hitakari* (The Beneficial), was of the literary trend and had as its editors Meer Musharaf Hossain and Raushan Ali; the second, *Pracharak* (The Propagandist), of reformist tendency was directed by Madhu Miah alias Moyezuddin Ahmed. The important fact is that these reviews emphasized the adoption of Bengali as the national language of the Muslims.

In the same year appeared in the literary horizon of Bengal, *Lohori* (Waves), which was edited by the eminent poet Mozammel Haq (1860-1933). It was the first poetry review of Bengal which was collaborated by some Hindu poets who showed an open spirit by criticizing Hindu animosity towards Muslims. In this way, they tried to prepare the ground for unity between the Muslims and the Hindus in Bengal.

Another important review of the epoch, *Noor-al-Iman* (Light of Belief) (1900), was published in the North Bengal under the direction of Mirza Mohammad Yusuf Ali, translator of *Kimiay-i-s'adat* by Imam Al-Ghazzali. This was the organ of Anjuman-i-Hemayat-i-Islam (a reformist group founded in 1891 at Rajshahi) and *Noor-al-Samaj* (erudite section of this group founded

in 1895 and being inspired by the celebrated *Ikhwanus Safa* and of the Asiatic society), once again insists on the role of conscience which is the divine light of intelligence. Although being fundamentally reformist, the review defended the *entente* of *Hindu-Musalman* (Hindus and Muslims).

Notwithstanding this which signals us an intellectual problem posed by the linguistic evolution, one knows that the prose literature saw light in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The daily language, whether it is of the Hindus or of the Muslims, remained structurally the same. The language represented by diverse writings, particularly by the first Bengali novel,⁴² had been very much influenced by Muslim tongues. The situation, however, started to change with the powerful style of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and the efforts made by the Hindu intellectuals of the metropolis in the social, religious, and political domains. If a Muslim wrote well at the time, it is of good tune to pretend that the work was not of a Muslim! This signifies to the eyes of the Hindus that a Muslim could not write well in Bengali and that his idiom is not distinguished. On the face of such contempts, the Muslims of the period, acquired a sort of complex. For this reason, sometimes they protested vehemently. The linguistic question was, thus, one of the causes of discord between the Hindus and the Muslims, and the same among the different groups of the last named community, as the orthodoxy did not understand then the importance of the mother tongue. The case of the editor of *Noor-al-Iman* is another striking example in this regard. He wrote a book entitled *Dugdha-Sarobar* (The Milk Lake), with the aim of the amelioration of his society. In response to the Hindu critics about the book, he wrote :

“In this book, I have employed words deriving from Arabic, Persian, Hindi, etc.. This is frequent in Bengali since many centuries, because this language is above all related to rural dialects, as the flesh and the blood are linked. This made a Hindu journalist to say: “We could not taste the milk because it had been prepared in the Muslim kitchen and that the Hindus consequently cannot touch it.”⁴³

⁴² *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (Calcutta, 1857) by Tekchand Thakur (pseudonym of Payari Chand Mitra).

⁴³ *Noor-al-Iman*, Shraban 1307 B. S. (1900).

In spite of that, the editor did not forget to mention that the milk has been tasted by many Hindu intellectuals and that a zamindar of that community had given financial reward to the author.

After publishing *Sudhakar*, Sheikh Abdur Rahim, the leading intellectual of the time published three periodicals: *Mihir* (1892); *Mihir O Sudhakar*; and *Hafez* (1897). In these last enterprises, he attempted to follow uniquely the literary path without mixing up religion and literature as he had done in the past. He tried to create also, for the first time in Bengal, in spite of the difficulty to find equivalent terms in Bengali. In general, the chief editor and his collaborators would offer an analysis, rather objectively, regarding political problems. An interesting article entitled, “Congress O Muchalman Jati” (The Congress and the Muslim Community) published in the two issues of *Hafez* can serve as an example. Its author, Advocate Sheikh Osman Ali, found two reasons for the Muslim antipathy towards the National Congress:

“First of all, the manner in which the Congress criticizes and attacks the government it seems that it is an anti-governmental organization; Muslims, therefore, should not participate in it and openly become the enemy of the Government; secondly, if the Congress gains something by its activities, Muslims apprehend that Hindus shall take the advantage and nothing would remain for them.”

The writer tries to defend the argument of his co-religionists. But, in lieu of blaming the Hindus, he condemned the backwardness of the Muslims which were caused by their “eternal laziness.” A minute examination of the Muslim writings reveal to us a problem that is graver than the pretended laziness. It appears to us well that the Muslims were suffering at the time unconsciously from a wound that was inflicted by an inferiority complex. However, the situation started to change, and a sentiment of self-respect saw daylight, as it is seen in the new review *Naba Noor* (New Light). Under the direction of the poet Syed Emdad Ali,⁴⁴ the review, one of the best in Bengal, had known a grand success. It is in this review that we see for the first time the appearance of female writers of the two

⁴⁴ Born at Dacca in 1875, Syed Emdad Ali was well-known for two works, *Dali*, a collection of his poems and *Tapasi Rabeya*, a biographical and philosophical essay on the life and meditation of the famous sufi Muslim lady.

communities. Otherwise, the review constitutes a complete dossier of the Muslim criticism on the subject of Hindu writings aimed against the Muslims. What is remarkable here is that this criticism does not lose lucidity. This is why, a considerable number of Hindu writers joined in this protestation of the Muslims. It was the expression of the newly-born middle class among the last named. On the other hand, the review propagated ardently Hindu-Muslim amity.

One can, therefore, observe a paradoxical evolution of the cultural life of Bengal during this period: in lieu of propagating progressive ideas, the Hindus were following step by step the path of "aggressive Hinduism" advanced by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and abundantly wrote against the Muslims. Naturally, the Muslim intellectuals, who were dreaming of a perfect union with their compatriots, were hurt. They engaged all their forces in a combat against the "anti-patriotic and anti-humanitarian" activities. In an article entitled "Matri Bhasha O Bangiya Muchalman" (The Mother Language and the Muslims of Bengal), the chief editor writes:

"The Hindu intelligentsia organized the Congress and tried to obtain the support of the Muslims by calling them brothers in the conferences, and the same persons, once returned to their own homes become freely antagonistic towards them. How the Muslims could have confidence in these people who were in the habit of cutting the plant at its root and water it on top to make it sprout?"⁴⁵

He even goes so far as demand these writers, leaders, and even his fellow members to abandon this sort of hypocrisy for the well-being of "the unfortunate Mother" (that is to say, India) and to prove in practice their sincere desires. If not, the Congress, conferences have no meaning; they are like children's games or simply instruments to kill the old friendship between the two communities and to augment the actual animosity. On another occasion,⁴⁶ the editor writes:

"By reading the article of the review *Bharati*,⁴⁷ the Muslim community has understood that the happy dream of a united India shall remain always a dream."

⁴⁵ *Naba-Noor*. Pausha 1310 B. S. (1902).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Agrahayan 1310 B. S.

⁴⁷ *Bharati* is the famous literary review, published under the care of Tagore family. The article in question is entitled, "Raj-sebay Hindu O Musulman;" by Paresh Bandyopadhyay (Ashvin 1310 B. S.)

He indicates that the educated Muslims know well the ill intention of the Hindus in the case of Government services and elsewhere. He cites the example of a Hindu magistrate who does not permit any Muslim to enter in whatever service in his district, for he would favour his co-religionists. The writer comments with disgust:

"Here is the result when one obtains the power of governing a district. What would be the situation if the Hindu gets the power to rule over the entire Bengal. Is it for nothing that the Muslims are not participating in the Congress?"

Hence, in many other articles the editor and his collaborators denounced the anti-Muslim elements in the writings of Hindus from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to Rabindranath Tagore,⁴⁸ and made a last appeal for unity and fraternity between the two communities.⁴⁹

This sentiment reached its culmination at the time of their protest against the partition of Bengal (1905). They protested in the name of the country without clearly supporting the cause of the Congress. This leaves us to peep through a different political situation.⁵⁰ But, what is important to add here is that the appeal of these Muslim intellectuals did not receive any attention from the Hindu leaders, nor even from those of their own community. Differences that existed in the interior part of the society, and differences between the diverse communities along with foreign domination largely retarded the nature of development. However, the efforts of the Muslim middle class permitted them to take progressively the advantage, thanks to gaining a cohesion of knowledge of Indian, Islamic, and even Western origins.

We have tried to put light on the intellectuals and the journals that seem to be important to us. The number of all those who

⁴⁸ Rabindra Nath Tagore (1861-1941) is the only political or literary personality of India, who, in our opinion, had conscientiously kept supreme impartiality in the conflict which opposed the two communities. (we have more about this in the 4th chapter). However, the critics had found in some minor writings of Tagore, for example, in the drama *Sati*, in the poem "Shivaji Utsab", the elements that they were searching.

⁴⁹ As we have already signaled some solitary voices of Hindu intellectuals joined them; Cf. a very important article of N.C. Gosh published in the review *Naba-Noor* in the same year.

⁵⁰ Cf. Chap. V.

participated in these activities is certainly more elevated than it was in the past, if one compares the situation with those in the earlier decades. In the list of five hundred and fifteen persons during the fifty years which had preceded 1855 who were named for their literary activities, only ten Muslims are found.⁵¹ In this perspective, one can understand the rôle of these intellectuals and their motivations, along with the problems which were posed to them during the exercise of their activities. The Seizure of Consciousness, as one sees it, comes out neatly of these efforts and perhaps more so in the literary activities or creative writings that we shall relate in the next chapter.

⁵¹ Cf. *Selections from Records of Bengal Government*. India office library. London 1855, No. 22.

CHAPTER - III

CREATIVE WRITERS OF THE PERIOD

The metaphysical subtleties of theology fell to the ground and there came faith to flower into poetry. The Reformation had gone. The Renaissance with its "Zeitgeist" began to work out the great synthesis – the synthesis of new ideals and our old allusions of at least five hundred crowned years of thought.

H. M. DAS-GUPTA,
*Studies in Western Influence
on the 19th Century Bengali Poets (1857-
1887)*; Calcutta, 1935, p. XVI.

The traditional literature of Bengal before the 19th century is totally written in verses, whether it is romantic tales or religious treatises.¹ Without worrying for poetical content, most of the Hindu or Muslim *kavis* (poets) experimented with their thoughts and their emotions in a simple, naïve style, altogether lacking literary effects. This phenomenon is, nevertheless, frequent in the history of world literature. The case of Bengali literature is, however, remarkable in the sense that these poets, being extremely emotive, have brought to make semantic and syntactic innovations. In the domain of prosody, they remain faithful to the rules fixed by the Sanskrit rhetoricians. Although there had been some signs of fatigue in the utilization of

¹ Only few letters in prose have been discovered from the pre-modern age. The Vaishnabite literature of the 17th century witnesses of this orientations towards the prose; consult the exhaustive work of Dr. Sukumar Sen. *Bangla Sahitye Gadya*. Calcutta. 1935.

the *payar*, (conventional metre) before the 19th century, the socio-cultural situation does not permit normal evolution of the literature in prose.

It is probable that the introduction of the printing press² and the evolution of the social system would have permitted the development of this literature in prose at the desired time. But, a particular element appears from outside that was constituted by the immediate need of the British civil servants to control the administration which took hereafter this development.³ Within a few decades, it reached its paroxysm, thanks to the introduction of Western knowledge, scientific research, and socio-religious movements.

The Muslims could not deploy their creative force, nor could play any significant role in this new enterprise because of the unfavourable conditions that have been referred to in the preceding chapter.⁴ Recently, a renowned historian states with justice:

“From 1757 to 1857, the Muslims of Bengal had not done but to follow in the literature, the old Moghul tradition. We can call the literary production of the epoch as the imitation of the classics. It remained altogether intact despite Western influence.”⁵

Indeed, the poets experimented with their psychological resistance in the latter changes by imitating the classics of the Middle Age or didactic religious poetry. Their writings do not permit the union with the literary evolution of the time. Notwithstanding the number of these writings added to the creation of the Middle Ages would not be less than ten thousand *Punthis*.⁶ This vast literature is distinguished from the modern literature by its linguistic particularities. In these texts, Arabic-Persian words, although current in the society, have been employed along with new terms, adjectives.

² Towards 1778.

³ Dr. S. K. De, *History of Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1825*, Calcutta, 1919.

⁴ Cf. Chapter II; moreover, there was no Muslim among the eight authors who collaborated with the efforts of Fort William College (1801-1815) for the publication of the first scholarly manuals.

⁵ Dr. M. Enamul Haq, *Muslim Bengali Literature*. Karachi, 1957, p. 173.

⁶ The exact number and the authenticity of these *Punthis* or manuscripts have not yet been precised; see M. Hakim, “Bangiya Sahitye Musalman”, *Islam Darshan*, 1921, No. 2, p. 526. M. Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan, op. cit, p. 17, 21-22.

pronouns; and, even verbal forms are explored to a great extent. Like other Muslim languages, the characters of these Bengali works have been sometimes calligraphed or printed from right to left. Is it an expression of the psychological resistance like the Hindus who, at that time, insisted on the Sanskritized idiom? A study of ensemble lacks us to precise this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the historians and the chroniclers are of this opinion. This typical language, although a little bit deformed by historical evidence and the present form of the spoken language in East Bengal was but the popular idiom of the time. It is curious to note here that time and again one calls it *Musalmani Bangla* and the works in question, *dobashi-punthi*, that is to say, bilingual works!⁷ One generally considers that this Arabic-Persian literary world is not extremely rich in intellectual or imaginative values.⁸ However, the acceptatance of the total existence of man, as suggested by a critic,⁹ is a quality that is well-presented in these works. And, one does not find it always in the Muslim writings that followed. Further, one would be tempted to re-evaluate its historical importance despite the negligence of the Westernized intellectuals, whether they are Hindus or Muslims.

Since the appearance of the metropolitan culture, one started to consider this literature and that of the Middle Age as folklore literature (in Bengali, *Battalar Shahitya*) to put in relief its indigenous origin.¹⁰ Without doubt, here there is a critical under-estimation from the historical point of view, because for the poets, or the narrators, readers or auditors, this literature did not only attract ordinary people, but also the élites of the epoch. If it lacks artistic ingenuity or philosophical profundity, this does not signify that this appertains to the category of vulgar literature which one can ignore. For, in our opinion, the folklore genre, which is an important element of the cultural heritage of Bengal, is altogether distinct in many ways.

⁷ W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Mussalmans*, op. cit. p. 146; for the linguistic transformation among the Muslims, cf. a recent study of Munier Chowdhury, “The Language Problem in East Pakistan”, *I. J. A. L.*, Bloomington, XXVI, 3, 1960, P. 64-78.

⁸ Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Shashbat Banga*, Calcutta, 1358 B. S. p. 263

⁹ Syed Sajjad Husain in a lecture, published in the review *Masik Mohammadi*, 17th year, No. 10-11, p. 448.

¹⁰ Cf. Abdul Gafur Siddiqui (Anusandhan Bisharad), “Musalman O Bangla Sahitya”, *Sahitya Parishad Patrika*, Calcutta, 1323. B.S. p. 99; Amalendu Chakravarty, “Bat-talar Sahitya”, *Natun Sahitya*, 7th year, No. 6, p. 137-143.

This genre consists, in reality, ballads and mystic poems. The ballads which are the works of the past but collected in the course of the first quarter of the 20th century, are very often the works of the Muslims. Moreover, these are the only works that inform us of the social life in Bengal, especially of its Muslim part, which is painted in abstract forms. This abstraction is due to the preoccupation of the poets with nature and destiny of man which is not far from the Plebeian reality. Romain Rolland spoke of these works in eulogistic terms:

“In these *Mymensingh Ballades*, I have found the manifestation of an original thought, of innumerable examples of *Swaraj* and a high value attached to the acts and not to the passivity.”¹¹

The difference marked between the ballads and the literature of the Middle Ages is that in the first, they do not go with communal sentiments or with “religious and iconoclastic zeal,” as it is the case for the second.¹²

So far as the mystic poems are concerned, which are the rich reserve of Bengali lyricism, one would find here around twenty categories notwithstanding related with each other by folklore tradition or spiritual fervour. Among the most appreciated, one can cite the songs of the seasons (there are six *ritus* or seasons in Bengal!), *Bhatiali* (songs of the boatmen), pantheistic inspiration *Murshidi* (songs of the devout of Islamic inspiration).¹³ Here is an example of a *Murshidi*:

A flower bloomed on the lake
On the lake of the heart
From where it is taken by the river of respiration,
Allah, the all-powerful knows the value.
The lotus flower has opened its marvelous petals
and it is radiant like lightning.
Do you know his name?
It is Rasul, the messiah.

¹¹ Cf. Ahmad Sharif, “Punthi Sahitya”, *Mah-i-Nau*, Dacca, Sept, 1954, p. 24.

¹² D. C. Sen, *Folk Literature of Bengal* Calcutta, 1920, p. 86; for the classification of the Muslim folktales, *ibid.*, p. 98-99.

¹³ Cf. On this subject, see the monthly bulletin of the Embassy of Pakistan in Paris. *Pakistan*, nos 36-37 (1963); one can equally listen to some songs in the record-album by Deben Bhattacharya, *Chants et danses populaires du Bengale*, disques BAM, No. LD 076, Paris.

In this beautiful song, one can ask oneself if the lotus is a symbol or not. In the affirmative, it cannot but be the Hindu symbol, already manifested in the art and architecture of the Muslims of Bengal.¹⁴

The *Baul* songs, which are for most of the part apocryphal, on the other hand, give us a surprising insight into the birth of a syncretism.¹⁵ “By the simplicity of the language, the profundity of the thinking and the delicateness of the music, says Tagore, these songs do not have their equals in the world of poetry.”¹⁶ The most illustrious names of Baul philosophy and poetry – Lalou Shah (1774-1894), and Madan Shah (1858-1916) - are of Muslim origin and had been very much inspired by the Persian sufis. The traditionalists and the modernists had reproached them for corrupting Islam. This *Baul* poetry has been more and more popular and is considered as the jewels of the Bengali traditional culture since this judgement passed by Tagore and farther strengthened by Nazrul Islam from the beginning of the 20th century. Does this regain confidence in themselves by the Muslims of Bengal to play a preponderant role? Under all circumstances, without worrying about the syncretic aspect, the modern man, with his anxiety and his spiritual nostalgia, cannot but appreciate the profound resonance of the songs of *Bauls*:

Where can I find Him,
The Man of my heart?
Alas! Since I have lost Him,
I move around in vain in search of Him.
Around near and far-off lands
I languish for the beautiful moonrise
Which should enlighten my life
As I aspire to His contemplation
In the plenitude,
With my eyes, in the Joy of my heart!

¹⁴ Cf. “Introduction”, notes 47-51.

¹⁵ Prof. Muhammad Mansuruddin has already published seven volumes of *Haramani* (The Lost Gems) in Calcutta and Dacca; the philosophical essay of Khsiti Mohan Sen. *The Bauls of Bengal* (Translation by Lila Ray). Visva-Bharati, s.d and the lecture by Tagore in Paris (Cf. Bibliog) present only one aspect of the Baulian thought, the aspect of its similarity with that of the *Upanisads* and other Indian traditions. The monumental work of Upendra Nath Bhattacharya, *Banglar Baul O Baul Gan* (Calcutta, 1368 BS.), is recommended. On the other hand, the present writer’s *Poemes Mystiques Bengalis* (editions St. Germain-des Près-UNESCO, Paris, 1977) may be consulted.

¹⁶ Preface (Benediction) to *Haramani*, Vol. 1, Calcutta 1337 B.S., p. 11.

These introductory lines on the literary history of Bengal to which Muslim writers contributed would influence us to underline the two following basic points: The first is the seizure of cultural consciousness among the illiterate peasants, the fact which is neglected most of the time by modern intellectuals at home and abroad. The second is the act of putting under relief the sources of the folklore tradition among the metropolitan writers who, in this way, cannot hide their origin. The analysis of numerous works written by the Muslims shall prove it later. But, let us now note, *en passant*, that this tradition has been stronger among the Muslims than among the Hindus. It is known that the last named attach themselves with the Western culture, not even all the time trying to realize a synthesis with their proper culture, which separated them from the tradition and brought them into an intellectual crisis.¹⁷ What we can, however, add is that the domain of intellect has rather been static in Muslim milieu while their Hindu compatriots were rather dynamic. The nascent Muslim intelligentsia has, therefore, felt itself to be nearer to the masses and the world when there came the new impulsion. One can see these in a descriptive analysis in the works of writers that we shall consider hereafter.

In the previous chapter, we saw how the Muslim intellectuals passionately tried to find their proper path to express the truth according to their conscience, through searching an idiom which would not be of foreign origin but that would be properly theirs and would reflect the politico-social development of the country. This is more remarkable among the creative genius. "The action of the genius exercises evidently much more on the matter, ideas, and above all the sentiments than on the expression," writes the author of *La vie intellectuelle en France*. But, he reminds us that "this does not signify that at least one cannot approve of the need of an expression more original, more individual, and that one does not force oneself to discover, whereas one feels prisoner of what one disposes, to discover the forms which at the same time adapted to the object to express and to the temperament."¹⁸

¹⁷ This problem has been admirably studied from the sociological point of view by Edward Shils in his *The Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation*, Mouton, La Haye, 1961; cf. also for Indian criticism about the book in *Quest*, Calcutta No. 34, July-Sept., 1962, p. 52-68.

¹⁸ Pierre Barrière, *La vie intellectuelle en France*, Paris, 1961, p. 396-397.

This criterion is useful to us while considering the authors as genius of whom we are going to retrace the genesis of their works. Among them, Meer Mosharaf Hossain (1847-1912) is the first and by far the best. The acceptance of his master piece, *Bishad Sindhu* (Sea of Sorrows) as a classic example in Bengali literature and the interest suscitated by his successors – as much Hindus as Muslims – made him popular among the wide public.

His works are composed of 38 volumes - plays, novels., poetry, belles-lettres, essays - but three or four had never been published and even today with much difficulty only seven or eight works are found in the libraries around the world.¹⁹ However, these works show the fecundity of the author and his elegance in expression and his humanism. The variety and the extension of his writings and, above all, his powerful and Sanskritized style but often poetic, have immediately put him as the precursor of modern writers of Muslim Bengal. As far as he was concerned, perhaps, he was not conscious about his talent as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Tagore had been. They were the intellectuals of subsequent generations who discovered his works and became enthusiastic about these wonderful texts. If he had been conscious, Meer Musharaf could have suggested a new path to the thinkers of the epoch. In fact, his writings, despite their merits and their multiple resonances, do not resemble those of the two writers that we have just mentioned. And, they do not also follow the rhythm of the literary evolution. His art is as original as striking was his attachment to the previous schools of Bengali literature, for example, those of Ishvar Gupta (1833-1896) or those of Rangalal Bandyopadhyay (1827-1887).

His autobiography, *Amar Jibani* (My Life) was published from 1908 to 1912 in twelve volumes. They furnish us with information almost of his social *milieu*, notwithstanding an extraordinary sensibility, which makes it almost a *roman-fleuve*. His family being ruined, he worked all his life as a *nayeb* in the services of the few zamindars still existing among the Muslims and had lived in the village and the city alternatively. So, he had never been a permanent city-dweller, nor being associated with the intellectual movements of

¹⁹ A. K. M. Aminul Islam, *Bangla Sahitye Muslim Kabi o Kabya*, Dacca, 1959, p. 86-88.

the country. Contrarily to his "revered father who had been versed in Persian literature but who could not write a single word in Bengali," Meer Mosharaf Hossain started to learn Arabic at the age of four years, four months, and four days, according to the Muslim tradition; and, he did his secondary education while acquiring a solid knowledge of Bengali along with notions of Sanskrit and English. During this time, the taste of literature penetrated in him. And, he collaborated with a few renowned journals of the period in transition. Naturally, this collaboration, along with his entourage, and the milieu that he had frequented, influenced his intellectual formation. He admitted frankly about the place where he had his early formation:

"Krishnanagar is a Hindu-dominated town. The Muslims of the town have no influence; I, too, started to imitate the manners and the customs of the Hindus who slowly left in me a profound mark."²⁰

Hence, by opposition to the Hindu writers and other Muslim intellectuals of whom we have spoken in the previous chapter, Meer Mosharaf Hossain developed a synthetic spirit and was forced by his writings to come closer, in an *entente cordiale*, to the two communities.

He made a search to operate this approach in his polemic text – *Go-Jiban* (1889) (Life of a Cow) in which he tried to advance some arguments against the meat-eaters in view of drawing attention from the Muslims in this regard. These caused scandal; and the author found himself involved in a defamation suit by the celebrated intellectual, Pandit Reazuddin Mash-Hadi.²¹ On the other hand, his Islamic writings do not show any apologetic or propagandist tendency, because he had always, on the one hand, the anxiety to expose his ideas on art for art's sake, and on the other, the obsession of linguistic aesthetics. It is because of these reasons that the author, although being conscious of the social situation, protested against foreign oppression in his narratives, *Udasin Pathiker Maner Katha* (Memories of a vagabond, 1890) and against the tyranny of the local zamindars in his play, *Zamidar Darpan* (Mirror of Zamindars, 1873), keeping of a distance notwithstanding from the peasant revolt

²⁰ Meer Mosharaf Hosain, *Amar Jibani*, Calcutta, 1908 Vol. I, p. 286.

²¹ Cf. note p. 30.

or the mundane and literary circles. He devoted uniquely to his work as an administrator and writer and contented himself to lead an intimate life with his wife for whom he had written a volume of his autobiography, *Bibi Kulsum* (Bibi Kulsum, 1909), with the sub-title *Amar Jibanir Jibani*, (Biography of My Biography). His first work, *Ratnabati* (1869), is a legendary tale in the Sanskrit tradition to illustrate the maxim. "Knowledge is better than wealth." The author considers *Ratnabati* as an original creation that has not been refuted until the present, but what is important to signal here is that it was the first work in this genre in pure prose written by a Muslim writer.

His best dramatic pieces are *Basanta-Kumari* (Daughter of the Spring) and *Zamidar Darpan* (Mirror of Zamindars), published in the same year. Based on Sanskrit form of the theatrical art, *Basanta-Kumari*, a psychological drama, treats the theme of a young woman, wife of an old man, who falls in love with her son-in-law. So far as the dramatic aspect of the situation and the personages are concerned, the piece is perhaps comparable and even superior to *Kirti-Bilas* written by J. C. Gupta (1851). But, it does not evidently have the quality of Racine's *Phedre* (1677). For a young Muslim author who does not have theatrical tradition behind him because of the religious antagonism in the society, it was an immense success if, above all, one considers the expression of human passion and the construction of the intrigue in it. To this, we should also add that the piece was put on the scene for the first time by the author himself and in his own home.

His *Zamidar Darpan*, as much as for the title as for the subject, reminds us of the famous drama *Nil-Darpan* (Mirror of Indigo planters, 1960) written by, Dinabandhu Mitra.²² A parallel study of these two great works, according to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, dean of Bengali letters, would be interesting, because this would reveal to us the social counter-current of the day:

"Nil-Darpan is the Bengali *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Whereas *Uncle Tom's Cabin* preached the abolition of slavery of the Blacks in America, *Nil-Darpan* favoured the suppression of

²² On *Nil-Darpan*, see the article of Jules Block in *Histoire des Littératures*, Vol. I, Paris, 1955, p. 1032-1033. Note that the English translation of the play was not done by J. Long as Block writes but by the famous poet Michael Madhusudhan Dutt. Long was the publisher, even as such, he was imprisoned by the British court.

the slavery of the Bengali peasantry by the European indigo planters. The aim of the book, *Zamidar Darpan*, is to relate the oppression of the zamindars. What the celebrated *Nil-Darpan* exposed on the planters of indigo is similar to that this book presents on the zamindars. The story is a well-conceived one. But we are very much disturbed and very sad to know the incident caused by the peasants of Pabna (a district in East Bengal). It is not prudent to put oil on fire. We advise, therefore, that the author should stop the sale and the distribution of the book.²³

Mosharaf Hossain did not accept the advice. Being happy to see his success, he published soon a second edition of the book in which he added a foreword for the readers:

“Many enemies have tried to break the mirror; but, it did not stop the following of its theatrical presentation.”

Despite his birth in a zamindar family and his relation with it, the author, who was passionately searching to express truth and beauty, exposed without hesitation the exploitations of the peasants. This was ignored by the Hindu intelligentsia who belonged, in the majority, to this class of oppressors.

The construction of the scenes follows the Sanskrit model. The declaration of the Prologue is interesting to quote:

“You know there is one special category of animals in the provinces; some of them even live in the city where they are like dogs; but here in the provinces they are like powerful lords. In the city one considers these enemies as very mild, very sober, very calm; they are neither ferocious, nor heinous – in short, they are unapproachable beings they don't even touch meat or fish. But, in the provinces, neither the jackals nor the dogs, neither the pigs nor the cows, can evade them. What is to say? These animals become tigers in their proper forest. Be sure, these animals are divided into two groups: Hindus and Muslims?”

The drama, then, starts with a scene of oppression by a Muslim Zamindar on his subjects. This is a scene in which English judge, doctor, advocate – all – become his accomplices. The sympathy of the author goes to the subjects in their struggle for existence. But he

sees only one chance of salvation. He expresses it in the same way like his predecessor, the author of *Nil Darpon*, did. The wife of a peasant expresses her hope in the denouement that Queen Victoria – the Mother – will save them. This play can, perhaps, be considered as a primordial work for another reason, because with it the Muslim personages appear for the first time in a theatrical representation by a Muslim author. Uptil then, Meer Mosharaf Hosain or other Muslim writers were hesitating to do this, because they were apprehending internal social antagonism and they were happy to put it on the scene opposed to Hindu personages, who were socially different from them.

The most popular work and one of the best, of Meer Mosharaf Hosain is *Bishad Sindhu* (The Sea of Sorrows). This is a tragic story of Karbala which never stops to arouse the emotions of the Muslim world over several centuries. And, this is manifestly the reason of its success. But, the author recounts with emotion the story of the passionate love of Yazid for Zainab, wife of Hasan, who is the grandson of the Prophet, by avoiding all political or religious questions. According to him, the passion was the veritable cause of the Karbala combat. To draw the picture of this legendary history, he developed the theme into many secondary stories and human intrigues. The scenes of the total life and the penetrating analysis of the characters are constantly present in the author of *Bishad Sindhu*. Almost all the characters, and above all, the protagonist, Yazid, was well-drawn from the point of literary criticism. But, one can reproach the author for writing a *roman-fleuve* (in three volumes: first 1885, second 1887, third 1890), which was not in the literary tradition of Bengal and, consequently, lacked unity. Despite its length and some useless chattering, a reader is always impressed by his long monologues that constitute enough meditations on hope, happiness, money, etc. These monologues, on the other hand, prove the intellectual profundity of the author. In fine, *Bishad Sindhu* is one of the Bengali classics of the nineteenth century and it obtains in just title the success even among the Hindu readers.

However, the critics consider that *Gazi Miyar Bostani* (Regrets of Gazi Miya, 1899) is Meer Mosharaf Hosain's masterpiece.²⁴ Of a

²⁴ Muhammad Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan, op. cit. p. 83; N. I. Muhammad Sufian, op. cit. P. 393. One of the rare copies of this book is to be found in the British Museum Library (cote 14127 ee 10); the catalogue of this library mentions wrongly Ali Allah, Sayyid of Bogra as author, in lieu of Meer Mosharaf Hossain.

²³ This book review was published in the famous literary review *Bangadarshan* (Bhadra, 1280 BS.), of which Bankim Chandra was the editor.

complex form, this work is another "roman-fleuve" that escapes equally all literary classifications. The corruption in the "feudal" society is the theme of this book in which the author, as a prophet-philosopher, throws an amused glance on the surrounding. Other than his sharp sense of observation, the critic of life and the use of old proverbs under a new form, constitute the merits of this work which is conceived in a style that is very personal: the author goes even to criticise himself; the allegorical symbolization of the personages and places are justified to draw the inferno of this world. Not without irony, he criticizes severely the Bengali women of upper society who hide under their curtain their hypocritical manners. Lastly, no grotesque or cruel situation escapes the vigilant look of our author. Here is what he says, for example, about the butchers:

"There are three kinds of butchers in Bengal. The first ones are those who put the knife through the throat of the cow, they are the real butchers. The second ones are those who are the advocates and who profit from the quarrel opposing two parties to extract money from them. The third ones are the doctors who do not have any professional formation, but yet practise. These three kinds of men are similar to the animals and they have no charity of soul at all. To put the blade of the knife on the throat of man is their only religion."

If one considers the literature as the critique of life, *Gazi Miyar Bastani* represents evidently one of the best literary creations of Bengal. Among other works, *Maulud Sharif* (Applause of the Prophet, 1900) in verse and *Islamer Joy* (Victory of Islam, 1908) in prose are the best examples of his writings on Islam. It is towards the end of his life that he affirms his religious spirit, after having exposed his universal vision in his plays, novels, and other diverse narratives.

Notwithstanding, the author, true to his concept of artistic beauty, never became a victim to bigotry. One can perhaps reproach him for his *naïveté* which appears sometimes in his long monologues and restricts his personal philosophy to express more clearly. Despite this reservation (in fact, he had not possessed the instructions which would have permitted him access to European literature or to Sanskrit classics), he was a grand figure of Bengali letters and a conscientious artist of the language.

Next comes Daad Ali (1856-1930) – a minor poet – who draws our attention because he was one of the first poets who followed the path of modern lyricism that had been introduced by Bihari Lal Chakrabarty (1834-1894) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). His works – *Bhanga Pran* (Broken Heart), an elegy written on the death of his wife, *Shanti Kunja* (Garden of Peace), a collection of devotional songs, *Ashek-e-Rasul* (Love of the Prophet), a collection of traditional songs in honour of Prophet Muhammad (p. b. u. h), *Antimé Mrityu* (Death at the End), and the manuscript *Diwan-e-Daad*, illustrate his poetic vision that was rather modernist in spirit. His works brought a considerable success during the period despite the less turbulent existence of this village poet.²⁵

Mozammel Haq (1860-1933), being less talented than Meer Mosharaf Hosain, is certainly an artist who was more conscious of language than the two writers we have just considered. The reason is the expertise that he had mastered in English and Persian, although like others he also could not go for higher studies, too. We have mentioned in the previous chapter that his review of poetry, *Lahari*, is the first in Bengal. A little later, he launched a second review – *Moslem-Bharat*. These two publications, under his able editorship and with the participation of two grand poets, D. L. Roy for the first and Kazi Nazrul Islam for the second, as principal collaborators, made a mark in the literary history of Bengal.

Among his six poetical works, one can consider *Hazrat Mohammad* (p.b.u.h) (1903) and *Jatiya Foara* (The National Fountain 1912) as the most significant contribution of a Muslim poet of the period.

In *Hazrat Mohammad* (p.b.u.h), a poem belonging to epic genre, the poet sketches a brilliant picture of the life of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) – from his birth up to the conversion of his companion Abu Bakr who became the first *Caliph* of the Muslim world. In this sense, the work is incomplete. But, the genius of the poet is revealed in his elegance and intelligent presentation which puts him above all criticism. In density and gravity of the expression, Mozammel Haq

²⁵ Here is one of the main reasons for which most of the Muslim poets remain unknown. We do not consider many other minor poets for the lone reason that their works are almost unnoticed. Hence, despite our efforts, we could not find out the writings of two Christian poets of Muslim origin, Samuel Pir Box and Munshi Aji Bari.

surpasses Hindu poets of the same genre. However, one does not find in him the new conscience of modern poetry which had already been experimented by Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Rabindranath Tagore. In the vision of the poet, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) was a simple man; he was also poor, with whom the rich widow, Khadija, fell in love and asked to be married. The moral forces of the Prophet – the determination of his soul covered by the love of God and his way of preaching – had been well-depicted in the poem.

Furthermore, *Jatiya Foara* (National Fountain) written by him is a very popular collection of poems of circumstances which were published in different magazines and were recited in public reunions. In his introduction, Mozammel Haq indicates that he is not a sectarian and that his aim is but to work for the national renaissance. The decadence of the Muslims, however, had given birth in the mind of the poet an incomparable “nation” in all the domains of action and thoughts. He incites them to get back their lost glory by leaving aside the luxury and idleness. Here are a few lines of the poem entitled “Inspiration”:

Proceed swift to the field of action,
Accomplish there your mission of life,
With benignant rays of knowledge pure
Your soul enlight.

United with one another
Fraternal bonds forge with strength,
March forward to progress and glory
Your national prestige render bright.

Then alone the shame will ease,
Then alone can happiness enjoy,
Fame, honour, wealth and welcome
Spontaneously receive from all sides.

The world will pause to view surprised,
Astonished at this renaissance,
Reintroduced you will be as men
Your greatness all will laud forthright.*

* Translated by Begum Yusuf Jamal (Mrs. M. Hussein), *Poems from East Bengal*, Karachi, PEN Publication, 1954, p. 42

Two works in prose – *Firdausi*²⁶ and *Shahnama*²⁷ – are considered by many as the best contribution of Mozammel Haq in Bengali literature. The value of this biography and the translation of the Persian epic is due to his direct and intimate knowledge of the sources and an elegant and faithful presentation of those in his mother tongue.

A connoisseur of Persian letters, Mozammel Haq, naturally, took interest in Sufism and its contribution to socio-religious domain. His *Maharshi Monsur* (1896), *Tapas Kahini* (Biography of Sufi Saints, 1910) *Bara Pir Charit* (Biography of Saint Abdul Qadir Jilani) passionately describe the beauty and charm of the interior life of the renowned mystics.²⁸ His *Tipu Sultan*, on the other hand, is a quasi-historical monograph on the last sovereign of Mysore. Here the author regrets much for the failure of his hero in the combat for protecting liberty, which rather reveals to us the patriotic sentiments of the author.

He also wrote three novels – *Daraf Khan Gazi*, *Johara*, and *Rangila Bai*²⁹ – all of which prove the ingenuity of the author. *Daraf Khan Gazi* is a pseudo-historical novel on the legendary personage of the same name.³⁰ In the local tradition, Gazi is a saint-conquerer of the Tribeni and author of *Ganga Stothra* (Hymn to the Ganges) in Sanskrit.³¹ Both the Muslims and the Hindus venerate him even today. The author tries to retrace his life; but due to the lack of necessary documents, the work remains more a romantic hagiography.

²⁶ Biography of the Persian poet. Calcutta 1898, 88 p., 2nd ed, p. 1911, 122.

²⁷ Partial translation of Firdausi's epic, 1909, Vol. I, p. 335; in French, there exists two monumental works on this subject by Professor Henri Massé, *Les épopées persanes*, and *Firdausi et épopées national*, Paris, 1935.

²⁸ It may be noted here that there exists an important publication on the Persian metaphysics at the time, *Ershade Khalekio ba Khoda-prapti Tatva*, Calcutta (1900); 4th ed. p. 1949, 298 p., by a devoted Sufi, Muhammad Abdul Karim; the book contains a very coumplet description of different Sufi schools and an interesting comparison between the Védantism and Sufism.

²⁹ Haq could not complete the novel “for family seasons”; cf. M. A. Hai and S. A. Ahsan, op. cit., p. 117.

³⁰ It is likely that Ghazi is one of the “pancha pirs” (the five saints) who are venerated by both Hindu and Muslim peasants; cf. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburgh 1921, Vol. IX, p. 600.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 19-20.

Johara (1917) is a narrative of the suffering of a young Muslim village girl whom the parents want to get married to a boy of their choice. The poor girl leaves the house. Her tragic life begins when she finds herself in the hands of bandits. The work is conceived to be following a didactic plan as it is the case of *Kapal Kundala* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who influenced Haq. The author makes the young girl flee, thus, showing the victory of virtue. Of a personal style, *Johara* is a remarkable novel of the epoch and even important till today for its social theme.³² Being a conscious artist of language, Mozammel Haq has also responded to the demand of the time by writing text books for schools. He did it with much tact and lively comprehension of the cultural values of his own community. Pioneer in this domain, he did not show, however, fanaticism in his works which was sometimes seen in the efforts of his Hindu colleagues and the group of *Sudhakar*, that was formed by the Muslim intellectuals to whom he belonged.³³

A participant in the intellectual efforts of Muslim journalists and writers, Shaikh Fazlul Karim (1882-1936) was one of the best representatives of the Seizure of Consciousness period among the Muslims of Bengal.³⁴ His epic poem on the Prophet of Islam, *Paritran Kavya* (Verses of Deliverance, 1903), places him on the same plain as Michael Madhushudan Dutt and Nabin Chandra Sen in Bengali poetry and also attests a certain position as a modern lyricist. In this book, he played the role of a moralist in the best Islamic tradition. On this subject, his translation of *Asbat-us-Chamau* from Arabic, entitled *Chamau-Tattva* (1900), *Hazrat Kwaza Muinuddin Chishti*³⁵ (hagiography), *Rajarshi Ebrahim* (Abraham, the Prophet-Emperor, 1920), *Chintar Cash* (Culture of Thoughts) and *Path-O-Patheyo* (The Path and Travel Money, 1913) are the best examples among his numerous writings, many of which have not

³² *Prem Darpan* (Mirror of Love) by Arjumand Ali Chowdhury was the first of the genre (1891) but its awkward composition does not permit us to compare it with this fine novel.

³³ In our previous chapter, we have tried to relate the motivation of the group *Sudhakar*; normally this group was not fanatic, but its insistence to evoke religious questions gives the impression of fanaticism when Haq was writing his books.

³⁴ He edited an excellent literary review, *Basana* (the Desire).

³⁵ He was an ardent Sufi of the Chistiya order.

been published yet. His thoughts were always expressed in a beautiful and dignified language:

“life passes, words stay. What is not truly dead, but the truth lives forever. In the day-to-day life, the Muslims have fallen in decadence beyond redemption. And, however, in this black night of the incredible fall, we can be proud of something that will illuminate this Muslim nation.”³⁶

Being nourished by this conviction, Shaikh Fazlul Karim contributed to the Bengali literature by extracting things from the rich teachings of the Islamic past.

Although the work of these four writers show us how the Muslim litterateurs can realize the success in the domain of modern prose or poetry, one cannot, however, ignore that in their writings there is a certain backwardness which was equally seemingly present in the social setting. They followed rather the tradition or modernist element of the previous epoch. It goes without saying that their Hindu compatriots had already passed this stage and that at present they progressed by borrowing the ideas of Rousseau, Voltaire, Mill, Comte, Marx, or Moliere.³⁷

Towards the end of the 19th century, epic poetry knew a grand vogue in Bengali. “In the West it had furnished a vast field to the ardent genius of the Renaissance, to his erudition, to his imagination, to his faith.”³⁸ It is not surprising that the “Bengali Renaissance,” which had always been compared with that of the West,³⁹ have had developed in the same manner. The renewed contact with the ancient classics of India and the rediscovery of the occidental epic poems suscitated among the Bengali poets an irresistible enthusiasm.

The contemporary lyricism was neither responding properly to the newly arrived national ideal, nor to the individual aesthetics of the intellectuals. Hence, during almost a half century, Rangalal Bandyopadhyay (1827-1887), Michael Madhushudhan Dutt (1824-

³⁶ *Path O Patheya*, Calcutta, 1913, p. 5

³⁷ Louis Renou, *Les littératures de l'Inde*, op. cit. p. 106

³⁸ Paul Van Tieghem, *Histoire Littéraire de l'Europe et de l'Amerique: de la Renaissance à nos jours*, Paris, 1951, P. 26.

³⁹ On this aspect, see the introduction of a collection of important studies by Atul Chandra Gupta, *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, Jadavpur, 1958, P. XI-XII.

1873), Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay (1838-1903), and Nabin Candra Sen (1847-1909)⁴⁰ held the Bengali readers in this spirit. Whatever could be their merits or defects, these poets did not but visualize ultimately a return to Aryanism and an "aggressive Hinduism" that the Muslims could not accept; only Michael, the new convert to Christianity who was also an "*Astadasha-Bhasa-barbilasini-bhujanga*",⁴¹ courageously innovated certain literary forms and types to enlarge the horizon of Bengali poetry.⁴²

Few Muslim poets, under the impulsion of this literary climate, aspired to write epic poems for the regeneration of their community, at least to remind their co-religionists of their glorious past. We shall consider in this direction two prominent names – Kaikobad (1857-1951) and Hamid Ali (1874-1954) – so as to know well the genesis of their works.

Kaikobad, which is the pseudonym of Muhammad Kazem Al-Qureshi, is perhaps the most famous poetic genius of the Muslims of Bengal. To add to this, he was also a great tragic figure from the social situation of his time and of his mingling with the old school, with an antagonistic attitude towards modern poetry all his life, even when Mallarmé, Rimbaud, or T.S Eliot became models for Bengali poets. Being a son of an advocate, he could not continue higher studies because of the premature demise of his father. Before getting a job in the postal service, Kaikobad, while being a school-student, published two volumes of poems: *Biraha-Bilas* (Reflections of the Rupture, 1870) and *Kusum Kanan* (The Garden of Flowers 1873). Works of a precocious genius, these two collections, did not obtain success as it was the case with his third book of poems *Ashru-Mala* (Beads of Tears, 1894). The elevated poet Nabin Chandra Sen wrote him.

"I could never believe before receiving your book that a Muslim could write so beautiful poems in Bengali. To tell

⁴⁰ Cf. Indira Sarkar. *Les idées sociales dans les oeuvres poetiques de Nabin Sen*, doct, diss, Paris, 1950.

⁴¹ Talents and linguistic qualities of an epic poet, according to the Sanskrit rhetorecian, Vishvanath Kabiraj.

⁴² Even the biographer of Michael Modhusudhan Dutt, Jogindra Bose wrote two epic poems, *Prithviraj* (1915) and *Shivaji*, putting on scene two parsonages who, in the past, fought against the Muslim power.

the truth, very few cultivated Hindus had a similar mastery of the poetic diction."⁴³

In reality, the collection contains many charming poems on nature, patriotism, and love (for example, an acrostic on his Hindu beloved, Being ambitious, the poet dreamed to write an original epic poem, because in his opinion, all his predecessors did only to imitate the classics.

This ambition pushed him to select a period of the pan-Indian history – the third Panipath War (1856) – as the central theme of his book, *Mahashmashan* (The Great Funeral Pile, 1904). His long introduction informs us the reasons for this choice thus:

"Since long time, I was cherishing in my heart the hope to write an epic, a war poem, depicting the noble and the heroic activities of the Muslims of India, in such a manner that the Muslims of Bengal, by reading it could tell with pride that their ancestors had been the other day the incomparable heroes, so that their nobles and their pride had nothing inferior to other people in the world. Hence, I depicted under my poetic pen the glory of the heroic past wherever I found in them, and I offered it to my readers. I have also tried to remind them the decline of this glorious past. I have fulfilled my desire. There is, no doubt, that from now or within two hundred years, Bengali language shall be seriously studied by the Muslims. They will then understand that by reading this *Mahashmashan* that the third war of Panipath had been the last spark of the bravery and heroism of their ancestors."

The instinct of justice and Muslim conscience in Kaikobad seems, however, to counteract this declaration. In effect, in his epic he eulogizes even the Hindus with whom the Muslims had a fratricidal war. This attitude was absent in the epoch, notably among the Hindu poets who, following the cannons of poetic art, exalted the Aryan heroes and diminished their adversaries. For his defence, Kaikobad explains his steps in the same introduction:

"The Hindus, like the Muslims who were engaged in an extremely severe war, are heroes and believers. There would

⁴³ As quoted by M. A. Hai and S. A. Ahsan, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

not be any merit for the Muslims to show that the Hindus are weak, because the lion had no glory to fight with the jackal.”

It is probable that the poet would have cherished a novel ideal and had remained faithful in all his works. Notwithstanding, the intrigue is maladroit, because it does not come back to focus the center of attention on the principal hero. On the other hand, five episodes of tragic love among the principal personages (three of them were Hindus), are evoked simultaneously with the events of the war, and its ensemble has certainly suscited a very large interest. But, all these do not conduct us to a sublime denouement relating the grandeur of human spirit. So far as the form is concerned, he follows the steps followed by Sanskrit rhetoricians. But, he does not care much for the logical development of the intrigue. The prosody, the metaphor, and the dialogue are not always of a happy usage in this epic poem, although the description of the war, the invocation of patriotism, and the elegies, are admirable. One would remember of a scene where the wife of the Nawab insists on joining her husband in the battlefield and thus giving him a relief from the enemy hands. It is well in the tradition of the Muslim heroines of which history offers us plenty of examples, but the literature has unfortunately forgot to illustrate.⁴⁴

As the poet would have desired, the evocation of the past remains always lively and nostalgic. On many occasions, he consecrates there the superb verses which express his reflections lucidly. Here are some verses extracted from his epic:

“With much valiance the Hindu goddess of Fortune
Establishing Aryan faith in the heart of India
Became one with the ashes of this funeral pile.
On that pyre, over those ashes,
A Muslim empire was built in a new way.
This nation with tremendous courage
Having reached the pinnacle of glory
Ruled India so, that cheers arose,
Resounding Indian skies and soil
And the foundations of Islam were laid.

⁴⁴ In the Bengali tradition, it is just the contrary. We find a heroine of Hemchandra beseeching her husband not to go to the battlefield.

But Providence is so infinitely erratic:
The Western skies became dense with clouds
Thunder and lightening showered
And in this fire was consumed in a trice
The colossal power of Islam,
And she fell as ashes into ruins.
This Delhi is a terrible funeral pile for Hindus.
For, it is here that five Muslim empires
Have crumbled to form the dust that is seen.
With every act of Muslim history,
With its rise and fall, is associated this great necropolis.
This place is a great center for human education
Each ruined pile forms an epic, with each particle of dust
The infinite mysteries of creation, existence, and destruction
Are interwoven; like a crystal-clear mirror
Human states reflected therein.
In this place – in this awesome region -
Many poets, braves, and kings,
Pious and impious many lovers,
Are asleep forever. Delhi's fate is to cherish
Graves upon graves.
Is not this the law of destruction? Without this law
How else would the world travel to progress?
Without destruction the world would be imperilled
For through destruction alone life is born –
This law is the clue to creation,
This law extends across the universe,
Applicable alike to the living, the inanimate,
The rational, and the vegetable world.”*

Kaikobad wrote many other *kavyas* (Poems) in fine verse and more poems which unfortunately have not yet been published. The two *kavyas* that were published, *Shiva-Mandir ba Jivanta- Samadhi*, (History of the Ruination of a Muslim Zamindar Family by their Hindu Staff, 1917)⁴⁵ and *Muharram Sharif ba Atma-Bisarjan* (on the

* Translated by Begum Yusuf Jamal (Mrs. M. Hussein), *op. cit*; p. 43-44

⁴⁵ In the last chapter, there is a discussion about Hindu-Muslim relationship where this subject is treated for the first time.

theme of the episodes in Karbala and the sacrifice of the two grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h.; 1933), received Muslim approbation in the period. However, one does not find a renovation of the poetic consciousness in Kaikobad who, with the same monotony, depicts his obsession for patriotism, religiosity, and historical truth.

Kaikobad echoed from a far-off distance, perhaps, the teachings of Amir Ali.⁴⁶ It should be noted here because this influence left hereafter a profound mark up on Muslim litterateurs. It should also be mentioned here that the poet was a devotee of the order of the Quaderia Sufis, which was reflected in all his poetic works.

Being inspired by similar motives, the poet Hamid Ali (1874-1954) left three epics with two collection of poems, *Kavita-Kunja* (The Poetic Garden) and *Bhratri-Bilap* (Elegy for brother) and a book in prose, *Parashya-Bir* (The Persian Heroes). In the introduction to his first epic, *Kasem-badh* (Murder of Kasem), he comments.

"The great poet Rabindranath Tagore has written in the review, *Bharati*, while criticizing the work, *Musalman Chatrer Bangla Shiksha* of Honourable Syed Nabab Ali Chowdhury⁴⁷ that "We cannot renounce our literature under the pretext that it is full of hatred towards the Muslims. The time has come to consider the scholarly manuals destined to the Muslim students be written by the Muslims and this is also to encourage the Muslim authors... Therefore, the Muslims should lay the foundation of a separate literature..." Our noble Hindu brothers do not wish that the Muslim readers and students read all the time books full of misdeeds perpetrated by their ancestors; ... and make trial of these writers (Hindus) with contempt from the bottom of their heart. That is why, they advise us to create our own literature. One of the reasons of the publication (of the epic)

⁴⁶ M. A. Hai and S. A. Ahsan; *op. cit* p. 247-248.

⁴⁷ Originally this was a lecture in Urdu; The English Version is entitled, *Vernacular Education in Bengal (Being a speech delivered at the 12th session of Mohammedan Educational Conference)*, Calcutta, 1900. This version was prepared for the Governor of Bengal to whom it was dedicated. In the presence of the Governor and under the chairmanship of Sayyid Amir Ali, the author had pronounced the speech furnishing all the details of Hindu writings against Muslims. The Indian Institute of the University of Oxford possesses a copy.

is to call upon the educated Muslims to make them interested in literature, to show them the art of writing, and to reproach them for their indifference in this respect."

In the second epic, entitled *Jaynal Uddhar* (The Rescue of Jaynal, which is the last episode of Karbala), he reiterated his previous declaration, but with an interesting development:

"My main aim is to write a beautiful poem which shall be an independent literary enterprise for the Muslim readers. Here is an interesting subject which has nothing to deal with Hindu gods and goddesses and their innumerable cults."

These two epics, in fact, are nothing but two long narrative poems in free verse, being inspired by the sources of the masters that we have already mentioned. The poet does not care for the historical chronology; but, contrarily, one can appreciate in him the precision of the plot and the depiction of human types.

The subject of the third epic, *Sohrab Badh*, is extracted from an episode of Firdousi's *Shahnama* in which Rustam, the Persian hero, fights against his son Sohrab and kills him in the duel. The poet elaborates his story in a very agreeable manner. But, the absence of all poetic message does not permit us to compare this work with the original epic of Firdausi, nor with the English version of Mathew Arnold. The denouement itself is not also tragic enough than that of the other ancient versions in Bengali *Punthi* literature. The merit of Hamid Ali remains, on the other hand, on the command he had possessed by the time in the use of free verse and in the ingenious simplicity of plots. Moreover, an exceptional fact is that the poet, although one of the traditionalist *Ulemas* and teacher of Arabic, wrote in Bengali his literary works during his youth in a relatively short span of six years.⁴⁸

We have already indicated the qualities and the limitations of the epic works rendered by the Muslim poets. It remains for us to study their relationship with the large literary family of Bengal. There is no doubt that the success they carried off is explained by the currents of ideas of the period. It is just the time when the Bengali intelligentsia renounced to produce works of pure imitation that the Muslim poets

⁴⁸ For this study concerning the poet and his works, we are grateful to the family of the poet who lives in Chittagong. The histories of Bengali literature do not unfortunately consecrate enough space for him. However, one can consult the article by Abdul Qadir, "Kavi Abul Ma-Ali Muhammad Hamid Ali," *Mah-e-Nau*, Dacca, March, 1960 p. 62-70.

started to repeat. Modern lyricism launched by the poets like Biharilal Chakravarty and Rabindranath Tagore transformed itself in a very refined style of expression. From the point view of poetic art, it can be said that the form was not without defect. Tagore, the best representative of the genre, was reported to have imported from the West "the sentimental languors of the Celtic crepuscule, the affectations of the aestheticism *fin de siècle*, and the misty wave of the symbolism of Maeterlinck."⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the modern lyricism appeared to most of the poets – Hindus and Muslims as well as a poetic form whose existence would remain only ephemeral. The Muslim poets, in particular, proclaimed the authenticity of the epic poetry. They could not understand that the modification of the notion of time and space made it impossible the recreation of the grandiose universe of the epic. They would not even see at what point the mythological heritage lacked in them, whereas their Hindu colleagues possessed or borrowed skillfully – from foreign cultures, chiefly from Greek and Latin, this heritage seemed to them too far away to serve as an inspiration.

The intellectual tradition, the literary milieu, and their lack of education would not facilitate the task of the authors. As to the readers, they would be more interested in periodical literature and would be much less concerned about reading great works rendered by the pseudo-classic writers. Finally, it is of importance to signal that hereafter everybody knows that there are "literary genius" among the Muslims of Bengal, the *Mahakavis*, (great poets) that is to say, the poets who had written epics. The Hindu historians, in a general way, avoid to mention their names or to write analytically on their works, which are not much inferior to those of the Hindus.⁵⁰

The course of the successive periods of the history of the intellectual life in Bengal was in great movement and followed the repercussion of socio-political events. The Muslim intellectuals cultivated, at the time, their dear ideas of which we have just described. The glorification of the past and the worries of the present prevent them to turn towards future, at least up to the arrival of the soldier poet Kazi Nazul Islam.

⁴⁹ J. C. Gosh, *op. cit.*, p. 146

⁵⁰ Although Hindu works might have shortcomings, they would, notwithstanding find in them the elements that evoked the faith and the national renaissance of Bengal. Muslims, by opposition, would not envisage them at all.

Chapter IV

SEIZURE OF POSITION : 1905-1947

All consciousness is positional and it wears out in this very position.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE
L'Être et le Néant,
Paris, 1943, p. 18

That Moslem Politics should have run a parallel course and should never have merged in the Hindu current of politics is a strange fact of modern Indian history. In so segregating themselves the Moslems were influenced by some mysterious feeling, the source of which they could not define and guided by a hidden hand which they could not see, but which was all the same directing them to keep apart from Hindus. This mysterious feeling and this hidden hand was no other than their pre-appointed destiny, symbolized by Pakistan, which, unknown to them, was working within them. Thus viewed, there is nothing new or nothing sudden in the idea of Pakistan. The only thing that has happened is that, what was indistinct appears now in full glow, and what was nameless has taken a name.

B.R. AMBEDKAR
Pakistan or Partition of India,
Bombay, 1945, p.333-334

The first half of the 20th century in India is the more prominent period in the history of this country. For Bengal, this period is even more important as for socio-political, so for its intellectual and literary history. It is not because it is recent, but because it is

characterized by the plasticity of events and facts, and also for the ambiguity of opinions and its ideas. This period offers a vast perspective for each human activity. Thus, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to identify the landmarks of intellectual development of the Muslims by separating it from the general history of ideas of Bengal and of India. As the interaction of politics and various socio-religious movements were all at times the consequence, these are the causes of this development.

Nevertheless, a synoptic view may be proposed in this chapter which, by developing the theme of our previous study, could be called Seizure of Position. The total period between 1905-1947 is evidently the result brought about by the Seizure of Consciousness of the previous period. Furthermore, one can distinguish in the present period three principal phases which are often mixed up: political participation, altruist adventure, and crisis at the time of decision. These were branded in diverse positions that were undertaken by the Muslims in the modern history of India.

By considering these different points schematically, we will arrive at seeing how the awakening of the Muslim society in Bengal transformed itself into its present shape. It now goes without saying that the particular situation in Bengal cannot be isolated from that of India altogether and that for the examination of the problems studied, it is often required that we relate the facts globally.

Muslim participation in the political life had been hindered by the rulers of the country – The British – and even by the leaders of the Muslim community. Sir Sayyid Ahmad, we have seen earlier, notably formulated this principle of non-participation; and, his disciples assiduously followed this path. Also, there were religious chiefs, namely, Munshi Meherullah and some other intellectuals, who prohibited the Muslims to take part in political activities and put the accent on economic and social progress.

However, the Muslim attitude started to change from the beginning of the 20th century for various reasons. Firstly, it was because of the Act of 1892 which introduced the Legislative Council in the country where the Muslims were not really represented. This situation gave lively protest on the part of the Muslims when a belated policy change of the government came to make them calm. In fact, in a letter of August, 1907, to all the provincial authorities, the Government of India declared:

“With the electoral system in force upto now, Hindus dominate largely in all or almost all the electoral constituencies which makes that the Muslim members are relatively of little number and even the system of nomination (i.e. the nomination of “supplementary” Muslim member by the Government) – although one would have insisted on it – was not permitted to obtain a satisfactory recruitment of standard Mohammedans on which the community could have confidence. The Government of India suggests, therefore, to local Governments to the adaptation of following measures: firstly, other than the little number of Muslims normally eligible, it seems desirable that each council reserves exclusively a certain number of seats for the Muslims; secondly, in view of filling up these seats or a part of it, a proper electoral college for the Muslims should be constituted.”¹

This special electorate was, in fact, introduced by the Act of 1909, which left the Muslims of India satisfied enough, whereas the Hindus became totally unhappy. The Hindus, under the direction of the National Congress, and being pushed by their thrust for independence or by their desire of the exclusive Hindu renaissance, started henceforward the political struggle. Such a situation made the Muslims anxious perhaps more than the happenings of the past events did. We make allusions to the incidents which had occurred in Bengal during 1905 and then spread to all over India as its follow-up. In that very year, Bengal was partitioned;² the Government of India created in effect, on the 16th October, 1905, a new province for “East Bengal and Assam” for administrative needs, but which became an eminently Muslim territory.³ Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy (1898-

¹ Cf. Ram Gopal. *op. cit.* p. 107-108. (Translated from the French text).

² Before the Charter Act of 1853, the Bengal Presidency of the British Empire consists of Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa and a part of the United Province along with Delhi and a part of the Punjab. After this Act, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam became one single province. In 1874, Assam became a separate province.

³ C. J. O'Donnell (M.P.) in his enquiry report. *The Causes of Present Discontent in India* (London, 1908) states that it was a perfectly reasonable measure and one had talked about the partition since half a century (p. 63). East Bengal was then consisted of Dacca, Chittagong and Rajshahi divisions (15 districts); the new province had 106540 square miles and a population of 31 million persons of which 18 million Muslims and 12 million Hindus.

1905), did not hide the true policy of the Government, which desired "an acceleration of the progress of Mohammedan subjects". Naturally, these declarations brought a great misunderstanding, above all, among the Hindus who manifested their disapproval of various attempts of the Viceroy. The Hindu intellectual élites of Bengal were, on the other hand, had opposed certain activities of this very capable Viceroy, such as to officially recognize the National Congress and his reform of the administration of the University of Calcutta. Furthermore, one can add to these the difficulties in the order of economic affairs of certain Hindu Zamindars,⁴ – proprietors in East Bengal – but who lived in Calcutta (situation which reminds the régime of *latifundia*) along with the domination of employment the other day reserved to the Hindu degree-holders, because of this partition of Bengal. Now, as the news of the partition was known, the intellectual élites, – the Hindu bourgeoisie – started to protest vigorously. Some of the Muslim leaders, only intellectuals, like Liakat Ali (editor of the journal *Swadeshi*), Abdur Rasul (advocate), Abul Kasem and Dudu Baksh (politicians) joined these protestations.⁵ The Central Mohammadan Association led by Amir Ali advised equally the government in these terms:

"No part of the Bengali-speaking population should be separated from Bengal if an urgent necessity be not felt; in the present case, this necessity does not exist."⁶

Following the same step, the daily *Mussalmans*, which was just founded by an intellectual named Majibur Rahman, declared, in its turn on the 14th December, 1906:

"It is our economic and political situation which makes us Indians, and in our daily life we are first of all Indians and then Muslims."

However, as soon as the protest took an extremist position and attacked, violently not the British alone, but the Muslims too, the Muslims, position changed. The situation shall perhaps be better

⁴ K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.* p. 38.

⁵ It may be mentioned that these leaders are from West Bengal, the police report *File No. 491*(1907) at Calcutta noted that there had not been a single enlightened Muslim who, capable guiding the masses in East Bengal and Assam, associated himself with the Congress session. Cf. H. and U. Mukherjee, *India's Fight for Freedom or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905-1906*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 149.

⁶ Amvika Charan Majumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, Calcutta III, p. 223.

understood if one carefully considers the attitude taken by the great poet Rabindranath Tagore; with eminent persons like Sir S. N. Bannerjee, B. C. Pal, and Aurobindo Gosh (1872-1950).⁷ Tagore was at the front line of this movement and it suits us to tell that it is he who could always clearly see Bengali and Indian problems if not those of the world, before his colleagues, thanks to his quasiprophetic vision. During those agitating days of the movement called *Swadeshi*, he wrote and eloquently spoke, thus, appealing to the good sense of all:

"The reason for which the Musalmans do not understand our sentiment comes of what that we never intimated our heart with theirs." He reproached his co-religionists of not to have given any proof of their interest for the well-being of the Musalmans: "Therefore, we cannot blame them if our goodwill leave them rather in perplexity."⁸

Hindu activities made the Muslims anxious. Contrary to the Hindus, who quickly nurtured an anti-British sentiment, they manifested their gratitude to the British, following the directions of their leaders and in response to the good wishes of the dominant class. According to Julien Vinson,⁹ they expressed their gratitude to Lord Curzon thus:

"Who has encouraged Muslim studies on Islam, the restoration of mosques, the foundation of Muslim colleges. Sir R Fuller, Lieutenant Governor of the new province, East Bengal, had been received at Dacca, with an indescribable enthusiasm by the Muslims, whereas the Hindus abstained themselves and their journals were full of violent protestations."

Soon after the partition, there were bloody conflicts¹⁰ between the Hindus and The Muslims. All these put the last named in distance

⁷ Although he turned to be a sage much latter in the time-old Indian tradition, Aurobindo had a list of very important political activities; cf. Dr. V. P. Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Shri Aurobindo*, Bombay, 1960.

⁸ Cf. *Your Tagore Today - Selections from the Writing of Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore* (translated by H. N. Mukherjee) - edited by H. K. Sanyal, Bombay, 1945, p. 25-26. (Translated from the French text).

⁹ Cf. "Le mouvement Swadeçi", *Revue du monde musulman*, I, 1, Nov. 1906, p. 24-25.

¹⁰ Julien Vinson treats a conflict occurred on Feb. 7, 1906; *ibid.*, p. 25-26.

from the few Hindu politicians to whom they had fraternal sentiment. Julien Vinson gathered certain details regarding incidents in the article already mentioned. This permits us to understand better the Muslim attempt and the problems that were posed. We quote from the same source once more the following extract,¹¹ which seems to be quite significant in this regard :

“It is good to remind again that from the 5th November, 1905, Mohammedan Literary Society of Calcutta¹² was sending a circular to their co-religionists so that they remained engaged in taking no part to the agitation against the “Partition” of Bengal. In this document signed by Bakhtiyar Shad, Syed Muhammad, Abdullah Khan Ahmad, etc, to stay as good and faithful subjects of the King Emperor Edward VII, insisting on this point that the interests of the Mohammedans of India are all different than those of the Hindus, and by enumerating the favours of the present Government:

1. Annual allocation of Rs. 50,000 (83,500 F.) for Muslim schools in Bengal,
2. Foundation of a number of scholarships in the University of Calcutta,
3. Preservation of earlier foundations,
4. Successive allocation of more than Rs.1,00,000 (167,000 F.) for the construction of a building to install a *Madrassa*,
5. Adjustments brought to rules on the peste in favour of Muslim ladies behind veil, which close the gyneces,
6. Authorization during epidemy, to go on pilgrimage to Mecca , leaving from Chittagong in place of Bombay, be accorded to the Muslims of Bengal, Behar, and Orixia (sic).”

By failing to obtain the Muslim support, the Hindus continued to agitate, and with the help of other Indians, they adopted an attitude

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 26.

¹² This is the society founded by Nawab Abul Latif in 1863 (see, chap 1). Always very active until the death of its founder, it was launched again at this epoch, and was transformed into a Muslim institute towards the twenties of the past century and published a periodical, *Muslim Review* under the editorship of the renowned Islamologist of Bengal, S. Khuda Baksh.

of passive resistance, like the boycottage of English cloth and foreign titles with the intention “to create never-ending complications”¹³ for the régime. This, perhaps, could not be criticized in itself; but as ill-luck would have been that the movement rapidly took a religious turn and the motives of the metaphysical and obscurantist order of the Hindu orthodoxy were employed in the new cult of *Swaraj* and in the idolatry towards the motherland.¹⁴ Adaptation of *Bande Mataram* as the national anthem, Shivaji festival, political assassinations, and open fanaticism of certain leaders and intellectuals intensified in Bengal anti-Muslim sentiment among the common Hindus.¹⁵ Consequently, the Muslims started to become alert.

Being hesitant about the attitude to be adapted, the Muslim leaders, vis-a-vis the burning politics of the country, grasped that a constitutional reform was imminent. Soon they formed a delegation under the leadership of Nawab Muhsin-ul-Mulk – a disciple of Sir Sayyid Ahmad. The Nawab rapidly obtained the signature of 4,000 Muslim leaders of all provinces and indigenous states of India in a petition of grievances which would be formally submitted to the Viceroy by the Aga Khan (1877-1957) on the 1st October, 1906.¹⁶ The reply of the Viceroy Lord Minto was full of laudatory comments towards the Muslim community and its leaders whom he addressed as “the descendants of a conquering and dominant race.” He was also satisfied to know about the legitimacy of their points of view as well as the aspirations of the enlightened section of their community. Without committing himself, he gave the delegation the assurance that they could count, concerning the rights and political interests of the Muslims, on the British *Raj* who would thus prove the sense of justice and *fairplay*. He referred to the problem of the new province of East Bengal and Assam where the Muslims had shown their loyalty in spite of the difficulties provoked by agitations and administrative limitations. The partition, he said, had been uniquely

¹³ K. A. Wadud, *Banglar Jagaran*, *op.cit.* p. 178.

¹⁴ Dr. M. A. Buch, *The Development of Indian Political Thought*. Baroda, 1940, p. 182 and V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*. London, 1957, p. 354-356.

¹⁵ Although from a particular view, Dr. Rash Behari Gosh discloses this in his presidential speech at the National Congress met at Surat, Dec. 26, 1907, on day-to-day reality, cf. Nirod C. Chowdhury, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. New York, 1957, p. 227.

¹⁶ For the complete text, see, Ram Gopal, *op.cit.* p. 329-335.

dictated by the interests of "the present and future populations". The future of this province would be ascertained and the Muslims who had proved their loyalty along with moderation, could equally be ensured of the ardent sympathy of the ruler.¹⁷

This Anglo-Muslim *entente*, more re-assuring than that of what Sir Sayyid had obtained, incited the leaders to take a position more concrete and more decisive than that they could have made until that period. They decided, as a result, to establish an organization which would permit them to get recognition from the British Government as "a nation within the nation," following the formula of Aga Khan.¹⁸

This India-wide organization had been the dream of a great number of enlightened Muslims of the 19th century. During the annual session of the All-India Mohammedan Educational Conference, just after two months, Sir Salimullah (1871-1915), the Nawab of Dacca, invited all the leaders and formally proposed its creation. Dacca, the erstwhile capital of the new province of Assam and East Bengal, became thus, on the 30th December, 1906, the place where met representatives of the Indian Muslim leaders, among whom figured almost all the men of letters and politicians of Bengal.¹⁹ One would better grasp over the success of this meeting if he could count the resolutions which were unanimously admitted although these were less known to the historians :

"Met at Dacca, Muslims delegates of all the parties of India decide to found a political association, the All India Muslim League, with following objectives :

- a) to promote among the Muslims of India the sentiments of loyalty towards the British Government, in order to avoid the misunderstanding that could provoke certain measures undertaken by the Government;
- b) to defend the rights and interests of the Muslims of India and to present obediently their demands to the Government;

¹⁷ *Ibid* p. 335-338.

¹⁸ Cf. *The Memoirs of the Aga Khan : world Enough and Time Enough*. New York, 1954, p. 75-76 : see also an important article in French of the same period by A. Le Chatelier, "Aga Khan". *Revue du monde musulman*, Paris, 1, 2, Nov. 1906, p. 48-85.

¹⁹ Syed Muhammad Taifoor, an octogenarian intellectual of Dacca, having participated on this august manifestation, communicated to us on this subject along with a few biographical notes on Bengali personalities.

- c) to prevent all sentiments of hostility towards other communities, as long as they respect the principles adopted."²⁰

It may be noted here that there lies certain symbolic importance of the foundation of the Muslim League at Dacca and its first annual session at Karachi (1907). The two cities, in fact, became the centers of the militant Muslims for liberty. Since 1947, they would attain the rank of capitals, the first – Dacca for East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), and the second – Karachi for the central government.²¹ The Muslim League which would permit the Muslims to become "a nation within the nation" would progress by recruiting its members from among those who were leaving the National Congress, being frustrated by its extremist and/or moderate wings, and also among the bourgeoisie which was in rapid ascension. Thanks to Sir Salimullah, Dacca was going again to be a great city to endow with many academic and philanthropic institutions. These have had helped the cultural development of the Muslims of Bengal.²²

Since then, the Muslim leaders started to feel more and more the need to pass on action for avoiding the reproach of what was known as the "eternal slumber". These leaders, however, are not from the class of intellectuals, but in great part recruited from the chiefs who remained busy in social development by playing there a prestigious role due to their activities or because of their aristocratic origins. Contrary to the previous period, these leaders should have felt proud, henceforward, to have had in life a supplementary role, that is to say, political role in its proper sense.

On the other hand, the happy times of the Angle-Muslim *entente* would soon to be over, at least what is to be concerned as the national life of Muslims, because the heavy cloud had already started to darken the political horizon of India. It is towards 1912 that the Muslims started to lose confidence in the British politics for the reasons and because of the incidents that we enumerate summarily.

²⁰ A. B. Rajput, *Muslim League, Yesterday and Today*, Lahore, 1949, p. 19-20.

²¹ Since 1962, Karachi is no longer the capital of Pakistan, but yet remains the most important city for internal and international relationship; it is the ideal site for the fusion of Pakistanis of different regions and counts as resident, an ever increasing number of Bengalis.

²² Muhammad Habibullah (Bahar), "Sir Salimullah", *Masik Mohammadi*, Dacca XXI, II, p. 644-645.

We have already indicated that the constitutional reforms in 1907 did not provide the results that the Muslims expected following the promises made by the Viceroy and other authorities, notably by the Secretary of State in charge of the Affairs of India. In the meanwhile, an incident at Aligarh College roused the élites against the British officials.²³ The pride, always vivid among the Muslims, was wounded by this incident. It was in the Muslim League session of 1910 at Nagpur that one hears for the first time the criticism addressed to the Government. The bureaucracy was made responsible to have created the dissension between Indian communities; and, animated protestations were pronounced against the enormous expenditure allotted for the defence of India.²⁴

Concerning the choice of the attitude to be taken on the political level, leaders of the Muslim league pronounced the unity between the two large communities of India and launched an appeal to the Hindus so that a Hindu-Muslim meet could take place in the next year at Allahabad.

That was the first sign of a political friendship between the two communities – friendship that would reach its paroxysm by the Lucknow Pact in 1916.²⁵ Thanks to the efforts made by Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), then a young politician exceptionally gifted, educated in western style, and unionist *par excellence*. It is also because of him that the Muslim League abandoned since 1913 its principle of unconditional loyalty by adopting a motion for objective to develop in India the system of self-government as would be “suitable” for them.²⁶

All the same, the two events of capital evidence should be treated to understand the deception of the Muslims and the course of their history, whether in Bengal or in India. First of all, what was known to be the “accomplished fact,”²⁷ that is to say, the partition of

Bengal, was annulled by the solemn declaration of His Majesty King George V on the occasion of the *darbar* at Delhi (12th December, 1911). Being surprised by this unexpected event, and impressed by the towering personality of His Majesty, the Muslim leaders like Aga Khan, Amir Ali, and others advised their co-religionists to renounce a protest movement to meet this decision. The order was generally followed. However, the loyalist leaders, it is known, could not check the rise of the young radical leaders, and, they found themselves in the obligation to quit the organization.²⁸ On the other hand, Nawab Salimullah (died in 1915) declared, not without bitterness,²⁹ in his presidential address to the Muslim League at Calcutta (1912):

“It is regrettable that the new province brought practically nothing to Muslims; it, rather, separated a little more the Muslims from the Hindus. It is not right to say that the partition was the result of Hindu-Muslim difference. The true conflict is born out of the Muslim refusal to participate in the Hindu revolutionary activities against the British.”

He concluded by launching a fervent appeal for Hindu-Muslim rapprochement.³⁰ Also, the immediate reaction of the great leader Viqar-ul-Mulk (1841-1917) – disciple of Sir Sayyid Ahmad, friend and successor of Muhsin-ul-Mulk, previously pro-British – would be interesting to follow *en passant*. In a famous article, he declared:³¹

“It is clear, sufficiently clear, after what has happened that, it is useless to ask Muslims to have confidence on the Government. Thus, on what we should count, that is, with the help of God, the force of our right arm. In this

²³ Conflict between the secretary of the college and the Lt. Governor of the United Province, patron of the college; see, Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 118-119.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 119.

²⁵ For more details see A. C. Banerjee, *Indian Constitutional Documents*, Calcutta, 1948, Vol. II, p. 289-295.

²⁶ This Key word “Suitable/convenient” symbolises the attitude of the Muslim League which, having the same objective at this moment with the National Congress, keeps notwithstanding a distinct entity and the right to modify the notion of self-determination according to the mood of its members.

²⁷ Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for Indian Affairs had declared a little earlier: If I go to heaven one reason will be that, in spite of much pressure here, long and

loudly continued. I stood firm by the Settled Fact.” Quoted by K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.*, p. 44. Cf. F.W. Hist. “John Morley at the India office,” *Manchester Guardian*, Feb. 26, 1929.

²⁸ K.K. Aziz, *op-cit.*, p. 82.

²⁹ During The *Darbar* at Delhi, Sir Salimullah found himself with the offer of the highest distinction, i.e. G.C.I.E; he then commented: “This is nothing but a bait, a bribe and halter of disgrace around my neck” (Cf. Muhammad Habibullah Bahar, *Mohammed Ali Jinnah*, Calcutta, n.d. (1945), p. 34 (note), and “Sir Salimullah”, *loc.cit.*, p. 644).

³⁰ *The Times*, 5 & 6 March, 1912; Michael O'Dwyer, *India as I know it, 1885-1925*; London, 1925, p.175.

³¹ Cf. “The Fate of Muslims in India”, *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, Dec. 20, 1911, quoted by A.H. Albiruni, *op. cit.*, p. 110-111.

perspective, we have one example before us, that is, of our worthy compatriots (that is, the Hindus)".

He concluded by appealing to the Muslims to be in political agitation like the Hindus; but, curious enough, he prohibited them from participating in the activities of the Congress, because this participation, according to him, would be a political suicide.

The second incident indicates us that the Muslims of India, more particularly those of Bengal, adhered to the "politics of suicide" *i.e.*, to be in close contact with the Congress. This incident took place around the question of *Khilafat*, which could be termed as the "altruist adventure."³² A renewal of pan-Islamic movement was making its way, thanks to the political agitation, as was being made by the Hindus, and with their help because the leaders felt the need of an agreement to fight against the all-powerful Western power, in view of the claims of Muslim nations, and to obtain the liberty of their own country. Of being a complex character, this movement made a profound influence on all spheres of Muslim life, and mainly on spiritual, cultural, and political spheres.

The Muslims of Bengal, along with those of India, being for the most part Sunnites, were devoted to the Turks, and their Sultan was considered as the *Caliph* of the Islamic world. The *Imam*, in his Friday prayers, would pronounce the name of the *Caliph*. Moreover, in the 19th century, it was rather the British who had set in motion the rapprochement with the Ottoman empire to safeguard the north-west frontiers of India that was being menaced by the Russians. Hence, when in 1876, the last named were advancing towards Constantinople, the Indian troops had been sent to fight. And, a propaganda in favour of Turkey – the largest Muslim Empire – was launched.³³ Consequently, the Muslims of India sympathized with the Turkish cause and became happy and were proud of the grand Turkish Victory over the Greeks (1897). But, with the change of British politics, the Muslim leaders, following Sir Sayyid's example, incited their co-religionists never to mixup in the question of foreign policies which would be to detriment the Anglo-Muslim *entente*

³² Dr. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi elaborates a full chapter in his excellent study, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, (610-1947): A Brief Historical Analysis*, The Hague, 1962, p. 255-278.

³³ Cf. V. Chiral, *India*, 1926, p. 217-218.

inside the country. Most of the Muslims, above all those from Bengal, did not follow this directive. We have already known that the Muslim intelligentsia, yet in its infancy, was greatly interested in the pan-Islamic teachings of Afghani.³⁴ When they gained more in number in the beginning of the 20th century, they turned resolutely towards the religious ideology along with political action. Many journals, reviews, and pamphlets were published in Bengali, Urdu, and even in English either to elaborate the project of Pan-Islamism and to explain its practical philosophy, or to transform this idea into action and to implement it in India. Whereas the Bengali review like *Mohammadi* (both monthly and weekly), *Al-Eslam*, etc, brought up interesting and upsetting polemics, the new generation of the Bengali Muslims followed equally the teachings of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) and Maulana Mohammed Ali (1878-1931) as they had professed in the two journals – *Al-Hilal* (Calcutta, 1912-1914) and the *Comrade* (Calcutta, 1912). These two personalities, well-known to the historians of modern India, were going to dominate the Muslim spirit not only of Bengal, but also of the whole India. During all this period of the *Khilafat* movement, which was terminated only in 1930, they had the advantage of keeping direct relationship with this Muslim spirit, as long as it was concerned with the demands of the *Khilafat* and national liberty.

The Turkish misfortune of the years 1915-1920, along with the sufferings of few other Islamic peoples – Egyptians, Libyans, Persians, etc – created among the Muslims of India a zeal without comparison. The Great War of 1914-1918 aggravated more this state of affairs when the Muslim soldiers of India found themselves face to face with their Turkish co-religionists. The Muslims of India had put their confidence in the British justice towards Turkish, but the Treaty of Sèvres (10th August, 1920) was humiliating for Turkey.³⁵ This pushed the leaders to adopt, without hesitation, the system of protestation popular among the Hindus. In spite of their intention to be engaged in the fight for their national liberation, they accepted it

³⁴ Cf. Chapter I & II.

³⁵ On this subject, an important document is preserved in the library of National School of Living Oriental Languages (now renamed, INALCO): *Le Traité de paix avec la Turquie et l'Attitude des Musulmans de l'Inde. Adresse présentée par la députation du Congrès National de l'Inde pour la défense du Califat au Vice-roi à Delhi, le 19 janvier, 1920* (Paris, Bureau d'information islamique).

to utilize first of all to safe-guard the Islamic people.³⁶ The influence of Mohammed Ali,³⁷ who was educated in Aligarh and at Oxford as well, was not only exercised by his journal the *Comrade* or other writings, for he was a demagogical orator who could stimulate the masses. On his side, Azad had created, in the manner of his *Ustad* (Mentor) Shibli, a school of young intellectuals most of whom were recruited from Bengal.³⁸ In vigorous texts, he exhorted the Muslims to make their task in these critical moments. Let us quote few extracts³⁹ from his texts to understand the profound arguments put forward by this great thinker:

“History will tell that there had been a community which was “Muslim”, who possessed the history richest in nobility and in human dignity to which was given the heritage and the leadership of the world, which was sent on earth to liberate the servants of God from the chains of tyranny and of despotism, which was sent to crush the fetters and not to put them on their own feet, which had come to collapse the stone collars that hindered men, with the exclusion of servants of god, and not to adorn with even the heaviest stone collars, who was the representative and the *Calife* of God on the earth so that the world is mastered and not to be proud of his proper servitude....

(History will tell) that India advanced towards the path of liberation and progress. The Hindus remained ready to die for such a task, but the Muslims went to hide away in caves. They were crying, but they fastened their mouths. The Hindus had entered upon the holy war (*Jihad*), but this community of holy warriors made more than to remain

³⁶ On this point, there exists diverse, if not opposed opinions; consult H. A. R. Gibb (ed), *Whither Islam? A Survey of the Modern Movement in the Muslim World*; London, 1932, p. 73 and W.W. Cash, *The Muslim World in Revolution*, London 1925, p. 25-29.

³⁷ Besides his autobiography and speeches (cf. bibliog.), consult an important study of W. J. Watson, *Muhammad Ali and the Khilafat Movement*. Diss., McGill University, Montreal, 1955.

³⁸ There exists no comprehensive work; one can, however, profit by reading a short study by B. G. Ray, “Islam in Modern Bengal”, *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Santiniketan, XXI, 1955, p. 58-89.

³⁹ Quoted in *Nawā-e-Azādi* (Writings on independence), Bombay, 1957; translated by André Guimbretiere, *Orient*, no. 18, Paris, 1961, p. 53.

silent, by demoniac cries that it left us to listen that all those who combatted in the holy war were rebels...

... Here is the hour of decision. Here is the moment when, for good, the decision for our victory or our defeat is going to be inscribed. Come and build your destiny. Prevent by all your forces our honour and our prosperity to sink. Don't let our victory to fly away. Don't stain the sail of Islam in irreparable manner. Don't deceive the hope of the deliverance and don't work to fail the liberation of India for which the chance might not to be found before centuries.”

Azad, an indisputable scholar of Islamic philosophy, knew well about the Western knowledge. He tried in his own way to formulate the principles of the intellectual and political life in theological manner. Being inspired by Sir Sayyid, he soon became the antithesis of this thinker and a man of action. Since then, his interpretation of Islam as a humanitarian force and his hope to arrive at the initial purity of Islam by developing the faculty of *Ijtihad* permitted him to become the most progressive master among the orthodox *Ulemas*.

This evidently constitutes a complex problem because one cannot but attribute retrospectively the title of progressive to the Indian leaders of the time. Azad had the merit to be, for a given moment of the history, the inspired leader of a “great” people who found themselves at that epoch, in total decline. Being admired and venerated by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru (1889-1964), and other Congress leaders as the symbol of noblest aspiration of this political party, he worked all his life, with unshakable conviction, for Hindu-Muslim rapprochement in political and social arena.

This effort, indeed, became a reality during the years that followed the first World War. Thanks to the political miracle of Mahatma Gandhi, the Muslim movement for *Khilafat* found itself to be closely linked with the movement of the Congress which the Muslims had considered so long as a Hindu organization.⁴⁰ Gandhi, in his quality as “National Hero,” imposed his will on the Congress, on the League, and on the Committee of *Khilafat*. For a movement of the masses, he pronounced in favour of non-violence and non-

⁴⁰ Cf. On this subject, consult K. J. Mahale, *Gandhi devant l'opinion française*, doct. diss., Paris, 1962, Chapter II.

cooperation with the régime in power. Few leaders – mainly B.C Pal, C.R Das, Rabindranath Tagore.⁴¹ Pandit Malavya, and M.A. Jinnah – raised their voices against the participation of the masses in the movement without prior training. Despite this protestation, it is the method of Gandhi which received general approbation. The whole of India entered into a new phase of its anti-imperialist struggle.

By deceiving the Muslim leaders, the Turks themselves simultaneously developed into a secular force to get back their national prestige and, so, they denounced the *Khilafat*. To the telegrams of Indian and Egyptian Muslims, who were in favour of maintaining the *Khilafat*, Kemal Ataturk, Father of modern Turkey, replied:

“The drama of centuries, cherished by the Muslims that the caliphate should be an Islamic Government including them all, has never proved realizable. It has become rather a cause of dissensions, of anarchy, of war between the believers. Better apprehended, the interest of all has made clear the truth : that the duty of all the Muslims is to arrange distinct Governments for themselves. The true spiritual bond between them is the conviction that all believers are brethren.”⁴²

Being completely disillusioned, the Muslims, who just took position against the loyalty towards the British, now joined the non-cooperation movement and made it more reinforced.⁴³ In the famous Congress session where there were, for the first time in history, 1050 Muslims among the 14,532 delegates, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, one of the *Khilafat* leaders, proposed to give the vague term *Swaraj* the definition of “total independence” This formula did not, unfortunately, receive approbation from Mahatma Gandhi.⁴⁴ Consequently, The Muslims of Bengal followed the political chief C.R Das, keeping apart from the Gandhian path, with the example of

⁴¹ His remarkable essays, *Ethics of Destruction* (Madras, 1923) did not receive the attention that it deserved.

⁴² Cf. Dr. Rafiuddin Ahmad, “Romance of New Turkey”, *India and The World*, Calcutta, Sept. 1932, p. 202.

⁴³ For more details, Cf. Rahmat Ali, “Le mouvement d’émancipation nationale de l’Inde”, *Maghreb*, Coll. Les documents marocains, Paris, 1933, II, 17, p. 213; Subhas. C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, Calcutta, 1948, p. 62.

⁴⁴ Cf. B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, Bombay, 1946.

their own leaders, Maulana Akram Khan, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani (1880-1976), Wajed Ali Khan Panni, A. K. Fazlul Huq, Maulana Islamabadi, and Husayn Shaheed Suhrawardy.

C. R. Das, the *Deshabandhu*, (Friend of the Country), attempted several times to solve the Hindu-Muslim problems by practical solutions, chiefly under the form of a pact, thanks to which the Muslims could obtain employments by priority.⁴⁵ His sudden death and the brutal incident of human carnage in all over India stopped this noble task.

The religious zeal exhaled at this time among the Hindu community because of two new elements which had serious repercussions on the political and intellectual life of the peninsula. The Hindu movements – *Suddhi* (Reclamation) and *Sangathan* (Consolidation) – launched by the Hindu Mahasabha, an extremist political party, became very active. Now the Muslims were left on suspension regarding all Hindu steps. In their turn, they also organized *Tabligh* (propaganda for conversion) and *Tanzim* (political movement) to reply to these fanatic activities. When these parallel movements developed and often collided with one another, the Muslim leaders made, for the first time at least on the Indian level, various attempts to socially evaluate their community. They tried to make the mosques and madrassas the spiritual and intellectual centers, as it had been before. Now they helped to found technical schools and social service institutions. This attitude permitted them to ameliorate the economic situation of their co-religionists by founding banks and commercial and industrial societies only for the Muslims.⁴⁶ It may also be said here that these enterprises received approbation from the great majority of the Muslims of all classes, of all ideologies – conformists or modernists.

⁴⁵ Known as the Hindu-Muslim Pact of Bengal (Dec. 1923), it modified the Hindu-Muslim pact of Lucknow (1913) which ignored the Muslim representation in the provinces with Muslim majority. For, in these provinces above all, the Muslims appartained to lower classes and hence were politically weak. The Bengal pact was condemned by the Hindu press, whereas the Muslims welcomed it and demanded 80% of the Government and other posts foreseen in the Pact. Cf. Ram Gopal *op. cit.*, p. 174-176.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ram Gopal, *op. cit.* p. 196. It may be mentioned here that there exists no study on this subject. We write about these facts by witnessing the remarkable examples left at Chittagong by Maulana Maniruzaman Islamabadi (Cf. Chapter V.).

The consequences of these activities started to be felt in all the domains of Indian life. Hence, the Hindu-Muslim honey-moon period expired. Historians and journalists have had multiple reasons to justify the cause or ideology of their proper community, but the fact remains that from 1923 to 1927 religious quarrels cost⁴⁷ the life of 450 persons and made 5000 people wounded. The disaster grew worse until 1947 in the British India. One cannot ignore that there had been even riots because of Hindu writings against the Prophet of Islam (p. b. u. h.) and Islamic religion.*

The constitutional problems loomed at this moment to aggravate one more time the Hindu-Muslim difference. It may be remembered here that at the beginning of the 20th century, the question of the electoral representation divided the two communities. In the second decade of the century, the same question posed again with more acuteness because the first results discharged and the British attitude regarding the proposed reform in 1917. We know that already the laws of 1892 and 1909 had augmented the number of members to the "Legislative council" of India. Most of them were henceforward the elected members by the public. These "non official" members had limited rights either in the Central Council or in the Provincial Councils. The Act of 1919 had then enlarged the notion of the democratic government so that the Provincial Councils could be enlarged and could acquire more power. A certain number of ministries like Agriculture, Education, Local Self-Government, and Public Health passed to Indian hands. These were responsible to the legislative assemblies and not exclusively to the British Governors. But, as this Act did not accord the right to vote only up to 4 percent of the population of the country, one can only establish the slowness of the progress on the way to self-rule and to universal suffrage. Hence, the responsibility to the British was rather great for, in the meanwhile, they did nothing to realize their ambition to offer India a new administrative and constitutional statute.⁴⁸

The situation after the First World War became more critical than ever before. On the other hand, they had promised, many a time, a large participation of the Indians in the Government. The Act of

⁴⁷ Will Durant, *The Case of India*, New York, 1930.

* We make allusion to the *Rangila Rasul* affair; also, *Infra*, Ch. V, footnote 12.

⁴⁸ Beni Prasad, *India's Hindu-Muslim Question* London, 1946, p. 40.

1919 and other administrative and judicial measures they put in vigour, in spite of the wishes of Indians, were not found at all acceptable.⁴⁹ The diarchy introduced under the Act was in great part responsible for the failure of mutual cooperation between the Government and the two communities.⁵⁰ Being conscious of its defects, however, the British Government announced on the 27th November, 1927, the constitution of a commission (known as Simon commission) to examine all the constitutional problems. The absence of native representatives in the Commission was vehemently resented by the Indians. As signs of protest, leaders of all the large parties became united so that a project of the Constitution of India could be presented. The result of this reunion – the *Nehru Report* – became an apple of discord to the interested participants.⁵¹ Jinnah, who aligned himself for the last time with the National Congress, tried to save his compatriots from the political impasse by proposing the famous amendments known under the title of "the 14 points of Jinnah." Before the Indian leaders, he cited the example of Canada and Egypt where political adjustment was not founded on population, but on principles of equity.⁵² In spite of the pressure from a liberal leader like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the "Hindu India", represented by M.R. Jayakar (of the Hindu Mahasabha) rejected the propositions made by Jinnah. M. R. Jayakar passed the observation that he had great difficulties in persuading his party to accommodate with "concessions" made to the Muslims. Nothing could be accorded further. Even if the amendments had to be accepted, these would not have satisfied the total Muslim community because Jinnah was representing only a little fraction of this community.⁵³

Here are the essential points of friction which caused separatism of the Muslims from the Hindus and distance of Jinnah, who according to the Hindu leaders, had never remained tired of making

⁴⁹ Sitaramayya; *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Bombay, 1947, Vol. I, p. 153-158, 8. 202; the Home Rule movement of Mrs. Annie Besant, of which Jinnah was also a leader and was very active, too.

⁵⁰ Cf. P. Spear, *The Oxford History of India*, *op cit.* p. 807.

⁵¹ The exact title is, *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Conference to determine the Principles of the Constitution of India*.

⁵² For further details, see Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Pakistan, the Formative phase*, Karachi, 1960, p. 72-73.

⁵³ Cf. V. D. Mahajan, *India since 1526*, Delhi, 1960, p. 327.

efforts for Hindu-Muslim rapprochement. The different Muslim groups,⁵⁴ then, hurriedly reunited themselves in a conference under the chairmanship of Aga Khan at Delhi on 1st January, 1929. The resolution accepted there was identical with the amendments of Jinnah.⁵⁵ Without entering into detail, it may be noted here that not only the percentage of the seats to offer to the Muslims in the Central Government and in the provinces opposed the Muslims to the Hindus, but the federalist form of the Central Government was also a litigious point. So, hope for general understanding in the political matter appeared henceforward impossible. The Hindu press vigorously blamed the Muslim leaders, principally M. A. Jinnah, by calling him "the prodigal son," "the communalist par excellence," "the chief of the separatists," etc. However, Jinnah, who the other day was considered by the Hindu leaders as the "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity" and the "Pride of India and not the private possession of the Muslims," did not believe in the theory of two nations for India up to about 1937. However, the seed of separatism had already been sown; the theme had become dear to the Muslims due to their religious, political, and literary teachings. The change in the Muslims, attitude had been underlined by Professor Louis Massignon in the following terms:

"With Jinnah, Indian Islam turn up the way towards the West, in the place of making deeper its comprehension and its participation of the native spirituality, of the "Mother India" (*mataram*), capable of leading to render it explicitly "daughter of Abraham," grand and one among nations."⁵⁶

After having said this, it is now required for us to search the origin, at least the first explicit manifestation, of Muslim separatism. It would be legitimate to leave once more Bengal for Allahabad where the poet of Punjab, Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938), rendered on the 29th December, 1930, an important lecture to express the theory of two nations. The long lecture of the President of the All-India Muslim League is full of ideas and passages that are often

⁵⁴ Alain Petit (*Loc. cit.* p. 8-25) writes that there had been three parties which were of tendency neatly opposed and who kept their positions separately. A. Petit is full of praise for Jinnah.

⁵⁵ Cf. Maurice Guiyer and A. Appadorai, *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, 1921-1947*. London, 1957; Vol. I, p. 244-247.

⁵⁶ Cf. L. Massignon, *Annuaire du monde musulman*, Paris, 1954, p. 131.

quoted. We shall be content to summarize few points. For, in our opinion to quote few passages would not explain the profound political thoughts of the metaphysician that was Iqbal.⁵⁷

The Islamic religion is different, says Iqbal, from the Western faith which is a private affair. For Islam, God is the universe, the spirit, and the matter, the church and the state – all are linked organically. Now, in a "continent" like India, which is, an Asia in miniature, with diverse cultural affinities, and which, despite all the effects of the past, could not attain the principle of internal harmony,⁵⁸ the Muslims should find out their own homeland in India in the lineage of their culture and their tradition. It is there, according to him, resides the permanent solution of the religious communities. Without being outrageously favourable to his own party, and not opposed to other religious groups, he, therefore, demands for the greatest interest of India and of Islam "a Muslim India" comprising the province of North-West India (actually West Pakistan / Pakistan after 1971):

"For India, this signifies, security and peace, resultant of an internal equilibre of power; for Islam, a chance to be delivered from the yoke of Arab imperialism which had forced to follow to mobilize its right, its education, its culture, for leading it to an intimate contact with its original spirit and that of modern times."⁵⁹

One would have rightfully contradicted certain points of this lecture, and certain questions that Iqbal had posed, but none should neglect its importance, nor the integrity of its author. The dynamic lyricism of Iqbal had been manifested in his national and Islamic hymns and a new and vigorous philosophy of action.⁵⁹ His very name, more than his works, became henceforward a source of

⁵⁷ For the complete text of the discourse. *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*; edited by Shamboo; Lahore, 1945.

⁵⁸ Iqbal also advocated, "things would have been different if India had accepted the lead of Kabir or Akbar but in its absence I cannot think of other course except strengthening every religious community of India in its particular ideology and way of life (*ibid.*).

* (Translated from the French.)

⁵⁹ André Guimbretière, "Une dynamique de l'eau et du feu: le poète Muhammad Iqbal", *Journal des poètes de Bruxelles*, April, 1958. *Reconstruire la pensée religieuse de l'Islam – Iqbal's conferences at Oxford and at Madras*; translated from English by Eva Meyrovitch, Paris, 1955. An important study with selected texts by Luce-Claude Maitre, *Muhammad Iqbal*, Paris, 1964.

inspiration to the Muslims. What Iqbal did for the idea of nationalism among the Muslims of the Indian peninsula had been done by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee for the Hindus of Bengal – observes Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah justifiably. But, let us be precise that the inference of the precursor was rather belated as this started only few years before the foundation of Pakistan (1947) and that the processes had since then continued with powerful force.⁶⁰

The Iqbalian theory presented through this lecture and other texts is not but evidently elegant utterance. It is solid and provocative of the Muslim sentiment expressed in triviality since this community found itself under British domination. The capital importance of this theory resides in the fact that within a space of ten years it became the *leitmotif* of the political thought of Indian Muslims, either of the élites or of the masses.⁶¹ The name of this “Muslim India” is due to Chaudhury Rahmat Ali⁶² – a leader of a students group of Cambridge. Towards the day before the starting of the Third round-table conference in London (1933), he circulated a brochure where the word “Pakistan” appeared designing the grouping of the Indian provinces of the North-West on the one hand and the “country of the pure ones” on the other. In his plan, Rahmat Ali adds further a “Bang-i-Islam” i.e. Bengal and Assam – the Eastern provinces – and, a “Usmanistan” which includes Hyderabad and Berar, Muslim principalities of the South.⁶³ The Muslim delegates in London refused to associate themselves with these extravagant demands,

⁶⁰ On this subject, see Abul Husain, “Impact of Iqbal on Bengali Muslim Thought”, *Iqbal Review*, Karachi, April, 1960; p. 54-62.

⁶¹ Aziz Ahmad, “Iqbal et la theorie du Pakistan”, *Orient*, No. 17, 1960.

⁶² It has been alleged that Chaudhury Rahmat Ali’s movement was financed by the British but there existed no proof whatsoever. The movement had publicized many fantastic ideas and remained in the field up to 1948, year of the death of its founder. In 1947 Rahmat Ali continued his propaganda against Jinnah because he accepted the actual Pakistan by betraying The “Pak” nation (Cf. Bibliog.). It may also be mentioned that the denomination of Pakistan for the Muslim State was not given by the Muslim League but by its critics, and this did not signify “the land of the pure ones” notwithstanding the advantageous use the media made of it. Cf. Jinnah, *Speeches and Writings*, 1960, Vol. 1, p. 509 (He explained this to Gandhi during their meet in 1944).

⁶³ It may be pointed out that Iqbal’s speech did never make an allusion to any independent and sovereign State of the Muslims, whereas Rahmat Ali did it categorically. On the other hand, the omission of Bengal in Iqbal’s plan is surprising. Is it unconscious or concerted? It is not clear. cf. Hafeez Maik, *Muslim Nationalism in India and Pakistan*, Washington, 1963; p. 228.

which, in their opinion, were nothing, but “a chimeric and impractical dream of students.”⁶⁴

The propositions of Rahmat Ali were, however, brought about an interest among the Muslim intelligentsia and obtained, at least, the merit of including Bengal in the “country of pure ones.” It is known that in the constitutional quarrel Bengal had been a major factor of disagreement, because the number and the place accorded to the Muslims of this province in the Government and the public seats were insufficient. The efforts of C. R. Das died with him in 1925.⁶⁵ The Hindu position remained unchanged towards the Lucknow Pact. The Muslim Leaders of Bengal – A. K. Fazlul Huq, A. K. Gaznavi, Nawab Bahadur Sayyid Nawab Ali Khan Chawdhury – three ex-Ministers, expressed their sentiments in the declarations that they made in front of the Reform Committee of His Majesty’s Government.⁶⁶

Deploring the situation of Bengal, they underlined two points: the Bengali Muslims, despite their majority in number, had become a political minority.⁶⁷ A democratic government finds itself before a difficult situation because it has to face the reality of lack of identical conceptions, as much social as for political points of view.

It may be further signaled here that S. Khuda Baksh (1877-1931), the eminent Islamologue of Calcutta, who was earlier a partisan of Gandhi,⁶⁸ wrote that the Lucknow Pact was nothing but a “sublime folly.” He foresaw in the *Swaraj*, professed by the Congress, a factor to devise the Indian society in two unequal⁶⁹ parts – one goes to the paradise and the other to the hell.

⁶⁴ Reginald Coupland, *Reports on the Constitutional Problem in India*, London, 1942, Vol II, p. 199-200.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Supra*, note 45p. For Maulana Azad, the consequences of it (1925) was that the Muslims lost whatever confidence they had in the Congress and hence the seed of the “partition” was sown (*India wins Freedom*, Calcutta, 1954, p. 21).

⁶⁶ Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ The diverse positions of Professor S. Khuda Baksh had been significant; these permit us to understand the situation of the Muslim intellectuals: upto 1912, he used to profess on unconditional loyalty to the British (*Essays: Indian and Islamic*, 1912 p. 213-215, and during the Khilafat movement, he advocated in favour of political agitation and appreciated Gandhi in an article (*Studies: Indian and Islamic*, London, 197, p. 30-36).

⁶⁹ Khuda Baksh, *Studies*... p. 1927.

According to the *Nehru Report* (1928) in which are envisaged a future constitution of India, the Muslim representatives of Bengal as the Muslim community would have wished, i.e, the separate electoral college could not be accepted before a delay of ten years. It was a question of importance for the Muslim leaders who got themselves united under the auspices of all parties, Bengali Muslim conference. They regretted that the actual system had not accorded universal suffrage and that the sensitive tax could not be acquitted by the Muslims as they were economically weak.⁷⁰ We already know about some other reasons for the failure regarding a common constitution for the future India.

On the British side, the Simon Commission submitted its report in May, 1930. The Indian leaders condemned it almost in unanimity. Sceptic enough regarding the success of parliamentary institutions in India, the Commission, all the more, suggested a number of constitutional changes that were not necessarily founded on the existing forms, for example, the abolition of the diarchy and the devolution of the "residuary" power to provinces.⁷¹ The Round Table Conferences in London (1930-1932), which followed and discussed the works of this Commission, could not reach to an acceptable agreement.⁷² Consequently, the Government of His Majesty imposed a decree concerning the problem of minorities.⁷³ The Muslims did not obtain what they demanded. They were offered the majority of seats in Punjab, but not in Bengal.⁷⁴ Following the same principle, the Government presented at last the famous Act of 1935, which became, for the following years, the "Magna Carta" of the Indian administration as well as the model of future constitutions of the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The ingenious work of the British Parliament was not liked by the Indians. Both the Hindus and the Muslims criticized the Act, the first ones above all, for the safeguard that was accorded to minorities, and

⁷⁰ Ram Gopal, *op. cit.* p. 214-215. There exists an important Bengali criticism by Daulat Ahmad, *Nehru Report o Mussalman Samaj*: Calcutta, nd.

⁷¹ R. Coupland, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, p. 102-103; *Cf. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, London, cmd. 3568, 3569.

⁷² For details, see K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.* p. 119-131.

⁷³ Known as the Communal Award, 10th August, 1932 cmd. 4142.

⁷⁴ I. H. Qureshi, *op. cit.* p. 291, K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.* p. 127-129.

the last ones for the part consecrated to the central administration because they were always afraid of Hindu domination.⁷⁵ But, only the part of provincial autonomy of this Act was put in vigour. All the political parties of India took part in the general elections of 1937. Jinnah, on return from his self-styled exile in England following his participation at the Round Table Conferences, tried to unify the innumerable sections of the Muslim League and few other Muslim parties. For, only to speak about Bengal, the Muslims adhered yet to the Congress, to the Communist Party, to the Krishak Praja,⁷⁶ to the United Muslim, to the *Khilafat*, etc.⁷⁷ In a large measure, the session of the League in 1937 unified all these parties and groups when this organization itself changed its programme and passed from self-determination (statute of dominion) to total independence, of feudalist attitude to certain socialist notion of economic distribution, and to the principle of co-operation with the Hindus on the basis of mutual accord.⁷⁸

All the same, it is the Congress which won majority in eight provinces and formed governments there.⁷⁹ Besides abnormal constitutional practices,⁸⁰ the functioning of the administration in these eight provinces became, in course of time, more and more humiliating for the Muslims. Everyday, on the opening of the Assemblies, *Bande Mataram* was being sung,⁸¹ the flag of the Congress Party was hoisted, League sympathizers were being oppressed by them (mainly by "the military department" of this

⁷⁵ Among many criticisms collected by V. D. Mahajan (*op. cit.*, p. 347-348), we quote here Nehru's comment; he compared the Act as a "machine with strong brakes but no engine" and that of Jinnah who characterized it as a scheme "thoroughly rotten, fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable".

⁷⁶ Under the direction of the popular leader A. K. Fazlul Huq, The Krishak Praja Party fought for obtaining agrarian rights. He looked for an agrarian revolution by the parliamentary and constitutional method, *cf. Humayun Kabir*, "Even the Muslims Disagree," *Asia*, XL, Aug. 8, 1940.

⁷⁷ *Cf. M. Habibullah, op. cit.* p. 77.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 78-80.

⁷⁹ In fact, it was too complex to say that the result of the 1937 election there had been a victory of the Congress (K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.* p. 141-143 table, p. 142; for the later development in favour of the League (1937-1945) *cf. ibid.* p. 160-161 and 249 note, 33).

⁸⁰ C. H. Phillips, *India*, London, 1948, p. 133.

⁸¹ *Supra* "introduction," note 117.

party), or opposition members were compelled to be silent, in the United Provinces, Urdu was replaced by Hindi, and the Muslim school-children were under obligation to salute the portrait of Gandhi and to sing Hindu hymns.⁸² The situation had worsened to such a degree that a British historian could write:

“It became, in all evidence that the new constitution signified a Hindu Raj, pure and simple.”⁸³

The authorities of the Congress, anxious to reinforce their party, ignored all criticism, or in certain cases, imposed unacceptable conditions to the League which proposed a compromise, or in certain cases government of coalitions.⁸⁴ Consequently, “communalism” or Hindu-Muslim antagonism remained propagated all over India with a fierce aggressivity.

It is interesting to observe here that in Bengal, where a government of coalition was established, there have had no incident of the sort. The Chief Minister of the province, A. K. Fazlul Huq, would say this with a loud voice in a League conference at Calcutta in 1938.⁸⁵ But, the initial concerns of this political personality, hailing from Barisal (East Bengal), were to spread education in the downtrodden regions and to solve the problems of the peasantry. It is necessary to signal here that after the first partition of Bengal (1905), and the foundation of the University of Dacca (1921), it is, due to his efforts that East Bengal could engage itself in the path of profound transformations.⁸⁶ Hence, despite his political opportunism, which was found in his long career from the foundation of the League

⁸² Publication of the Muslim League, A. K. Fazlul Huq, *Muslim Sufferings under Congress Rule*, Calcutta, 1939; *Pirpur Report*, Delhi, 1938; *Shareef Report*, Patna, 1939; on educational situation, *Kamal Yar Jung Committee Report*, Calcutta, 1942.

⁸³ H. G. Rawlinson, *The British Achievement in India, a Survey*, London, 1947, p. 214. On his side, Francois Léger notes, “They (the Congressists) did not take any precaution that the Congress victory inaugurates a period of *infidel dictatorship for the Muslims*”. (*The italics are ours*); *op. cit.* p. 119.

⁸⁴ For the conditions, consult R. Coupland, *India: A Re-Statement*, London, 1947, p. 214.

⁸⁵ Ram Gopal, *op. cit.* p. 258; Huq has even drafted a polemic against the behaviour of the Congressists of other provinces (*Cf.* foot-note 82. above).

⁸⁶ On this subject, there exists no authentic work. Two recent biographies, strongly novelistic, on Fazlul Huq, however, makes clear some aspects of the history of modern Bengal; B. D. Habibullah, *Sher-e-Bangla*, Dacca, 1369 BS and Khondkar Abdul Khaleque, *EK Shatabdi*, Dacca, 1369 BS (1962).

(1906) up to 1962 – the year of his death, – he was with C. R. Das and Subhas Bose, one of the most popular leaders of the Bengalis of all tendencies. Let us further note that he was popularly nick-named as *Sher-e-Bengla* (Tiger of Bengal) and *Gariber ma-bap* (Mother and father of the poor). Although later being expelled from the League by Jinnah, he was one of the authors of the audacious project of the partition of India. During the annual session of the League held in Lahore on the 23rd March 1940, he made this proposition:

“That it is the considered view of this session of All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary, that the area in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent States in which the constituted units shall be autonomous and sovereign.”⁸⁷

The Hindus and the British rulers recognized the very idea of Pakistan in this proposition expressed in deliberately vague terms and not being defined by the League or other Muslim personalities. They reacted strongly against a possible partition of India.⁸⁸ Rendering the League very popular to their co-religionists, Jinnah soon became their “Quaid-e-Azam” (Supreme Commandant) and “the Man most important in Asia.”⁸⁹ His call was certainly less logical than that of Iqbal, but more fervent for the supporters of “Muslim nationalism.” He uttered:

“The difference between the Hindus and the Muslims are of profound root and that one does not know how to eradicate them. We are a *nation* with our proper culture and

⁸⁷ For the complete text, see Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, *op. cit.* II, p. 443-444; A. B. Rajput, *op. cit.* p. 79-80 (In this book, the date is mentioned as 26th march; but this is not correct).

⁸⁸ The point of view of M. K. Gandhi is the most remarkable, *cf.* his article “To the Protagonists of Pakistan,” *Gandhi Series*, No. 5; Calcutta, 1949; for the British reaction, see K.K. Aziz, *op. cit.* p. 145-150.

⁸⁹ This epithet was employed by the British journalist Beverly Nichols, “Dialogue with a Giant,” *Verdict on India*, London, 1944.

our civilization, our language and our literature, our art and our architecture, our names and our nomenclature, our sense of values and of proportions, our laws and our moral codes, our costumes and our calendar, our history and our traditions, our aptitudes and our ambitions We have our proper and distinctive conception of life. By all canons of international law, we are a nation."⁹⁰

The movement in favour of Pakistan, founded on this political philosophy following which the Hindus and the Muslims formed two different "nationalities," marked in little time its powerful imprint on Indian political life. No negotiation would henceforward be undertaken between the British and the Indian leaders without taking account of this new fact. On the other hand, the fear of Muslims to follow, as soon as India is independent, an eventual dictatorship of the Hindu majority would be in force as it had been seen in course of the last events which followed the *Khilafat* movement and had led to the Congress administration of a few provinces. This fear had, at last, found a remedy and an issue. The political path is never simple and straight. With Jinnah as eminent chief, Indian Muslims would pass hereafter through difficult routes. The apparent intransigence of Jinnah earned for him the vehement condemnation of the Hindu and foreign press, but the Muslims endeared him even more jealously.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Quoted by François Léger, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 124; let us cite also his comment on Jinnah which is not devoid of precision: "from 1940 to 1947, Mr. Jinnah shall maintain the living idea, without engaging himself too far, nor closing really any door, without rejecting particularly the hypothesis of a confederal connection loose enough with the rest of India, without leaving to extend beyond by the adherents more numerous that would gather around him. Mr. Jinnah will continue to manifest during all this period the very rare qualities of the true politics as much as we have already discovered in him: a vehement imprecision, an evident firmness which does not exclude a real flexibility, an energy of which one feels that it should lead, even just upto the last minute nobody, he himself the first, exactly knows to what." (p. 127).

⁹¹ "The secret of success of Jinnah – let us note it *en passant*, in associating with the judgement of Professor Aziz Ahmad, in fact exactly on the contrary to what appeared externally to be the situation; he did not direct the Muslim opinion but was led by it; his role was of a man of law- sincere and lucid, who could formulate and express in precise constitutional terms what the client really desired." Cf. "Remarque sur les origines du Pakistan," *Orient*, No. 26, 1963, p. 21-29. On his side, the English historian P. Spear compare Jinnah's success with that of Churchill in 1940. See *India, a Modern History*, Ann Arbor, Michigan University Press, 1961, p. 408.

The demand for the creation of Pakistan was becoming more pressing as the day passed by; "grotesque and illogical," this did not liked by Hindus or the British without whose approbation the demand could not be fulfilled. However, some events did promote its realization.

First of all, the demand for Pakistan acquired support from two Hindu leaders of high value. Dr. B. R Ambedkar was the first to write a book in English – *Pakistan or Partition of India* – just after the vote of resolution at Lahore. In this book, he judged the case of Pakistan from all aspects and recommended its creation because he considered it as "a less injury compared to a perpetual friction between the two communities."⁹² The influence of this book on the supporters and/or the adversaries of Pakistan was enormous.

Heavily suffered by the World War II, the British, in the person of Lord Linlithgo, the then Viceroy, and Sir Stafford Cripps, Member of the War Cabinet, made allusions to the independence of India in the declarations⁹³ and propositions⁹⁴ so as to mobilize the Indians to the side of the Allies.⁹⁵ These propositions accepted, at least symbolically, the principle of Muslim self-rule.

On the other hand, another Congress leader – C. Rajagopalacharia – following the example of Ambedkar, tried to convince his colleagues to arrive at a compromise with the League. After being condemned for his notion, he abandoned his position of the Chief Minister of Madras as well as the post of member of the committee of action of the Congress. But he continued the task of reconciliation until upto 1944, the year in which Gandhi found his "formula" to triumph⁹⁶ and was put in a dialogue with Jinnah. It is evident that Gandhi did it against his will when he saw that parallel to his movement entitled "Quit India" (1942-1943), Muslim agitation

⁹² Dr. Ambedkar is the indisputable leader of the unfavourable Hindu castes, one of the builders of modern India and her constitution of 1950.

⁹³ Cf. "August offer," for the text and commentary, see Coupland, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 333-335.

⁹⁴ C. H. Phillips, *The Evolution of India and Pakistan – Select Documents on the History of India and Pakistan*, London, 1962, Vol. IV, p. 370-375.

⁹⁵ The Muslim League helped the Government in various ways in the preparatives of war, whereas the Congress remained apart. The communist Party, although of lesser importance, also helped the Government after the engagement of Russia in the war. This party then supported the action in favour of Pakistan and recognized it as a movement of masses, being inspired by the theories of Marx and Stalin (cf. also notes 100 and 115).

⁹⁶ Cf. C. Rajagopalacharia, *The Way Out*, London, 1944.

with the slogan – “Divide and Quit” – brought equal success.⁹⁷ The meeting between Gandhi and Jinnah failed because the last named, sure of his position, did not accept “the paternalist Hindu idea of Muslim autonomy within Indian federation” or the promise of partition after the liberation of the country.⁹⁸

The negotiations, however, continued chiefly on the side of the power who considered India on the state of civil war; quarrel and violence went on in multiplication.⁹⁹ The psychological division of the Indians manifested itself everywhere in the activities of the intellectuals¹⁰⁰ and civil servants, but also among businessmen, industrialists, and peasants.

Two events took place at that moment which changed the situation to the advantage of the Muslim League. Just after the war, Great Britain had a Labour Party government which decided to bring an end to the Indian situation¹⁰¹ and ordered a new election in India to judge the position of different political parties (1945).

Jinnah and his followers were waiting for this moment of truth for a long time. Despite challenges from the Congressists and the doubt of the British, they justified their demand for the creation of Pakistan by occupying all the Muslim seats of the Central Legislative Assembly.¹⁰² In the provincial assemblies, the results of the elections were equally surprising. In Bengal, for example, 113 out of 119 Muslim seats were acquired by the League.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Cf. Nawabjada Liaquat Ali Khan, *Jinnah-Gandhi Talks* (Sept. 1944); *Texts of correspondence and other Relevant Documents*; etc. (Delhi, 1944). Cf. also, *Gandhi-Jinnah Talks*, etc. (Delhi, 1944).

⁹⁸ M. A. Jinnah, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 499-500.

⁹⁹ It is good to remember that since that time on, Gandhi consecrated himself principally to the establishment of peace and to make a stop to human carnage. In Bengal, he was helped by the Chief Minister H. S. Suhrawardy whom the Hindus accused as responsible for the bagarres. The Indian tragedy of this period reached its paroxysm when the prophet of peace was assassinated by an extremist Hindu intellectual (1948).

¹⁰⁰ A vigorous movement, known as “The Renaissance for East Pakistan” installed at Calcutta and at Dacca, The “progressive” intellectuals of whom we shall speak in the following chapter participated in it with enthusiasm, and the communist politicians accommodated themselves, too, with the principle of Pakistan. For other aspects, consult, W. Norman Brown, “India’s Pakistan Issue,” P. A. P. S. Philadelphia, 5 April, 1947, p. 178-180) and *Infra*, note 115.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *India: The Statement of the Policy of His Majesty’s Government*. 14th June 1947, Cmd. 6652.

¹⁰² Cf. K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

¹⁰³ Of a total of 495 seats, the League won 446, and the number was increasing further as the Assemblies sat; Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p.305

The second event was constituted by the realization of a provisional government for India on the 2nd September, 1946, following a very difficult negotiation.¹⁰⁴ The formation and the working of the government created spectacular political situations, but established also the urgent need for partition. The League joined there on the 15th October, 1946, with much hesitation.¹⁰⁵ This Government had Nehru as its Vice-President, which was, in fact, an executive council of the Viceroy. It functioned just up to the 14th August, 1947. Now, the members of the Council, representing the League, would not consider Nehru in the role of the Prime Minister and would not attend the meetings held sometimes at his residence.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, Liaquat Ali Khan (of the League) presented, as the Member-in charge of Finance, a “budget for the poor. It was like a serious blow to the Congressists because it recommended heavy taxes on wealth and properties of big business magnets and industrialists (most of whom were Hindus, and financiers of the Congress) and proposed to establish a commission of enquiry for fiscal frauds.¹⁰⁷

In brief, these events clearly indicated to the Congressists and to the British that Hindu-Muslim co-operation amidst a Federal Government in India would not be materialized.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the British rulers found that the members of the League were not participating in the work of the Constituent Assembly although they were occupying the posts of the Viceroy’s council. This Assembly had the task to prepare a new constitution and the League did not find there acceptance of its plan for the creation of Pakistan. In fact, the two parties – the League and the Congress – had accepted only

¹⁰⁴ Cf. “Cabinet Mission Scheme, 1946”; for details, see Mahajan, *op. cit.*, p. 355-360.

¹⁰⁵ The five members that the League nominated were, Liaquat Ali Khan (Finance), M. Chundrigar (Commerce), A. R. Nishtar (Post and Air), Gaznafar Ali Khan (Health) and Jogendra Nath Mandal (Legislation); the last named, a Bengali Hindu of inferior caste, was chosen against a Muslim Member designated by the Congress. The League opposed vehemently but in vain, for such nomination to the Government.

¹⁰⁶ All the Hindu press and certain foreign news-media made echo to it; but due to lively protest of the League, the Viceroy clarified the situation; K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹⁰⁷ A. Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951, p. 43.

¹⁰⁸ A. K. Azad, *op. cit.*, p. 166+176.

half of the conditions imposed by the British and, thus, found themselves in the right to defend their proper positions.

The Congress leaders, facing unsupportable problems, did not, therefore, hesitate to accept a little hurriedly and to the great surprise of the nationalist Muslims¹⁰⁹ the principle of partition and the liberation of India elaborated by the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, in his project of the 3rd June, 1947.¹¹⁰ More hastily yet, one would take care of their wealth, their frontier, and their population.¹¹¹ There also, a problem, among others, remained cumbersome.

During the partition, being backed by the British, the Hindus insisted on the division of the two provinces: the Punjab and Bengal. Their demand was based on the fact that the eastern part of the first and the western part of the second would count in the majority of the populations – Sikhs and Hindus.¹¹² It goes without saying here that it was legitimate following the general principle of what was being applied in the entire India. But, the League leaders and Jinnah in person protested vehemently. Jinnah stressed the point that the partition of Punjab and Bengal would destroy the good turning of the administration and economy of these two provinces. A solution to this problem could be found, in his opinion, in the exchange of populations. He advanced even the argument by which if one would like to make partition in these two provinces, it would have to be

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 185-188; Maulana Azad, who worked all his life for the Indian unity (see, the beginning of this chapter) unmasked the Congress leaders and criticized the hypocrisy of his colleagues.

¹¹⁰ *Cf. Statement regarding the method of Transfer of Power, 3rd June, 1947; Cmd. 7136, 1947; for details, V. P. Menon, op. cit., p. 353-365.*

¹¹¹ Azad noted also that the English capitulation at the demand of the League, had been more in favour of British interests rather than to make this party happy, because the Labour Government had always been very favourable to the Congress (*op. cit.* p. 191).

¹¹² The reply of the last Viceroy to Jinnah, evoked by himself later, do not leave us to doubt the British effort in the division of the provinces: "The feeling invoked in his heart (i.e. of Jinnah) by the prospect of the partition of these provinces was the feeling in my heart and the heart of Congress against the partition of India itself." (*Cf. Asiatic Review*, London, 1948, p. 398). Here is one of the reasons for which Lord Mountbatten was not accepted by the League as Governor-General of India and Pakistan (He was for India and Jinnah was invested of this function in Pakistan). The sharp critics of Jinnah, let us note it *en passant*, have, however, no reason to accuse him as a politician averse of power, because Gandhi, during their meeting in 1944, had already offered him the possibility of his becoming the Prime Minister of India, after the liberation of the country.

done the same for other provinces too, where certain zones were populated by the Muslim majority.¹¹³

H.S. Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister of Bengal of that time, being supported by some Hindu leaders, principally Sarat Chandra Bose (Brother of Subhas Bose), tried at the last hour to safeguard the integrity of Bengal by making it a region of "independent type" inside Pakistan.¹¹⁴ But, the majority of the Hindu leaders and even the Communists, who previously showed themselves in favour of Pakistan,¹¹⁵ opposed this idea.

Suhrawardy, with the help of the Governor of Bengal, Sir Frederick Burrows, demanded further from the British Government that it recognized Bengal as an independent state or failing which it could accept Calcutta as a free city. This demand was rejected by the Government of His Majesty under the pretext that the Congress would never accept it.¹¹⁶

Now, the Hindus of Bengal, forgetting or ignoring their violent reaction against the partition of Bengal in the beginning of the century, abandoned the greater part of this province, that is to say, the districts where the Muslims were in majority. These territories were going to consist another state with the adjunction of a part of Assam (district of Sylhet), according to the wishes of its inhabitants to be expressed by a referendum. Being attracted by free India, they did not manifest any new attempt as it was the case of some Muslim leaders to materialize the project of an "undivisible Bengal."

Hence, let us now conclude that the partition, or to better – partitions of the Indian peninsula – could happen due to the compromise between the interested parties. This would explain that neither any person, nor a party, had been responsible individually for this "disaster." And, yet, none would doubt that the Muslim position had played the role of turning plaque in the happenings of events in

¹¹³ *Cf. Khalid Bin Sayeed, op. cit.* p. 182-183.

¹¹⁴ *Cf. Gopal Haldar, Sanskritir Rupantar*, Calcutta: 1348 B. S., p. 251. Abul Hashim, a League leader had already invoked (April, 1946) for the statute of Bengal as "Independent State," by indicating that the Lahore Resolution of 1940 could be interpreted as such. It may be added that the "Supreme Chief" Jinnah and his Bengali disciples did not approve it. See Khalid Bin Sayeed, *op. cit.*, p. 123-124.

¹¹⁵ W. N. Brown and Aziz Ahmad (*Cf. bibliog.*).

¹¹⁶ *Cf. Leonard Mosley, The Last Days of the British Raj*, London, 1961, p. 196.

modern India. As to the Muslims of Bengal, one cannot deny the importance of their role which constituted, as we have come to see, the essentials of Muslim position. Being worried about interior confrontations and being concerned about their connection with the co-religionists of the exterior, these followers of Islam, who participated lucidly during the old days in the composite civilization of Bengal, arrived to create, their proper abode in the "country of the pure ones," but leaving their frontiers open, in all senses, to them from whom they had come to be separated. Now it remains to examine their literary and intellectual activities which expressed similar ideas that had been manifested in the socio-political action, but with new elements which leave to predict a coherent and consolidated renewal.

CHAPTER-V

MUSLIM WRITERS AND THE RENAISSANCE OF BENGALI LETTERS

In times of crises in their History it is not the Muslims that saved Islam; on the contrary, it is Islam that saved the Muslims.

IQBAL

An intellectual is not only the man to whom books are necessary, it is he for whom an idea engages and sets the life in order.

ANDRÉ MALRAUX

Under this audacious and, perhaps, a little ambiguous title we would like to put together in this chapter the literary personalities of the 20th century and their important writings during the period 1905-1947. In doing so, we shall try equally to show how the socio-political events of the epoch had influenced these writings and, inversely, how these personalities, facing the new situation, had reacted to or participated in diverse movements. This is why, the literary or scientific works which are the fruits of the intellectual life of the Muslims of Bengal, as suggested by its title, cannot be judged in an isolated manner. The criteria of success in the contemporary period should be in direct relation with the criteria which is valued for the neighbouring society. Now, the neighbouring society, which was of the Hindus, dominated modern literature. It is an evident fact; and none doubts that its members had contributed in great part to a renaissance of letters. However, it is important to underline that

during this epoch their contributions had not been inspired by a separatist ideal putting accent on an exclusively Hindu literature. It is a curious fact that since the end of the 19th century, there existed among the Muslims two parallel tendencies. One could be considered as the "Muslim" Literature, and the other which figured as the literature of the Bengali people. But, what is problematic for the historian is to classify the authors in a systematic manner, because the more representative amongst them had almost participated in these two divergent, if not opposed, categories.

We have already tried to show briefly that this problem resulted from certain erroneous interpretation of the socio-religious facts and of an absence of laïc or of liberal ideas. We have signaled also how the Muslim writers, being guided by their consciousness, vis-a-vis their proper community, could not but react otherwise.¹ The 20th century had opened to them the ample notion of progress. But, their proper dynamism and the political situation of India induced them to religious conflicts - doctrinal and ideological. It is from there came the paradox because the literature had to become "Muslim". It is, therefore, legitimate to analyse the Muslim works by classifying the literary personalities according to their personal tendencies:

1. Writers like Shiraji, Akram Khan, Islamabadi, and their successors who consecrated to a Muslim literature and dominated the first twenty years of the 20th century.
2. The Muslim writers and intellectuals, such as Kazi Nazrul Islam, Kazi Abdul Wadud, and others who were closely attached to the Bengali tradition. From this group, came out pioneers of a renaissance of letters among the Muslims of Bengal; in the poetic art, or in political thought, they are often opposed to the previous group.
3. Writers like Lutfur Rahman, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain, Mohammad Shahidullah, etc. who may be placed in between the two groups mentioned above.
4. Intellectuals like Humayun Kabir, Abu Syed Ayyub, Syed Mujtaba Ali, and others, rather individualists, who represent in Bengal the spirit of universal culture, inspired by the occidental civilization.

¹ Cf. Chapters II and III.

This classification is, we hope, logical enough. It permits us to understand better the genesis of the works created by the Muslim writers in Bengal. On the other hand, it respects well the chronology.

The Muslim literature in modern style had as its precursors the writers that we considered in the first group. But, this movement had already been initiated before by two renowned poets - Kaikobad and Hamid Ali - who exhorted their co-religionists to create original literature.² Having given the limitations of their activities and the adversity of time, this task remained unachieved till the arrival of Syed Ismail Hossain Shiraji (1880-1931). Passing for a prodigal,³ this vigorous poet and prose-writer became the mentor of this school of thought. Born poor, Shiraji did not benefit - and that is, indeed, the case of most of the Muslim writers - from higher education; but by his personal efforts he acquired mastery in Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit languages. A born orator, also aided by his literary talents, he became quite wealthy, but continued to distribute his wealth to the poor, mostly to the writers who had financial difficulties.

Being inspired by the teachings of Afghani, Syed Ismail Hossain Shiraji was an ardent partisan of pan-Islamic ideals. He participated in the Indian political movements and was quickly considered as one of the eminent personalities of Bengal. Agitated and of singular spirit, Shiraji could not remain aloof from the movements of his time. He also denounced the Muslim exclusivism; and he became associated with the National Congress. His role there was rather of a conciliator; and, he struggled there with all his forces to defend the rights of his co-religionists. This is why, says Dr. Enamul Haq, "he combated on the one side against the English and on the other against the Hindus with a Herculean heroism."⁴ His pan-Islamic fervour led him to the battle-grounds of Turkey. During the war of the Balkans, he accompanied the medical mission which, placed under the direction of Dr. M. A. Ansari, the-then President of the National Congress, was sent by the Indian Muslims to help Turkey. His sojourn (December 2, 1912 - July 15, 1913) in that country, dear

² Cf. Chapter III.

³ M. Serajul Haq, *Shiraji-Charit*, p. 12-13.

⁴ *Muslim Bengali literature*, Karachi, 1957, p. 202.

to the Muslims of Bengal, brought him Turkish honours;⁵ but, his more valued contribution for his compatriots resides in the writings that he had contributed à propos of the country which was unknown to them.⁶ His travel diary, *Turaska-Bhraman* (A Journey to Turkey) (Calcutta, 1913), was published initially in the form of letters written by a Bengali traveling in Turkey. It treats the physiological and psychological aspects of the country and its people, and is the only work of this genre. The interest that a sociologist or a historian would take in it is not diminished even now, because the book offers us an excellent glimpse of social stratification, customs, and tastes of the Turks, which were also compared with those of the Bengalis. What is even more astonishing is that Shiraji expressed nostalgically love for his own country when he tries to describe the country which is, in his eyes, "magnificent and which is to be imitated."

His love for his own country inspired him equally in all other writings. In a collection of essays entitled precisely *Svajati- Prem*, (Love for one's own nation) he sketches in this way the idea that he makes of it:

"Love for the country is the vertebral column of national life. As the grasses need essentially the earth for its growth, love for the country is also necessary for the power and development of a nation. Without this sentiment, a nation possessing even religious unity is feeble and insignificant."⁷

This passion, which is, indeed, the *leitmotiv* of all his poetic works and of his own life – one can say – is not, however, original. He got it all from his predecessor poets like Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, Hem Chandra Bandyopadhyay, Nabin Chandra Sen, and Kaikobad. Like all of them, he confuses the notion of nation with that of community. So far as his style, subject, and vision are concerned, it can be said that his poetical works *Anal Prabaha* (Flow of Fire), *Maha-Shiksha Kabya* (The Great Teachings), *Spain Bijay Kabya* (The Conquest of Spain), remain in

⁵ The Sultan of Turkey conferred on him, in a ceremony, the honorary title of *Ghazi* and medals for his services. It is reported that our poet replied in excellent Turkish, *ibid.*

⁶ He wrote three books on Turkey; but only part of *Turasker Diary* and *Nobyu Turki* were published in the periodicals.

⁷ Sayyid Ismail Hossain Shiraji, *Svajati Prem* P. 1.

the line of the literary tradition of the 19th century. To create more variety, he endeavored to experiment few prosodic metres. But, because of the lack of creative force, these works were not artistically successful. Only *Anal Prabaha* became very popular in the epoch. His celebrity attained its paroxysm when the government banned this work and he was imprisoned for two years. It is a *tour de force* on the favourite themes of the poet and the Muslim readers demanded them from the writer. Here is an extract from the poem *Anal Prabaha* (Dedication):

Flag-bearers of the glory of Islam
Oh! the youth, lights of the spirit,
Let us hope that the world
appears with a new face
By the song of Islam,
By the awakening of the Muslims.
Let us evoke the glory of the past
And the love of the people,
So much I desire passionately
That your life catches fire
By driving away laziness.

His *Maha-Shiksha Kabya* takes as its theme an episode of Karbala; but, the author chooses only to present moral lessons in a didactic tone.⁸ *Spain Bijay Kabya* is unique in Bengali literature because this long heroic poem transports the readers to the far-off country, Spain. By taking the theme of the Moorish conquest from the *History of The Saracens* written by Amir Ali,⁹ Shiraji tries, not without success, to create an original epic. The portrayal of the characters of Emperor Roderick, Queen Ethica, and the Conquerer Tariq seems, in particular, altogether remarkable.

In this connection, one can also mention his historical essay, *Spainia Mussalman Shabhyota* (The Muslim Civilization in Spain). This was also well-documented and elegantly presented and was inspired by Amir Ali, too. His documentation is, however, based on other Western historians, who were sympathetic towards Islam.

Shiraji composed a large number of lyric poems of which an excellent collection – *Premanjali* (Offerings of Love) – brought a

⁸ This epic poem was partly published in the review, *Al-Eslam*, 1322 BS.

⁹ Cf. Chapter 1.

considerable celebrity to him. He wrote historical novels by following the examples of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. It is interesting to note here that he was a novelist in spite of himself and to react against Bengali novels, criticizing the Muslims and their civilization.

The romantic and exuberant spirit of Shiraji had not perhaps been very favourable to modern novel. But, that did not prevent him from making search for the historical places to create narratives nearer to those of Bankim Chandra whom Muslims condemned very loudly in that period. Hence, Shiraji, the then mentor of Muslim intellectuals, imagined what one can call "counter novels" to reply Bankim Chandra and to educate the Muslims who, in spite of themselves, were reading him.¹⁰ In his opinion, it is necessary to make readers turn back from reading novels written by Hindu writers. Three of his novels – *Ray Nandini*, *Tara Bai*, and *Firoza Begum* – made the Muslim readers of the time happy.¹¹ But, as literary creations, these works give, at times, an unkind impression of naïveté – an impression evidently caused by the schematization pushed by personages and extreme simplification of their reciprocal rapport. Moreover, the author adds there the role of the preacher with long discourses on the religious belief of the heroes. Even though being written in an agreeable Sanskritized style, his novels got only historical value and witness to Muslim reaction against Hindu positions. This is present in a more provocative manner in his circumstantial poems, namely *Rangila Rasul*.¹²

To sum up, it can be said that Shiraji searched to create an exclusive literary world for the Muslims of Bengal and a bridge between Islamic ideas of the 19th century and those of the 20th

¹⁰ Towards 1924, a homeopath doctor – Syed Abul Hussain – published an essay of 500 pages, *Jnan-Bhandar* (Treasury of knowledge), criticizing the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterji. In the following year, Shaikh Muhammad Idris Ali published a narrative, *Bankim Duhita* (Daughter of Bankim), supposed to be on the fictitious love-affair between the daughter of the celebrated novelist and a Muslim (In fact, this was not correct).

¹¹ In the first two novels, the heroines are Hindus and the heroes are Muslims. By 1928, both the books had their 2nd editions.

¹² In this poem (quoted in the review *Bangla Academy Patrika*, 1, 2, p. 39). Shiraji tried to excite the spirit of heroism among the Muslims so that they could take the revenge for the insult done to the prophet. We have already indicated (Chap. 4) on this subject that a Hindu wrote a book, *Rangila Rasul* (Lahore, 1924) which ridiculed the Prophet (p.b.u.h). Muslims protested all over India and a fanatic even assassinated the Hindu author (1929).

century through literary means. Being a renowned writer, poet, and orator, he had the advantage of influencing Muslim intellectuals and writers and even masses of the entire first half of the 20th century.

We shall now consider Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi (1878-1950) who was one of the great figures in the realm of intellectual evolution.¹³ Having had a religious formation, Islamabadi consecrated initially to teaching. But, soon the movements of the *Khilafat* and Non-cooperation made him a veritable leader who, to his credit, had a prolonged sojourn in prison and foundation of diverse socio-political organizations.¹⁴ Although his life, he worked as an ardent disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad. But, his literary works made him rather the principal promoter of Muslim literature.

Being profoundly influenced by Maulana Shibli Numani, he tried like his master to write or rather re-write the history of Islam.¹⁵ His masterpiece, *Bharate Musalman Sahitya* (Muslim Civilization in India), far from being a work of propaganda or apology, reveals to us a certain pattern of thinking that is as clear and original as that continued in the doctorate dissertation of a Hindu historian.¹⁶ His agreeable style and scientific interpretation rendered his book very popular at a given time to the two large communities of Bengal.

Today most of his writings are rare and out of print. They remain only in the pages of the journals and reviews. Notwithstanding, we now cite few titles which make account of the subjects treated and the current of the thinking of the author: *Turasker Sultan* (Sultan of Turkey), *Nizamuddin Aulia* (The Great Saint of Delhi), *Musalman-er Abhyutthan* (The Rise of Muslims), *Samaj-Sangskar* (Social Reforms), *Khagol-Shastra-Muchhalman* (Muslims in the field of

¹³ Islamabadi means that someone originally from Islamabad, the ancient name of Chittagong; cf. Mohammad Habibullah (Bahar), "Maulana Islamabadi", *Mah-i-Nau*, Dacca, 1, 5, P. 24-26.

¹⁴ He was one of the founders of *Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind* (a politico-religious party), *Krisak Praja Samiti* (an association in favour of the Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Samiti-literary society of the Muslims of Bengal, 1911), he was also an enthusiastic initiator of many industrial and commercial enterprises, banks, schools, and orphanages instituted for the first time for the Muslim society.

¹⁵ Cf. M. A. Hai and S. A. Ahsan, op. cit. p. 115; on Shibli, cf. supra. Ch. II, fn. 39 & Ch. III, fn. 38.

¹⁶ Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, op. cit.

Astronomy), *Bharate Islam Prachar* (Preachings of Islam in India),¹⁷ *Bhugol Shastre Musolman* (Muslims in the field of Geography), *Moslem Birangana* (The Muslim Heroines), *Korane Swadinatar Bani* (Messages of emancipation in the Koran), *Islamer Upadesh* (Counsels of Islam), *Islamer Punya Katha* (Sacred messages in Islam), etc.

During the fiery days of the *Khilafat* movement, Islamabadi played an important role not only by his writing and passionate speeches, but also through powerful journalistic works. Indeed, he was directly linked with the group – *Sudhakar* – during his youth. His *Sultan*, which made a sensation in India, was initially a weekly and later became a daily in the period 1903-1908. In 1929, a new daily, entitled *Amir*, was edited by him. But, the essential influence that he had over the Muslim intellectuals was, however, due to *Al-Islam*, a famous review that he edited along with Maulana Akram Khan. It is in this review that one gets most of the important writings of Maulana Islamabadi and penetrating notes that are pregnant with ideas, to the writings of other authors.

From 1940-47, this eminent personality immersed in the darkness of negligence because of his anti-Pakistan politics, whereas his colleague, Maulana Akram Khan, as brilliant as he was but shrewder in politics, affirmed his authority. The intellectual education of Akram Khan helped him undoubtably. But, one cannot ignore his strong common sense in commercial matters, too. He possessed a chain of journals and reviews which were popular in both the territories of Bengal. Before analyzing his journalistic activities, we will take his literary works into consideration. He wrote a biography of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), *Mustafa Charit* (Life of Mustafa), which is a unique creation in this literary genre in Bengal. With minute details and profound reflections, this work presents the prophet of the Muslims as a perfect human being. In doing this, the author does not give a didactic explanation of the life and activities of the Prophet, but forces himself to establish solidly his interpretation on historical science. He researched the logical relationship which could exist between the events, the Words of God (Qur'an) and the traditions of the prophet (*Hadit*). Being profoundly

¹⁷ Inspired by the important study of T. W. Arnold *The Preaching of Islam*, op. cit.

rational, he depicted the life of the Prophet only in the circumstances and situations which were known historically or at least historically conceivable. Hence, the analytical spirit of Maulana Akram Khan puts him above the passion of the devotee. This is the reason for which he was condemned at the time by the Muslim orthodoxy. It can also be underlined that this great work is written in an impeccable style, which contributes to his success, even to Hindu readers. He, later, published a short work, *Mostafa Chariter Baishistya* (Essential Qualities of the Prophet), which brought same success as his *magnum opus* of which this was an excellent résumé.

His essays of the first period, collected under the title *Samasya-O-Samadhan* (Problems and their Solutions) brought a new controversy between the orthodoxy and the modernists. In this book, Maulana Akram Khan does not occupy himself with the theological problems but treats the daily problems of the Muslims (questions regarding banking, interest, painting, music, etc.) to which opposes all the time their religion. And, he tries to bring to them some acceptable solutions. On the other hand, he engaged himself in the translation of the Qur'an since a long time; the few parts which have been published were acclaimed by the specialists and the public, for the clarity of the introductory chapter and the annotations along with the fidelity of the translation.

Maulana Akram Khan had a personal style which is close to the Sanskrit classical tradition of Bengal. In this, he surpassed all his contemporaries and all the writers who worked for a "Muslim literature". His powerful language acquired, thanks to his hard labour (as he comes from an Urdu-speaking family), had helped him much in the journalistic and political activities. In 1901, he published the *Mohammadi*, tri-monthly review, which later became monthly, then weekly, and even a bi-weekly journal. Before the publication of his famous daily, *Azad*, in 1936, he directed two other dailies – *Seback* and *Jamana* – for a short duration. The *Azad* and the *Mohammadi* were among the most popular and well-organised journals or literary reviews¹⁸ that the Muslim Bengal had ever produced in course of its history. Other than the encouragement he brought to the Muslim

¹⁸ Among the important reviews, we name the following: *Al-Eslam* (1915-1921), *Saogat* (since 1918), *Moslem Bharat* and *Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Patrika* (1918-1924).

intellectuals, Maulana Akram Khan could, thus, influence the Muslim opinion during the first half of the 20th century. His liberal ideas and his modern world-vision (he permitted the publication of photos and pictures in the reviews, appearance of critics even against the orthodoxy, and participation of women in literary, religious, and political meetings). This makes him one of the most lucid personalities before the creation of Pakistan.¹⁹ In politics, Maulana Akram Khan participated, when he was not even well-known, with Sir S. N. Banerjee in the movement against the partition of Bengal (1905). He became famous for his courage during Non-Cooperation and *Khilafat* movements. The uncontested leader of Bengal, C. R. Das, held him in a very high esteem. Maulana Akram Khan was imprisoned many a time by the British, and there, like other Indian leaders - Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Shiraji and Islamabadi - he well utilized the moments of forced leisure by drafting his best writings. Despite his reformist activities in favour of the Muslim society, he worked upto 1940 for the independence of the indivisible motherland. But, after this time (as we have seen in the previous chapter), there appeared the new political philosophy - Pakistanism - to which he participated both as a theoretician and as man of action.

For Shiraji, Islamabadi, and Akram Khan, politics, literature, and social reform were at the same time a passion and a profession. They put all their talents to fulfill their intention - the regeneration of Muslims of Bengal. Their colleagues, disciples, and successors did not have all the time the same sense of vocation, or the passionate fervour. They had been, on the other hand, more influenced by social counter-currents and by literary trends, which explains that we consider them in the third group by letting enter Kazi Nazrul Islam as the star and the mentor of a new generation.

We have mentioned, on many occasions, the name of Kazi Nazrul Islam, (1899-1976), the only among the Muslim poets who was the most celebrated in Bengal and even out of Bengal.

To welcome a revolutionary poet like Nazrul, the place has already been prepared by the social condition of the after-war (1914-

¹⁹ There exists no study on him; however, one can read the article by Ataur Rahman with profit: "Bangali Muslim Sahityikder Chintadhara" (Thoughts of Bengali Muslim Writers), *Uttaran*, Dacca. 1, 5-6, P. 262.

1918) period, the Russian revolution²⁰ the clandestine activities of the terrorists of Bengal²¹ and, above all, movements of *Khilafat* and Non-Cooperation. But, it should not be forgotten that in the state of beatitude of the Bengali poetry, Tagore was singing for the first time the glory of the youth and of active life, which was the key-idea of his recent collection of poems, *Balaka*.²²

Born in 1899 at Birbhum, in West Bengal, Kazi Nazrul Islam passed a difficult childhood. At the age of seventeen, he abandoned school and left "the University for the Universe", according to his own expression, that is to say, he engaged himself in the 49th Bengali regiment stationed at Karachi. Being a prodigy, he had written definitely poems and *yatras*,²³ but it is in the military camp of Karachi that he accomplished his literary apprenticeship and acquired the knowledge of the Persian poetry. His first publication was a short story, "Baunduler Atma-Kahini" (Autobiography of a Vagabond), published in the literary review of liberal tendency, the *Saogat*. The story created among the readers a great enthusiasm by the novelty of the subject and the originality of style. Being encouraged, Nazrul sent many poems, especially some excellent translations of the Persian *Rubaiyat* in Bengali to different magazines.²⁴

On return to Calcutta, he did not accept any post which would have been easy for him to find. He consecrated himself to poetry as well as to political and literary activities. Being domiciled in the

²⁰ The influence of the Russian revolution on Indian intellectuals has been noted well by K. M. Panikkar, *L'Asie et la domination occidentale du 15^e siècle à nos jours*, Paris, 1953.

²¹ The influence of the terrorists of Bengal on the political and literary activities of India is considerable. Unfortunately there exists no study on this subject. One can consult a Government report which tries to evaluate terrorism: *Sedition Committee Report*; President Justice S. A. T. Rowlatt, Calcutta, 1918.

²² Published in 1321-1322 B. S.; French translation *Cygne*, Paris, 1923 by Pierre Jean-Jouve and Kalidas Nag.

²³ That is to say, the plays for rustic theaters (*cf.* "Glossary"). Between 12 and 14 years, Nazrul wrote several pieces and himself put them on the stage. *Cf.* Azharuddin Khan, *Bangla Sahitye Nazrul* (Nazrul in Bengali Literature), Calcutta, 1363 B. S., P. 4-8.

²⁴ His later publications include *Rubaiyat-i-Hafiz* (1332), *Rubaiyat-i-Omar Khayyam* (1961).

office of the Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Samiti,²⁵ he had contact with another Muslim revolutionary whose socialist ideas influenced him.²⁶ He then published, two years after his first publication, two poems entitled "Bidrohi" and "Kamal Pasha," in the same number of the review *The Moslem-Bharat*. These two very famous poems were cited and published almost everywhere and became, without any doubt, the most grand event in the literary history of modern Bengal, particularly after the attribution of the Nobel prize to Tagore in 1913. "Bidrohi" (The Rebel) became the first name of the poet; in a certain sense, the author, in course of this poem, revealed to his compatriots a philosophy of action. Here it is:

THE REBEL ETERNAL: A RHAPSODY

Hail, my Hero, rebel eternal!
 Say : I outtop the great Himalayas
 in Titanic majesty,
 Abashed and humbled, the snow-capped mountain
 bows its head before me.
 Sublime, I tower
 far above the infinite spaces of the universe,
 above the sun, moon, planets and stars,
 above the seat of heaven itself.
 I am an ever-lasting wonder,
 the invincible victor
 whose stature dwarfs all.
 I yield to none in submission, nor know tenderness.
 I am the tempest's ferocity,
 the breath of the cyclone,
 Ruin's image, a terror, irresistible, impetuous, uncontrollable.

²⁵ This is the most celebrated literary and cultural association of the Muslims of Bengal. Almost all the writers and many politicians and businessmen were affiliated to it. Its date of foundation, 1911 (4 Sept.) is debatable; some wants to put it 5 years back. Cf. M. Habibullah (Bahar): "Sahitya Samitir (History of the Literary Organisation) Itihas". *Mohammadi* 14th year, number 7, 1348 B. S., P. 452-454.

²⁶ It was Muzaffar Ahmad, one of the founders of the Communist Party of India. He was originally from Sandvip, Chittagong. His essay, "Communist Party Garar Pratham Jug" (The First Decade of the Formation of Communist Party). Calcutta 1959, " Nazrulke Jeman Dekechi (As I have seen Nazrul), *Svadhinata* (Liberty) Calcutta, 25 June, 1947.

I trample on bonds,
 obey no law,
 recognise no rule.
 I sport with loaded boats
 in my revels
 and send them down to the sea's bottom
 without mercy.

I am a torpedo,
 an explosive mine.
 I am the spirit of *Siva*, the destroyer.
 I am the summer's storms
 always seething with turbulence,
 I am the wild wind:
 I crush and sweep away all in my path.

I can be seen in the riotous rhythm of the dancer,
 and heard in the soft melody of song,
 moving as I wish,
 ever free, unrestrained.
 Fearless, I challenge my enemies;
 bravely I battle with Death.
 I am the fury of the hurricane,
 terrifying like a pestilence,
 impulsive, lawless.

Ever unsubdued,
 the bubbling wine of life fills my impassioned heart.
 I am the flame which burns
 on sacrificial altars,
 I am both votary and sacred fire,
 I am a peaceful homestead as well as desolate graveyard,
 I create and destroy.
 I am the End,
 the finale of Night and Day,
 Great *Indra's* child
 I bear the luminous moon in my arms
 and the brilliant sun on my brow.
 I carry the lover's lute in one hand

and the trumpet of war in the other,
I hold inside me,
like *Siva*, the pale-throated one,
all the liquid venom churned up
at creation's dawn.
I cradle *Ganga's* waters in my locks.

I am a recluse, a poet,
a prince who has the semblance of hermit.
I am a ruthless Chengis;
I am a roving nomad who owns no master;
I am the frightening roll of thunder,

the celestial trumpet's blast
Siva's trident,
the dreadful mace of the god of death.
Disciple of legendary Indian sages –
renowned for their wrath –
I will sear the universe with my scorching flames.

I am both Joy and Grief.
I am the demonic power
which will overwhelm all on Earth's last day.
I am Tranquillity as well as Commotion;
I am youth's crimson flesh,
a rebuke to God's pride.
I am the violence of the typhoon,
the impulse of the ocean,
resplendent like the glee of the sea's raging waves.

The gloss of a maiden's braided hair,
the amorous movement of her eyes,
the passion blossoming in her soul,
the sweetness of a girl's first caress,
the thrill of secret glances exchanged in love,
the tinkle of a young woman's bracelets,
the tremor in the voice of a village lass,
the throb of the lover's heart,
the sigh of the widow,
the wail of the frustrated,

the suffering of the homeless,
the misery of the downtrodden,
the cry of wounded pride –
recall me.

I am the Eternal Child who does not age.
I am also the tuneful zephyr,
the music of the wandering singer
borne on forest winds.

I am the parched summer's thirst,
the cooling shade of the woods,
the soothing murmur of a desert spring.
I march onwards, relentless,
unfettered, glorying in self-knowledge.
I am Growth as well as Decay;
I am the quickening of conscience.
My banners fly in triumph
on the world's ramparts –
emblems of my sovereignty.

Dauntless, I speed across the measureless distances
of earth and sky,
like a gate,
on the back of winged mounts.

I am the quenchless fire
in subterranean volcanoes,
dark with no glow.
I leap from region to region
unhampered, reckless,
while the earth trembles in dismay underneath.

Alike I duel with primeval dragons
and grapple with Gabriel's flaming wings.
My parentage is divine.
I am restless and unquiet
and give no peace to my mother, the Earth.

I am Orpheus' lyre
as well as lord *Krishna's* flute –
able to lull the ocean to sleep with my strains.

When I rage and thunder
all hell's mansions shake in terror, –
their flames snuffed out.
I am the deluge
which brings both plenty and devastation
in the rainy season.
I am Injustice incarnate,
a fiery meteor, an evil sign of the zodiac,
a baleful comet, a harbinger of disaster,
I represent *Durga*, the goddess of terror,
and like her dance and rollic
in the midst of hell's flames.

I am both earth-bound and ethereal,
indomitable, immortal,
blessed with unfading youth,
a menace to man and god and demon,
the ultimate mystery at the heart of Eternity.
I roam heaven and earth and underworld,
unbound, unchained,
while they quake under my tread.
I am armed with a terrific axe and mighty plough –
famed both in ancient lore –
I will hurl the one at tyrants
and wield the other
to wrench the earth from its foundations,
that I may remould it
and read the world of sin and wrong and herald a new
era of peace.
I am weary of strife,
but I would have no rest
until the skies have ceased to ring
with the groans of the tyrant's victims
and tyranny itself lies dead, vanquished.
I am the implacable foe
of cruel blind Destiny

which rules the universe,
the whimsical despotic deity whom I despise,
I, the eternal rebel who never submits.*

After the publication of his first collection of poems, *Agnivina* (The Fire-Lute), Nazrul became the poet-darling of the Bengalis – whether they were intellectuals or less-educated villagers, Hindus or Muslims. His poems, “Aj Sristi Sukher Ullase” (On the Ecstasy of Creative Happiness), *Bhangar Gan* (Songs of Destruction) *Bisher Banshi* (The Flute of Poison), delivered on the same revolutionary tune the destruction of the old world-order, prejudice, and unwanted oppression so that a new world is created. Buddhadeva Bose, eminent poet and critic, had justly remarked :

“Freedom from bondage was the keynote of the poems of his first phase – wild, exuberant, delirious poems, intoxicated and intoxicating.”²⁷

It should also be mentioned here that the poems of pan-Islamic tendency like “Afghani,” “Khalid,” “Omar,” “Jaglul Pasha,” etc²⁸ were written during the first period. These are the veritable songs of *avant-garde* for what one can call a renaissance of the Islamic world. In composing these poems, the genius of Nazrul did not search to take part in his religious community, but witnessed well more the passionate love which linked him to the soil of Bengal and to the civilization of India. With an incomparable lucidity and an

* In lieu of retranslating the extracts in French which I translated, a very special version made by Syed Sajjad Husain is presented here with his translator's note :

“Nazrul Islam's rhapsody – *The Rebel* – is one of the most famous in Bengali. Its dazzling array of images and metaphors drawn from numerous sources, Indian, Islamic, Greek, and even industrial, strung together in apparent disregard of logic, is difficult to translate. The repetitions, inconsistencies, and paradoxes in Bengali are redeemed by the vigour and energy of the verse and the fascinating succession of rhymes. But I found that a literal rendering would result in a version which would not only fail to convey the superb beauty of the poem, but even expose it to the ridicule of foreign readers not familiar either with the idiom of the Bengali language or with non-Western mythology. I have therefore pruned away lines which I thought would not translate well and also tried to avoid the repetitions which would tire the reader's ear in English. The translation is consequently slightly shorter than the original.” Quoted in *Kazi Nazrul Islam, A New Anthology*, edited by Rafiqul Islam, Dhaka, Bangla Academy, 1990, P. 20-25.

²⁷ Buddhadeva Bose, *An Acre of Green Grass*, Calcutta, 1948, P. 37.

²⁸ Cf. his anthology, *Sanchita* (Collections), Calcutta, 1928.

unwavering conviction, he wrote numerous songs and patriotic poems, equally very popular in Bengal, in which he utilized often Muslim metaphors and Hindu mythology to the great surprise of the critics. Being determined to come closer to the people, at times he neglects the form. However, it is in these writings that one finds the most beautiful verses of the poet and a realization that is almost perfect of the harmonious Bengali synthesis.²⁹

Nazrul introduced in all aspects of Bengali poetry a force that is almost brutal, exuberant, and a very unparallel virility. It is in this way that he found himself as the head of the young generations of the 20s and the 30s. These generations of the time were tormented by the dream of liberation along with the currents and the counter-currents of the period. Nazrul did not contend himself by helping the diverse movements, thanks to his literary genius; he was tempted to guide them to a new direction towards journalism. He became editor

²⁹ In this regard, a poem entitled "Kandari Hunshiar" (Beware the Boatman) may be considered. This poem was written during the time when a great killing started between Hindus and Muslims at Calcutta on 2nd April 1926. He composed music for it and himself sang the song at the opening ceremony of the session of the National Congress:

... Asahay jati mariche dubia janena santaran
kandari! Aj dekhibo tomar matri-mukti-pon.
Hindu na ora Muslim?" oi jiggashe kon jan
Kandari! Bolo dubiche manus santan mor mar
Durgamo giri, kanter maru, Dustar parabar
Langite hobe ratri nishithe Jatrira hunshiar!
[The helpless nation is about to drown,
Knowing not how swim –
Captain! Now is the hour of test
For your vow to free the Mother
Who is he that asks,
"What are they, Hindus or Muslims?"
Captain, say it's Man who drowns –
My Mother's offsprings! ...
Pilgrims, beware! You have to cross
At dead of night
Mountains hard to climb, dense wilderness
And boundless, difficult seas! ..."]

Translated by Basudha Chakravarty, *The Rebel and other Poems: Kazi Nazrul Islam*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1974, P. 65].

Let us note that one year earlier, our poet obtained the admiration from Mahatma Gandhi by singing for him the "Charkar Gan" (Song of Wheels) cf. *Binsher Bashi* (Flute of Poison), Calcutta, 1331 B.S. The first edition of the book was proscribed by the Government.

of the daily *Navazug* (The New Era), since 1920, with Muzaffar Ahmad. Being patronised by the political leader A. K. Fazlul Huq, this journal became the first in Bengal to defend the rights of peasants and workers.³⁰ In 1922 (August 12), he published the first number of his own weekly *Dhumketu* (The Comet) with a "benediction" in insolent verses from Tagore and his own revolutionary editorials. Nazrul declared on this occasion:

"*Dhumketu* is not a journal of any community, it is proposed to denounce and to drive away the errors or the hatred which create obstacles to the Hindu-Muslim unity. He who understands and lives profoundly with his own religion cannot detest the same of the others. For us, faith in humanity is the supreme religion The *Dhumketu* demands total independence of India. We do not understand what *Svaraj* is; everyone explains this term in his own way. So, for us to achieve the total independence, we should revolt before everything. We revolt against all laws, against all sanctions, and against interdictions, which enchain us. And, in view of this revolt, we should first of all know ourselves."³¹

The dogmatic tone and the popularity of this little journal irritated the government; and, the poet was arrested for seditious activities. In the process, Nazrul made a declaration³² whose eloquence and strength caused a general stupefaction. Here we quote an extract:

"I have been accused of sedition. That is why, I am now confined in the prison. On the one side is the crown, on the other the flames of the comet.

One is the king, the sceptre in hand; the other truth with the mace of justice. To plead for me, the king of all kings, the judge of all judges, the eternal truth – living God.

My judge is employed by none. Before this great judge, the king and the subject, the rich and the poor, the happy and the sad, are alike and equal. Before his throne, the crown of

³⁰ Editorials signed by Nazrul are collected in *Zugabani*, (Massage for the Age) The first edition was proscribed, the second edition, Calcutta, 1356 B. S.

³¹ Quoted in his essay, *Rudromangal*, (Welfare and pacification of cruel shiva) "Durdiner Jatri" (Passenger in Bad Days), Calcutta 1333 B. S.

³² *Rajbandir Jabanbandi* (Testimony of a Prisoner), Calcutta, 1923.

the king and the string of the beggar have equal places of honour. His laws are Justice and Religion. These were not manufactured by any victor to rule over the vanquished. His laws emerged out of the realisation of a universal truth about mankind. They are for and by a sovereign God. The king is supported by an infinitesimal creature; I by its eternal and indivisible creator. I am a poet. I have been sent by the God to express the unexpressed, to portray the unportrayed. It is God who is heard through the voice of the Poet. My voice is but a medium for truth, the message of God. To legal sophistry that message may appear to be mere sedition, but to Justice it is neither unjust nor untrue. The king can muzzle that voice, but to Religion and Justice it will always remain the innocent, immaculate, undimmed, and ever-burning truth."³³

Nazrul was condemned to one year's prison by a British judge, himself a poet as it is known, who by an interesting coincidence had already condemned the poet Shiraji. These two Muslim poets were the only examples, at least the first ones, to be condemned to suffer imprisonment for writing nationalist poetry. In his cell, Nazrul composed many poems which he used to sing with other prisoners. Let us quote, for example, his famous "Shikal Bhangar Gan" (The Song for the Breaking of Chains):

Being in chains is our trick, trick being in chains
 Wearing this chain I will put all chains out of order
 We don't come to get imprisoned in your closed prison,
 We intend to destroy all chains that breed fear.
 We will conquer the fear of bondage wearing this chain,
 Our legs are not chained, this is an instrument to break
 the chain.

You are enslaving the world in the bondage of your chains,
 You guess you will reduce divine power by exhibiting
 terror...

³³ A French version is available in Luce-Claude Maître, "Les poètes rebelles du Bengale", *Europe*, 32 years No 101, 1954, P-95. The extract above is quoted from *Kazi Nazrul Islam - A Profile* by Karunamaya Goswami, Nazrul Institute, Dhaka, 1989, P. 17-18.

We will completely defeat discord that tries to frighten us all.
 This time we will use the conquering music of the weak and
 the lean.

You are ruling us by terror, not by love,
 We will throttle the voice that utters fear and demolish
 all fear
 We will die ourselves so that life emerges in the country
 of death.

We will go to the gallows so that jubilant smile may ensue
 from the conquest of death
 On this clanging of chains is no bondage nor crying
 This is the welcome song for the free world's messenger
 These oppressed ones are defying the oppressors
 Our own bones will turn into thunder and brighten the
 country.³⁴

Seeing that his life was as dynamic in the prison as it was outside, the authorities became more severe. In consequence, the poet performed hunger strike. He did not break the strike before the 40th day on the insistence of his writer friends, political leaders, and his compatriots assembled in a grand manifestation at Calcutta.³⁵

After his release from prison, Nazrul got married,³⁶ and published many collections of poems. *Samyabadi* (The Equalitarian or the Communists) and "Amar Kaifiyat" ("My Explanation") made new sensations. In the last poem, the poet replies to his critics by saying: "I am a poet of today and not the prophet of tomorrow." Then Nazrul passed sometime at Krishnagar – an ancient high

³⁴ Translated by Abu Rushd, *Selected Poems of Kazi Nazrul Islam*, Nazrul Research Centre, Dhaka University, 1994.

³⁵ The determination of the poet would be better understood if one considers his refusal to meet his mother who wanted to talk to him in the prison while he was still on hunger strike. On the other hand, Tagore sent him a telegram with the following words: "Give up hunger strike. Our literature claims you." The telegram was sent back with a plea that "The addressee not found". Tagore dedicated him his new play *Basanta* (Spring, 1329 B. S.) while Nazrul was still in jail.

³⁶ Even in his marriage, one finds this aspect of synthesis: as his wife Pramila Sengupta was a Hindu, from Comilla; their sons were called Krishna Mohammad (died during childhood) and Sabyasael Islam, Aniruddhya Islam.

place for Bengali writers. There he wrote, among other things, his best novel, *Mrityu-Kshudha* (Lust for Death). This novel presents us, still timidly, a new aspect of Nazrul's horizon. The hero of the novel is painted according to his own image, having the concept of his own life. So, Ansar, the hero, decides, as Nazrul says:

"He would sacrifice everything in the service of Man, he would endure all sufferings with patience, not because men are sufferers or miserables, but because they are beautiful."³⁷

Nazrul, henceforward, turned towards making a research for "beauty." His reading of Tagore, Shelley, Keats, Byron, and Persian poets inspired him, but as it was the case, for the conscience of the "self" (derived from the Hindu mysticism, 'So-hm' and the Muslim metaphysics of *Anal-Haq*), was revealed in his poems of the first period, now this new effort was authentic, that is to say, it took birth in his experiences.³⁸ To be successful in his research, he dived deep into the domain of music. He wrote a very large number of songs, more than those of Tagore (who wrote more than two thousand songs). In spite of defects of the form and vocabulary in certain songs, Nazrul contributed surprisingly the flowering of the civilization of Bengal, thanks to his new creations. As a musician, he employed all the *ragas* and the *raginis* in the classical music of India as well as the folk music of Bengal. Moreover, he won a considerable success by introducing some new melodies composed on the *ragas*, lost or forgotten, along with Occidental rhythms. It goes without saying that he composed the music of most of his songs.

Like his literary creations, life of the poet had always been dramatic. By the force of things and by his unconsciousness, Nazrul was sometimes rich and sometimes poor. Since nearly 1935, his life had entered into a new phase, although externally he worked normally.³⁹ His internal life took a dual aspect, both tragic and luminous. It was tragic because he had very grave family problems,⁴⁰

³⁷ *Mritukhudha* (Hunger of Death). P. 133.

³⁸ See his beautiful but obscure article, "Amar Sundar" (Beauty of mine), published in the daily *Nabazug* (The New Era), 17 Jaisthya, 1342 B. S.

³⁹ At that time, the daily *Nabazug* (The New Era) was published again with Nazrul as its chief editor.

⁴⁰ The death of his mother and his son, and malady of his wife.

to which one can add that the situation of the country began to deteriorate. Hypersensitive as he was, he had the impression that he was not doing enough for his countrymen. And it was luminous also, as he started to engage himself very seriously in spiritual meditation, practising the yoga, imposing fast on himself, offering prayers to the goddess Kali, and reading verses from the Qur'an, the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*, the *Puranas*, and the Tantras, etc.

We do not have enough details on this new period of the life of Nazrul. And, he himself did not leave much evidence because he became sick since 1942, not to be recovered again. However, a good translation of the last chapter of the Qur'an – the "Ampara,"⁴¹ – many Islamic, Baul, and Vaishnavite songs, and the very beautiful hymns to Kali made by him are the examples of unique creation in Bengali literature.

If one considers Nazrul Islam in his totality, it will appear, without any doubt, that a creative genius that no formula can bind and that, with the matter which was furnished to him in a determined epoch, he learned to shape an eternal image of the universe and the humanity. An immediate success – national and prolonged – rendered popular his verses, songs, and even novels, narratives, and plays sometimes not well-conceived. We draw to an end this sketch of the poet with his own words, which seems to be strongly justified:

"I was born in this epoch of the undetermined possibilities of the 20th century; I am but a drummer of the battalion of the *avant garde* - this is my mark."⁴²

With Nazrul Islam, the Muslim writers started to situate themselves on the literary map of Bengal. They left aside their inferiority complex and succeeded better in their enterprises. After the First World War, the young Muslims came in a greater number to Calcutta and found themselves before a political and cultural situation that was more welcoming than it had been before. It is in this way that the young poet Jasimuddin started his career, thanks to the encouragement which was given to him by the poet Nazrul and the grand person of Bengali letters, Dr. D. C. Sen (1866-1939).

⁴¹ *Kabye-Ampara*, Calcutta 1340 B. S.

⁴² *Nazrul Rachana Sambhar* (An Anthology of Nazrul's Works), anthology, edited by Abdul Qadir, Dacca, 1961, P. 96.

The poetic career of Jasimuddin (1903- 1976), which already in his life-time inscribed his name in letters of gold in the history of literature, offers us the melody and the lively image of the rural Bengal in their tradition of real folklore, but artistically refined as if by a magic touch.

Being born in 1903, at a village of Faridpur in East Bangal, he was one of the first poets who acquired higher education from the university.⁴³ Notwithstanding his prolonged sojourn in Bengali cities, the poet had always remained attached to village- life. He accepted from the beginning of his career the happy but difficult task to study in the field of Bengali folklore, the task that was confided to him by his mentor, Dr. D. C. Sen. Undoubtedly, he received on this point an impulse from the Gandhian movement, "Back to the Village", during the time of the *Khilafat* and the Non-cooperation movements (1920-1924).

The narrative poems of Jasimuddin resemble much the old Bengali ballads⁴⁴ by their tragic sense, their familiar atmosphere, and their expression for a quest of the *truth* in course of terrestrial existence. "Kabar" (The Tombs),⁴⁵ his first poem written and published in his adolescent years, created sensation; Dr. D. C. Sen included it as a text in the school final manual where Muslim writings did not have place in the past. Now, the young poet became well-known overnight to the Bengali readers. But it is only in 1929 that he was appreciated for its own value by the writers and intellectuals of all the communities for his narrative poem *Nakshi Kanthar Math* (The Embroidered Quilt) (1928).⁴⁶ In these poems and in other works like *Rakhali* (The Shepherd) (1930), *Baluchar* (The Sandshore) (1930), *Dhan-Khet* (The Rice-field) (1932), Jasimuddin brought a new pathetic melody to Bengali poetry. His modern idiom is directly related to that of the folk poets.

⁴³ He obtained his M. A. from the University of Calcutta and for few years he taught Bengali literature in the University of Dacca before joining the Publicity Department of the Government.

⁴⁴ *Supra*, Chapter III.

⁴⁵ Cf. English translation by Yusuf Jamal Begum, "The Graves", *Poems from East Bengal*, op. cit. P. 74-78.

⁴⁶ This work was admirably translated into English by E. M. Milford, *The Field of the Embroidered Quilt* (With an introduction of by V. Elwin) Calcutta, 1939. Dacca (Oxford), 1958.

The most devastating Bengal famine (1942-1943) – consequence of the Second World War – offered the poet the vision of the misery and human tragedy. He remained depressed upto the moment when he turned towards the burning reality. He consecrated then his genius to the depiction of this Bengali tragedy along with the sinister and violent paintings of the first Muslim master-painter, Zainul Abedin (born in 1917 at Mymensingh).⁴⁷ The poems of Jasimuddin⁴⁸ are the most representative documents of this period and even could be counted among the best artistic efforts of men in view of the survival in this world.

Jasimuddin published numerous collections of poems,⁴⁹ few lyrical plays, a literary memoir – *Jander Dekhechi* (Whom I have Seen) – and a travelogue – *Chole Musafir* (Thus Moves the Traveller). The works of Jasimuddin, taken in its *ensemble*, offer us an intimate picture of the secret life of rural Bengal. These express love, death, misery, and joy that are inscribed in folklore tradition.

It is evident that after what we have just related, the two Muslim poets were not the instigators of a Muslim Renaissance as one is often tempted to say, but promoters of the Renaissance of Bengali letters. Their poetic creations did not leave any doubt on this subject, because their images were borrowed from the common storehouse of the Bengali tradition; and, their vocabulary of Arabic-Persian inspiration enlarged the horizon of Bengali literature. Their efforts do not resemble at all that of Iqbal in Punjab, by whom they have not been influenced either. Their success is essentially due to their own genius. The Muslim writers, henceforward, found their own ways to move forward. The young poets who tried to imitate them had generally failed⁵⁰ because they partially accepted the traditional situation and superimposed it on the modern world without trying to conciliate the two trends.

It is from there that ambiguity and imperfection are born which characterize these young poets, along with other contemporary

⁴⁷ See the excellent album *Zainul Abedin*, introduction by Jalal Uddin Ahmed, Pakistan Publications, Karachi, 1958.

⁴⁸ Two poems of this period are included in the article of Luce-Claude Maître, op. cit., P 98-100; French translations are by Jacques Stepowsky.

⁴⁹ Among these poems, *Matir Kanna* (Cry of the Earth), is remarkable, because the poet, for the first time, treats city life on a large scale.

⁵⁰ Here there could be a reference to the names of two poets – Benajir Ahmad (1903-1983), author of two collections of poems, *Bandir Banshi*, *Baishakhi* and an essay, *Islam O Communism* (Islam and Communism) and Bande Ali Miyan who were, to some extent, successively followed the poetic direction of Nazrul and Jasim Uddin.

Indian writers. We shall see this more clearly if we consider an intellectual movement which blossomed at this moment and sealed the ulterior happenings of the events. Being named as *Buddhir Mukti* (Emancipation of the Intellect), this movement started at Dhaka towards 1926. Teachers and students of the university had started gathering around Kazi Abdul Wadud and some other intellectuals who had been already renowned for their insolent writings. Calling themselves the *Kemalists*, the partisans of the movement were being inspired by Kemal Ataturk, Raja Ram Mohun Ray, Rabindranath Tagore, Romain Rolland, as well as by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), Persian poet Sa'di, and German writer Goethe. In politics, they advocated religious harmony and the institution of modern democracy by reinforcing the struggle for liberation. In literature, their efforts are characterized by a straight co-operation with the Hindus (without posing for them the question of persistent inequality among the communities) and an aesthetic research. In fine, the promoters of this movement wished to integrate the secular elements, all by continuing to work for a social renewal.

The mentor of the movement, Kazi Abdul Wadud (1894-1969), was born in Faridpur, but did his higher studies at Calcutta. It is there that he resided for a long time, even after the independence. He occupied important positions in the department of Public Instruction. Earlier, he had received liberal education in the tradition of classical spirit of Bengal. As a Lecturer of Literature at Dhaka College, soon he became well-known in the literary circles for his essays⁵¹ which expressed, with new and neat points of view, his thoughts about religion, literature, philosophy, politics, and social reform, along with narratives or novels treating Muslim life.⁵² In 1935, Tagore invited him to deliver a series of lectures (Nizam lectures) on Hindu-Muslim conflict at Visva-Bharati (Santiniketan).⁵³

⁵¹ The most important ones were first published under different titles and collected in one volume, *Shashvat Banga* (The Eternal Bengal), Calcutta, 1951: English translation of 15 articles in condensed form are available in *Creative Bengal*, Calcutta, 1950.

⁵² His novels, *Nadibakshe* (On the River) (1918) and *Azad* two narratives, *Meer Paribar* (family of Meer) (1917) and *Tarun* (Youth) and a drama, *Path O Bipath* (Right Way and Wrong Way Freedom).

⁵³ Tagore had great admiration for the erudition, impartial judgment and, above all, the verbal capacity of Abdul Wadud. Cf. his preface to "Hindu-Muslim Conflict" (Conflict Between the Hindus and Muslims) in *Shashvat Banga*, Calcutta, 1951, P. 160.

In his exposé, Abdul Wadud examined the important points of religious development among the Hindus and the Muslims, without asking for what were the main reasons of actual conflict. In his opinion,

"It would be preferable to know what are the currents of thought, hopes, and aspirations of these two communities. This will bring us to the comprehension, if not to the solution to the conflict, or at least, aid us to acquire a little of this moral force which will permit us not to be left abated by the actual situation."⁵⁴

Then he affirms that in the intellectual history of the Muslims there had always been a great conflict between the rationalists and the followers of orthodoxy, but at the end it had always been the masses who decided, whereas among the Hindus the masses had always followed the orthodoxy.⁵⁵ Notwithstanding, the rationalist Muslims had to leave the place to Al-Ghazzali who professed marriage between Sufism and Puritanism. Muslims suffered from the inborn weakness of this thought. The rationalism of Ibn-Rushd (Averroes) influenced greatly European ideas, but it could not be brought to India at the price of a very late effort of Sir Sayyid Ahmad and Amir Ali. In between, the Indian Muslims, for the most part moderate *Hanafis*, had to follow the influence of the Wahhabis, puritans *par excellence*. Because of the socio-political situation, the particular social condition in Bengal accentuated more this influence in the region. Consequently, the Muslims of Bengal lost the synthetic liberalism that they had elaborated in the Middle Ages and the reason which had guided them in the beginning of the last century. Contrarily, they were profited in having a strict belief and the sentiment of the community by leaving on side syncretism and liberal thought.⁵⁶ The *Muslimization* of the Muslims and the disgrace of the personal reflection installed there, leaving rationalist researches of Sir Sayyid Ahmad and Amir Ali. A similar influence extended further more to the Hindu society with the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The efforts of personal reflections

⁵⁴ Ibid. P. 166.

⁵⁵ Ibid. P. 168.

⁵⁶ Ibid. P. 168-176.

appeared to the public as the weakness of a class of thinkers; ancient traditions were glorified revengefully and installed anew.⁵⁷

But the greatest obstacle to obtain a new Indian life has come, according to Abdul Wadud, by the political action in the 19th century. The élites launched certain movements, he says, for their own interest and then imposed them on the public. For this élite class, the Indian awakening cannot be other than a Hindu renaissance.⁵⁸ The counter-current was equally present among the Muslims. Sir Sayyid Ahmad, despite his liberal ideas, could not do other than to think that his religion was an incomparable light (*ek la - jawab nur*). His words – “what is not true is not Islam” – could certainly promote a renewal of ideas, but unfortunately, his successors were rather influenced by his separatism. While analyzing the political philosophy of Iqbal which got at the moment the attention from the Muslims of India, Abdul Wadud diagnosed that Iqbal (along with other separatists, especially) was not against Hinduism, but against the anti-Muslim Hindu attitude.⁵⁹ Yet, this great thinker did not denounce the leaders for their attitudes towards religion. Tagore and Gandhi had successively affirmed that the sacred word did not only constitute the religion, which “is the eternal conscience.” Unfortunately, the Indians, in general, did not approve but one part of this teaching where Gandhi incited everyone to be sincerely religious. This had rather provoked fanaticism. “But this fanaticism does not reflect (and Abdul Wadud expresses here his optimism that) the true face of Hinduism or of Islam of the other day or today.” Abdul Wadud concluded his study by these words:

“We should relate ourselves profoundly with our entourage, engage ourselves to the meditation and force ourselves to transform these religions in veritable laboratory of creative forces to the service of Man.”⁶⁰

It now goes without saying that this brief discussion cannot be a just idea of the work of Abdul Wadud. His luminous thoughts are

⁵⁷ Ibid. P. 181.

⁵⁸ Ibid. P. 181-186.

⁵⁹ Ibid. P. 187-188.

⁶⁰ Ibid. P. 196-200.

elaborated in many other writings⁶¹ and in his last lecture at Visva-Bharati, *Banglar Jagaran* (The Awakening of Bengal).⁶² Rationalism in religious thought was one of the leading ideas of Abdul Wadud. He had taken it first of all from a close source – teachings of the great reformer Raja Rammohun Ray. Now, it is natural that our author has consecrated erudite pages on his immediate master. Other than the works already mentioned, his numerous essays⁶³ have enriched the field of Rammohunian research, above all, what is concerned as the influence exercised by Islam on Raja Rammohun Ray and the influence exercised by him on the Bengali intellectuals.

Of all European thinkers, it is Goethe who made the greatest impression on Abdul Wadud. Being a great soul of the new age, epitomized by the European renaissance and by German classicism, Goethe appeared to him as the most imposing figure in the domain of efforts undertaken in view of “the emancipation of the intellect” (Buddhir Mukti). He consecrated many articles and two magistral studies on him, the first ones to appear in Bengali.⁶⁴ It seems well that Abdul Wadud preferred moral energy to moral formalism as well as vital values to mythic values in literature, politics, and thought.⁶⁵

A clear reflection served by a profound erudition has always pushed Abdul Wadud to take up interesting studies on the problems in social, political, cultural, and literary fields. Whether one agrees or not with him, his writings bring to his readers an intellectual pleasure. His efforts of syntheses revealed fruitful, although after 1940, date from which aggravate the fanatic sentiment among Muslims as well as Hindus, his voice turned, to some extent,

⁶¹ At least, three articles from *Shashvat Banga* (op. cit.) can be quoted in this connection, “Grihazuddher Prakkale” (Before the Internal war, *ibid.* P. 48-54), “Banglar Musalamaner Katha” (On the Muslims of Bengal) (P. 95-111) and “Sanmohitha Musalman” (The Hypnotised Muslims), P. 394-400, etc.

⁶² Published from Calcutta, in 1956.

⁶³ Cf. *Shashvat Banga*, P. 23, 26, 203-222, 250-253, 314-318.

⁶⁴ *Kabiguru Goethe* (The Poet-Mentor Goethe), Vol. 1 and Vol. 11, Calcutta, 1945-1947.

⁶⁵ Lila Ray, *A Challenging Decade: Bengali Literature in the Forties*, Calcutta, 1953, P. 114.

weakened and he became rather solitary.⁶⁶ His movement – “The Emancipation of the Intellect” – had an existence of about ten years under the auspices of *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* (Muslims Literary Society). The annual sessions of this intellectual and literary movement became real events at Dhaka – in the first two Kazi Nazrul Islam and in the tenth the great novelist Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay attended.⁶⁷

Among his friends and disciples – all of them writers or teachers – one should name Kazi Motahar Hossain (1897-1981),⁶⁸ Syed Motahar Hosen Choudhury (1903-1956),⁶⁹ Shamsul Huda (1910), Abul Faza⁷⁰ (1903-1983) and Sayyid Abul Hosain⁷¹ (1897-1938), who took up on their shoulder the heavy task of awakening the society from its mortal lethargy and published a literary review, *Shikha* (The Flame) (1927), for five years. Among the partisans of the movement, Sayyid Abul Hosain, a law teacher, was the most brilliant and most revolutionary-one. Although a practicing Muslim, he professed, at the risk of finding himself condemned by the orthodoxy, that the evolution of human beings does not have any limit and that one can enrich more than the prophet because

⁶⁶ Leaving aside contemporary problems, he started since then to take up his works on Goethe, Tagore, Saratchandra, Nazrul Islam and put himself to study the theoretical problems like “the Renouncement in India, “Allah according to the Qur’an,” “the Image of the Islamic State, etc.” At the moment, he is writing a biography of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). We thank him for a letter written to us to clear up certain points.

⁶⁷ The orthodox Dacca élites opposed this movement. After the third session, manifestations were prohibited to be held in Salimullah Muslim Hall, the prestigious University residence at Dacca and centre of many movements in East Bengal; the activities of Kemalists hereafter remained clandestine.

⁶⁸ Statistician and mathematician, and a great *mécène* of arts and letters, editor of the review *Shikha* (Flame), he (1897-1981) has recently published many studies Cf *Sancharan* (Collection of essays).

⁶⁹ Renowned poet and essayist (1903-1956), his *Sanskriti Katha* is a posthumous publication.

⁷⁰ Prolific author of stories, novels, plays, and literary essays. Among these works, let us name *Chauchir* (1934), *Matir Prithibi* (Earth made of Clay) (1940), *Jibanpather Zatri* (A Journeyman in his Way of Life) (Literature and Culture 1948), *Quaid-e-Azam* (play, 1946), *Sahitya-o-Sanskriti* (1962), etc.

⁷¹ Among S. A. Hosen’s works, we may mention *Banglar Musalmaner Shikhsa-Samasya* (The Educational Problems of Bengali Muslims), *Banglar Balshi* (The Bolsheviks of Bengal), *Muslim Culture* (translation of M. Picktall), *Hindu-Musalman* (Hindus-Muslims) (play in 5 acts).

Muhammad (p. b. u. h.) himself had said: “Be ornamented with the qualities of God” (*takhallaku bi akhlakillah*).

Let us now move on to the third group of Muslim writers. It will be convenient to remind ourselves that these writers do not constitute as such a group. We consider them in view of the importance of their writings and not as partisans of the first or the second group. These writers are, undoubtedly, Muslims by spirit and contents of their works; but they were not the promoters of any socio-religious reformation. They do not mix, in principle, in the interminable debate by putting the Ancients and the Moderns in question. Their only intention was to work for the Renaissance of the Bengali Letters. They became worried about the difficulties which encircled or prevented the Muslim participation to a blossoming of the literary Bengal. But they were not committed intellectuals, at least not so passionate as those we have just considered.

Lutfur Rahman (1889-1936), born in Jessore, is one of the rare writers who, in his works and in his life as well, had left the mark of a rich humanistic thought. His collection of poems, *Prakash* (Expressions) and his essays *Ummata Jiban* (Higher Life), *Manab Jiban* (Human Life), *Mahat Jiban* (Noble Life) and *Priti-Upahar* (Gift of Love) expressed original and highly idealistic thinking of the author: “His essays resemble the moral writings of Smiles (Scottish moralist). But, his vision of life is more poignant than that of Smiles having greater worry about literary values. He was in contact with Christian missionaries in his youth.”⁷²

Kazi Imdadul Huq (1882-1926) is one of the most accomplished Muslim intellectuals in the beginning years of the 20th century. His writings do not give, however, perfect witness to his genius. His famous novel, *Abdullah*,⁷³ is, nonetheless, the best portrayal of the Muslim society, with its qualities, abuses, and prejudices. Written with dexterity, *Abdullah* was appreciated by Tagore and by all the great writers of the epoch. Being an erudite, Kazi Imdadul Huq

⁷² Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Banglar Jagoran* (Rise of Bengal), op. cit. P. 198.

⁷³ It may be mentioned here that Huq could not terminate his novel as he was sick since 1918. He published upto 30 chapters in the review *Moslem Bharat*. Then Anwarul Kadir, one of the Kemalists, completed it by writing eleven supplementary chapters and by imposing a psychological character to the novel, 1st edition, Calcutta, 1933.

published his researches on the intellectual history of Muslims in a collection of essays entitled *Prabandha Mala* (Essays).

Two female writers played an important role in the social and intellectual evolution of the first thirty years of the 20th century. Begum Rokeya (Mrs. R. S. Hossain) (1880-1932) had the sense of social service; she founded the first secondary school for the young Muslim girls at Calcutta (1911). Her intelligence and humour are expressed happily in her writings: *Matichur*, *Sultana's Dream* (published first in English, then in Bengali), *Padmarag*, and her masterpiece *Abarodh Basini* (The Cloistered Women). Whether it is in her writings or in her activities, Begum Rokeya was undoubtedly the most remarkable champion of feminism in her time.

Nurunnesa Khatun (1894-1975) was one of the first Muslim ladies who, coming out of "family prison", could travel all around India with her husband. She nicely described her experiences in many of her narratives. She wrote even a detective novel.⁷⁴ Her essay, *Moslem Bikrom O Banglar Musalman Rajatva* (Muslim Courage and Muslim Reigns in Bengal) (1926) is an equally interesting chronicle on the "glorious" history of Islam and Muslim domination in Bengal.

Muhammad Barkatullah (1893-1972), born at Pabna, is the most celebrated Muslim writer for his philosophical orientation. His works, *Parashya Pratibha* (The Persian Genius) and *Manusher Dharma* (Religion of Man) examined the doctrines of the Sufis and the *Vedantists*; these showed all human research, but for the quest for one "religion" compatible with the creative genius of mankind. An agreeable style facilitates the reading of these essays which witness a profound thinking.

Two writers – Ekramuddin and Rezaul Karim – draw our attention for the contribution they made to literary criticism and the study of history. Ekramuddin (1880-1935) tried to evaluate the genius of Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in his works, *Rabindra Prathibha* (Talents of Rabindranath, 1926) and *Krisnakanter Will-e-Bankim Chandra* (Bankim Chandra in his *Krisnakanter Will*, 1930). His thinking is free from all prejudices an exceptional way fact, added with his choice of the subject. Furthermore, he is the author of novels and stories, such as *Kanch O*

⁷⁴ *Granthabali* (Collected Works), Calcutta, 1925.

Mani (The Glass and The Jewel), *Jivanpan* (Risking Life), *Notun Ma* (New Mother), along with the drama, *Anadhikar Prabesh* (Unexpected Entrance).

Rezaul Karim, in his turn, wrote a brilliant essay entitled, *Bankim Chandra O Musalman Samaj* (Bankim Chandra and the Muslim Society),⁷⁵ in which he refuted the allegation of his co-religionists against the famous novelist and recognized in the last named (i.e. Bankim Chandra) one of the "pillars of actual renaissance of Bengal". For this, he followed the tradition of the Prophet: "whether they love or hate, men are brothers in all circumstances." The author accomplished a noble task at a critical moment in the history of Bengal. His work, *Pharashi, Biplab* (The French Revolution) was the first complete study in Bengali on the subject and is undoubtedly one of the most interesting historical writings in the 30s in Bengali language.

Hereafter, we shall look into three writers: Ibrahim Khan, Akbaruddin, and Golam Mostafa, in whom one would find Tagorian tradition in spite of their political activities or their efforts that are inclined towards a certain Muslim reformation. Ibrahim Khan (1894-1978), born in Mymensingh, was influenced by the movements of *Khilafat* and Non-cooperation. He published three plays: *Kamal Pasha*, *Anowar Pasha*, and *Kafela*. He witnessed an intimate experience of the literary art and gained a profound knowledge in the world which was further evident in his short stories and travelogues. Having a Master's degree in English Literature, he preferred to follow the Gandhian path and refused to work for the Government. He founded a college for higher studies with the help of one of the rare Muslim zamindars, Wazed Ali Khan Panni, a philanthropist and great leader who fought for independence for a very long time. Despite his educational and political activities, Ibrahim Khan appeared to be an exceptionally devoted and prolific writer.

Akbaruddin (1895-1978) had only twenty years when he made sensation by publishing an article⁷⁶ which took over the theses of the Muslim intellectuals of the 19th century in view of creating a Muslim

⁷⁵ Written in 1938; 1st edition, 1944; 2nd edition, 1954.

⁷⁶ "Bangla Sahitye Musalmaner Sthan" (Muslim position in Bengali literature). *Al-Islam*, Calcutta, 1916.

literature. Written with much spirit and intelligence, this article is an analysis of the Hindu writers and the reasons that incited them to create their works. His plays, *Sultan Mahmud*, *Nadir Shah*, and *Sindhu Bijoy* (The Conquest of Sindh), along with his novel *Matir Manush* (Man of the Earth) are not of the exclusivist tendency, notwithstanding their subjects and their treatment eminently Muslim.

Golam Mustafa (1895-1964), born in Jessore, was a friend and contemporary of Kazi Nazrul Islam. He was a very popular poet with the youth and the villagers. His poetic language was influenced by Tagore and Nazrul; but, the simplicity of his expression and the mastery of prosody contribute much to his success. His collection of poems, *Rakta Rag*, *Khosh Roj*, *Hasna Hena*, *Sahara*, etc. do not leave for us the impression of an original creator. One finds there the Tagorian melody, but he would also discover interesting researches on the original employment of certain Arabic metres. His two novels, *Bhanga Buk* (Broken Heart) and *Ruper Nesh*a (Seduction of Beauty), too romantic, did not obtain any success. On the other hand, his two monumental essays, *Bishvanabi* (The Universal Prophet, 1942) and *Islam O Jihad* (Islam and Jihad), were well-appreciated. One will, however, express reservation for these works, as they though written with elegance, lack logical arguments.

Abdul Qadir (1906-1984), a disciple and confidant of Kazi Nazrul Islam and son-in-law of Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed, is the antithesis of these two personalities to whom he was attached. In his collection of poems, *Dilruba* (1933), and in other poems, he followed the exposed line of Tagore. For his original essays on the prosody and on the Muslim writers along with his able direction that he had given to many literary reviews,⁷⁷ one would be tempted to place him among Kemalists. But, in fact, he had always been a moderate intellectual.

Shahadat Hosen (1893-1953) was a prolific writer with his forty-five publications and considerable originality of musical and aesthetic expression. Whether it is poetry, novel, or play, he revealed himself like an artist of high quality, borrowing, at the same time, from Sanskrit metaphors to the Islamic images. It is important to note here that this personality participated, in the Gandhian

⁷⁷ *Jayati, Mah-i-Nau*, etc; and an important anthology of Bengali poetry, *Kavya Malancha* (Garden of Poetry).

movement of 1931 and that he was imprisoned but he never wrote any revolutionary poem of Nazrulian genre.⁷⁸

Two famous writers bear the same name: Wazed Ali. Being concerned with socio-cultural problems, these two contemporaries played the role of intellectual leaders of the groups a little divergent. S. Wazed Ali (1890-1951), a high government civil servant (Chief Presidency Magistrate), did his higher studies in literature and law at Cambridge. His publication - essays and short stories - are numerous. Let us mention his principle works, *Bhabishshater Bangali* (published also in English under the title, *Bengalees of Tomorrow*), *Jiban-Shilpa* (Art of Life), *Muslim Sanskritir Adarsha* (The Ideals of Muslim Culture), *Shabhyata O Sahitye Islamer Dan* (Islamic Contribution to the Civilization and Literature), *Mashuker Darbar* (short stories), *Ibne Khalduner Samajbiggan* (The Sociology of Ibne Khaldun in his celebrated *Mukaddima*). S. Wazed Ali was, for a long time, President of the famous society of Muslim writers, *Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Samiti* (Bengali Muslims Literary Organisation). But, during the time of Pakistan movement, he founded a new organization centering round the literary review he directed, *Gulistan*. He foresaw an undivided Bengal and professed Hindu-Muslim unity. His short story, "Bharatbarsha" (India) is an immortal master-piece; it is replete with all his thoughts and suggests the possibility for the idyllic state presented by the Indian tradition, to subsist in the troubled reality of the day. In 1945, he made an important speech which expressed his profound tendencies and the reasons for his art:

"The religion of humanity is the natural religion of writers. Their task is to give shape to the deepest urges of man, to his joy and sorrow, suffering and pain, hope and expectation."

He explained the importance of this task by indicating that the rôle of the writers is to sow the ideas so that the public would get their inspiration as they had the habit of having this, the other day, from the religious leaders. The responsibility of guiding men in the path of well-being and progress has fallen now on the shoulder of the

⁷⁸ Abdul Kadir, "Shahadat Hosen" *Mah-i-Nau*, Dacca, Feb, 1954, P. 43.

writers. And, that is why, literature has become a serious affair. He added:

"If life as a whole is to be restored again to health and simplicity, fresh ideals of life are necessary from time to time. ... When in the life of a people such a great inspiration comes, all petty differences, hatreds, and antipathies are gone with the wind. It is within the power of writers today to bring us this inspiration."⁷⁹

As far as the second writer of the same name is concerned, Mohammad Wazed Ali (1888-1954) is the author of numerous essays on cultural and literary problems. For long, he was a journalist in Calcutta. But, he passed the last years of his life in his native village in Khulna. A rich, clear, and liberal thought, without being heavy, dominates his writing. His small biographies on the Prophet, Haji Mohammad Mohsin (an eminent Bengali philanthropist), Sir Sayyid Ahmed, Abdul Latif, and even on Jinnah, are interesting and important, because most of them are the first of its kind.⁸⁰

These notes on the Muslim writers and intellectuals would not be complete if we do not consider at least three renowned learned scholars: Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad, Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq, and Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah.

Abdul Karim (1871-1953) was known in the literary milieu of Bengal by his honorific title *Sahitya Visharad* (A Scholar of Literature), which was conferred on him by the society of pundits of Nadiya. He was an excellent specialist of Sanskrit and of old Bengali literature. Notwithstanding his limited means (he was but a small employee at the office of Public Instruction in Chittagong), he was successful in assembling an enormous collection of ancient works - two thousand rare manuscripts of which one thousand two

⁷⁹ The presidential address was pronounced at the All Assam Bengali Language and Literature Conference; cf. Lila Ray, op cit. P. 124.

⁸⁰ The publisher of these works (with the exception of a short biography, *Quaid-e-Azam*, which was published by a Hindu publisher at Calcutta in 1948, was Muhammad Habibullah (known by his nick-name Bahar). He contributed much to the Renaissance of Bengali literature and to the cause of Pakistanism by his powerful essays and his patronisation of other intellectuals. He and his sister (Begum) Shamsun Nahar Mahmud, (1908-1964) edited an important literary review *Bulbul*.

hundred were by Muslim authors.⁸¹ Thus, he revealed one hundred and fifty names of Muslim poets about which the historians did not have any knowledge. He published some important manuscripts with strong erudite introduction and notes.⁸² His historical essay, *Arakan Raj Shabhay Bangla Sahitya* (Bengali Literature in the Court of Arakan Kings) which he wrote in collaboration with Dr. Enamul Haq, gives to us a complete picture of the literary history of the 17th century.

The passionate love for literature and Bengali tradition that Abdul Karim showed all through his life helped, undoubtedly, the Muslims of Bengal to liberate themselves from a sort of complex concerning their contribution to ancient literature, and incited them to attempt new researches in this direction.

Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq (1906-1982), also a Chittagonian like Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad to whom he was an ardent collaborator, made himself known first of all for his doctoral dissertation, *Bange Sufi Prabhab* (Sufi Influences in Bengal): a historical and philosophical study on the influence of the Sufis in the intellectual evolution of the Bengalis, in particular on their literature. This work, accompanied by a latter publication, *Purba Pakistane Islam* (Islam in East Pakistan), constitutes a fundamental study - objective and comprehensive on the intellectual history of the Muslims of Bengal. His recent work, *Muslim Bengali Literature* (original Bengali with an English translation by Syed Ali Ashraf), despite certain debatable details, places him among the top literary historians. Enamul Haq wrote also a linguistic monograph, *Chattagrami Bhashar Rahasybhed* (Discovering the secrets of the dialect of Chittagong), on the dialect of Chittagong.

⁸¹ And, this was done without the help from any foundation or of the Government. The difficulties were not coming from the financial question alone or due to his lack of leisure. Many times, among the Hindus, one would not allow him to touch a certain manuscript because it is considered as a religious element for the *Puja* of Sarasvati (The goddess of learning). By his supplication, Abdul Karim would get permission to copy it standing and without touching the sacred book. Cf. The preface of Byomkesh Mostafi, Secretary of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad at Calcutta, in the first bibliographical description of the manuscripts that Abdul Karim had collected, *Prachin Punthir Bibaran* (Description of Ancient Hand Written Works) cf. also the bibliog.

⁸² *Go-raksa Bijay* of Faizullah; *Mrigalubha* of Rati Deva; *Jnan Sagar* of Ali Raja (publication of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta) his *Padmabati* of Alaol has been published by the Department of Bengali, University of Chittagong.

Renowned philologist and phonetician, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah (1885-1969), from 24 Pargana district of West Bengal, is the first Muslim Bengali scholar of French formation. Well before defending his doctoral dissertation, *Les chants mystiques de Kanha et de Saraha* (Sorbonne, 1928), he was known in Bengal as a poet and essayist of talent. In the 20s, he directed the Bangiya Musalman Shahitya Samiti and he never lost his place in the cultural turbulence of the country. This was because he remained preoccupied with the problems of the university and literary researches. An excellent classical scholar and refined connoisseur of modern tendencies, he gave for a long time to the young Muslims a new orientation concerning literary and philological researches.⁸³ Of liberal spirit, Shahidullah inspired, on the one part, Islamic sources, as one would see by his studies and translations of Omar Khayam, Iqbal, and the Qur'an, and on the other part, of the Sanskrit and Buddhist traditions. In his numerous essays published in the reviews, his temperament and scientific spirit are expressed in a simple and direct language.

Among all these writers whom we have put in three groups, there exists a common point: they all are concerned about their identity. They wanted to feel, first of all, as Bengalis or Muslims, as well as, at the same time, Muslims and Bengalis. Their consciousness in this regard was tormented by the exalted nationalism, whether it is under pan-Islamism or pan-Indianism.

Now, in the fourth group, we propose to present certain literary personalities of whom the spirit is somewhat different. These writers, in fact, do not worry about the socio-political attitudes of their religious community. They would like to be the *littérateurs* in the global sense. The knowledge of the external world that they had acquired by international contact they had along with higher studies they undertook in different disciplines helped them in realizing their ambition. Furthermore, they arrived on the literary scene at the moment when the nationalists (Hindus and Muslims), the Freudians, and the Marxists were creating in the country a period of Bengali *Sturm und Drang*.

⁸³ Few important titles can be mentioned: *Bhasha o Sahitya* (Language and Literature) (Dacca, 1949). *Bangla Sahityer Katha* (On Bengali Literature); "Bangla Bhashhar Itibritta" (History of Bengali Language) in *Sahitya Patrika*, (Literature Journal) Padmabati and Vidyapati-Shatak.

Humayun Kabir (1906-1969) is the most known and gifted representative of this group. Being born at Faridpur, he made it known very early as one of the most brilliant Muslim students of the province as well as a distinguished young poet. His three collections of poems – *Swapna Sadh* (Dreams and Desires) (1928), *Sathi* (Friends) (1943), and *Astadashi* (The Eighteen Year-old Girl) (1938) – are a witness of his sensibility and of his beautiful and precise imagination *à propos* of nature and human life. Yet, the poet remained always faithful to the Tagorian School. In the philosophical thought, however, he was more profound and original. His two philosophical essays on Emmanuel Kant and two studies on Karl Marx and Marxism were the first scientific works in Bengali on the subject. Furthermore, his ideas on the life and the world are to be found in numerous essays dispersed in different journals. In this regard, M. Jean Boulier-Fraissinet writes:

"Humayun Kabir, minister of Indian Union for Scientific Research and Cultural Affaires, searches in the world crisis not principally the economic and political causes – abstract and particular, but more profound causes. He observes them in the conflict between the authority and an individual liberty, irreducible to notional cadres and to the instincts, and which expresses itself especially in the imaginative creations. He searches, therefore, a solution in a society that would learn to have equilibrium in the order and in the liberty of the individual."⁸⁴

Being concerned about and experiencing in India the perfect harmonization of unity in diversity, Humayun Kabir remained in the lineage of Raja Rammohun Ray, Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi, and Radhakrishnan, and refuted vigorously the theses of the Muslim leaders.⁸⁵ He emphasised, however, much more importance the Islamic influence on the Indian civilization than these precursors had ever offered. His studies, "*Bharatbarsha O Islam*" (India and Islam) and *Banglar Kabya* (Verses of Bangal) (1945) witness this.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ J. Boulier Fraissinet, *La philosophie indienne*, Paris, 1961, P. 119.

⁸⁵ *The Indian Heritage*, P. 33; *Science, Democracy and Islam*.

⁸⁶ Published in 1349 BS, reedited in 1365 at Calcutta, there exists also an English translation which is not comparable to the Bengali original: *Studies in Bengali Poetry*, Bombay, 1962.

His friend, Abu Sayyed Ayyub (1906-1980), to whom he dedicated his master-piece *Banglar Kabya*, is equally an original thinker, but with a different orientation. Annadasankar Ray notes in his study on Bengali literature:

“His essays are ordinarily on the philosophical subjects and he is of the Marxist persuasion.”⁸⁷

This was true, in fact, in 1942 – the date of this observation. Ayyub had been an editor of the famous literary review *Parichay* (Identity) at that moment, and he edited with one of his communist colleagues an anthology of Bengali poetry.⁸⁸ Later, he took part in the international movement on the Liberty of Culture as he was interested, above all, in aesthetic values that man manifests by his action or his ideas.⁸⁹

Belonging to similar liberal tendency, Syed Mujtaba Ali (1904-1974) is one of the most celebrated writers of contemporary literature. His celebrity acquired, thanks to his travelogue on Afganistan (towards 1927), *Deshe-Bideshe* (At Home and Abroad) (1948), he has become the most accomplished humourist and chronicler of Bengal.

Born in a cultured family of Sylhet (a district in Assam, India; now in Bangladesh), he became a direct student of Tagore when during the *Khilafat* and Non-cooperation movement he left a local English School to enter into Santiniketan. He learned there German and French along with Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian languages. In 1932, he defended his doctoral dissertation, *The Origin of Khojas and Their Religious Life Today* in Bonn, Germany, and travelled throughout Europe. On his return, he occupied a chair of Comparative Religion at the University of Baroda, and later at Visva-Bharati, besides an important position at the All India Radio. He started much later publishing short stories and anecdotes on the life lived in Europe and in the different regions of India. Of an extraordinary brilliant spirit, he adds there such a colour that, despite their extravagancies, his writings bring a great popularity among all

⁸⁷ Annadasankar and Lila Ray, op. cit, P. 83.

⁸⁸ Abu Sayyed Ayyub and H. N. Mukherjee *Adhunik Bangla Kavita*, (Modern Bengali Poetry) Calcutta, 1945.

⁸⁹ On this subject, one may consult his introduction in his anthology *Panchish Bacharer Premier Kabita* (Love Poems of 25 Years) and his articles in the quarterly review *Quest* of which he is the co-editor.

sorts of Bengali readers. His erudition helps in the very divergent modes of life and to the hypocrisy that characterizes it many a time. His very personal style lies where these employment of Arab-o-Persian or Franco-German neologisms is mixed and a way of retelling stories which is inspired by the Bengali tradition. This permits him to break easily the frontier which separates Indian Bengal from the Pakistani Bengal. An incontestable scholar, Dr. Mujtaba Ali did not write but rarely essays on controversial problems.⁹⁰ He attached himself curiously to his profession of a writer and did not worry to give an exact idea of his personality.

The three writers that we have just discussed had introduced, in collaboration with other Hindu writers, a progressive and cosmopolitan tendency in the literary history of Bengal. This orientation is certainly altogether in the line of Tagore. But, it is much more forceful; and, it witnesses a strong desire of the meeting between East and West. However, being engaged in the path of self-determination, their fellow countrymen could not always appreciate properly the efforts made in this sense. The common trait of these writers – cosmopolitanism – found an eloquent definition through the pen of Humayun Kabir that we are tempted to quote:

“In the modern age, there is hardly any room for specific contribution by any particular community as such. The forms of civilization and intellectual attitudes are becoming the same in all communities and hence it will be on the basis of qualitative contribution – and not on the basis of indigenous authors – that intellectuals can hope to make an impact on the modern world.”⁹¹

In this direction, one can mention a number of names of young writers, but we shall retain only four; they are the two following poets – Ahsan Habib ((1917-1986)⁹² and Abul Hosein⁹³ – and two

⁹⁰ Cf. his essays like “Muslim Sanskritir Adarsha” (Ideal of the Muslim Culture) in the celebrated review *Chaturanga* (of which Humayun Kabir was the editor) and *Purba Pakistaner Rastrabhasha* (State Language of East Pakistan).

⁹¹ Extracts from a letter by Humayun Kabir to the present writer (April 14, 1963). We thank him vigorously for the information he supplied us within the letter.

⁹² Of romantic expression even in realist contexts, Ahsan Habib (1917-1986) is one of the rare conscientious artists of Bengali poetry; cf. his first collection of poems, *Ratri-Shesh* (The Night is Over), Calcutta, 1948.

following novelists – Shaokot Osman (1919-2001)⁹⁴ and Syed Waliullah (1922-1971),⁹⁵ – who kept their heads cool in traversing the national and/or international crises and had consecrated their talents to artistic creation of the interior life.

Before terminating this chapter on the literary personalities of the Muslim Bengal, let us now remember that the classification that we have formulated cannot be altogether exhaustive. It does not have but other ambition than to present a sort of introduction for the later researches on Muslim writers and intellectuals and their most important writings. Chronologically speaking, the different groups can be arranged in the following manner: the first group manifested itself prominently during the first and the second decades of the 20th century; the second group, above all, made themselves remarkable during the second and the third decades; the third group subsisted during all the period in question; the fourth group, finally, revealed itself just before the second World War.

It remains for us, however, to speak of the last group and the issue of *Pakistanism*. In the previous chapter, we have signaled the socio-political interferences that brought the Muslims to combat for their liberty. It is known that by the force of things, the Bengali leaders, whether they are Muslims or Hindus, had to leave the place to other chiefs in this pan-Indian struggle. Who had taken, therefore, the responsibility to awake the Muslim masses from their mortal lethargy and from the confusion in which they found themselves *à propos* of the ambiguous politics of the country? They were the

⁹³ In an elegant diction but often incisive, Abul Hossein offers us in his poems mostly in prose, *Naba Basanta* (New Spring, Calcutta, 1940); cf. his poem, "Dynamo" is quoted in the article of Luce-Claude Maître. *op. cit.*, P. 103-104.

⁹⁴ From the very start of his literary career, Shaokat Osman (1919-2001) put himself in the service of socialist realism – the issue of doctrines propagated by the progressive writers. He wrote many novels, short stories, plays, and essays which were published more after the independence.

⁹⁵ Syed Waliullah (1922-1971) attaches himself to the social reality described from a global point of view and more on a philosophical tone. His short stories – *Nayan-Chara* (Calcutta, 1945) and novel *Lal Shalu* (1949, French translation by Anne-Marie Thibaut; *L'arbre sans racine*, Paris, 1964) put him decidedly in a good position among a host of new novelists.

surviving leaders, the *Mullahs*, but also the students and the intellectuals in a large number, who took all issues of the middle class with an incomparable zeal.⁹⁶ It is permitted only to speak of the intellectuals who allied themselves with the Muslim determination to become a nation through a movement of cultural renaissance. Now, these intellectuals of whom we would like to say a few words, could be considered as the advanced group of the first Pakistani generation. Among many others, poets Farrukh Ahmed (1918-1974) and Syed Ali Ahsan (1920-2002),⁹⁷ and writer-journalists Abul Kalam Shamsuddin (1897-1978), Mujibur Rahman Khan (1910-1984), and Abul Mansur Ahmad (1878-1979)⁹⁸ led this movement at Dhaka and Calcutta. But the movement spread very quickly to almost everywhere in Assam and Bengal. The movement in Calcutta took birth under the aegis of the *Purba Pakistan Renaissance Society* (founded in September 1942) with the following objectives:

1. To manifest on the literary plan the *Pakistanism* which inaugurates the national renaissance;
2. To help literary and scientific researches, publish books, organize scientific and philosophical conferences on the *Pakistanism*;
3. To spread these ideas to *littérateurs*, to women, and to students;

⁹⁶ So far as the social stratification is concerned, the situation may be resumed according to the diagnostic results of the sociologist A. K. Nazmul Karim (*op. cit.*, P. 144) – in the Muslim élites, a middle class was formed towards 1906, after the partition of Bengal, thanks to the special privileges they obtained from the British Government. It became very powerful in the political life, more powerful even than the high bourgeoisie (this cannot be applied to other regions of India). This class, however, has been severely touched by the Second World War and inflation. On the other hand, a commercial class made a rapid ascension. It may also be noted here that these two classes are a mix-up of Muslim *Sharif* (Aristocrats) and non-*Sharif* (Non-aristocrats) classes due to the English domination.

⁹⁷ Farrukh Ahmad is perhaps the most important Muslim poet of Bengal in the last decade. His first collection of poems, *Sat Sagarer Mazhi* (Sailors of Seven Seas, Calcutta, 1944) was dedicated to Iqbal, his favorite mentor. Syed Ali Ahsan, poet and intellectual leader, translated Iqbal and wrote an excellent *Kabya, Chahar Darbesh*, based on the tradition of ancient literature. His other poems, *Anek Akash* – (Many Skies, 1959) and his essays reveal a cosmopolitan spirit and profound erudition. He is presently the Head of the Bengali Academy at Dacca.

⁹⁸ Abul Kalam Shamsuddin was the editor of the daily *Azad* and translator of a novel written by Turgueniev (*Virgin Soil*). His colleague Mujibur Rahman Khan, was editor of the monthly *Mohammadi* and author of a polemic writing of high value, *Pakistan*. Abul Mansur Ahmad was the editor of a key important daily of the 40s – the *Ittehad*. He was a novelist and humourist of great talent.

4. To establish good relationship with other movements susceptible to contribute to the cultural development of the "nation";
5. To translate the sentiment of Hindu-Muslim rapprochement in literature;
6. To act through literature against all reactionary ideas: anti-Pakistani, fascism, etc.

Within two years, the society acquired a great reputation, thanks to its activities; not only Muslims but also many leftist intellectuals took part in it.⁹⁹ One would understand well their pride as the leaders of the society who proclaimed that there existed no similar movement in India at the time, and also their anxiety to keep good relationship with the neighbouring community. But, all this was done in a mood that one would call an "aggressive confidence."¹⁰⁰

So far as the movement in Dhaka is concerned, it was placed under the auspices of *Purba Pakistan Sahitya Sangsad* (Literary Association of East Pakistan, 1942), one can note that the profound reasons and the spirit were identical with that of the former enterprise, notwithstanding a greater importance accorded to literature. Being inspired by the movement of the literary renaissance in Ireland, the leaders remained concerned about the literary future of Bengal; one of them defined literature not like the expression of life, but as the renovation of tales of the past – lost or hidden.¹⁰¹ The intellectuals of East Bengal manifested their new consciousness by the intermediary of a very popular review, *Pakistan*, by reading, publishing, and adapting the *Punthi* literature, along with translations of Iqbal. The activities of these two associations continued in full swing upto 1947 and diminished after the creation of Pakistan. But, the presence of a new consciousness, inspired by this movement, contributed to the psychological formation of the rising generation of Pakistani intellectual élites in Bengal. Their attitudes had been expressed in the movements in 1948, 1952, and 1954 in favour of the Mother Language and provincial autonomy. These attitudes are

⁹⁹ Cf. The review *Mohammadi*, 17th year Nos. 10-11; the entire number was devoted to the grand reunion of the Society in 1944.

¹⁰⁰ From a political point of view, this attitude has been noted by Khalid Bin Sayeed, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

¹⁰¹ Syed Ali Ahsan, "Purba Pakistaner Bangla Sahityer Dhara" (Trends in Bengali Literature of East Pakistan) *Mah-i-Nau* Dacca, August, 1951, P. 49-55.

inscribed furthermore in a new cadre and to the scale of the history of Pakistan (East Bengal/Bangladesh), that is to say that, henceforth, it does no more belong to the part of Muslim history of Bengal.

It is now time to conclude. We have tried to describe and analyse in the utmost measure the situation of the Muslims of Bengal by emphasizing the key points of their intellectual evolution. It seems futile to take back the multiple themes that we have revealed in the activities of the personalities, in the ideas, and in the events. It is to observe, however, that the separatist tendency of the master-thinkers searched in its totality to create an exclusive world reserved for the Muslims. Some great figures elevated their voice certainly in favour of a harmonious synthesis. But, the intellectual life which evolved so rapidly in this period of nearly a century that it could escape neither from the complexity of the socio-political conjuncture, nor from the repercussion of the economic situation. Consequently, the spirit of the thought-current remained often confused and indecisive. The intellectual evolution itself presents a less creative force than it seems to have achieved in the first instance. The acceptance of humanism in its broader aspects – idea of progress and of secularization – in life and in art remained as yet problematic for the Muslim intellectuals. As the gloomy prophetism of some of their great figures in favour of a synthesis was not properly listened in the course of the period that we have just analysed, it is necessary that the intellectuals put themselves in the quest by all means thus permitting to bring about a veritable social and intellectual metamorphosis, that is to say, a national renaissance. Hence, we think to have expressed our optimism on that score, because in a general manner, the Muslim sensibility has testified for a renewal in the confines of the existing belief, and in function of the future native land, all by catching consciousness of the reality for expressing it with intelligence.

GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS AND LITERARY GENRES

- Abbasides** : Caliph dynasty of 750 to 1238 AD. The dynasty gets its name from its ancestor, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h), Abbas b. Abd al-Muttalib b. Hashim. The Abbasid period was qualified by the Muslim scholars as "imperialist" in the 19th century, but was glorified later for its contribution to Islamic Knowledge.
- Adam** : Father of the mankind; as Jesus was the second Adam in christianity, a relationship was established between Adam and Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), the last prophet.
- Alamgiri** : Cf. *Al-Fatwa al-Alamgiriyya*; Judicial and religious consultations decreed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.
- Alim** : He who knows, that is to say, an erudite. The term designates the doctors of Islamic law and theology.
- Allah** : Arabic term to designate God – Creator and Master of the judgment; in Bengali, *Khoda* is employed more often; *Ishvar* and *Niranjan* are also employed from Persian, Hinduist, and Buddhist sources. *Allah* has 99 other names of attributes (*Aziz*, the All Powerful, *Rahman*, the Benefactor, *Karim*, the Generous, etc.)
- Alpana** : Ritual decoration in Bengal; a feminine art intimately related to religious and popular festivals.
- Amir (or Emir)** : Chief commander, Governor, Prince; also employed as a title of nobility; the term appears to be fundamentally Islamic.
- Amla** : *Zamindar*'s Employee in charge of collecting taxes.
- Ampara** : The first and the last *surat* of the *Qur'an*, which constitutes 30th part of the Book. These are recited in the daily prayers.
- Ana'l Haqq** : "Me, I, this is the Creative Truth," speech pronounced in the transcendental ecstasy by the martyred mystic, Mansur Hallaj. Haqq has many significations; but as underlined by L Massignon, "this dynamic term, fundamentally Hallagian, is in direct relation with the *Qur'an* (50, 41 : *Sayha bi'l Haqq*, cf. 42, 47) has become the common name cf. God, because of the Sufis, in countries like Turkey, Iran and India" (*Essai sur origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, Paris, 1954, p. 38)
- Anjuman** : Persian word which means religious association, political group, etc. The Bengali branches of Amir Ali's Association designated themselves by this term, since the end of the 19th century.
- Ashraf** : Cf. *Sharif*.
- Azan (adhan)** : Announcement; technical term designating the call, which consists of seven formulas (among the Sunnites), to daily prayers.

BA : Bachelor of Arts.

BL : Bachelor of Law.

Bande Mataram : "I salute Mother": hymn to the country regarded as mother.

Bat-talar Sahitya : Indigenous literatures other than the poems written by the poets of the courtyard, this type of Bengali literature has been written or recited for the villagers who would listen to them sitting under the Banyan tree (*Ficus indica*).

Baul : "Madcap"; this term designates a group of syncretic Bengali-Muslims or Hindus who search God in their own heart and in their own body. The Baul thought both mystic and profound, elaborates a system of meditation by juxtaposing the sufi, vaishnavite and tantrik schools.

Behest, Bihisht (djanna in Arabic) : Garden; Paradise according to Quranic conception.

Bhatiali : One of the very popular genres of songs in Bengal: songs of the boatmen. "This is about a melody on the theme of the river and of the grand spaces that one discovers so far as possible of its fall. Every strophe is terminated by a shrill cry putting emphasis on the last syllable which is prolonged by the singer as long as possible." (Deben Bhattacharya).

Brahmoism : The Hindu devotional syncretism of progressive and anticommunal social tendency; Raja Rammohun Ray (1772-1833) founded in 1828 the unitary Hindu temple which soon took the name of *Brohmosamaj* (Society of believers in *Brahman*) where the most impressive feature was to see Hindus, Muslims, Christians practising the prayer in common. In a general way, return to a certain Hindu traditions operated itself into the confraternity, which on other points remained fidel to its original tendency. It is a movement made for an élite which had no penetration in the masses, but had incited a number of Hindus to reflect more to the postulates of their religion and search to establish this on the basis of humanly more rational (L. Renou, *L'Hinduisme*, p. 114-116).

Cadi : Cf. *Qadi* [Kazi]

Çastra (Shastra) : Sanskrit word meaning precepts, rule. This term primitively covered all the treatises, excluding the rituals; later, the *Shastra* started to designate almost exclusively the books of law.

Cepoy (or *Cipaye/Spahi, Sepoy*) : Indian soldier.

Chiisme (*Shia-ism*) : Islamic sect which takes as point of departure the acknowledgment of Ali as Calif after the death of the Prophet (p.b.u.h).

Çiva (*Shiv*) : One of the three great Hindu divinities. Çiva is both destructor and benefactor.

College : Establishment of English higher education in India, affiliated to a University.

Communalism : The antagonism which set one against the other of the two great Indian communities: Hindu and Muslim. By this term, It is understood the expression of schism of the Indian populations in political, social and cultural domains particularly after the *Khilafat* and Non-cooperation movements. The psychique state of a communalist dynamic and conscious of the Seizure of Position of his proper community, changed the course of the modern history of India. (Cf. W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, first part, ch.1).

Dar al-harb & Dar al-Islam : According to Muslim conceptions, the world is divided into *dar al-harb*, "War territory" and *dar al-Islam*, "domain of Islam." The domain of Islam consists of all the countries already placed under Muslim demination. Now, The *dar al-harb* is a non-Muslim territory which is to be conquered by a holy war and which the believers should quit; This notion has been evolved since the 19th century.

Darvesh (*darwish, darwesh, fakir in Arabic*): The term signifies in Persian, "searcher of doors," i.e. mendicant. It means "spiritual master" in Muslim mysticism.

Daybhag : Laws of repartition of the property. (Cf. *Bibliog.* 1).

Deputy Magistrate : Joint Magistrate of a district who is in charge of administration, of the collection of taxes and of the justice. "In that epoch (19th century) this post has been the highest administrative position that an Indian could expect. (Humayun Kabir, *Studies in Bengali Poetry*, Bombay, 1962, p. 67; retranslated).

Dharma : "The considerable term of dharma, properly the support; the order which presides over the facts in normative disciplines, but more specially the moral law, the religious merit: it is the only term which translates our word religion, and which at the same time extends beyond and remains on this side" (L. Renou, *op cit*, p. 28-29).

Dharama - Çastra : Teaching of the law; collection of Hindu juridique order.

District : Administrative unit of a magistrate; in 1881 there were 47 districts in Bengal.

Division : Grouping of some districts of a province administered by a commissioner. In 1888, there were 9 (nine) divisions in Bengal.

Dobhashi : Interpreter; bilingualism; employed for a Bengali literary genre in which the language and the thought are eminently Islamique.

Dozakh (Duzakh, nar, djahannam) : The hell according to Quranic conception.

Durbar : Royal ceremony; it indicates the solennelle audition the British king used to allow the leading citizens of India.

Ère bengali (Bangabda, Bangle San, Sal, B. S.) : Solar year introduced by the great Mughal emperor Akbar in 1555-1556, corresponding to the *Hijra* (the hegire, the Muslim year since 622) which is the lunar year. The Bengali year and the year *hijra* are designated by e.b. (B. S.) and A. H. In 1965 A. D., it is 1372 B. S. and 1384 A. H.

Fard (Farz) : The strictly obligatory prescriptions from the religious point of view.

Fatima : Daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.); wife of the 4th Caliph Ali and mother of two sons, Hasan and Husayn, the last named is the tragic hero of Karbala.

Fatwa : Religious decree.

Fikh (Fiqh) : Intelligence, wisdom; this term designates the science of Islamic law.

Firingi (frenji) : Foreigner, European, intelligent man, Cf. *The Muslim World*, review, Harford, 1949, p. 307.

Firishta : Designates the work of the Persian historian Muhammad Kasim Shah (1552-1623). He wrote a history of Muslim India (translated by Briggs, London, 1829).

Fundamentalist (in Pakistan) : Partisan of a reformism, opposed to traditionalism, but advocating a return to the sources and to the primitive period and envisaging even a certain re-establishment of the first caliphates (following A. W. Eister, cf bibliog).

Forkan : Distinction, revelation, salvation; employed often as synonym to the Qur'an, the fourth book and the sacred Words of Allah.

Gauriya – riti : The Gaur school; poetic style of Bengali poets in Sanskrit (cf. S. K. Dey, *History of Sanskrit Poetics* vol. 11, p. 79).

Ghazal : Persian monorhyme poem, principally consecrated to panegyric but can also be elegiac, satirical or moral. Of short length – more than four but less than fifteen verses, a *ghazal* expresses personal and intense lyricism.

Ghazi : Honorary title given to one who distinguishes himself in a war against the infidels.

Ghazir Pat : The roll of hide designating the heroic actions of the *Gazis* or *Ghazis*; example of the traditional art of the Muslims of Bengal.

Hadith : Narration, récit, relating the acts and sayings of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his companions.

Hajj (Hadjdj) : The pelerinage to the Makkah, Mina and Arafat : last of the five columns of Islam.

Halal : Arabic word designating the comestible products for the believers.

Hanafites : Those, who among the Sunnī Muslims follow the tendency (*Madhab*) founded by Abu Hanifa. This is the principal sect of Islam, the three others being *Shafai, Hambali and Maleki*; the differences that separate the one from the other sects are not very well-marked. *The Report of the Census of India (vol. VI, p. 173)* precises that practically almost all the Muslims of Bengal belong to this sect and interpret the traditions of the Prophet quite liberally by the analytical reasoning, whereas the *Hanafites* of other places do not believe in any modification.

Ijma : Consentment, accord; This is one of the four *usuls* (base, racines) on which the Muslim belief system rests.

Ijtihad : The effort of the reason and of the human Knowledge to understand the situation where a religious injunction should be applied and the interpretation of this law according to the case.

Imam : Guide, the chief in charge of conducting a common prayer; this term does not certainly indicate a priest.

Iman : Etymologically, tranquility of spirit and security against fear; this term signifies the faith, that is to say, the confidence in Allah, the belief in Him, in His Prophet, and in His predication.

Indra : Chief of the *Lokapala* (regents of the world) more generally that of the *Vasus* and of the gods. In the Indian epic, his role is of the warrior and the benefactor.

Injil (Andjil) : Corrupt form of the word, *Evangil*.

Jati : Bengali word which replaces nation; e.g. *Farashi Jati*, the French nation; however, the use of this word to designate the religious community (*sampradaya*) is quite frequent.

Jihad : Literally a serious enterprise to defend a just cause; synonym of the Muslim holy war in opposition to crusade; even a word like “crescentade” has sometimes been used.

Ka'aba : The sanctuary of Islam, situated almost in the middle of the grand mosque of Mecca (Makkah)

Kabin : The marriage contract among the Muslims.

Kafir : Infidel.

Kali : The “Black” one of The principal Hindu divinities with a cruel image; she is venerated in Bengal for her power. The Vedic practice of sacrifice of animals (in clandestine of human beings) is perpetuated in the cult of Kali.

Karbala (Karbela, Kerbela or Meshed Husain) : is situated about 100 Kilometers to the south-west of Bagdad to the limit of the desert; The grand-son of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was killed there on the 10th

October 680 A.D. It is on the basis of this historical episode that a good number of Muslim poets wrote tragic poems.

Kavi (Kabi) : Poet.

Kavya (Kabya) : Poetry; collection of poems.

Khan : Title of nobility in Turkish, coming from *Kaghan*.

Khanqah : Convent, Sufi monastery.

Khilafat : Term employed for the politico-religious movement of the Muslims of India. To the spirit of altruism : sentiment of love for others, moral doctrine according to which the good consists in searching the interest of his equals.

Local self government : Ministry of municipal activities (construction of roads, bridges, health and some schools, etc.); not to be confused with *self-government* (cf. *infra*).

M.A. : Master of Arts

Madrasa : Muslim establishments for secondary and higher studies.

Maha Kavi : Grand poet, designates the author of *Maha Kavya*, epic poem.

Mandir : The Hindu temple.

Marshiya (Marthiya) : In Turkish *mersyè*; funeral oration.

Masnavi : Long Persian poem of flat rymes of narrative or didactic content.

Maulana : Derived from the Arabic term, "Maula", having different significations notably, "tutor" or "lord." *Maulana*, "Our lord" is employed in the Qur'an to designate Allah. In India, this term or *Maulvi (mawlawi, mawlay)* are used to designate erudits, savants or saints; *maulvi* is used today commonly for "Mister" or to address a simple religious person.

Maulad Shaif (Maulud, Mawlid al-Nabi) : Festival commemorating the birth of the prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h).

Meer (Mir) : Abbreviated Persian title of Arabic term, *amir*. Traditionally this title has been used by the poets and men of letters. Sometimes a *Sayyid* is designated himself with this title.

Mela : Fair, the *Hindu mela* was a sort of Hindu manifestation of the *Patriotic Association* of the *Maharshi*, father of R. N. Tagore.

Mleccha : The "dirty foreigner", used for a non-Hindu.

Monafek (Munafik) : Heretic, sceptic, hypocrite ...

Muharram : The first Month (30 days) of the Islamic year; the 10th is the anniversary of the battle of karbala.

Mujahid : Holy warrior; he who is engaged in *Jihad*.

Mujtahid : He who is competent in *ijtihad*.

Mullah : Religious man; *mujtahid shiite*.

Mumin : Fidel; he who has the *iman*.

Munshi : Derived from the Arabic *insha*; "Professional secretary"; this term designates in South Asia a cultivated native, particularly a teacher of the languages of the country.

Murid : Novice, he who has entered in a brotherhood.

Murshid : Spiritual master.

Mutazili : *Al-Mutazila*, the grand theological school which created the dogmatic speculation of Islam (since 9th century), of rationalist and intellectual character.

Nabab (Nawab, Nawwab) : Term employed under the Mughol emperor of India to designate a viceroy or a Governor of a province; since the British domination, it was offered as an honorary title for the princes of the royal blood or for the civil servants of great value. Further, one understands by *Nabab* (French conception of the English term *Nabob*) the rich Anglo-Indians.

Nabi : Prophet.

Najat : Salvation.

Namaj : The ritual prayer or the divine service among the Muslims (*salat* in Arabic).

Muslim Nationalists : Appellation of the Congressists and other Muslims who by their saying or action were manifesting in favour of one political nation in India and were opposed to Muslim nationalism or Muslim separatism since 1930 or more concretely since 1940. Cf. *Infra*, "Pakistanism".

Nayeb or Naib : Administration of the property or manager of a *Zamindar*.

Pakistanism : We use this term for the movement in favour of Pakistan (1940-1947) which some call as Muslim nationalism or separatism. By doing this we insist on the cultural, intellectual and moral aspects of the partisans of the movement.

Pandit : Scholar in Sanskrit and in Bengali.

Pathan : The Afghans. "One often makes a distinction between Afghans and Pathans. The last named term applies to the Durranis and allied tribes. But this difference is not but probably a formal difference (the Persian designation of the Afghans is etymologically unknown) applies naturally to the western tribes, where as Pathan, indianized form of the indigenous name, applies as the eastern tribes" (translated from the *Encyclopedie de l'Islam* 1960, Vol. I, p. 223).

Payar : Conventional Bengali metre where each verse is composed of fourteen syllables and rhymed in all the two verses.

Pir : Elder in Persian; Priest, religious educator and above all, spiritual master.

Pravandha : Literary essay, scholarly discourse (also *nivandha* and *rachana*).

Progressists/Progressives : Communists or pseudo-communists (intellectuals or writers). "No writer of less than forty years, says Mulk Raj Anand, can confirm to day that he did not at a moment or another, followed the influence of the Association of Progressive Writers, which was founded in 1935. The movement to which this society gave birth, had in its origin of all a literature in verse or in prose which is attached as close as possible to new Indian reality" (K. M. Pannikar, *L'Asie et la domination Occidentale* p. 443). Let us add that the Bengali literature was influenced by Kazi Nazrul Islam and Muzaffar Ahmad, even before 1935.

Puja : The external essential form of Hindu religious practice; the adoration of deity, according to the canons, minutiously fixed by the treatises on the determined days.

Punthi/Puthi : Manuscript, work, designate also a genre of Bengali literature of ancient tradition.

Puranas : Antiquities; designate a genre of literature of ancient India (from 1st to 12th century) confirming the traditions and legends, and constituting more or less a mythical history.

Purdha : The seclusion of women wearing the veil.

Qadi (Cadi/Kazi) : The judge; in 1864, the British administration stopped such recruitment in India.

Qaderi (Kaderiyya) : The Dervish order instituted by Abd al-Kadir al-Jilani (died in 1166).

Raj : Rule or domination; e.g. *British-raj*.

Raja/Rajah : King; under British domination designates the princes of indigenous States or a simple title for a notable (e.g. *Raja Bahadur, etc.*)

Rama/Ramachandra : Gracious like the moon; the legendary king of the Hindus on whom the epic *Ramayana*, "the geste of Rama" was written by Valmiki. The image of Rama is often employed in the nationalist terminology of India as symbol of justice and of the ideal human being. The epic itself was more secularized than the *Mahabharata*, the other grand epic of India. The two were being developed since the 2nd century before J. C.

Rasul : Envoy, apostle.

Rishi : Sage.

Ritu : Season

Roza : The fasting that the Muslims observe during the month of *Ramadan*, the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. *Ramadan* is the only month that was mentioned in the Qur'an. It was named for revealing of the holy book.

Rubai (plural *rubaiyat*) : Persian quatrain condensing a mystic or philosophical thought.

Saheb/Sahib : Derived from the Arabic *S-h-b* (*ashab*) in the sense of companion, employed in the Subcontinent to designate the Europeans but also the high ranking natives; in feminine *Sahebani, Saheba or Mem-saheb* (Madam).

Sahitya : Literature.

Sal : Persian word employed in Turkish and in Bengali for year, astronomical year.

Salafia (Salafiyya) : Partisan of the ancients, an Islamic movement.

Sanad : Document.

Sangathan : Consolidation; designates a reformist movement of the Hindus.

Sarasvati : Of instable origin, ancient river-goddess, she is the patron of arts, the divinity of the eloquence and of the knowledge, the inventor of the Sanskrit (L. Renou, *op. cit.* p. 45).

Sayyid (Saiyyid, Syed, etc.) : Descendent of the Prophet (p.b.u.h); Prince, Lord, Chief or Master.

Self-Government : Political term mostly used in erroneous matter; administrative auto-determination.

Shagird : Disciple, student (in Bengali, this word is transformed as *shagred* and designates a devoted disciple).

Shaikh (Cheik) : Literally, the old man; employed also for a *Sufi* master. Among the Muslims of India, this title has been attributed or advantageously accepted to designate the social class.

Shariah : The religious law of Islam; total commandments of Allah.

Sharif : Arabic word; plural *ashraf; shurafa* "noblesse, sublime". In spite of the doctrine of equality of all the Arabs, and finally of all the believers, the notion of a higher class expressed by this term has developed among the Muslims.

Shastra : Cf. *Çastra*.

Shirk : The fact of associating and in particular of giving a companion to Allah, to honour someone else by the side of Allah.

Siddha : Saint, particularly a mystic-master among the Buddhists.

Sita : Rama's wife; ideal type of a chaste woman.

So-hm : The Hindu mystic formula which signifies, "I am He" by extension, there is no difference between He and me: sa-'he'; aham-'me, I', *Sohm* (or *Soham*) he designates;" *Brahman* i.e "The Creator" which forms the trinity with two other great divinities: *Vishnu* (Conservator) and *Shiva* (Destructor). According to sects, they represent the one or the other the Supreme Being: The mystic, in his extase, believes to be connected with the Supreme Being.

Sufism : Method of absolute introspection for the Muslims who, two centuries after its apparition has "enlivened" Islam. The Sufi or the Muslim mystic advances towards spiritual life like a traveller to attain the perfect knowledge (*Marifat*). A superhuman desire to sacrifice for his brothers and a spiritual exercise – individual or collective for *fana*, i.e, the negation of self in the extasy, characterizes the sufism. As L. Massignon says, "It is, thanks to its mystic, that Islam is an international and universal religion. International: by the apostatic works of the mystics visiting infidel countries; it is the persuasive example of Muslim hermits ... learning their popular languages and by mixing in their life, who converted so many Hindus and Malays to Islam, despite tyrannical fanaticism of the conquerors of foreign languages ... Universal: these are the mystics, the first ones who understood the moral efficacy of the *Hanafiyah*, the fact of a rational monotheism natural to all men (*Essai sur les origines du lexique technique* ... p. 15)

Suddhi : Movement in favour of the reconversion of the Hindus.

Sultan : A powerful prince; an independent sovereign of a certain territory: derived from the Arabic.

Sunna : The tradition of the belief and action established by the Prophete (p.b.u.h.) considering an interpretation of the sacred book.

Sunnite : Adherent of the Sunnism; the Sunnites follow the orthodox tradition of Islam; they accept the Qur'an and the Hadith as the base of all belief and the teaching of Islam along with the legitimacy of the first four caliphs.

Surat : Verses of the Qur'an.

Suttee : Corrupt form of the word, *Sati* (the chaste woman); social custom of the Hindus in which the widows were to be burnt themselves alive on the same pyre of her dead husband. In 1817, there were 706 *suttee* in Bengal (*Satidaha* in Bengali); forbidden by the government in 1829.

Swadeshi : "The word *swadeçi* (the English writes *Swadeshi* has been translated by our adjective "autonome". But the translation is not rigourously exact, because *swadeçi* (from *swa* ourselves, proper and *deça* "country") to a signification more general and absolute. It means definitively a tentative of pacific revolt against England; of a sort of strike organized by the Hindus, but the Muslims refuse to follow" (Julien Vinson, "Le mouvement Swadêçi" *Revue du monde musulman* 1, 1, Paris, November 1906, p. 22-23). Thanks to Gandhi, The meaning of this term has been enlarged and the

participation of the Muslims to the political movement has been acquired since 1920 s.

Swadhinata : Independence.

Swaraj : Independence or political autodetermination; this term is often employed confusedly. The Congressists for example, were using it for *Dominion Status* for India until 1929.

Tabligh : Propaganda; religious movement of Muslims of India infavour of a massive conversion, now a general reformist movement.

Tafsir : Commentary of the Qur'an; in Bengali, this term is applied necessarily to translation.

Talaq : Returning of a wife by her husband; form of divorce according to the Islamic law.

Tantrism : "Religion" of the Tantras (sacred texts) which is an autonomous development of the *Yoga* and which takes for its point of departure on the original physiological and cosmological representations. There are two ways : *Dokhsinacara* (of right) or *Vamacara* (of left); the Bauls follow the last.

Tazim : Political-religious movement of the Muslims of India.

Taqlid : The adherence to the Muslim law without examination; the strict observance of traditional authority in religious matters.

Tariqat : Road, way, path (of the Arabic *Tarika*, plural *Turuk*); the ensemble of the rites of the spiritual exercises preconised for the life in the diverse Muslim congregations.

Traditionalist : He who confirms the unity of the religion with all other aspects of life in exchange for eventually an interpretation exercised of this tradition according to which religion and politics find themselves integrated (following A. W Eister, see Bibliog). We have employed this term for those who are called "revivalists" apropos of the persons who had manifested this attitude in the 19th century.

Ulama : Cf. Alim.

Ustad : Master, maestro.

Vaishnavism : It is the *Bhakti* or the vishnuism of Bengal, the other way towards the deliverance of the Hindu pietistes who since Shri Chaitanya (1485-1553) exercised a considerable influence on the emotive plane and then on the intellectual plane, as much as among the Hindus or for their neighbors. It is a well-elaborated doctrine and "one distinguishes there and one subdivises there to the infinite the sentiments, the states of soul, the concomitant or subsidiary states to the limitation of the savant theories which had been scaffolded to explain the poetics and the dramaturgy. On the other hand, an erotisation is produced, different in its principle from that

of *tantrism* but no less intense, or less perillous (L. Renou, *L'Hindousisme*, p. 63).

Vivek : Human conscience.

Wahhabi: The *Wahhabya* is a religious group who follows the teaching of Muhammad b. Abdul-Wahhab (1703-1792); in Arabic, the partisans of the group are called *Muwahhdun* i.e. Unitarians. For their similar puritan doctrines it was believed that the partisans of the religious movements of India in the 19th century were all *Wahhabis*.

Waqf (Wakf, habs) :In Islamic judicial terminology this term signifies the properties of *mainmorts*.

Yatra : Etymologically "to go" or "to leave" designates a genre of drama in popular opera of Bengali tradition.

Yavana : Indian equivalent of the Greek term *ionia*, expressed rather hatred than respect, employed often contemptuously to the Muslims of India.

Yoga : Etymologically "Union" or "rule", the means of access to the mystical life, technic of physiological and psychological order to acquire physical and mystical power.

Zabur :Writing; the Book of Dawood.

Zakat :Alms out of income; according to Islamic law, a Muslim must pay every year 2.5% of his wealth to the poor.

Zamindar :Holder of landed property; possessor of wealth; "In Bengal, these properties are habitually vast, a *Zamindar (Zamidar* in Bengali) is responsible vis-a-vis the Government for the payment of tax on the property and also in a certain measure to maintain law and order over all his stretch. In other parts of India, the Zamindars have little domains, many a times commonly occupied, under a periodically renewable policy" (T. W. Haig in the *Encyclopædia of Islam*). The Zamindars existed during the Hindu and Muslim periods with the principal task of collecting taxes. However, the formation, the function and the statute of a new class of *Zamindars* were but a British innovation after the Act of 1793.

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ABBREVIATIONS

B.S.O.A.S. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

I.J.A.L. International Journal of American Linguistics.

J.A.S.P. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan.

P.A.P.H.C. The Proceedings of the All Pakistan History Conference.

P.A.P.S. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society.

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INDEX ONOMASTIQUE

A

Abd al-Wahhab : 40n
 Abdul Bari (D'), Md. : 40n
 Abdul Gafur Siddiqui (D') : 72n, 99n
 Abdul Hai, Muhammad : 31n, 32n, 36n, 44n, 65n, 79n, 87n, 98n, 107n
 Abdul Hakim, M. : 98n
 Abdul Qadir : 119n, 177n, 189n
 Abdul Karim : 65
 Abdul Karim (Dr) : 22n, 23n
 Abdul Karim (Munshi, Sahitya Visharad) : 26n, 191
 Abdul Latif (Nawab) : 15, 42n, 43, 51-58, 60, 75, 190
 Abdul Mannan, Kazi : 56n
 Abdul Wadud, Kazi : 44n, 46n, 48n, 53n, 54n, 57n, 59n, 81n, 99n, 180, 185
 Abdul Wali (Maulvi) : 70n
 Abdur Rahim (Shaikh) : 79, 80, 85n
 Abdur Rasul : 124
 Abdus Sobhan (Shaikh) : 63, 75
 Abid Hussain, S. : 27
 Abott, Freeland : 40
 Abraham : 112
 Abu Bakar : 109
 Abu Tawwamah (Shaikh, Sarf al-Din) : 24n
 Abul Fazal : 184
 Abul Hashim : 153
 Abul Hosen, Sayyid : 160n
 Abul Husain : 195, 196
 Abul Hussien, Syed : 184
 Abul Kasem : 96n
 Adison : 89
 Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din : 57, 58n, 85
 Afzal Ali : 26,
 Aga Khan : 127, 128n, 140
 Ahmad, Abut Mansur : 197n
 Ahmad, Meyraj-Uddin : 85n
 Ahmad (D', Rafiuddin) : 136n
 Ahmad (Munshi, Reajuddin) : 85n
 Ahmad Sharif : 100n
 Ahsan Habib : 195n
 Aji Bari (Munshi) : 109n

Akbar : 46, 40, 161
 Akbaruddin : 187
 Alaol : 26, 27, 32, 191
 Albiruni, A.H. : 51, 131
 Al-Ghazzali : 90
 Ali Ahmad : 26n
 Ali Ahsan, Syed : 31n, 32n, 36n, 44n, 65n, 70n, 87n, 98n, 107n
 Alim Ulah (Maulvi) : 80
 Ali Raja : 191n
 Al-Samarqandi, Qadi Rykn al-Din : 24n
 Ambedkar, B.R. : 121
 Aminul Islam, A.K.M. : 103n
 Amir Ali, Sayyid : 15, 16, 34, 61, 64, 75, 79, 131, 159, 181
 Amir Hussain, Sayyid : 57
 Aniruddha Islam, Kazi : 175
 Ansari (D') : 157
 Ansari (Shaikh), 'Abd Allah : 26
 Anwarul Quadir : 185
 Appadorai, A. : 140n, 147n
 Arnold, Mathew : 119
 Arnold, T.W. : 137n
 Ashraf, K.M. : 70
 Ashraf Ali (Meer) : 72
 Askari, Hasan : 24n
 Asoka : 20
 Aatur Rahman : 164n
 Aurangzeb, Alamgir : 29, 45n, 46, 79
 Averroes : 181
 Ayyub, Abu Syed : 156, 194
 Azad (Maulana), Abul Kalam : 15, 129, 135, 161, 164
 Azam (Shah, Sultan) Ghyasuddin : 25
 Aziz Ahmad : 142n, 148, 3n
 Aziz, K.K. : 50n, 131n, 144n, 150n

B

Badi-al-Alam (Shah) : 81
 Badsha Mian : 41n
 Bagchi, P.C. : 30n
 Bakhtyar Shad : 126
 Baljon, J.M.S. : 64n
 Bande Ali Mian : 179n

Bandyopadhyaya : 80n
Bibhuti Bhusan: 46
Bandyopadhyaya, Hemchandra : 114, 159
Bandyopadhyaya, Manik : 46,
Bandyopadhyaya, Paresh : 94n
Bandyopadhyaya, Rangalal : 103, 113, 158
Banerjee, A.C. : 130n.
Bankim Chandra, voir Chatterjee :
Bannerjee : 1250
Barani, Diya al-Din : 21n
Barbosa, Duarte : 30n
Barkatullah, Muhammad : 186
Barrière, Pierre : 102n
Basu, Jogindra : 114n
Basu, Rames : 24n
Bauls : 22, 87, 100
Benajir Ahmad : 179n
Beni Prasad : 138n
Besant (Mrs), Annie : 139n
Bhasani (Maulana, Abdul Hamid), voir Khan Bhasani.
Bharat Chandra : 32
Bhattacharya, Deben : 100n
Bhattacharya, Sukumar : 31n
Bhattacharya, Upendra Nath : 87n
Bhattasali, N.K. : 20n
Bin Sayeed, Khalid : 139n, 153n, 198n
Bloch, Jules : 105n
Blunt, W. S. : 57n
Bonnerjea, Biren : 19n
Bose, Budhadeva : 20n
Bose, P.N. : 80n
Bose, Rajnarayan : 44, 49n
Bose, Sarat Chandra : 153
Bose, Subhas Chandra : 15, 136n, 147, 153
Boulier-Fraissinet, Jean : 193n
Bradley-Birt, F.D. : 53n
Briggs : 34n
Brown, W. Norman : 150n, 153n
Browne, E.G. : 26n
Buch, M.A. : 127n
Burrows (Sir, Frederick) : 153
Byron : 176

C

Campbell-Johnson, A. : 1516n
Campos, J.A. : 32n
Cash W.W. : 134n
Chaitanya, Shri : 228
Chakravarty, Amalendu : 99n
Chakravarty, Biharilal : 109, 120
Chandidasa : 25
Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra : 15, 17, 44, 53, 75, 76, 94, 95, 103, 105, 106, 112, 142, 160, 186, 187
Chatterjee, Sarat Chandra : 46, 151
Chaudhuri, N. : 127n
Chaudhury, Arjumand Ali : 112n
Chawdhry, Rahmat Ali : voir Rahmat Ali
Chirol V. : 132n
Chowdhury, Ksitish Chandra : 306n
Chowdhury, Munier : 109n
Chowdhury, S.B. : 45n
Chowdhury, Sayyid Motahar Hussain : 184
Chowdhury, Sayyid Nabab Ali : 118
Chundrigar, I.I. : 15n
Churchill : 148n
Clark, T.W. : 75n
Clive : 33
Comte, A. : 113
Cornwallis (Lord) : 34
Coupland, Reginald : 143n, 144n, 146n, 149n
Cripps (Sir, Stafford) : 149
Crook, B. : 55
Crooke, W. : 52n
Curzon (Lord) : 1238-125

D

Dad Ali : 109
Dani, A.H. : 18n, 23n, 28n
Dante : 43n
Das, C.R. : 15, 136, 137, 143, 147
Das, Krisna Rama : 29n
Das, Tarak : 37n
Dasa Brindavana : 18n
Das-Gupta, S. B. : 22n
Daud Rahbar : 42n
Daulat Ahmad : 144n

Davis Kingsley : 84n
De, S.K. : 98n
Defrémery : 30n
De Tassy, Garcin : 78n
Deva, Rati : 191n
Di Conti, Nicolo : 30n
Dimock, Edward Cameron : 22n
Di Verthema, Ludovico : 30n
Dudo-Mian : 41n
Dudu Bukhsh : 124
Duhamel, Georges : 13
Durant, Will : 138
Dutt, Bimal Kumar : 28
Dutt, Michael Madhusudhan : 105n, 110, 112, 113, 158
Dutt, R.C. : 34n
Dutt, Satyendra Nath : 46

E

Ekramuddin : 186
Elwin, V. : 178
Emdad Ali, Sayyid : 89, 93
Enamul Haq (Dr. M.) : 18, 24n-26n, 28n-30n, 36n, 98n, 157, 191
Erasmé : 40n
Ethica : 159

F

Faizullah (Shaikh) : 26, 192n
Farrukh Ahmad : 197
Faruqi, Ibrahim Rawwam : 24n
Fazle Rabbi : 17
Fazlul Huq A.K. : 137, 143-145, 173
Fazlul Karim (Shaikh) : 89
Filliozat, Jean : 36n
Firdausi : 26n, 111, 119
Firishtah, Muhammad Rasim : 19n
Forster, George : 31n
Fuller (Sir), R. : 125

G

Gandhi (Mahatma, M.K.) : 15, 41, 135, 136, 142, 143, 147n, 149, 161, 164, 172, 182
Ganesha (le roi) : 18n
Garibullah : 31
Gaznavi, A. K. : 143

Geddes, Arthur : 32
George V : 131
Gibb, H.A.R. : 87n
Goethe : 180, 184
Gokhale : 15
Golam Mostafa : 187,
Galdseck (Father, William) : 74n
Gosal, Satyendra : 26n
Gosh (Shri), Aurobindo : 125
Gosh, J.C. : 19n, 21n, 27n, 32n, 45n, 120
Gosh, N.C. : 95n
Gosh, Rash Behari : 127n
Guimbretiére, André : 47n, 59n, 64n, 87n
Gupta, Atul Chandra : 113n, 134n, 141n,
Gupta, Ishwar : 80, 103
Gupta, I.C. : 105
Gwyer, Maurice : 140n, 147n

H

Habibullah, B.D. : 147n
Habibullah (Bahar), Muhammad : 64n, 129n, 131n, 145n, 161n, 166n, 190n
Habibur Rahman (Shaikh) : 67n
Hafeez Malik : 142n
Hafiz : 24, 165n
Haldar, Gopal : 50n, 153n
Hamid Ali : 114, 118, 119, 155
Hamidullah, Muhammad : 49n
Harinath (Kangal) : 81n
Hasrat Mohani (Maulana) : 136
Hastings, Warren : 34n
Hirst, F.W. : 131n
Humayun Kabir : 145n, 156, 193, 195
Hunter, W.W. : 20n, 38, 42n, 49, 50n-52n, 72n, 99n

I

Ibn Battutah : 30n
Ibn Khaldun : 189
Idris Ali (Shaikh, Muhammad) : 160
Ikram, S.M. : 29n
Imdadul Huq, Kazi : 185

Iqbal (Sir, Muhammad) : 15, 36, 155
Irving, Washington : 199
Islamabadi (Maulana, M.) : 64n,
137, 156, 161, 162, 164
Ismael (Maulvi) : 72
Ismail Shahid (Shah) : 42

J

Jaglu Pasha : 171
Jalal al-Din Muhammad (sultan) : 18
Jalal Uddin Ahmed : 179
Jamiruddin, John : 66
Jasimuddin : 177-179
Jaya-Deva : 20
Jayakar, M.R. : 139
Jilani, Abdal-Qadir : 111
Jinnah, Mohammed Ali : 15, 130,
131n, 136, 140-142n, 147-152, 190

K

Kabir : 141n
Kaikobad : 114-118, 166, 167
Kalidasa : 48
Kant, Emmanuel : 193
Karamat Ali (Maulvi) : 42, 43, 51
Kaviraj, Narhari : 29
Kaviraj, Visvanath : 114
Keats : 176
Kefayetullah (Munshi) : 72n
Kemal Ataturk (Pasha) : 136, 166,
180, 187
Kemalists (Ies) : 180-184, 187
Khadija : 110
Khalid : 171
Khalji, Muhammad Bakhtiyar : 17
Khan, Abid'Ali : 24n, 28n
Khan, Azharuddin : 165n
Khan (Maulana), Akram : 137, 156,
162-164
Khan (Shree), Allah-dad : 81n
Khan, Ibrahim : 187
Khan, Gaznafar Ali : 151n
Khan (Nawabzada, Liakat Ali) :
150n, 151n
Khan, Muin-ud-Din Ahmad : 40n
Khan, Muhammad : 26
Khan, Mujibur Rahman : 197

Khan, Nasarullah : 26
Khan, Sabirid : 26
Khan (Sir), Sayyid Ahmed : 15, 50-
52, 62-64, 74, 85, 89, 181, 182, 190
Khan Ahmed, Abdullah : 126
Khan Bhasani (Maulana, A.H.) : 137
Khan Chawdhury, Nabab Ali : 143
Khan Ghazi, Daraf : 24, 111
Khan Panni, Wajed Ali : 187
Khan Yusufzai, Abdul Hamid : 81
Khandkar, Abdul Khaleque : 146n
Khuda Bakhsh, S. : 126n
Krisna Muhammad : 175n
Krittivasa : 25

L

Lalan (Shah) : 101
Law, N.N. : 23n
Léger, François : 44n, 45n
Le Chatelier, A. : 128n
Le Goff, Jacques : 71n
Lévy : 70n
Liakat Ali : 124
Linlithgow (Lord) : 149
Long (Rev., James) : 72n, 105n
Lutfar Rahman : 156, 185

M

Madan (Shah) : 101
Madhu Meah : 89
Mahajan, V.D. : 139n, 145n, 151n
Mahale, K. J. : 135n
Mahdi Hussain : 40n
Mahmud, S. : 54n
Muhammad (Prophet) : 24, 26,
35, 79
Maitra, A.K. : 32n
Maitre, Luce-Claude : 141n, 174n,
179n, 196n
Majumdar, Amvika Charan : 1249n
Majumdar, R.C. : 17n
Malaviya (Pandit) : 136
Mallarmé : 114
Mallick, Dr. A.R. : 54n
Malraux, André : 155
Mandal, Jogendra Nath : 169n
Mann : 40n

Mansuruddin, Muhammad : 101
Marx, Karl : 113, 149n, 193
Mash-Hadi (Pandit, Reajuddin) : 56,
85n, 104
Massé, Henri : 111n
Massignon, Louis : 140n
Mayo (Lord) : 38
Mazzini : 89
Meerali (Dr, Mohammad) : 91
Meherullah (Munshi) : 65-67, 182
Meile, Pierre : 34n
Menon, V.P. : 127n
Meyrovitch, Eva : 141n
Milford (Mrs, E.M.) : 178n
Mill : 113
Minhaj Siraj : 173n
Mir Zafar : 33
Misra, B.B. : 30n, 32n
Mitra, Dinabandhu : 105
Mitra, Nabagopal : 49n
Minto (Lord) : 127
Mohamed Ali (Maulana) : 15, 41n,
133, 134
Molière : 113
Monahan, F.J. : 20n
Morens, H.W.B. : 80n
Morley (Lord, John) : 130n
Mosley, Leonard : 153n
Mostafi, Byomkesh : 157n
Motahar Hussain (Dr), Kazi : 184
Mountbatten (Lord) : 151, 152n
Mozammel Haq : 91, 92, 109, 111
Muhammad (Haji) : 26
Muhammad Muhsin (Haji) : 55n, 190
Muhammad Saghir : 25
Muhammad Taifoor, Syed : 128
Muhsin ul-Mulk : 127
Mujibur Rahman Khan : 197,
Mujtaba Ali, Syed : 156, 194, 195
Mukherjee, H.N. : 125, 194
Mukherjee, H. et U. : 124n
Mukherjee, Ramkrishna : 33n
Mukhopadhaya, Bhudev : 44, 45
Mukunda Rama : 29
Muller, Max : 37
Mumford, Lewis : 71n
Musharraf Hussain (Meer) : 103, 104
Muzaffar Ahmad : 166n, 173, 188
Muzammil : 26

N

Nag, Kalidas : 165n
Naimuddin Muhammad : 72-74, 81
Naoroji : 15
Napoleon : 89
Nazmul Karim, A.K. : 30, 70, 197
Nazrul Islam, Kazi : 15, 109, 120,
156, 164, 165-177, 179, 183,
184, 188
Nehru, Jawahar Lal : 135, 164
Nezamuddin Aoulia : 161
Nichols, Beverley : 147n
Nishtar, A.R. : 151n
Norregaard, Georg : 32n
Nurul Amin (Prof.), M. : 40n
Nurunnesa Khatun : 186

O

O'Donnel, C.J. : 123n
O'Dwyer, Michael : 1316n
Omar : 171
Omar Kayyam : 165n, 192n
Osman Ali (Shaikh) : 93
Ortega y Gasset, Jose : 47

P

Pal, Bipin Chandra : 45, 57, 125, 136
Panikkar, K.M. : 165n
Parameshvara, Kavindra : 25
Petit, Alain : 140n
Phillips, C.H. : 13, 75, 145
Pickett, M. : 184n
Pir Box, Samuel : 109n
Prithviraj : 114n
Purchas, Samuel : 30n

Q

Qadir, Abdul : 72n, 177n, 178, 188
Qazi, Daulat : 26
Qanungo, K.R. : 19n
Qureshi (D', Ishtiaq Hussain) : 132n,
144n
Qureshi, Magan Thakur : 26
Qureshi, Mahmud Shah : 39

R

Racine : 105
Radhakrisnan : 193

Rahman, F. : 62n, 63n
 Rahman, M. : 28n
 Rahmat Ali : 136n
 Rahmat Ali, Chawdhry : 142
 Rajab Ali (Maulvi) : 81
 Rajagopalacharia, C. : 149
 Rajput, A.B. : 129n
 Ramakrishna, (Shri), Paramhangsa : 15, 181
 Ram Gopal : 48n, 127n, 130n, 137n, 143n, 144n, 146n, 150n
 Ranade : 11
 Rangalal, (voir Bandyopadhyaya) :
 Raushan Ali : 50
 Rawlinson, H.G. : 146n
 Ray, Annadasankar : 19n, 20n, 194n
 Ray, Haralal : 17
 Ray, Lila : 19n, 20n, 183n, 194n
 Ray (Sir), P.C. : 26n
 Ray (Raja), Rammohun : 15, 48, 65, 80, 180, 183, 193
 Read (Sir), Stanley : 37n
 Remaud, J. J. : 18n
 Renou, Louis : 22n, 44n, 48n, 69, 113n
 Rezaul Karim : 186, 187
 Rimbaud : 114
 Roderique : 159
 Rokeya Khatun (Mrs R.S. Hussain) : 156, 186
 Rolland, Romain : 180
 Rousseau : 113
 Rowlands, J.H. : 20n
 Roy, D.L. : 109

S

Sa'adi : 180
 Sabysachi Islam : 175
 Sajjad Husain, Syed : 99n, 171n
 Salimullah (Sir) : 128-131
 Sanguinetti, B.R. : 30n
 Sanyal, H.K. : 125n
 Sapru (Sir, Tej Bahadur) : 139
 Sarkar, Benoy : 45n
 Sarkar, Indira : 114
 Sarkar (Sir), J.N. : 19n, 31n
 Sayyid Ahmad (Brelawi, Shahid) : 42

Sartre, J. P. : 121
 Sayyid Hamza : 31
 Sayyid Sultan : 26, 27
 Scott (Sir, W.) : 55
 Sen (Dr., D.C.) : 25, 177
 Sen, Girish Chandra : 74n
 Sen, Kshiti Mohan : 101
 Sen, Nabin Chandra : 44, 114, 158
 Sen (Dr.) Sukumar : 24n, 97n
 Sen, S.N. : 50n
 Serajul Haq, Muhammad : 157n
 Shah Jahan : 29
 Shah, Shu'ayb : 24n
 Shahadat Hussain : 188, 189
 Shahidullah, (D', Muhammad) : 20n, 25n, 156, 192
 Shaikh Chand : 26
 Shakespeare : 48
 Shams al-Din Ilyas (Shah) : 20
 Shamsuddin, Abul Kalam : 197
 Shamsul Huda : 184
 Shamsun Nahar : 190n
 Shaokat Osman : 196n
 Shariat-Allah (Haji) : 40, 41
 Shelly : 176
 Shelvankar, K.S. : 50n
 Sher Shah : 21
 Shibli Nu'mani, (Maulana) : 15, 89, 161
 Shils, Edward : 102
 Shiraji, Ismail Hussain : 156-158
 Shivaji : 76, 95, 159, 160, 164
 Siraj-Uddowla : 32, 157, 174
 Sitaramayya, P. : 139n
 Smiles : 185
 Smith, William Cantwell : 62, 87
 Sorokin : 29, 70
 Sourdel, Dominique : 87n
 Spear, P. : 139
 Staline : 149n
 Stapleton : 24n, 28n
 Stepowsky, Jacques : 179
 Sufia Ahmed : 64
 Sufian, N.I.M. : 29n, 107n
 Suhrawardy, Husayn Shaheed : 153
 Syed Ali Ahsan : See Ali Ahsan Syed
 Syed Mohammad : 126

T

Tabrizi (Makhdam), Jalal al-Din : 24
 Tagore, Rabindra Nath : 15, 46, 95, 109, 110, 120, 125, 180, 182, 184, 186, 193
 Tarachand : 28n, 161n
 Tariq : 159
 Tekchand, Thakur : 64
 Thibaut, Anne-Marie : 196n
 Tilak, B.G. : 45
 Tipu-Sultan : 111
 Titu Mir : 46
 Titus, M.T. : 70
 Turgueniev : 197n
 Toynbee, A. : 84
 Tritton, A.S. : 40

V

Vambery, A. : 55n
 Van Tieghem, Paul : 113n
 Varma, V.P. : 125n
 Verelest, Harry : 31n
 Vidyapati : 25
 Vidyasagar, Ishwar Chandra : 15
 Vinson, Julien : 35n, 125n

Viqar ul-Mulk : 30

Vivekananda, (Swami) : 15, 181
 Voltaire : 113

W

Wajed Ali, Muhammad : 190
 Wajed Ali, S. : 189
 Waliullah, Syed : 196
 Waliyullah (Shah) : 40
 Washington, G. : 89
 Watson, W.J. : 134
 Wilson, C.R. : 34
 Wise, James : 29n
 Wheeler, R.E.M. : 28
 Y
 Yazdan Bakhsh, Muhammad bin : 24
 Yusuf Ali, A. : 43
 Yusuf Ali, Mirza Muhammad : 91
 Yusuf Jamal Begum (Mrs Muhammad Hussain) : 110, 117, 178
 Yusuf Shah (Sultan) : 26

Z

Zainuddin : 26, 27
 Zainul Abedin : 179

A REVIEW OF

ÉTUDE SUR L'ÉVOLUTION INTELLECTUELLE CHEZ LES MUSULMANS DU BENGALE 1857-1947

by
Suniti Kumar Chatterji

*A study on the Intellectual Evolution among the
Musalmans of Bengal, 1857-1947: by Professor
Dr. Mahmud Shah Qureshi : Paris and The Hague,
Mouton & Co. 1971: Pages 208.*

This is a fine book for which the author is certainly to be congratulated. He has written this book in French, and this brings additional *kudos* to the scholarship of Muslim researchers in Bengal, who are manifesting an admirable interest in different branches of study and extending the horizon of learning in the sub-continent of India, consisting of the independent lands of *India-Bangladesh-Nepal-Pakistan*. Prof. Qureshi is a well known scholar who has been long connected with the University of Chittagong in Bangladesh. The contribution of the Musalmans in the development of the thought and mentality as well as intellectual rebirth in the Indian subcontinent has not been seriously taken up by any competent scholar. Here and there some occasional observations have been made on the situation for the Musalmans of the country, from British times, e. g. We have Sir William Wilson Hunter and other British Civilians, monographs and papers on the Muslims of India which throw quite a good deal of side-light into the history of

the intellectual evolution of Muslim India. In recent times much work has been done by present-day historians and scholars of India, both Hindu and Muslim. The Muslim educational and cultural as well as political revolution centering round the Anglo-Muslim College at Aligarh (later transformed into the Aligarh Anglo-Muslim University), which was inaugurated by Sir Syed Ahmed and helped by a great poet and thinker like Altaf Husain Panipati 'Hali', did outstanding work in arousing the sentiments of the Muslim, of North India, particularly, and of the rest of India also, to develop their educational as well as cultural and political background. In recent times we have in Bengal particularly scholars like Syed Ameer Ali, Nawab Abdul Latif, Nawab Shamsul Huda, Dr. Humayun Kabir, Kazi Abdul Wadud, S. Wazid Ali, Muhammad Shahidullah and a few others, eminent thinkers, who like Maulvi Zakauallah of Delhi sought to bring the light of modernism and the spirit of progress in the minds of the Indian Muslims.

The Muslims of Bengal suffered from being at crossroads. They were drawn by two different currents of mentality—one, which they received from their Hindu background—from their blood—which was intimately connected with their language which was of Indian origin and their original social environment and atmosphere which was Hindu—the bases of their mentality; and the other was the influence of Islam proper which was scholarly and scholastic, and tried to wean them away from their Hindu inheritance and character and transform them into good Musalmans, aiming to transform them with that into good Arabs in the first instance, but later on (as this was found to be impossible) it was modified in order to transform them into good Arabicised Indians. This Arabicisation could after all be only an imperfect process, and it led to misunderstanding when it was not broad-based on science and learning, and in many cases it was productive of a kind of frustration and dissatisfaction. Yet when there was a harmonisation it produced good results in the shape of a genuine Indo-Muslim culture which did not ignore its Indian bases, and was able to graft upon the basic culture of India some of the finest things from the Arab world, and in addition also from the Iranian world. The Islamic culture of India could not be purely Arab. It had a strong leaven of the culture of Iranian world, which was in certain respects an antithesis to that of the Arab world. This

Indo-Muslim culture is really an Indian culture as profoundly modified by the ideology and thought as well as art of Perso-Arabic amalgam. The Urdu language and literature which was based on the language and literature of North India (which in a broad way has been generalised as "Hindi speech and literature") as well as the Muslim literature of Bengal (which is frequently something identical with ordinary Hindu Bengali literature, excepting for some of its subject matter and its vocabulary) are two of the most noteworthy creations of this Indo-Muslim culture of India.

Indian civilization has been modified most profoundly – and at the present moment it is going to be almost revolutionised in its mentality—in its material as well as intellectual and spiritual affiliations through its contact with the Anglo-American world, has taken two very noteworthy steps towards extending its rather circumscribed original Indian orbit. These extraneous forces were exerted by the Perso-Arabic culture brought by Islam, and the modern outlook and culture of the western world through the English language and literature. This inner development through the action of these two sets of leavens which came from outside has been going on from the first conquest of a part of India by the Arab Muslims in 712 A.D., and it is continuing even now through the establishment of the English language and of the English and European way of thought and way of action. Recently this western influence has come up in another form (and this not at all religious, unlike the Roman-Catholic world of ideas and cults which was sought to be imposed upon India by their protagonists, and the Protestant form of Christian ideology brought in by the British which touched only a fringe of Indian life including that of the Indian Christians). This new form of Western influence on the Muslim (as well as Hindu and other) cultures of India was brought in by Communism from Soviet Russia and China and other countries within the communist sphere. A full history of the cultural and intellectual evolution which has been going on in India during the period from the 8th century A.D. onwards right up to the present age (end of the 20th century) is a subject of paramount interest, and the intellectual evolution of the Musalmans of Bengal is just a section of it. But the proper study of this can easily become encyclopaedic; and portions of these from different aspects have been attempted, and frequently attempted successfully by scholars

both Indian (Hindu and Muslim) as well as British and other Europeans.

Prof. Qureshi modestly limits himself to a study of the intellectual evolution of the Bengali Muslims. But even this subject is quite vast, and his performance in this line shows quite a comprehensive and a brilliantly successful attempt. The headings of his various chapters will show how he has attempted to tackle this great subject. There is a preface of two pages introducing the book and its author. Then we have the Introduction-with a significant heading – *The Crescent and the Lotus-the Heritage of the Past* (pages 11-38). Then the book begins with Chapter I : *The Seizure of Conscience, 1857-1905*. Then we have in Chapter II a discussion of the problems of thought and action. Chapter III gives a good study of the great writers of this epoch in Bengali, both Hindu and Muslim, and he brings before a European and a French public quite a good deal of information about the outstanding Muslim writers of Bengali during the 19th century. Chapter IV takes up the question of the full appreciation of the position between 1905 to 1947. Chapter V is a study of the Muslim literature in relation to the Bengal Literary Renaissance. It will be seen easily from this book that Prof. Qureshi does not try to differentiate between Hindu literature and Muslim literature in Bengali as two polarities. There is a general tendency among most of the Muslim writers to look upon Bengali literature, whether old, middle or modern, Buddhist, Brahmanical and Muslim or affiliated to a number of minor sects, as a single entity, and this is not over-simplification but is a true statement of the case.

This is a very well thought-out work, and the matter, as it can be easily seen has been treated by a scholar who has an atmosphere of modernism in his mind. There is a lot of precise information about Bengali writers who helped in the intellectual evolution of the Muslims. It is easy to see that his reading of the subject has been quite extensive – and I am inclined to think that it is much more extensive than in any other work of a similar type which I have seen. He has given a glossary of Indian terms, of native Indian origin (whether Sanskrit or from the modern languages, or foreign taken from Persian and Arabic, and also from English, and French occasionally), and there is a very useful bibliography which I should say is fairly complete, extending to over 32 closely printed pages,

giving names and details of works by European as well as Indian writers in English and French and Bengali, including also Journals and Periodicals. There is also a full index of names of persons as well as books and Institutions.

As the book is written in French it will be not always easy for Indian scholars unacquainted with the language to utilise it properly, and I hope it will be possible to bring out an English edition for the benefit of Indian readers. The printing and general get-up are excellent. The work certainly does great credit to the culture of Bangla Desh and India.

Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji
National Professor of India in Humanities
Calcutta, November 20, 1972

The first part of the book deals with the general situation of the population of the country and the
 *political and economic conditions which have led to the present situation. The author discusses the
 economic and social conditions of the country and the political situation which has led to the
 present situation. The author also discusses the role of the government in the economic and
 social development of the country. The book is a valuable contribution to the study of the
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 economic and social development of the country. The book is written in a clear and
 concise style and is accessible to a wide range of readers. The author's analysis is
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The second part of the book deals with the specific political and economic conditions of the country and
 the role of the government in the economic and social development of the country. The author discusses
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