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**CULTURE CONFLICTS
IN
EAST PAKISTAN
1947 - 1971**

A STUDY IN THE ATTITUDE OF BENGALI MUSLIM
INTELLIGENTSIA TOWARDS BENGALI LITERATURE AND ISLAM

FAZLUR RAHMAN

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- to My Parents

PREFACE

Originally my study was to identify the nature of the cultural contacts between West Bengal and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) since 1947, particularly those not directly determined by the diplomatic/political relationship between the two countries. But I had to abandon the original plan and took interest in the direction of understanding the conflicting attitudes of the several groups of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) intelligentsia in regard to one vital question : to which would the intelligentsia be loyal—the historically determined regional culture, or the new politically determined culture embodied in the notion of Pakistan?

Culture and politics act as complement to each other is universally true. In order to get a perfect study of one involves careful study of the other. Besides religion too plays an indirect role in shaping culture and the basic trend of politics. In the light of the fact I tried to go deep into the basic core of the subject and bring out the real theme of the study.

In course of my massive search and analysis of the components of my study I had to face non-committal views on different aspects of the study among the intelligentsia of both in Bangladesh and West Bengal. In my opinion politics has been playing a fluid role yet to take full shape to conduct current cultural affairs. Hence it seemed to be quite futile to labour on political/diplomatic identity of culture in the process of taking safe opinion the real shape of two identical cultures of two Bengals shall take some more time to take real identity.

Hence I had to abandon the political side of my study and concentrate my treatise on cultural change so that researchers might evolve a right direction for identifying the real problems and the solutions thereof and base my study to usher in a guide line to go into deep. Besides during Pak-regime culture in Bangladesh got bogged up by a religious fever with the obvious result that it felt far apart from its main track and lost its true

identification. This religious bias had been so strong that it caused a serious rift in the basic core of our cultural themes. The rift is yet to be repaired and unless the rift is fully set alright no political comment and study is fully possible nor feasible.

I made an extensive use of relevant source-materials, highly authentic records and the news paper files in different centres available in different parts of Bangladesh and West Bengal to complete the study.

Finally I owe my gratitude to Mr. M. A. Sayed who took all pains to shape the typed manuscript into a printed one.

7 December, 1990

FAZLUR RAHMAN

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I am grateful to all of them.

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Finally I would like to recall the good memories of my parents and near relations whom I lost during the course of this study.

CALCUTTA
MARCH, 1988

FAZLUR RAHMAN

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan, established in 1947, started with a very weak political base. Politicians and leaders considered religion as the only bond of union between the East and West Pakistan. Since the birth of the new state the political leaders of the West wing somehow managed to grab power and succeeded in denying the Bengalis their due share in the political and economic decision making. As a result, the years 1947-1971, saw West Pakistani attempt to suppress Bengali culture also. The first victim of this systematic attack was the Bengali language. Suppression of Bengali culture found expression in many other subtle ways. The age-old name of East Bengal was changed into East Pakistan, even though the regions in West Pakistan retained their original names. Many Bengali poets and litterateurs were banned out of market only because they were not Pakistanis or because their ideological moorings or religious beliefs were different from those of the Pakistani Muslims. No similar action, however, was taken or even contemplated against any West Pakistani literature—Punjabi, Gurmukhi, Gujrati or Urdu. The songs of Tagore, were banned despite their universal appeal. Bengali sartorial and cosmetic practices also drew adverse criticisms from the West Pakistani leaders. During the days of Ayub Khan, these subtler onslaughts became more pronounced and persistent.

Twenty-three years of partnership in the political field between the Eastern wing and the Western wing of Pakistan only proved that it was not a partnership on the basis of equality or of mutual respect. Bengalis were asked to make all the sacrifices, including disfranchisement of 12 percent of their people and subsequently total denial of their right of participation in the political power of the country. There were no equivalent sacrifices which West Pakistan was required to make. It also became apparent that the democratic process on which the Bengalis were persistently keen was consistently being resisted by West Pakistan. The defence personnel and the politicians did nothing to arrest this tendency and indeed, tacitly approved of them. It became clear that not only the language of expression but also the political language of the two separated regions were not finding any meeting ground. The attempt at linguistic and

cultural subjugation, the nature of economic exploitation and the pattern of denial of political power brought back memories of the struggle for Pakistan. In the manner in which Hindus and Muslims of India could not form one nation, Bengalis and West Pakistanis, despite their earlier record of unity in the struggle for Pakistan, were failing to forge any lasting bonds of nationhood. Religious unity in the context of antipathy towards another religious community held the Pakistanis together. But this negative factor was no longer sufficient or adequate to hold the Pakistanis of the two regions together after the partition of British India. The shift of power in favour of the military, however, gave rise to the illusion that the restoration of the political process, when it takes place, would perhaps create a climate of give-and-take and a better understanding. It was, however, obvious that the best solution lay in reducing the areas of friction and hence of contact. Consequently the demand for regional autonomy in a very large measure gained ground'.¹ Keith Callard in a very perceptive observation summed up the Bengali position at the end of the first ten years of Pakistan. The next thirteen years only confirmed the conclusion:

"Whether through Bengali ineffectiveness or the Machiavellian wiles of their opponents Bengali influence had never been decisive: Nazimuddin had been Governor General, but the real power lay with Liaquat Ali. Nazimuddin became Prime Minister but lacked force of will and was ultimately dismissed by the Punjabi Governor General. Mohammad Ali of Bogra was brought in as Prime Minister but, although a Bengali he remained the captive of West Pakistan group that provided the main strength of his government. The Bengali members attempted to use their majority to diminish the powers of the Governor General, but as a result they found themselves out of their own jobs. The electorate of East Bengal had repudiated the Muslim Language, but the outcome was rule for more than a year by West Pakistani bureaucrats. The armed forces were West Pakistani, the national civil service was predominately West Pakistani, and trade and industry

1 A. M. A. Muhith, *Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation* (Dhaka: 1978), pp. 39-67.

were largely in the hands of non-Bengalis. It is in some such terms as these that most Bengalis view the history of the first ten years of Pakistan. In consequence, despairing of equality on a national basis, they turned increasingly to proposals for home rule for their own province."²

Actually the development of an advanced political ideology in East Pakistan developed in the wake of a cultural movement, specially the Language Movement and the political dimension later became more pronounced.

Immediately after the emergence of Pakistan when the political awareness was not so deep in the mind of the general people of the country a cultural movement like the Language Movement caused a break through in the political arena. And if the political aspect of the movement is taken it may be observed that its basis was to a considerable extent economic. On the issue of a National Language this cultural movement acquired a political status. Added to this a new awakening of linguistic nationalism was gaining ground. Thus the Language Movement and some other cultural movements played the vital role in shaping the destiny of East Pakistan.

In studying this cultural conflict I particularly tried to concentrate on an understanding of the conflicting attitudes of several groups of the East Pakistan intelligentsia in regard to one vital question: to which would the intelligentsia be loyal- the historically determined regional culture, including the status of a homogeneous **speech community** (Bengali) or the new politically-determined culture embodied in the notion of Pakistan? In this connection I have studied almost all the institutions that developed in East Pakistan after 1947 and tried to use the available relevant source materials available mainly in different parts of Bangladesh and in Calcutta. Hence the title used for the work is: **"Culture conflicts in East Pakistan, 1947-1971: A study in the attitude of Bengali Muslim Intelligentsia towards Bengali literature and Islam."**

Besides **Introduction and Conclusion**, the study consists of six chapters. In **Chapter-I**, I have traced the social condition of the

2 K. Callard, **Pakistan- A Political Study**, p. 173 (quoted in **Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation** by A. M. A. Muhith).

Muslims of Bengal in the nineteenth century and tried to show the conflict particularly over their mother-tongue, between the 'ashraf' (upper section of the Muslims coming to Bengal from outside) and the 'atraf' (low-status muslims, including a considerable number of converts from the degraded Hindus). I also tried to show that a slow but gradual change in the attitude of the Muslim intelligentsia towards Bengali literature and Islam was gaining ground.

Gradually the muslim intelligentsia started studying Bengali literature and made their contribution in the literary field. This brought them into conflict with Hindu litterateurs of the period. An important reason was that they were under the influence of the growing Hindu nationalism in the last four decades of this century. This conflict between the Hindu and the Muslim writers gave rise to perceptions of communal distinctiveness of the Muslims, and the Muslims who were latecomer in the literary field showed sign of reaction against Hindu nationalism. Chapter II deals with this.

In Chapter III our focus is on the political climate of the Indian sub-continent as a whole and of Bengal in particular in the light of the Lahore Resolution of 1940. Politics played a dirty role and religion was eventually taken as the only justification for the partition of the country.

After the partition when the Hindu threat faded away, conflict arose among the Muslim intellectuals of East Pakistan and as a result different schools of thoughts and ideas emerged and developed. The situation was aggravated by the attempt of the Central Government to make Urdu the only National Language of Pakistan. Against strong protest the Provincial Government set up a "Language Committee" and this has been discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

Chapter V deals with the National Language controversy. In the tussle the Government finally declared Bengali and Urdu as the National Languages of Pakistan.

In Chapter VI, I tried to illustrate the progress of the cultural movement in East Pakistan through odds and hazards upto 1971, depicting alongside the attitude and role of the intelligentsia in moulding the destiny of its people.

Finally in the Concluding Chapter, I have drawn my conclusion in the light of my study.

Chapter - I

CHANGING ATTITUDE OF THE BENGALI MUSLIM INTELLIGENTSIA TOWARDS BENGALI LANGUAGE AND ISLAMIC VALUES

"Bengal is the land of both the Hindus and the Muslims— it is not the land of the Hindus only. But at present the Hindus and the Muslims are on different poles—completely heartless to each other. The Hindu-Muslim unity is very much essential for the all-round development of Bengal. But as long as the Muslim high-ups boast of being of different countries, and at the same time harbour the idea that Bengali is not their own language and as such they must not write Bengali nor learn Bengali, but only Urdu and Persian, the desired unity will never come because national unity owes its origin to the uniformity."¹ These valuable remarks had been made by Akshaya Kumar Sarkar in his criticism of "Gorai Bridge" (1873), a work of Mir Mosharraf Hossain. "A few aristocrats sitting at the graveyard of past glories, were still not certain about whether 'Bengali' or 'Urdu' should be the language of the Bengali Muslims. A few days later they formed language-oriented societies, held meetings and tried Bengali speeches to make the people of Bengal understand that Bengali was not the language of the Bengali Muslims nor is Urduised Bengali but that it should be pure Urdu."² The comment is of M. Enamul Huq. These two comments are identical—one had made the observation in the light of his practical experience and the other, on the basis of his researches. The dispute over the question of whether Bengali or Urdu was the mother-tongue of Bengali Muslim has been debated for a pretty

1 **Vanga Darshan, Panah, 1280 B. S.**

2 **Muhammad Enamul Huq, Muslim Bangla Shahitya, Pakistan Publications, Dhaka, 1965, (2nd Edition) p. 303.**

long time. It was carried on sometimes under the influence of the aristocrats, sometimes by the rising intellectuals and sometimes just for achieving political gain.

During the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar, Bengal was only a part of a wider administrative unit. For several centuries till the Partition of 1905 the region of Bengal included Bihar, Orissa and Chhoto Nagpur. This administrative position of Bengal helped the growth of a middle class, connected with the administrative service, including a considerable number of Muslims.

From the English translation of '**Syar-ul-Mutakherin**' of Syed Golam Hossain some details on them may be gathered. They were '**ashraf**' or successor of the aristocracy. Most of them were the non-Bengalee Muslims who had come to Bengal to seek fortune as participants in the Mughal administration. They held high military and civil positions under the patronage of the Nawabs of Dhaka and Murshidabad. Although these Muslims in course of time tried to identify themselves as Bengalis, their mother-tongue was Persian and in conversation with low class muslims and infidels they used Urdu, 'the language of the military camp.' For a long period since the tenth century a large number of **pirs, darweshas** and **aulias**, preaching the liberal philosophy of '**sufism**', did not draw any distinction between the **ashraf** and the **atraf** and there did not exist any class division between the foreign and the local Muslims. Yet the subsequent Mughal rule in Bengal gave rise to such a distinction.³

Urdu emerged as an oral language of the Mughal soldiers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the rule of emperor Shahjahan Urdu received the court recognition.⁴ Urdu was formed on the basic structures of the regional Hindi languages of Northern India by assimilating the Arabic alphabets and writing method and Arabic and Persian words and vocabularies. Urdu established its ascendancy as a language

3 **The Ittefaq**, 4th April, 1986, pp. 5-6

4 Abu Muhammad Habibullah, **Shamaj, Sanskriti O Itihasa** (Bangla Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1974), p. 77.

through the endeavour and efforts at first of Poet Galib, Hall and later on of Syed Ahmed and Sibli Nomani, the leaders of the Aligarh Movement. The language was afterwards carried to the centres of Dhaka and Murshidabad and other places by the **nawabs, subedars, mansabdars** and the members of their families. Since then Urdu culture began to strike roots among the aristocratic class. During Mughal rule, Bengal had a viable link with Delhi and at that time the fortune seekers gathered in the capital and commercial centres of Bengal. Gradually there grew a non-Bengali Urdu speaking class in this country and the group adopted Urdu as its family language.

In 1702 the capital of Bengal was shifted to Murshidabad. Since then the importance of Murshidabad increased and it became the centre of learning and culture. People aspiring to fame and riches became eager to adopt Urban culture. In order to enhance their social prestige they adopted urdu as the medium of learning and also of day-to-day communication. A strong motivation behind the preference for Urdu and Arabic-Persian, particularly in Bengali Muslim families, was keeping in contact with the administration. Hindu kings and zamindars mastered Persian and followed the **nawabi** etiquette and culture. Even the English at the initial stage would like to follow the **nawabi** life-style.⁵

Another development contributed to the numerical growth of the Urdu-speaking community. When Calcutta grew up as a modern city, avenues for earning livelihood increased manifold there. People from all corners of India began to crowd in Calcutta in quest of livelihood. Even intellectuals and learned people came to Calcutta in large number to enjoy the amenities of city life. As a result the influence of Urdu speaking people from other provinces of India continued unabated. Murshidabad lost its importance after 1757, Mysore fell in 1799 and Oudh in 1856. In order to avoid rebellion the British Company kept those royal families in Calcutta under its own custody at its own cost. The Nawabs of Murshidabad, Mysore and Oudh, along with a great number of retainers and

5 Gopal Halder, **Bangla Shahityer Ruparekha**, Vol. 1, (3rd Edition), p. 183.

devotees began to live respectively at Gardenreach, Tollygunj and Matlaburuz of Calcutta. Needless to say they were supporters of Urdu language.

The family language of the new Dhaka Nawab family was Urdu. Their fore-fathers came from Kashmir for commercial purpose and at first settled in Sylhet and then in Dhaka. Later one Hafizullah of this family set up a zamindari estate in 1812 by purchasing extensive landed property. In the days of the Sepoy Mutiny his fourth descendant Abdul Ghani actively helped the British and in return received the title of 'nawab.'

Both the old and the new zamindars of different parts of Bengal tended to conform to the Mughal culture to maintain their social and financial position. They adopted Urdu as their family language. They regarded the learning of Arabic-Persian as the learning of the cultured. The 'Saber' family of Rangpur-Paerabond, the 'Pannis' of Tangail-Karatia, the 'Gaznavis' of Delduar, the 'Chaudhuris' of Mymensingh-Dhanbari, Bogra and Shaistabad and the 'Suhrowardys' of Midnapore would use Urdu-Persian as their cultural media. The newly educated muslims, such as Abdul Latif, Syed Amir Ali, Abdur Rahim, Khan Bahadur Abdul Jabbar, Syed Shamsul Huda and others patronised Urdu, Persian and English. The Madrashah-educated **moulavis** and **maolanas** were also supporters of Urdu. Their medium of education was Urdu, they discoursed in Urdu and delivered speeches in religious functions in Urdu. They regarded Bengali as the language of the Hindus of Bengal.

In 1837 English was made the State Language in place of Persian. The Muslims felt the need of English education. Since then the government began to adopt a definite education policy. The Anglo-Persian faculty was opened in Calcutta Madrashah, and the Anglo-Arabic in the Hooghly Madrashah. In 1835-38 Adam in his Education Report recommended Urdu for the Muslims in urban areas and Bengali in rural areas. In Wood's despatch stress was put on primary education and as a result the number of schools greatly increased in villages. Just at that time Abdul Latif and Amir Ali initiated a movement for English education. Many came out of the Calcutta University with higher degrees. It was they who sowed the seeds of modernism in society. Educated young men began to cultivate Bengali literature. The truth that Bengali not Urdu, is the

mother-tongue of the Bengalis had been demonstrated time and again. It was understood that the study and culture of this language could better ensure the prosperity of the nation and society. The newly educated community realised this basic fact and a conflict started over the issue with the exponents of Urdu. The Bengali-Urdu question was a major issue in the sphere of Muslim education during the period. The Muslim masses in Bengal, both descendants of immigrants and local converts, formed part of the Bengali '**speech community**'. John Gumperz defined a '**speech community**' as a 'human aggregate characterised by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant difference in language use.'⁶ Thus we observe that although Urdu was the **lingua franca** of the Muslim elites and Arabic and Persian were two Islamic languages, they could never form Urdu, Arabic or Persian '**speech community**' such as happened in case of Bengali. Of course, there was little difference in the spoken dialects of the Bengali Muslims and Hindus at the popular level. The difference which could be observed was purely regional, and not communal and between the spoken and the literary Bengali. Similar difference were noticed between the speech habits of 'Mushalmans by descent and by conversion, the former using a mixed language and the latter speaking more like their Hindu ancestors'.⁷

The movement for the spread of education among the Bengalee Muslims was initiated by Abdul Latif. An analysis of his education programme shows that he was an advocate of Arabic-Persian-Urdu based oriental education. It is true that he had supported English language and Western knowledge and science; yet his main object was to take better advantages for the Muslims in the field of employment and to improve their social conditions. He was seldom keen on any innovation in the life and thought of Bengali Muslims. He was out and out a

6 John Gumperz, '**The Speech Community**' in *the International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences* (New York, 1968) (quoted by Rafiuddin Ahmed in his **The Bengal Muslims: 1871-1906—A Quest for Identity**, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981).

7 Rafiuddin Ahmed, pp. 106 - 132.

conservative. He had all along supported Madrashah education. In 1880 in a booklet on Muslim education Syed Ameer Hossain recommended the abolition of Madrashah education and establishment of modern colleges. As a protest Abdul Latif held a meeting of the Mohammedan Literary Society.⁸ After his death his son, Abdur Rahman, went on upholding his ideal and steered the movement in support of Madrashah education through the Mohammedan Literary Society. Abdul Latif had argued in favour of an Arabic-Persian based education. In the Hooghly Madrashah report he said: "unless a Mohammedan is a Persian and Arabic scholar, he cannot attain a respectable position in Mohammedan society, i.e. he will not be regarded or respected as a scholar, and unless he has such a position, he can have no influence in the Mohammedan Community. Consequently a Mohammedan who has received English Education, and has omitted the study of the Persian and Arabic, is little able to impart the benefit of that education to the members of his community. But, if he knows Persian and Arabic along with English, he acquires an influence in society and is of course sure to use his influence in the interests of the government. The government should, therefore, in my humble opinion, devise such means whereby the Mohammedans may be taught at once English and Persian and Arabic."⁹ Latif's comments express not only his own attitude to education but also that of the then muslim aristocrats. For instance, in an article 'Our Education' in the 'Hitakari' Mosharraf has said : "The spread of education should be geared up with an eye to our society. In the society there is no demand for middle vernacular, the same fate hangs over entrance. It is really unfortunate if the national education fails to keep pace with national politics and its policies. So the education of Urdu and Persian is essential, only English education would not give us any dividend.... By learning only English and Bengali in total neglect to Urdu and Persian none can face the society in a

8 Syed Ameer Hossain, **A pamphlet on Mohammadan Education in Bengal**, Bose Press, Calcutta, 1880.

9 Enamul Huq (ed), **Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif : His Writings and Related Documents**, Samudra Prokashani Dhaka, 1968, P.23

dignified way. In the context of the situation learning of Urdu and Persian along with primary education is obligatory." ¹⁰

Abdul Latif set up the Mohammedan Literary Society to generate extra eagerness among his countrymen with regard to Western learning and culture. In the monthly, yearly and emergency meetings of the society, discourses and lectures and publication of articles in Urdu, Persian and Arabic were arranged. Bengali had no place there. On the day of the inauguration of the Society on 2nd April, 1863 Abdul Latif read out his article in Persian stating the objects and aims of the society.

In the fifth session of the society, F.G. Tille read his article on '**Electricity and Electric message**' in English and Abdul Latif with a view to making it intelligible to the audience read out its Urdu version. All articles of Abdul Latif were written either in English or in Persian. In 1863 the first Agricultural exhibition under the auspices of the Government was held in Alipore. Abdul Latif as a member of the exhibition committee wrote in Urdu leaflets and booklets on the objects and utilities of the exhibition. Sir Cecil Beadon approved of them and advised him to translate them into Bengali. In his autography he wrote, 'I translated it into Bengali and circulated several thousands of copies in the mofussil with the best results.' ¹¹ Perhaps this is the only specimen of his culture of Bengali. In the '**Rais and Rayat**' it was stated that Abdul Latif was well versed in Bengali. Mosharraf Hossain dedicated his drama '**Bashanta Kumari**' to Abdul Latif. In the dedication he wrote that Abdul Latif had some inclination towards Bengali literature. Evidently Abdul Latif knew Bengali and had an interest in it. In 1882 he recommended to the Hunter Education Commission to arrange for instruction through the medium of Urdu for the education of middle and upper classes of Muslims, while the lower class Muslims of villages would preferably be taught in Bengali : To quote Abdul Latif :

10 Kazi Abdul Mannan, **Adhunik Bangla Shahitye Muslim Sadhana**, Student Ways, Dhaka, 1969 (2nd ed.) P.326

11 Enamul Huq, **op-cit**, P.174.

"Briefly summarised my opinion as regards Bengal is that primary instruction for the lower classes of the people, who for the most part are ethnically allied to the Hindoos should be in the Bengali Language—purified, however, from the super structure of Sanskritism of learned Hindoos and supplemented by the numerous words of Arabic and Persian origin which are current in everyday speech : for the Bengali of the low-courts furnishes a good example. For the middle and upper classes of Mohammedans, Urdu should be recognised as the vernacular....' The middle and upper classes of Mohammedans are descended from the original conquerors of Bengal, or the pious, the learned and the brave men, who were attracted from Arabia, Persia and Central Asia to the service of the Mohammedan rulers of Bengal; or from the principal officers of Government, who... were appointed and sent from the Imperial Court, many of whom permanently settled in these parts. All these, for the most part naturally retain the Urdu as their vernacular. " ¹²

It was the fourth reply to the Commission with regard to mother tongue being the medium of instruction. In respect of languages of Bengali Muslims he classified the nation into two components. The Bengali of the Muslims of Bengal is not different from that of the Hindus. The Muslim Bengali should be free from Sanskrit influence and should learn adequate Arabic-Persian words. These views of Abdul Latif on education, language, culture may be taken as those of the existing leaders of society and this was a cultural crisis. What impact this crisis had left on the people of Bengal is stated by Badruddin Omar, "The Bengali Muslims continued for sometime more to acquire Arabic, Persian and Urdu by indulging in utter neglect to mother tongue. As a result such Muslim educated young men failed to get any job under the new administrative structure of British rule to earn their livelihood and were compelled to work as **maulavis** in madrasahs and **maktabs**, as **Imams** of mosques etc. Thus, the economic, social and cultural progress of the entire Muslim society was seriously impeded. " ¹³

12 **Ibid.** P.225

13 Badruddin Omar, **Purba Banglar Sanskritir Sankat, Nabajatak Prakashan** Calcutta, 1971, P.11

Syed Amir Ali occupies the second place next to Abdul Latif. His father Sadat Ali was a resident of Oudh. He at first came to Orissa from Oudh and then finally settled at Chinsura. Amir Ali was born in Cuttak of Orissa. He could not change over to Bengali from Urdu in only one generation. After going through '**History of the Arabs**' translated into Bengali by Sheikh Raizuddin of Rangpur, he wrote to him from London : with the limited knowledge of Bengali, I can safely say that the Bengali version of my Short History of Saracens has been done unique.¹⁴ Amir Ali learned Bengali but never cultured it.

His attitude was for the welfare of the Muslim community of entire India. All his works dealing with the glories of the Muslims are written in English. Through his 'Central Mohammedan Association' he sought to make the newly educated Muslims conscious of their heritage. The works of the Association were conducted in both English and Urdu. Bengali was not used there. Delwar Hossain Ahmed of Hooghly, Serajul Islam and Syed Shamsul Huda of Comilla, Abdul Karim of Sylhet, Abdur Rahim and Obaidullah Sahrowardy of Midnapore, Khan Bahadur Abdul Jabbar of Burdwan — all were vehement supporters of Urdu and left their mark in the spheres of govt. offices, educational institutions and meetings and societies. After graduation, Abdul Karim became the editor of the Urdu Paper the '**Darul Sultanat**' in three languages - English, Bengali and Urdu.¹⁵ Md. Yusuf and Syed Amir Hossain were inhabitants of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar respectively. They had been in Calcutta for a long time for professional reasons. In some aspects they provided leadership to society. At a meeting of the Calcutta Muslim Education Society held under the auspices of the Presidency Magistrate, Abdur Rahim, it was decided to set up a **maktab** at Karea. In respect of imparting education in the **maktab** Principal Edward Ross of the Calcutta Madrashah suggested that in the **maktab** the medium of instruction should be Urdu, arguing that the Muslim nationality of Bengal

14 Sheikh Raizuddin Ahmad, **Arab Jatir Itihasha**, Vol. II, Brahman Mission Press, Calcutta, 1319 B.S. (Tr.).

15 Muhammad Ali Azam, **Life of Mouvi Abdul Karim**, Calcutta, 1939, P.37.

would be greatly weakened if the medium of instruction were Bengali. ¹⁶

Syed Amir Ali, Sir Abdur Rahim, Syed Shamsul Huda, Delwar Hossain Ahmed were present in that meeting. This amply proved that the Bengali members present there did subscribe to the view. Sheikh Abdur Rahim, the editor of the **Mihir** said, "many raise strong objection when Bengali is regarded as a language by itself. Specially the Nawab Bahadur, Khan Bahadur, a few doctors and a few x y z living in aristocratic areas have not accepted Bengali as a language. It is therefore quite foolish to take seriously their views on Bengali." ¹⁷ Mozaffar Ahmed in an article wrote about these Urdu-seekers, "a few non-Bengali Muslims live in Calcutta for different purposes. A few of them have settled in Calcutta permanently. They are trying to acquire Urdu as their mother tongue. But it is a great folly with them when they try to introduce Urdu instead of Bengali among the Bengali Muslims. There is also a group with them which try to do this harm. These groups are almost pure Bengalis." ¹⁸ The **mullahs** would support Urdu. Mozaffar Ahmed said, "There is a group of people who become overwhelmed at the very sight of the crooked characters of the alphabet. In other words whatever is written in Arabic is true and sacred to them. As Urdu is written in Arabic character, all what is written in Urdu is the religion. Again many think that Urdu literature has attained its full perfection and as such Bengali Muslims must learn Urdu. If they fail they will be deprived of the boon of Islamic civilization." ¹⁹

The Madrashahs of Calcutta, Hooghly, Dhaka, Rajshahi and Chittagong produced these categories of **mullahs**. Without having education in Bengali and English they did not get government jobs, ultimately returned to villages and worked as religious teachers of **maktabs** and **madrashahs**, performed religious functions and held **jalshas** and **milads**. They would feel

16 **Mihir O Sudhakar, 13th Ashar, 1309 B.S.**

17 **Ibid.**

18 **Al-Eslam, 1324 B. S.**

19 **Mozaffar Ahmed - Urdu Bhasha O Banglo Mussalman, Al-Eslam, Sravan, 1324 B.S.**

gratified to speak in Urdu, after the fashion of town-based aristocrats. The **Noor-al-Iman** called these Urdu-seekers **khedmatgars** and commented, "The sons of the so-called aristocrats and their **khedmatgars** speak Urdu, hate Bengali. But they.... find it easier to express their mind fully in Bengali, they refrain from doing so because of their hatred for the language."²⁰

Sheikh Abdus Sobhan criticized Muslim zamindars for their ignorance of and aversion to Bengali : "You (zamindars), a few of you sometimes are proud to say 'we are the real English aristocrats'.... Ill luck it would have been if our ancestors had not come to India. How can we learn Bengali ? Is Bengali fit for aristocratic Muslims? ... Yet on Bengali depends your propriety, you are harming yourselves — yet you harbour hatred towards Bengali."²¹

Some Bengali writers had a warm concern in their heart for Urdu. They would regard Urdu as the **lingua franca** or a medium of communication of all Indian Muslims. So they wanted to keep up studies of Urdu for Bengali Muslims. Mohammad Akram Khan in his presidential address in the All Bengal Muslim Conference says, "...Urdu is neither our mother tongue nor is it our national language. But Urdu is essential for preservation and development of Indian Muslim Nationality."²² The most objectionable comment was made by Mohammad Reazuddin in his introduction to the book '**Hasrat Mohammad Mostafa**'. He wrote : "The Muslim nationalistic character of the Indian Muslims would be very much jeopardised if there would not have been Urdu. The Muslims of Bengal have been greatly harmed as their mother tongue is Bengali. Only for this reason have they become devoid of national feelings, downcast, weak and coward. About three hundred and fifty million Bengali Muslims have been totally spoiled by Sanskritized Bengali. They have become segregated from the Muslims of other provinces

20 **Noor-Al-Iman, Bhadra, 1307 B.S.**

21 Sheikh Abdul Sobhan - **Hindu Mussalman**, Victoria Press, Calcutta, 1888, P.97

22 **Vanglo Mussalman Shahitya Patrika, Magh 1325 B.S.**

only because of this language barrier."²³ This statement was similar in meaning to that of Ross. Thus we find in it the real backdrop of the remarks made by Akshaya Kumar Sarkar and Enamul Huq. Facing this adverse attitude with regard to language the Bengali writers of that age had to continue their writings. This honest effort gained a momentum through Bengali journals. The number of Muslim-edited journals increased greatly in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In articles and editorials of these journals Bengali as the mother tongue had been given preference over Urdu so far as the Urdu versus Bengali dispute was concerned. Mir Mosharrif Hossain in his article '**Our Education**' published in the **Hitkari** said, "The mother tongue of the Bengali Muslims is Bengali. He who has no feeling for mother-tongue is not a man in the true sense of the term. Mother-tongue should have greater preference in household affairs. . . . The Bengalis need Bengali even in household works and works related to offices."²⁴ He was the first to assert that the man having no faith in mother tongue is not a man at all. Abdul Karim Shahitya Visharad was a great exponent of Bengali language. He had not the least doubt that Bengali is the mother tongue of all Bengalis. He would deem it a foolish imagination to adopt any language other than Bengali in daily works and conversations. Even he did not like to admit any disformation of the Bengali language. Perhaps he was the first to realise the signal of **Vanga-Darshan**. He said, "If a downtrodden society or nation aspires to change its condition for the better that must be done with the assistance of a national language— none else can change the lot. If Bengali is to be given up, then we shall have to forsake our co-partner Hindu-brothers... whatever do you say ? The Hindus and the Muslims are two main off-shoots of the same tree— they are the two parts of a same body."²⁵ Abdul Karim called them as traitors who tried to create divisions in the social structure. Again he described them as hypocritical social benefactors who in the name of national language tried

23 Reazuddin Ahmad - **Hasrat Mohammad Mustafa**, Solemani Press, Calcutta, 1355 B.S. (4th edition), Introduction.

24 Kazi Abdul Mannan, *op.cit*, P.327

25 **Islam Pracharak**, January, 1903, pp.21-22

topervert the mother-tongue, "although Bengali was termed as the daughter of Sanskrit, it was nourished and developed in the laps of Muslim nurses." So Bengali is the joint property of the Hindus and the Muslims, to forsake it was to forsake oneself.²⁶

The editor of the 'Nabayug' Syed Emdad Ahmed was completely convinced of the need to accept Bengali as mother-tongue. He had said that Bengali is the mother-tongue of the majority people of Bengal and without this they cannot survive. In the opinion of the writer many Muslims holding high posts were not ready to accept Bengali as mother-tongue. On the contrary, they wanted to make Urdu mother-tongue of the Bengalis. In their opinion 'Bengali is the language of the cowards, and in whole of India there should be one language for the Muslims and that must be Urdu'.²⁷ In protest against this opinion Syed Emdad Ali said, "Is it possible to introduce the usage of an alien language by dislodging the language which has gradually brought even the simplest Muslim peasants of Bengal under your control... now why is there a futile attempt of the so-called leaders for blocking the smooth progress of education?"²⁸ The outlook of Syed Emdad Ali was very practical— as education is related to language so prosperity is related to education. It would be unfortunate if education and prosperity of the society are impeded by an artificially created language problem. In an article under the title "Mother Tongue and National Prosperity" Ismail Hossain Sirajee did not draw any difference between the patronage of mother tongue and that of national prosperity. In his opinion 'mother-tongue is the language of heart and it is sacred and worthy of worship. It is a great sin if it is not properly served.'²⁹ In the Muslim society 'learning Bengali was often considered as irreligious as learning English.'³⁰ The demand was now raised that it would be sin if Bengali was not learnt. The national feelings of the Bengali Muslims could

26 Naba Nur, Jaistha, 1311 B.S., p.59

27 Naba Nur, Paush, 1310 B.S., P.348.

28 Ibid, p.344

29 Islam Pracharak, January-February, 1902.

30 Ibid. September-October, 1901, p.308.

thus be created by giving Bengali the status of mother-tongue and initiating movement for giving the language due prestige and position in national life.

Along with the Bengali-Urdu Controversy there started a dispute centring round Arabic-Persian and Sanskrit words. It was suggested that literature had to be composed in such a language as included the bulk of Arabic-Persian words generally used in the daily life of Bengali Muslims. The language must not be sanskritised like the language used by the Hindus. Abdul Latif raised this point in a reply to the Hunter Commission. He wanted to give Bengali a Muslim character by an admixture of Arabic- Persian words. The obvious result would be that the religious education of the lower class Muslims would be easier and a viable connection would be established with the culture of the middle class. **Syed Nawab Ali** in his book '**Vernacular Education in Bengal**' opposed the sanskritized pattern of Bengali in School Text Books."³¹ The Muslim writers of Bengal were greatly influenced by this dispute. Some of them dreamt of creating a separate language. As the Islamic religious faith and customs were reflected in the Muslim social life, so the use of Arabic- Persian words became almost unavoidable. Some religious words have no synonyms. Mirza Mohammad Yunus Published a community booklet under the title '**Dugdha Sarover**' (Milk-pond). In the book Arabic-Persian words were used profusely. Yusuf Ali said, "a few of Arabic, Persian, Hindi words and those of other languages that have made inroads into the colloquial language of rural population of Bengal through centuries, had been used in '**Dugdha Sarover**'. And for that reason a Hindu newspaper critic in his criticism sarcastically remarked : "the milk boiled in Muslim kitchen is untouchable for the Hindus and on account of this we could not realise the tastes of that milk."³² Mirza Yusuf Ali could not take the remark easy. When the '**Noor-al-Iman**' was published under his editorship he presented some arguments in support of this."³³

31 Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, **Vernacular Education in Bengal**, Calcutta, 1900, p.10.

32 **Nur-Al-Iman**, Sravan, 1307 B.S.

33 Dr. Mustafa Nurul Islam, **Samayik Patre Jivan O Janamat** (1901-1930), **Bangla Academy**, Dhaka, 1977, pp.328-329.

"We are Muslims. The words of Bengali language that are used by the members of our families, servants and maid servants and neighbours must remain abundantly in our compositions.

When the father of modern Bengali language Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was adorning Bengali he was averse to using **Rajadhiraj, Chakravarti** etc. instead of **Badshah, Darbar** etc.

If God pleases **Noor-al-Iman'** may adorn Bengali with the soft-fragrance-diffusing rose garland."

It was also written, "those who have learnt Bengali in **Pathshalas** (Primary schools) with the Hindu-teachers and through text books written by the Hindus, have learnt Bengali parrot-like only Sanskrit-based chaste Bengali. At the time of speaking and writing the Sanskrit pandits use chaste Bengali. They discard Islamic words which have unchangeable and unaltered connection with the religion of Islam and they try to use Sanskrit version of those words in their writings... . spirited natural Bengali, if freed from letters, may usher in a remarkable prosperity to the rural Muslim society of Bengal.... without hating Bengali as a language of the Hindus, let Bengali be made quite suitable and adaptable to time and circumstances."³⁴ What Syed Emdad Ali had said in the article '**Mother Tongue and the Bengalee Muslims**' hinted at the need of a separate language for the Muslims. He wrote, "we may make room for us in this new sort of Bengali language and it is imperative for us. If we fail the Muslim society will gradually lose its own specialities and take to a strange feature by reading Bengali full of Hindu feelings and ideals. For this Muslim society may be separated from the main current of Hinduised Bengali but this will not in any way harm Bengali as a language nor the country herself; rather it will enrich Bengali language. Although Bengali shall assume different appearance for the sake of a particular community, it will not bring any basic change to the language."³⁵ The observation in this respect of Mohammad Reazuddin Ahmed, the editor of the '**Islam Pracharak**' had

34 **Nur-al-Iman, Bhadra, 1307 B.S.**

35 **Naba Nur, Paush, 1310 B.S., p.349**

a similar strain. He wrote, : the day when we will be able to assimilate nationalistic words, feelings of national spirit, religious mindedness in the language of Bengali, we shall be able to harvest the full benefit of Bengali as mother tongue... If the studies of Arabic, persian and Urdu languages get stopped in this country, we, the Muslims would turn Hindus and in that case our existence like that of the Buddhists shall merge into Hinduism."³⁶ The observations had not only reflected an inferiority complex but also a sordid petty self-interest of the Muslim middle class. The adoption of new form of Bengali language' was a cover for incompetence and fear of Hinduism had been used as a shield.

Like language and vocabularies, discussions were made in papers and journals on literary aspects and structures. Advertisements and criticisms on theatres used to be published in the '**Mihir and Sudhakar**'. This provoked Ibn-e-Ma'az to write a strong protest article in the **Islam Pracharak**. In the opinion of the writer, performance of theatre is a wide way to sin. This poison has been doing great harm to the youth of the country and the fact needs no explanation. These are generally the fields of sins.'³⁷ Apprehending harm to society from these compositions the writer further said, 'if the theatre-based advertisements and criticism mentally harm and spoil a Muslim and downgrade him spiritually will not the theatre owners and the editors be responsible?'³⁸ Drama literature is related to theatres and states. So to oppose performance of theatres was to oppose dramas as arts. Like songs and dances **jatras** and theatres are not approved in Islam and this belief gave rise to this sort of adverse attitude.

The '**Lahiri**' was first published in **Baishakh of 1307 B.S.** In criticising the paper the editor of the '**Islam Pracharak**' commented: "We have no doubt that the first Muslim poet-edited paper would be very elegant in respects. But we are afraid of the condition of the society. The Muslim community of Bengal is still in deep slumber. Those who are said to beeducated are lifeless. We are not in favour of poems

36 **Islam Pracharak**, January, 1903, p.21 (Footnote).

37 **Ibid**, March-April, 1900, p.285.

38 **Ibid**.

written fully in English pattern and style. The poetry written in Muslim pattern and style is not a matter to be overlooked. We hope the editor must take this fact into consideration."³⁹ By mentioning poetry in English pattern and style the critic perhaps referred to modern lyrics. He opposed sentimentalism in poetry in view of the current condition of the Muslim society of Bengal. Poetry inspired by national feelings was then necessary to rouse the sleeping and lifeless nation. Influenced by this idea Ismail Hossain Siraji also opposed writing of imaginative, subjectless and purely lyrical poetry. He himself was a creative writer. Yet he never admitted the necessity for writing delicate art-based poetry, stories, novels, dramas and songs. He made a plea for writing on religion, learning, and science to meet the dire needs of the time and the community as well. He published an article in the 'Nabanur'. There is no denying the fact that literature had contributions to make towards building a nation and development of community. But all types of literature cannot do that. In his opinion, 'the value of literature is more than that of the royal treasures.' On the contrary, bad literature with its obnoxious feelings, imagination and thought is more dangerous than any other sin. Observing a great increase in the number of novels and stories in Bengali literature he expressed a fear and said : "Right from the weeklies to journals all papers are full of cock and bull stories and abnormal love affairs. Can no better benefit be expected from reading history, philosophy, epic, science, religious literature, sociology, biographies, archaeology, biology than by reading novels and stories?"⁴⁰ In line with the Hindu writers, the Muslim writers should not write soft-reading imaginary novels and poetry because the Muslim community is downgraded and distressed. Now there is a need of spirited ambitious literature and not the rotten stuff." His appeal was: 'Brethren be aware. The Bengalee Muslims have died in sins. Please do not rot the crops by spreading poison of love. They will never revive if you do so.'⁴¹ In the introduction of 'Roynandini' Ismail Hossain Siraji wrote: 'It is desirable to maintain good term between the Hindus and

39 **Ibid**, November-December, 1899, pp.190-191.

40 **Naba Nur, Jaistha, 1310 B.S. PP. 59-60.**

41 **Ibid Ashar, p.103.**

the Muslims who are inhabitants of the same country. But it is a matter of great pity that the Bengali brethren are sowing seeds of discord, being enamoured of the past glories of their Aryan ancestors. For the sake of well-being of the country by way of counteracting against them and in order to rouse self respect among the Muslims I have written '**Roynandini**' just to abide by dictates to duties."⁴²

Kaikobad too received inspiration from religious thinking and idealism for his writing. In the introduction of '**Siva Mandir**' he wrote: True literature is the greatest medium to awake a down trodden and sleeping nation.... Bad characters as delineated in literature by so-called literary men drag the society to ruin and fall. In this composition I tried to present the crisis of good and bad and had shown the downfall of sin."⁴³ The Hindu writers, in order to rouse patriotism and nationalism, incorporated the past national glories, myths and history as themes of literature. The Muslim writers similarly devoted themselves to making literature on themes relating to past Muslim glories illustrating characters and religious topics. At the time of the renaissance the past stories of heroism and great characters inspired the nation. For instance, during the Wahabi-Faraidi Movement in the middle of the nineteenth century, attempt was made to revive religiousness.

The idea of **Pan-Islamism** was introduced by Sayyid Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1838-1897) in the seventh decade of the nineteenth century. His message to Muslims all over the world was, first, to present a united front against the imperialist West, and secondly, to cast aside their fears and suspicions and to adopt the institutions and techniques that were the secret of Western strength. The only political rallying point of the Muslims in those days could be Istambul because not only was it the seat of the Caliphate (**Khilafat**) but it was also the citadel of the Ottoman empire, still by far the most advanced Muslim power.⁴⁴

42 **Siraji Rachanbali** (novels), Kendriya Bangla Unnayan Board, Dhaka, 1967, P.5.

43 Kaikobad - **Siva Mandir**, 1921 (Introduction)

44 **Struggle for Independence 1857-1947** (A Pictorial Record), Pakistan Publications. Karachi, March, 1958, p. 36.

The idea of **Pan-Islamism** fired the imagination of the Muslims of the sub-continent. Having lost their freedom to a foreign power and acutely conscious of their altered status, the Muslims were inspired by the message of **Pan-Islamism** with a new hope and a rare faith in the future.

Pan-Islamism does not admit state or national barrier—it aspires for unity and fraternity of the world Muslims. The Wahabists declared the British ruled India as 'darul-harb' and advocated 'hijrat' to Muslim-ruled Afghanistan. For all these the Muslims of India would feel attracted to Arab-Iran traditions and culture. On the other hand, as a reaction to the revival of Hindu culture, feelings of reverence towards Islamic tradition and culture were then roused in the Muslims, and in them a quest for an Islamic identity began. Since the nineteenth century they repeatedly sought this identity, actually not for upward mobility but for a separate cultural identity.⁴⁵ There arose a question of avoiding Hinduism in literature. Self-respect of the Muslims got so strong that Nawab Abdul Latif had opposed inclusion of anti-Muslim English books in the University text. He said: "the necessity for the students of the country of being acquainted with the two great oriental heroes by reading Sohrab-Rustom is greater than to learn Greek myths by reading the Illiad."⁴⁶ Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury raised the same objection against the kind of Hinduism that was incorporated in the text books of village schools. Hindu gods and goddesses and myths got dominance in text books written by the Hindu writers. The Muslim students could hardly know anything about their religion, tradition and history. In Hindu literature and history the Muslims were painted mainly as villains and murderers and by reading all these the Muslim students would harbour a bad notion about their ancestors. As such Nawab Ali Chowdhury raised a question : "should we send our boys to schools only to learn of the vices and not of the virtues of our civilization and our fore-fathers ?"⁴⁷

45 Rafiuddin Ahmed, *op.cit.*, pp.120-122.

46 Enamul Huq, *op.cit.*, p.220

47 Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, *op.cit.*, p.11

In the 1886-87 yearly conference of the '**Mussalman Surid Sanmilani**' of Dhaka it was observed : "many of the Muslim educated youths can easily tell the biographies of the great grandfather of Jesus Christ, can name of the sixteen hundred gopinis of Sree Krishna but if they are asked to tell the tenets of Islam they will remain dumb-founded. It is a matter of great regret that there is no arrangement for religious teaching in schools.... So the Muslim guardians are opposed to give their children English or Bengali teaching and in fact our social bondage is gradually getting loose for want of religious education and there is no doubt about it."⁴⁸ Against the text books of primary schools the **Noor-al-Iman** wrote: "the text books, coached in the **pathshala**, are ridden with Hindu myths, the battles of Rama-Ravana and Kuru-Pandava and the Muslim students have to be swallowed them. Along with these the Hindu mannerism, customs are to be memorised by them. They are not spared by doing this only. They have to read books containing hatred against Islam and its customs. How then is it possible to infuse in them self-respect and national respect against so much odds ?"⁴⁹ Raising a similar objection one writer wrote in the '**Bashana**' : 'every Muslim should take utmost effort for publication in simple Bengali language of Islamic historical events, stories of Muslim heroes and heroines, stories of Muslim saints and biographies of prophets, history of kings and sultans, tenets of Islam, extracts of hadith usefulness of prayer and fasting etc. and attempt for incorporate them in school text books.'⁵⁰

The prevailing outlook of society produced this idea among the writers. They had to write with special attention to religious rights and social justice on the one hand and on the other, the demand of the age and society. In the age under review the novels and dramas written by Muslims were very few in number and their merit was insignificant. Limitation in

48 **Dhaka Mussalman Surid Sanmilani**, 1886-87 (Programmes), pp.6-7.

49 **Nur-al-Iman**, Sravan, 1307 B.S.

50 **Bashana**, Jaistha, 1316 B.S.

regard to subject matter and structures is a great obstacle for a free and lucid literature. Those who tried to create literature with an eye to the dictates of society became imprisoned in narrow ideas. An artificial literature like this may serve society, but it loses its life and lucidity. The literature of the Muslim writers of this age showed such shortcomings.

Feelings, language, words, self analysis and inspiration for renaissance—all are there in their writings but they are stained with the touch of communalism. Although the Muslim writers accepted Bengali as mother-tongue they were not unbiased about themes and as such they failed to produce any real literature. They had to wait longer for that. Quazi Nazrul Islam with his tremendous life-force and constructive genius could at first break and overcome the social barriers and hindrances.

Chapter - II

REACTION TO HINDU NATIONALISM IN THE 19TH CENTURY

An important aspect of the social and political history of Bengal from the middle of the nineteenth century to the second half of the twentieth century was the relation between the Hindus and the Muslims. It was also reflected in the contemporary Bengali literature.

At the very beginning of the nineteenth century the entire population of Bengal was mainly divided into two major religious camps—Hinduism and Islam. Most probably, one third of the total population of this period was Muslim.¹ Since thirteenth century the Muslims had been a sizeable population of Bengal. The liberal religious principles of Islam attracted the low-caste Hindus and as a result they began to embrace Islam in an increasing number. Consequently upper caste Hindus considered the Muslims as people of low origin. Even at the end of the nineteenth century respectable Muslims would have no access to the houses of the Hindus.² Moreover during the exciting days of the Independence Movement Muslim compatriots had to vacate the court-yards of their Hindu compatriots just to give them scope to drink water. Rabindra Nath mentioned such incidents on several occasions.³

According to the opinion of Tarachand and others there is no pure separate Hindu-Muslim culture nor is there any unified culture of the two communities in the Indian sub-continent. But similarities are observed between them due to their living together for a pretty long time.⁴ But even after living together for six or seven centuries both the communities maintained their separate identities. It is true that there was influence of sufism on

1 R.C. Majumder, **History of Freedom Movement in India**, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1963, p.32.

2 **Ibid**, pp. 36-37.

3 **Rabindra Rachanabali**, vol. XXIV, **Vishwa Bharati**, 1965, p. 262.

4 Tarachand , **Influence of Islam on Indian Culture**, Allahabad, 1946, p. 137.

the **vaishnava** cult and the Muslim poets too wrote **Vaishnava Padabali**. The **baul** cult also attracted both the Hindus and the Muslims and there were marked similarities between **pirbad** and **gurubad**, yet the differences in the observance of religious and social lives of the two communities are unmistakable. In the language of Enamul Huq, 'as we perceive direct or indirect Muslim influence in the Hindu-Bengali literature, so also we notice a similar Hindu influence in Muslim-Bengali literature. But this does not mean that the Hindus converted the Muslims to Hinduism and **vice versa**. It might result out of the study of Sanskrit by the Muslims and of Persian by the Hindus.'⁵

This mutual influence was due to their living together for a long time. Likewise local reformations and admixture of certain social customs and manners were natural. "But these were minor points and did not touch the essentials of life. In all vital matters affecting culture the Hindus and Muslims lived in two watertight compartments as it were."⁶ Since the advent of the Muslims in Bengal, the Hindus and the Muslims have been very carefully preserving their respective individualities. In the initial years of the nineteenth century, inspite of a few stray communal disturbances, the Hindus and the Muslims lived together as peace-loving neighbours.

The rule of the East India Company could not be secured just with the fall of Nawab Sirajuddowla and Mir Qasim. Resistance was offered by the general people to the Company. In fact the one hundred years from 1757 to 1857 of the Company's rule was a period of exploitation and repression through revenue policy and unfair trade and also consequently of recurring rural unrest. In such cases of resistance, Hindus and Muslims often jointly participated. The rebel **sanyasis** and the **fakirs** enjoyed widespread mass support and it had been a great headache for the Company for a long time.⁷ In spite of organizational differences an identical anti-British sentiment brought the Muslim **fakirs**

5 "Madhya Yuger Bangla Shahitya", 'Language and Literature Week : 1370 B.S., Bengali Department', Dhaka University, 1964, p.45.

6 Majumder, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

7 J.M. Ghose, **Sanyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal**, Calcutta, 1930, p. 62

and the Hindu **sanyasis** closer. The **fakir** leader Majnu Shah had a close communication with **sanyasi** leaders Bhabani Pathak and Devi Chaudhurani.⁸ The local Muslim weavers also actively co-operated with the **santal** rebels.⁹

The misery of the general mass greatly increased as a result of the deindustrialization of the Indian economy.¹⁰ In such economic, social and political conditions in the country, the Sepoy Mutiny (War of Independence) took place in 1857. Scholars are divided in their opinions on the nature and character of the mutiny. The British called the mutiny merely an act of insubordination on the part of the sepoys or an attempt at the revival of feudalism. On the other hand, in 1957 it was treated with much reverence in Pakistan and India as the first national uprising against the English. The centenary of the mutiny was observed in both the countries with pride and esteem.

The contemporary Bengali Hindu intelligentsia did not approve of the mutiny. They considered it harmful to their interests.¹¹ The part of the reason for this was that right from the days of Ram Mohan educated Bengali Hindus did not normally favour any movement against the English. In spite of his full knowledge of the oppression and repression of the English, Ram Mohan was hopeful about some regenerative aspects of the English administrative system. So his objects were two-fold : to bring reformation in the administrative system and to make the people able to enjoy more civic and political rights by imparting them innocent religious education without rousing any dissatisfaction and disharmony.¹²

In fact due to the ardent effort of Ram Mohan and Vidyasagar English education among the Hindus quickly spread. Acquisition of Western knowledge and science stimulated

8 Narahari Kaviraj, "**Swadhinata Sangrame Bangla**", National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1957, p.53.

9 **Ibid**, p. 82.

10 Ramesh Dutt, **The Economic History of India**, Vol. II, (2nd Edition) Delhi, 1960, Chapter - VII, pp. 73-79.

11 Benoy Ghosh, **The Bengali Intelligentsia and the Revolt**, (Rebellion 1957), New Delhi, 1957.

12 Kazi Abdul Wadud, '**Banglar Jagaran**', **Vishwa Bharati**, 1963 B.S. p. 37.

movements for religious and social reformation in the Hindu society and gradually an educated Hindu middle class developed in Bengal. In Hindu thought three currents were then identifiable: the old conservatives, the newly educated Young Bengal and the Brahmas. The old conservatives wanted a purified form of Hindu religion. The Young Bengal group, had a broad outlook on social and religious questions. The role of the Brahma Samaj was partly to maintain a balance between the two. The patriotism of Ram Mohan, Debendra Nath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Akshaya Kumar Dutt of the Brahma Samaj, and Ram Gopal Ghosh and others of the Young Bengal group is unquestionable. But none of them was at the time against British rule. On the other hand, Universities were set up in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857 and as a result the scope for higher education for the Bengali Hindus expanded. English education constituted for them a big advantage and it was not possible at that moment for them to give up those advantages and support the cause of the mutiny. Besides this "the class characteristics of the middle class are to oppose mass movement or rebellion. So the Bengali intelligentsia by opposing the cause of the sepoy mutiny had observed its class character."¹³

Yet it is striking that the trend of social awakening in Bengali literature was noticed from the poems of Iswar Gupta and the writings on the mutiny published in the '**Sangbad Pravakar.**' In all these writings the sepoy mutiny was pictured as a misdeed of the Muslims.¹⁴ Hindus who took part in the mutiny were also condemned by the middle class Hindus. Thus we find that with the end of the mutiny when the editors of the English papers of Calcutta recommended to the government strong punitive punishment for both Hindu and Muslim participants in the mutiny, Iswar Gupta became worried at this and appealed to the government that the entire Hindu community should not be considered guilty of the offence committed by a few Hindus.¹⁵

13 Benoy Ghosh, **Bengali Intelligentsia and Sepoy Mutiny**, *Natun Shahitya*, Part VIII, 1st issue, *Baishakh*, 1364 B.S., p. 9

14 **The Sangbad Pravakar** (editorial), dated 20.6.1857 & 29.6.1857. Binoy Ghosh, **Samoyik Patre Banglar Samaj Chitra**, vol. I, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 226-232, 236-237.

15 **Iswar Gupter Granthabali**, *Bashumati Shahitya Mandir*, P. 320.

A few years later in 1860 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan also spoke in the same strain to preserve the muslim interest from further erosion. The Muslims of India, he pleaded, were more loyal than the Hindus. Every right thinking man, he thought, was glad to find that the few irresponsible Muslims who had taken part in the mutiny had been duly punished. But it was unjustified to hold the entire Muslim community responsible for the misdeed of a few Muslims.¹⁶ This attitude of self-defence of the two communities made them hostile to each other.

The Hindu-Muslim relation became more complex at the end of the sepoy mutiny. The main expectation of the English during the mutiny was that there would grow a feeling of antipathy between Hindu and Muslim sepoys and that they would forget the unity. The expectation was fulfilled after the mutiny. The Hindus entirely blamed the Muslims for the mutiny and as a result inspite of utmost efforts of Sir Syed Ahmed the Muslims had to bear the major share of the blame for the mutiny.

At this hour of crisis '**Padmini Upakhyan**' of Rangalal was published in 1858. It seems to have anticipated the later expressions of anti-Muslim feelings in the writings of Ishwar Gupta. The aim of the poet was to make the English educated Hindu youths aware of Hindu tradition.¹⁷ He intentionally painted the historical Muslim characters black only to glorify the greatness and nobility of the Hindus. Moreover, in the **Padmini Upakhyan** he showed himself up as a seeker of British mercy, while he deliberately misrepresented the character of the Muslims.

One of the main causes of this mentality of Rangalal was his effort to elevate the Hindu middle class to a better position. But this attitude could not touch Michael Madhusudan Dutt in whose life the awakening of this particular age and its modernism attained their fullness. For this reason in order to evaluate the Hindu-Muslim relation in modern Bengali literature an assessment of Dutt's genius would be in order. In fact in modern Bengali literature Madhusudan Dutt is unique.

16 Syed Ahmed Khan, **Loyal Mohammedans of India**, 1860, pp. 2-6.

17 Rangalal Bandopadhyaya, '**Padmini Upakhyan**', First edition, Calcutta, 1265 (1858), Introduction.

As Madhusudan has viewed life in Greek-like candour and sincerity, with an integrated awareness of beauty, soaked with the elixir of humanity and free from all prior superstitions,¹⁸ so also in his epic, like the Greek literature, he has represented in the character of **Ravana** the contemporary life, saturated with deep sense of self-realisation.

Rama of the epic is the descendant of godly heroes of the **'Mangal Kavya'**. The Bengali life too is the symbol of the end of the middle age in Bengali literature. On the other hand the indomitable spirit, the vast wealth, the patriotism and above all the firm self confidence of **Ravana** seems to be the symbol of the mental image of inspiration of the rising Hindu middle class at the time. As the cherished aspiration of the Hindu middle class had not been fulfilled at that age in their individual and social life so also **Ravana**, inspite of his uncommon prowess and self-respect, suffered a miserable defeat at the hand of an inscrutable destiny.¹⁹ The greatness of Madhusudan's genius lies in this new evaluation of life and self-consciousness, and the combined results of this realisation are the language and the new verses.

So Madhusudan did not compose any conventional and even Ranggalal-like anecdotes. Although the theme is minor in the **'Tilottoma Samvav'** the tale in the **'Meghnadbadh Kavya'** is very brief. The latter relates the installation of **Meghnad** in commandership at the death of **Virbahu**. **Meghnad's** death his cremation and other related episodes are minutely described. But these minute details turned into a great epic as a result of a firm canto-diversion, free-flowing unprecedented blank verses, spirited language, and dramatic technique in the delineation of characters. So he did never compose works depicting the glories of gods and goddesses or old history. And convention-free Madhusudan, who had an open mind regarding all religions, was not at all eager to establish Hindu glory. He planned writing a drama on the historical character **Razia** and he mentioned

18 Pramathnath Bishi (ed), **Michael Rachana Samvar**, Mitra O Ghosh, Calcutta, 1366 B.S., Introduction.

19 Mohitlal Majumder, **'Poet Sree Madhusudan'**, Vanga Bharati Granthalaya, Howrah, 1365 B.S., Chapter V and VI.

Syed Ali Ahsan, **Poet Madhusudan**, Karachi University, 1964.

as follows in a letter on the epical potentialities of the events of 'Muharram.'²⁰

"If a great poet were to rise among the Mussalmans of India, he could write a magnificent epic on the death of Hossen and his brother. He could enlist the feelings of the whole race on his behalf. We have no such subject."²¹

There were only two guide lines to follow before the Bengali Hindu poets in the post-Madhusudan and Rangalal period : the propagating anti-Muslim feeling for the purpose of glorifying the greatness of Hindu heroes in literature, and the broad humanism of poet like Madhusudan where religion, particularly of a communalist bent, did not constitute any part of the poet's emotional being and ideology. But it is a matter to note that in the field of anecdotal literature the Bengali Hindu poets followed the line of Rangalal for a pretty long time. The high ideals depicted in Madhusudan's 'Brajangana,' 'Birangana' or 'Sonnets' could not much attract the Hindu poets.

English education along with religious reformation and social movements, gradually contributed to the growth of political awareness in the Hindu society.²² The agitation that the newly formed organization carried on was entirely constitutional in method. The first outcome of this awareness was the establishment of the Zamindary Association in 1837.²³

Later 'The British Indian Society' was established in 1843. The aim of the society was to submit grievances to the government in a peaceful manner. Higher class Indians and private English people were its members. But soon the English disowned their link with it. In 1850 the Indian Government submitted a bill in the Council to curb the oppression of the

20 Jogindranath Boec, 'Michael Madhusudan Datter Jivan Charit', Fourth edition, pp. 442.

21 *Ibid*, p. 489.

22 C.F. Andrews and Girija Mukherjee, 'The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India, George Allen & Union, London, 1939, p. 22.

23 Ram Goptal, 'British Rule in India, 'Asia Publishing House, London, 1963, p.272

Indigo planters, and to bring them under the control of one homogeneous kind of judicial system, applicable to all Europeans and natives. As a result of these occurred a massive movement of the English living in India and against the movement the government had to withdraw both the bills at last. The incident considerably embittered the relation between the Indians and the English and the latter left the society.

In 1851 the **British Indian Association** comprising only of the Indians was established in place of the former one. Like the former institution its aim was to submit to the government the demands of the people within the framework of law. The Secretary of the Society Debendra Nath Tagore had been very much energetic for giving it an all-India character. As a result the political awareness was much more evident in this society than before.²⁴ But after the Mutiny of 1857 the association cut off all political activities and later on engaged itself only in the activities for preservation of interest of the zamindar class.²⁵

In the political history of this country the Indian Council Act of 1861²⁶ played an important role. The then Secretary of States in explaining the significance of act said,

"The Imperial Legislature has by this Act provided for the first time, for the admission of Europeans independent of the government and the natives of India to take part in the important work of legislation for India."

The seeds of future possibility of autonomy were sown in it although it was neither cherished nor felt during those days.²⁷

The English educated and the upper caste Hindus had the maximum institutional and social opportunities for preservation of their interest. But the Muslims, backward in education and capability, had no such scope.

The sincere efforts of Nawab Abdul Latif for removing of the comparative greater backwardness of the Muslims of the

24 **Ibid**, p. 274

25 **Ibid**, p. 275

26 **The Indian Council Act, 19 August, 1861.**

27 Rustom P. Masani, **Britain in India**, Oxford University Press, London, 1960, p. 53.

country deserves special mention. He tried in various ways to spread English education among the Muslims. For this purpose he convened an essay competition.²⁸ However, the essay was to be written in Persian—not in Bengali. His Mahomadan Literary Society was established in Calcutta in 1863. Its aim was to create a sense of progress through systematic pursuit of scientific knowledge.

With the same purpose Sir Syed Ahmed Khan established in 1866 the Translation society in Northern India. It was the life-long mission of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to spread western education among the Muslims of the sub-continent. Moreover Syed Ahmed Khan was not averse to his own mother-tongue like Abdul Latif and as such his attempt attained much more success.

When the attempt for the spread of English education among the Muslims was at its initial stage, the 'Hindu Mela' was formed in Calcutta in 1867. The opinion and articles of the members of the 'Hindu Mela' cast a far-reaching influence on the Hindu-Muslim relation in the then Bengal. So the importance of the 'Hindu Mela' in the context of Hindu-Muslim relation in Bengal needs to be assessed. "Mainly with the financial and ardent assistance of Debendra Nath and Gyanendranath of Tagore family and under the inspiration of Raj Narayan and enterprise of Nabagopal the 'Hindu Mela' was established."²⁹ The explanation of naming it 'Hindu Mela' may be given in the language of Bipin Chandra Paul : "In these days this sub-continent used to be treated as the land of only the Hindus. The thought that the Muslims, the Christians have equal right on the country, never came in their mind. Under the inspiration of this narrow nationalistic feeling Maharshi Debendra Nath tried to keep the Brahma Samaj fully confined to Hinduism and with the inspiration of this narrow national feeling Naba Gopal established the 'Hindu Mela'.³⁰

The basic aim of the 'Hindu Mela' was to inspire the Indians with the ideals of self-reliance and nationalism. But this Indian conforms to Hinduism and this nationalism was merely to Hindu

28 Kazi Abdul Wadud, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

29 Provat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, 'Rabindra Jibani, Vol. I, Vishwa Bharati, Calcutta, 1953 B.S., p. 46.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 47

nationalism. In order to preach Hindu nationalism the literary men, influenced by the ideals of the 'Hindu Mela', occasionally propagated an anti-Muslim feeling. The dormant seed of Hindu nationalism in the compositions of Rangalal now tended to fructify.

Rangalal, in order to paint the spirit of chastity of the Rajput women painted the Mughal emperor Akbar in his '*Sar Sundari Kavya*' (1886) as a licentious person, discarded by women and seeking pardon.

In the dramas of Jyotindra Nath the anti-Muslim feeling is evident. On the otherhand, Bankim Chandra in '*Durgeshnandini*' (1865), betrayed similar feelings.

When loyal people like Sir Syed and Abdul Latif were engaged in the spread of English education among their own community, the anti-British struggle of the common people had not ended. The English ruthlessly suppressed the Wahabi Movement in Bengal in 1870.³¹ Similar movements of the Hindus at Poona and in the Deccan were also put to suppression.

A change in the government policy towards the spread of education among the Muslims came soon. Special mention may be made of Hunter's attempts made after the sepoy mutiny towards finding out the causes of discontent among the Muslim. The Hunter's Report published in 1871 elaborated the causes of discontent and distress among the Muslims of this country, and discussed threadbare their possible remedies. In his report he referred specially to the Muslims of Bengal and said that under British rule the Muslims of Bengal were the worst sufferers.³² He pointed out :

"A hundred seventy years ago it was almost impossible for a well-born Musalman in Bengal to become poor: at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich"³³

In his opinion poverty and backwardness in education, specially English education, were the root causes of distress of the Muslims.

31 W. W. Hunter, '*The Indian Musalmans*', The Comrade Publishers, Calcutta, 1945, Ch. II & III.

32 *Ibid*, p. 149.

33 *Ibid*, p. 150.

In order to alleviate the distress of the Muslims drastic changes in the English Education Policy were essential. In the language of Hunter:

"The truth is that our system of public instruction which has awakened the Hindus from the sleep of the centuries, and quickened their inert masses with some of the noble impulses of a nation, is opposed to the traditions, unsuited to the requirements, and hateful to the religion of the Mussalmans."³⁴

In 1871 on 7th August the Indian Government declared their decision concerning Muslim education. In the resolution Lord Mayo regretted the educational backwardness of the Muslims and directives were sent to all schools and colleges to impart education in Arabic and Persian. The formal decision in regard to this education was taken by the Government on 13th June, 1873. As to the educational misfortune of the Bengali Muslims prior to 1871 it was stated:

"In Bengal the Bengali speaking Eastern Mahomedans frequent the lower schools in good number, but they found themselves more or less excluded from following out their education into the upper class by the absence, upto 1871, of any adequate provision for that distinctive course of instruction which the customs of their society require."³⁵

As to the attitude of the Muslims towards English education it was stated:

"The Mahomedans are not so much averse to the subjects which the English government has decided to teach, as to the modes or machinery through which teaching is offered."³⁶

As to the revived Education Policy for Bengal it was recorded:

34 **Ibid**, pp. 168 - 169

35 **Resolution of the Govt. of India on Muslim Education, 13 June, 1873. Selections from the Records of the Govt. of India Home Dept. No. 205 (1866), p. 152, Select Documents, p.181.**

36 **Select Documents, p. 183**

"In Bengal the Lieutenant Governor now desired to restore Mahomedan education by a well-connected substantial reforming of the existing material.

Orders were issued in 1871 to establish a special class for teaching Arabic and Persian to Mahomedans in ordinary schools, wherever the demand should justify the supply, and wherever the Mahomedans should agree to conform in addition, to the regular course of study in the upper school classes so that both kind of instruction must be taken. The collegiate instruction in the Calcutta Madrassa will be remodelled and reinforced, while the Mohsin endowments which now support the Hooghly College, will be employed, whenever in Bengal their employment seems most advantageous, for encouraging and extending education among Mahomedans. Moreover, the University of Calcutta has decided to examine in Persian as well as in Arabic for the degrees."³⁷

With the same purpose through the active enterprise of Sir syed Ahmed Khan '**The Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College**' was established in North India. Lord Lytton laid the foundation of the college on 8th January, 1877. The welcome address stated that the purpose of taking English education by the Muslim was "to make the Musalmans of India worthy and useful subjects of the British Crown."³⁸

Despite remarkable changes in the government education policy, the Muslims lagged far behind the Hindus in respect of employments in the government services. In a memorandum submitted to the then Viceroy in 1882 the National Mohammedan Association appealed for alleviating the distress of the Muslims. In respect of obstacles before the Muslims for entering into government services the Association referred to two reasons : a. flouting of government policy by the government officials, and b. unnecessary stress given on University degree. The resolution of the govt. on 15th July, 1885 was intended as a reply to the memorandum:

37 *Ibid*, pp. 183-185.

38 G.F. Graham, '**The Life and work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan**', 2nd edn., London, 1909, p. 179.

"In every province admission to the superior departments of the government service is now, speaking generally, regulated either by public competition or by the possession of qualifications altogether independent of the race or caste of the candidate."³⁹

So the government stated that in its policy no exception could be made for the Muslims in this respect. Any exception would only mean a fall in the high standard of administration. During this time the Muslims constituted thirty one percent of the total population of Bengal but in the field of services the percentage of service-holders among the Muslims was quite insignificant. In the memorandum of 1882 the fact was specially mentioned. In this respect the government resolution stated that the main reason of Muslim backwardness was their lack of English education; their poverty was indeed one of the causes for their inability for receiving English education. However, part of the reason is that they were unwilling to take English education. The comments of Abdul Latif contained in his memorandum to the Education Commission deserve to be mentioned. In respect of the comparative standards of education of the Hindus and the Muslims Nawab A. Latif said:

"This mass of the Mohammadan population consists of cultivators among some millions of Brahmins and Kayasthas, who from time immemorial have enjoyed a superior system of education and in consequence a passport to public offices."

"It is only by raising their own educational qualifications to the level already attained by other races that the Mohammadans can hope to win appointments that are awarded as the result of examination."⁴⁰

Although the government had been eager for giving a serious thought to the causes of educational backwardness of the Muslims and effecting possible remedies, it was not willing to arrange any special provision for the Muslims with regard to government services.

39 **Select Documents, op, cit, p. 186.**

40 **Ibid.**

The emergence of an English educated middle class was also associated with an awareness of its group about its political rights. For a pretty long time the articulation of this awareness was constitutional in form, and within the framework of the acceptance of the Raj. ⁴¹

The period under discussion witnessed the reactions of the Muslims to the growing Hindu nationalism. It happened owing to uneven economic and educational development of the two communities. Some efforts were made to bring about a change in the attitude of the Muslims, but the trend could only partially reversed. Considering their economic insolvency and social backwardness the Muslims gradually inclined to English education. In general, the growing Hindu nationalism tended to alienate the Muslims from the main current of this movement, and to push them to think in terms of separatist notions.

41 S. N. Banerjee, 'A Nation in the Making', Second Edition, Oxford University Press, London, 1925, pp. 85-86.

Chapter - III

POLITICALIZATION : THE LAHORE RESOLUTION (1940)

On 17th July, 1883 under the auspices of the Indian Association founded by Surendra Nath Banerjee, the first Indian National Conference was held. One of the aims of the Conference was 'to promote friendly feelings between Hindus and Muslims.'¹ Three main institutions of Calcutta jointly convened the second National Conference: the British Indian Association of the Zamindars, the Indian Association of the Middle Class and the Central Mohammadan Association. This conference was held on 25th, 26th and 27th December of 1885. Almost exactly at this time, the first meeting of the Indian National Congress went into session in Bombay. To quote Surendra Nath:

"The two conferences met about the same time, discussed similar views and voiced the same grievances and aspirations."²

In the opinion of W.C. Banerjee, the first President of the Congress, Sir Allan Hume at first took the plan of forming the Congress in 1884. Hume thought that if the political leaders of India sat together at least once a year to discuss the social problems, it would be beneficial for all. He did not desire that politics should form part of their discussion.³ But when Hume informed Lord Dufferin, the new Viceroy, of his plan the latter advised him to form the Congress as a political institution. Dufferin said,⁴

"It would be desirable in the interest as well of the rulers as of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly

1 Ram Gopal, **'British Rule in India'**, Asia Publishing House, London, 1963, p. 277.

2 S. N. Banerjee, **'A Nation in the Making'**, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, London, 1925, pp. 98-99.

3 W.C. Banerjee, **'Indian Politics'**, 1893, p. VII

4 **Ibid**, p. VII

and point out to the government in what respect the administration was defective and how it could be improved."

Dufferin, of course, advised Hume to keep his own name secret from the plan. In fact as long as he had been in India, the secrecy had been maintained.

Dada Bhai Naoroji, the second President of the Congress, expressed his opinion regarding the clear-cut relation of the Congress with the government on 27th December, 1886:

"Then I put the question plainly: Is this congress a nursery for sedition and rebellion against the British government (cries of no, no) or is it another stone in the foundation of the stability of that government (cries of yes, yes) ? There could be one answer and that you have already given, because we are thoroughly sensible of the numberless blessings conferred upon us of which the very existence of this congress is a proof in a nutshell." ⁵

He also said that only subjects relating to national interest would be discussed in the congress and nothing regional, religious or sectional that might tend to generate disputes would be raised. ⁶ On 30th April, 1866 Hume openly analysed the aims of the congress in the Allahabad Conference and said :

"It was realized from the outset that there might be question in regard to which Bombay would differ from Bengal, Europeans from Natives, Hindus from Mohamedans, Sunnis from Shias, but all such are excluded from the congress by its fundamental rule that it shall only pass and press resolutions on those questions in regard to which there is practical unanimity amongst the representative of all classes and creeds of all provinces."⁷

5 **Report of the Second Indian National Congress, 1886, Select Document, p.52.**

6 **Ibid, pp. 55-56.**

7 **Allan Octavian Hume, 'Speech delivered at Allahabad' 30 April, 1888, Select Documents, pp. 141-142.**

The resolution of this conference in respect of Hindu-Muslim relation clearly stated :

"That no subject shall be passed for discussion by the Subject Committee or allowed to be discussed at any Congress by the President thereof, to the introduction of which the Hindu or Mohamedan delegates as a body object, unanimously or nearly unanimously; and that if, after the discussion of any subject which has been admitted for discussion, it shall appear that all the Hindu or all the Mohamedan delegates as body are unanimously or nearly unanimously opposed to the Resolution which it is proposed to pass thereon, such Resolution shall be dropped; provided that this rule shall refer only to subjects in regard to which the congress has not already definitely pronounced an opinion."⁸

As a result of this resolution there was scope on the one hand for viewing the congress as a secular organization and on the other, it became rather easier to reject the subjects of Muslim interest as communal. Although this was done to maintain communal harmony it tended to preserve the interest of the Hindu middle class.

We have already noticed earlier that the government took different measures and initiative for the spread of English education among the Muslims. The English educated Muslims whose number was small at that period, co-operated with the government whole-heartedly but they realized that along-side English education the Bengali Muslim should learn Bengali well and should cultivate it for their own benefit. They inspired the Muslim writers and the press to create public opinion in favour of learning of Bengali along with that of English. Their hard labour bore fruit and their expectation came to be fulfilled with the publication of '**Gorai Bridge**' of Mosharraff Hossain and '**Kushum Kanane**' of Kaikobad in 1873. '**Gorai Bridge**' earned the appreciation of the '**Vanga darshan**' but that applause was not for its literary brilliance; it was due to Mir Mosharraff Hossain's

8 Resolution XIII, **Report of the Indian National Congress, 1888, Select Documents**, p. 153.

ability to write correct Bengali. Of course **'Gorai Bridge'** was not the first publication of Mir Mosharraf Hossain. Earlier his novel **'Ratnabali'** and his drama **'Vasanta Kumari'** were published in 1869 and 1873 respectively. After the publication of **'Gorai Bridge'** in 1873 his **'Zamidar Darpan'** was published in the same year. The chief characteristic of his publication of this phase was his non-communal attitude. Kaikobad was also non-communal. This is evident from his **Kavya 'Kushum Kanane'**. In the opinion of the poet the Hindus and the Muslims as two subjugated nations should have no reason for self-pride nor should they hate each other.

In the period from 1870 to 1890 the number of historical themes was greater in the composition of Hindu poets. In these writings the poetical art of Rangalal was mostly followed; the influence of the **'Hindu Mela'** was discernible. Thus Nawab Sirajuddowla is painted black in the **'Suradhani Kavya'** of Dinabandhu Mitra; of course he praised in his work the contemporary muslim social leaders like Nawab Abdul Latif. In the **'Palashir Yuddha'** of Nabin Chandra Sen, Sirajuddowla is also painted black. Yet it was Nabin Sen who for the first time took Bengal-based themes instead of those of Rajputana for Bengali poetry. In the **'Palashir Yuddha'** the mind of the poet seems confused. On the one hand, he has painted Siraj as a sinner and on the other, he has rebuked the plotters against him. He has not painted Clive as a hero but clearly he has proved himself a seeker of British mercy. The part relating to the comparison of the Muslims with the English also reflects a picture of the contemporary Hindu-Muslim relation. In the opinion of the poet both the English and the Muslims were foreigners; but the Muslims lived in the country for a longer period and became almost a part of the indigenous society. Three cantos of **'Maha Mughal Kavya'** of Durga Chandra were published respectively in 1873, 1876 and 1877. Although little of the work is **'Maha Mughal'**, the contents reveal that the poet attaches much importance to the fall of the Mughals. The first canto of the work bears the title **'Aurangzeb'**, the second **'Sivaji'** and the third **'Joy Singh'**. The poet has painted Aurangzeb black while he has painted Sivaji and Joy Singh as heroes. The hero of **'Yamini Pravat'** (1879) of Dharendra Nath Paul is also Sivaji. The second poetical work of Nabin Sen, **'Rangamati'** (1880) had also a hero of an identical nature. In this respect it may be mentioned that

although Sivaji has been painted in these works as a robber yet there is a clear attempt to acclaim him as the pioneer of the renaissance of Hindu-India. Prasanna Kumar Nag adopted the art style of Rangalal and tried in his '**Rajputana**' to convey an impression that Akbar's character was not without its blemishes. The theme of '**Vanger Virputra**' (Great Son of Bengal) by Jogendra Nath Ghose was the show of Pratapaditya's prowess. In 1882 Nabin Sen planned the '**Trayee Kavya**' of '**Mahabharata of India**' and in 1886 the first part of this planned work was published under the caption '**Raibatak**'. It needs no mention that in the '**Hindu Mahabharata**' the Muslims are excluded.

In the field of poetry mention may be made of '**Abakash Ranjini**' Parts I and II of Nabin Sen, '**Kavitabali**' of Hema Chandra, '**Kavi Kahini**' of Dinesh Charan Basu and '**Kavita Pustak**' of Bankim Chandra. In '**Abakash Ranjini**' Nabin Sen expressed unhappiness at the foreign rule, but was profoundly loyal to the English. Nabin Sen won a prize of 50 Guineas by writing '**Bharat Uchchash**' on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales, the eldest son of Victoria. In '**Abakash Ranjini**' the Muslims are identified as foreigners. In the opinion of the poet the sepoy mutiny is a slur on India and the poem on the Duke of Edinborough, the second son of the great Queen stated that, after long sufferings under the Muslims the Hindus of Bengal cordially invited the English'. This attitude of the poet went through minor changes at the time of composing '**Palashir Yuddha**'. Hem Chandra of '**Kavitabali**' was not fully anti-Muslim. He spoke of Muslim unity in his another poem. To Dinesh charan Bose the Bengali Hindus and Muslims are alike and the imagination of the poet was greatly stirred by the prowess of the Rajput heroes against the infidels. The thought of Hindu renaissance was noticed in the poetry of Bankim Chandra and within a very short time it attained perfection. The publication of '**Anandamath**' started in the '**Vangadarshan**' in 1880 and in 1882 it was published in a book form.

When the thought of Hindu revivalism began to get greater importance in the works of Hindu poets and the novels of Bankim Chandra another incident tended to embitter Hindu-Muslim social relations. Dayananda Saraswati established an organisation in 1882 to prevent slaughter of cows. The cow is the goddess of the Hindus but it is food to the Muslims. Naturally the Muslims took it that the prohibition of killing of cows was

directed against them intentionally, because the Muslims believed that without taking beef one cannot be a Muslim. As a result the social conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims tended to intensify. Mir Mosharraff Hossain, a Muslim literary giant of the age, emphatically mentioned, with reference to 'Bharatsava', 'Yatisava', that there was no difference between Hindus and Muslims. Presumably under the influence of his liberal outlook Mir Sahib wrote **Gojivan** in 1888. In the article he advised the Muslims to abstain from eating beef. As a result a great reaction was noticed in the Muslim society. Riaz-al-Din Mashhadi protested against it and wrote under surname 'Agnikukkut'. At a religious meeting of Tangail Mir Mosharraff Hossain was declared an "infidel and religious injunction was issued in favour of divorce of his wife." ⁹

Even during this deterioration of the Hindu-Muslim relations, attempts were made to maintain good harmony between the two communities. Three journals edited by the Muslims were very much active in this regard. The 'Ahmadi' was edited by A. Hamid Khan Yusuf Zai from Tangail and financed by Karimunnessa Khanam Chaudhuri. The first publication came out in **Sravan 1293 B.S.** (1886). Afterwards in **1296 B.S.** the title was changed to 'Ahmadi O Nava Ratna' The articles published in it aimed at maintaining communal harmony and the most noted article on it was 'Udashi'. Similarly the 'Hindu-Muslim Sanmiloni' a monthly journal was edited by Munshi Golam Kadir from Magura, Jessore. The first issue of it came out in **Ashar 1294 B.S.** (1887). He appealed repeatedly to the Hindus and the Muslims to maintain friendly relation among themselves. Another monthly journal 'Kohinoor' was published in **Ashar 1305 B.S.** (1898) under the editorship of Md. Rowshan Ali Chaudhury. In one of the articles published in the **Kohinoor** 'The conflict between Hindu-Muslim and its remedy', Sheikh Osman Ali identified the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British and the revivalism of Hindu nationalism as the root cause of the conflict. He, therefore, urged everybody to be united forgetting caste, creed and religion since

9 Anisuzzaman, **Muslim Manash O Bangla Shahitya, Lekhok Sangha Prokashani, Dhaka, 1964, p. 230**

the price of disunity would be the strengthening of British administration.

In the political sphere a similar trend is noticeable. At the fifth session of the Congress held in Bombay in December, 1889 a draft proposal for the formation of a representative government was prepared. Munshi Hedayet Rasul brought an amendment providing for an equal representation of Hindu and Muslim members in the council. But the Muslim delegates themselves rejected it. Of the total Muslim delegates sixteen voted in favour of the amendment while twenty three voted against. Most of the delegates abstained from voting.¹⁰

The activities of the Congress were so far kept confined to constitutional means for submitting various demands. In the last decade of the 19th Century a group of young radicals began to criticize sharply the *modus operandi* of the Congress. Aurobinda Ghosh in 1893 wrote in *Indu Prakash* of Bombay :

"In an era when democracy and similar big words slide so eligible from our tongues, a body like the congress, which represents not the mass of the population, but a single and very limited class could not honestly be called national . . ."¹¹

In 1894 in course of writing about Bankim Chandra he again wrote that the Congress leaders of Bengal " have . . .lost all hold on the imagination of the young men."¹²

In papers like *Vangabashi* of Bengal the rightist mentality and the lack of public contact of the Congress came under rebuke. In the Congress Conference of 1897 Aswini Kumar Dutt, a delegate from Bengal, satired the Congress as a fun of three days. In his opinion, the yearly activities of the congress got bogged up in three days session.

10 R.C. Majumder, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. I, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, Cal, 1963, p. 32.

11 Harish Mukherjee & Uma Mukherjee, *Sir Aurobindo's Political Thought*, pp. 75-76.

12 *Essay on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee*, Published on 27th August, 1894, Reprint, Pandicheri, p. 47.

Balgangadhar Tilak was the leader of the leftist group of the Congress. He introduced the 'Ganapati Utsav' in 1893 and 'Sivaji Utsav' in 1895 in Maharashtra. Under the cover of these ceremonies anti-British activities were widely encouraged.¹³ But the articles Tilak wrote to establish the glory of Sivaji's character directly revealed his anti-muslim attitude. In line with Tilak strong attempts were made in Bengal for rebuilding the character of Sivaji. Due to widespread propaganda the words Sivaji and Swaraj became synonymous to the Hindus. At the same time various false ideas began to emerge about the Mughal emperor Aurangazab. Even in such circumstances, the aspiration for Hindu-Muslim harmony among the Muslim poets was not lost altogether. 'Asrumala' of Kalkobad was published in the year of 'Sivaji Utsav'. 'Debala' of Osman Ali, 'Katha-O-Kahini', 'Sivaji Utsav' of Rabindra Nath, 'Mahashashan' of Kalkobad and many such publications were published at this time and everybody tried for a Hindu-muslim understanding through their writings.

The failure of rightist leadership of the Congress was evident from 1890 to 1905.

The famine of 1896, the unemployment problem and the large scale outbreak of plague in Bombay complicated the political atmosphere. On the other hand, the victory of Japan over Russia created a new awareness among the people about Asian power. In the writings of C. F. Andrews the Hindus of the country received greater importance than the Muslims. The possibility of the revival of lost glories of Hinduism and Buddhism roused new hope in them.¹⁴

In 1905 the Partition of Bengal gave birth to a powerful nationalist movement. The leadership of the congress passed to the hands of the 'extremist' leaders like Balgangadhar Tilak, Bipin

13 A.R. Desai, 'Social Background of Indian Nationalism, OUP, London, 1948, p. 305.

In Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movement in India*, London, 1924, p.359.

14 Rev, C.F. Andrews, 'The Renaissance in India', pp. 4-5 (Quoted in Farquhar, p. 360).

Chandra Paul, Lala Lajpat Roy, Aurobinda Ghosh and others. And "the Hindu indelogy in which Paul, Gosh and other leaders aroused nationalism in the new phase could not appeal to the politically conscious Muslim middle class."¹⁵

As a result the Muslims did not spontaneously join the Congress-initiated movement for self-rule. Moreover, the Muslims did not become eager for boycotting British goods. One of the chief weapons of the **Swadeshi** movement was the boycott of British goods. although many mills and factories were established by 1905, there was no Muslim mill owner. In their eyes the boycott of British goods was to increase the bill of the Partition of Bengal as an administrative necessity. But the opponents of the bill interpreted it "as a device to gather support of the backward Muslim community against politically advanced Hindus."

It may be mentioned here that among the educated Muslims a few like Abdul Rasul, Abul Kalam Azad, Mozibar Rahman and Mohammad Akram Khan opposed the Partition of Bengal. But as they were few in number their influence was limited. On the other hand, the Nawabs of Dhaka and their associates were extremely happy at this partition.

With the spread of education political consciousness among the muslims began to develop rapidly, On 1st October 1906 a Muslim delegation under the leadership of His Highness Aga Khan, met the then Viceroy and appealed for maintaining Muslim interest in the field of service, election, administration and other allied fields.¹⁶ Lord Minto admitted the justification of the Muslim demands.¹⁷ The first political institution of the Indian Muslims, the Indian Muslim League was born in Dhaka on 30th December, 1906. The historical decision taken in this respect read as follows :

15 Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 357

16 *Select Documents. op. cit.* pp. 190-198.

17 Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

" (1) That this meeting, composed of Mussalmans of all parts of India, assembled at Dacca, decides that a political association, styled the All India Muslim League, be formed for the furtherance of the following object : (a) to promote among the Mussalmans of India feelings of loyalty to the British Government with regard to any of its measures; (b) to protect and advance the political rights and interests of Mussalmans of India and respectfully to represent their needs and aspirations to government; (c) to prevent the rise among Mussalmans of India of any feelings of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to other objects of the League. :"¹⁸

In another resolution the Partition of Bengal was supported and boycott movement was discarded :

"(11) . . . that this meeting considers that partition is sure to prove beneficial to the community which constitutes the majority of the population, and that all such methods of agitation such as boycotting shall be firmly condemned and discouraged."¹⁹

On the otherhand, in Congress sessions of 1905 and 1906 the Congress adopted the resolution supporting the anti-partition and boycott movement. But the dispute between the moderates and the extremists of the Congress continued to increase and the Surat Congress of 1906 ended in a fiasco in the midst of wrangling between the two groups. The government promulgated the Act of Explosives, the Indian Press Act, the News paper Act, Anti-government Meetings Act etc. and sought to suppress the movements of boycott and terrorism. The rightist leader Gokhle in a letter wrote : " At this the leftists are getting the upper hand, the sentiment and sympathy of the Bengali Hindus are with the leftists and situation is further complicated by the fierce antagonism between Hindu and Mahomedan. "²⁰

18 **Select Documents, op. cit. p. 194.**

19 **Ibid.**

20 **Ibid. pp. 168-169.**

In the Amritsar session of the Muslim League of 1908 the demand for greater representation in the Local Boards, in the Privy Council and in the field of services was raised and thanks to the sincere efforts of the Muslim League the Morle-Minto Reform provided for separate election for the Muslims.

At the height of the movement against the Partition of Bengal Hindu politicians became increasingly keen on Hindu-Muslim harmony. This eagerness developed among the literary persons also. Rabindra Nath came forward to bind bond of fraternity in the hands of Muslim coachmen. But he soon realised the futility of all those attempts. He understood that Hindus and Muslims were not only separate but that they were rival to each other. At this hour he thought, Hindu-Muslim parity was a greater necessity than Hindu-Muslim unity.²¹ Dwijendralal, inspired by different ideals, abused the Swadeshi leaders in 'Alekhya' (1907). In 'Prithviraj' (1915) and 'Sivaji' (1918) of Jogendra Nath Bas showed eagerness for Hindu-Muslim harmony.

The terrorist movement spread and flourished in the political climate produced by the Swadeshi Movement and it was confined mostly to Hindu youths. In the liberation struggle the role of this movement is undisputed. But its greatest shortcoming was the orthodox attitude of the terrorists. As Tlak thought Hinduism and patriotism complementary to each other so the exponents of terrorism thought that religious appeal would be an effective mobiliser of the people. Barindra Kumar in his deposition before the Magistrate of Boroda said on 2nd May, 1908:

"I then returned to Bengal, convinced that a purely political propaganda should not do for the country, and that people must be trained up spiritually to face dangers. I had an idea of starting a religious institution."²²

21 Saumendra Gangopadhaya, **Swadeshi Andolon O Bangla Shahitya**, Basudhara Prokashan, Calcutta, 1967 B.S.

22 **Sedition Committee Report**, Calcutta, 1918, **Select Documents**, op. cit., p. 207.

The deposition of Upendra Nath Bandopadhyaya stressed an identical point :

"As I thought that some people of India would not be made to do any work except through religion, I wanted the help of some Sadhus (religious ascetics). Failing Sadhus I fell back upon school boys and collected them to give them religious, moral and political education."²³

The 'Bhagavat Gita' and the works of Vivekananda were compulsory readings of the terrorists. Unquestionable surrender to the will of God was their bounden duty. The anti-Muslim feelings of the terrorists can be found in the autobiography of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. In the language of Maulana Azad :

"In fact all the revolutionary groups were then actively anti-muslim... The revolutionaries felt that the muslims were an obstacle to the attainment of Indian freedom and must like other obstacles, be removed."²⁴

Even when the Maulana supported the Swadeshi movement and wanted to join the terrorist party, he was viewed with suspicion and was kept aside. In fact the anti-muslim feeling and orthodoxy of the Hindu terrorists tended to embitter Hindu-Muslim relations.

The Delhi Durbar, held in 1911, announced the revocation of the Partitin of Bengal. The Muslims, specially the Nawabs of Dhaka became dissatisfied. The Government promised the establishment of a new University there as a measure of pacification. Thus University of Dhaka was eventually created in 1921. At this time Turkey was defeated in the Balkan War in 1912. The Sunni Muslims of India would regard the Sultan of Turkey as the Caliph. So dissatisfaction began to grow among them. In the Muslim League session of 1913 autonomous rule was clearly declared as the aim of the organisation. In fact the league

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.

24 Abul Kalam Azad, 'India Wins Freedom,' Orient Longmans, Calcutta, Reprint, April, 1957, p.4.

stepped into a new era since then. The Congress Worker Barrister Mohammad Ali Jinnah joined the session and since then the dominance of intelligentsia and middle class began to be felt in this organisation more than that of aristocrats and high-status Muslims.²⁵

After coming back from South Africa Gandhi joined the Congress and in the same year (1914) the First World War started. In the war Turkey took the side of Germany. The invasion of Turkey by the English in the war brought the League and the Congress closer. On the question of Parliamentary Rule and Automomy they came to a unified decision. Consequently both the Congress and the Muslim League rejected the **Montegau-Chelmsford Report** on Constitutional reform.²⁶ Inspite of this opposition the **Montegau-Chelmsford Report** was embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919. Discontent began to grow and the government repression culminated in the massacre of Jalianwalabagh.²⁷

After the defeat of Turkey in the First World War the question of the **Khilafat** and the future of Turkey came to be the main problem to the Indian Muslim leaders. They considered it necessary to communicate to the Viceroy the felings of the Muslims. On 20th January, 1920 Gandhi, Tilak and other Congress leaders met the Muslim leaders in Delhi and conveyed their full support on the question of the **Khilafat**.²⁸ A Part of Muslim representatives waited on the Viceroy; but the Viceroy counselled the delegation to submit their opinion to the British Government in England. The party of representatives that was sent to the Prime Minister Sir Llyod George in England included Mohammad Ali, Saud Hussain, Syed Solaiman and H.M. Yahya. On 19th March the party submitted the memorandum to the Prime Minister. But Llyod George clearly stated :

25 Anisuzzaman, *op.cit.*, P. 104.

26 *Select Documents, op. cit.*, 208-210 and 266-270.

27 **Report of the Committee appointed to investigate Disturbances in the Punjab** (The Jalianwalabagh Firing. 13 April, 1919), *Select Documents*, pp. 210-215.

28 *The Azad*, 20 January, 1920.

" I do not want any Mohamedan in India to imagine that we entered into this war against Turkey as a crusade against Islam . . . I do not want any Musalman in India, therefore, to imagine that we are applying one principle to Christian and another principle to Mohamedans. But neither do I want any Musalman in India to imagine that we are going to abandon, when we come to Turkey, the principles which we have ruthlessly applied to Christian countries like Germany and Austria. " ²⁹

At this time Gandhi put-forth his appeal for Non-cooperation theme, before the leaders of both the congress and the leangue. For a long time Gandhi had been following his **Non-cooperation** policy. In his opinion he evolved the word **Satyagraha** in South Africa. ³⁰ He declared that the central theme of Satyagraha was non-violence and non-cooperation. ³¹ Among the leaders, both Hindus and the Muslims there was initially a bit of hesitation to accept **Satyagraha** against the repressive policies of the government. But in the Nagpur Sesion of the Congress in 1920, Gandhi's viewpoint was accepted. In fact the role of the Congress underwent a change due to the acceptance of Gandhi's leadership, his political philosophy and his declared aim of attaining **Swaraj**. "Its nationalist middle class agitation was transformed into a mass revolutionary movement." ³² But when the Congress Session of Nagpur was going on Mohammad All Jinnah severed his connection with the Congress.

During the non-cooperation and Khilafat Movement the Hindu-Muslim harmony began to grow, at least for the time being. Nazrul Islam made his debut in Bengali Literature. Just at this time the atomsphere of Hindu-Muslim harmony in the contemporary politics greatly influenced Nazrul Islam. One of the major themes of his poems and song was Hindu-Muslim harmony. The ideals initiating by him were

29 **The Time**, 22 March, 1920, **Select Documents**, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

30 **Young India**, November, 1919, pp. 11-13.

31 **Resolution V. Report of the 34th Indian National Congress**, 1919, p. 65, **Select Documents**, *op. cit.*, p.210.

32 **Philips, Introductory Notes. Select Documents**, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

humanism, and the longing for Hindu-Muslim harmony partly derived from these ideals.

The Hindu-Muslim harmony in the political field was not long-lived. The possibility for a secular liberation struggle through Hindu-Muslim harmony was destroyed within a short time. One of the main reasons of it was the effort of Gandhi to give the movement a Hindu character. Like Tilak and terrorists Gandhi too introduced an element of Hindu orientation. In the language of Desai :

"leaders like Gandhi have often attempted to inject hindu religious ideas into the nationalist movement. Gandhi, for instance, interpreted **Swaraj** as **Ram Raj**, a historical memory which could not enthuse the Muslims. "³³

For valid reasons the movement of the Congress appeared to the majority Muslims as a Hindu movement. In fact in the recommendations of the Motilal Nehru Committee (1928) on Indian Constitution no mention for preserving the interest of the Muslims was made. In the Calcutta Session of the Muslim League held in 1928, the League wanted to accept the report. But the influential group under the presidentship of Aga Khan arranged the All India Muslim Conference in Delhi on 1st January, 1929. In the resolution of the conference demand for preservation of Muslim interest was raised. In a later session of the League held in Delhi, Jinnah tried in vain to steer a middle course. On the otherhand, without paying heed to the Muslim demand the Congress in its session on 31st December 1929 decided in favour of a movement for full autonomy and the solemn declaration made by the Congress on 26th January, 1930 did not include any mention of the preservation of Muslim interest. In the session of Allahabad in 1930 the League president Allama Iqbal supported the decision of the Delhi Muslim Conference and said :

"Th Muslims of India cannot agree to any constitutional changes which effect their majority rights, to be secured

by separate electorates, in the Punjab and Bengal, or fail to guarantee them 33 percent representation in any central legislature. " ³⁴

In the third session of Indian Round Table Conference held in December 1932 the matter was repeatedly discussed. ³⁵ After the election of 1937 according to the Administrative Reform of 1935 Act, the leaguers could clearly understand the motive of the congress leaders. In the 1937 election the congress emerged victorious and formed government in seven provinces. But the congress rejected the proposal of the league to form coalition Ministry in the Hindu minority provinces. In the Lucknow Session of the Mislim League of 1937 said :

"The present leadership of the Congress, specially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienation the Musalmans of India more and more by pursuing a policy which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed Governments in six provinces where they are in a majority they have by their words, deeds and programme shown more and more that the Musalmans cannot expect any justice or fair-play at their hands. Wherever they are in a majority and wherever it suited them they refused to cooperate with the muslim League parties and demand unconditional surrender and signing of their pledges." ³⁶

In the Presidential address of the Patna Session of the Muslim League in 1938 Jinnah said :

"The Congress has now, you must be aware, killed every hope of Hindu-Muslim settlement in the right royal fashion of Fascism. The congress does not want any settlement with the Muslims of India. As the Chairman of Reception Committee has said in his address, "the Congress wants the Muslims to accept settlement as a gift

34 **Indian Quarterly Register** Vol.11, pp. 337-344.

35 **Indian Round Table Conference, 3rd Session, 27th December, 1932, Select Documents, op. cit., p. 3017.**

36 **Jamaluddin Ahmed (ed.) , Speeches and writings of Jinnah, 1974, Vol. I, P. 30.**

from the majority . . .The Congress is Nothing but a Hindu body. That is the truth and the Congress leaders know it. "37

And in 1940 at the Lahore Session of the Muslim League Jinnah in his Presidential address said in clear language that the Hindus and the Muslims are two nations and declared :

" Muslim India cannot accept any constitution which must necessarily result in a Hindu majority government. Hindus and Muslims brought together under a democratic system forced upon the minorities can only mean Hindu Raj. "38

In fact before the Muslims there was no other alternative but to think in terms of a separate state.

It is an admitted fact that the Bengali Muslims in general aspired to achieve a separate state with a hope to gain economic freedom³⁹ and simultaneously it seemed to majority Muslim writers that the scope for playing their roles would be wider if Pakistan came into being. Amalendu De observes that Pakistan proposal led the Muslims to long for a separate political identity and on the otherhand, it inspired the Muslim writers to follow a distinct path by eluding the influence of the Hindu writers and thus the 'Two Nation Theory', greatly affected the literary and cultural environment of the period also.⁴⁰ In this context let us find out the state of affairs prevalent specially in Bengal during the birth of Pakistan. In the Lahore Resolution of 1940 the idea of a bare blue print of a separate state was created. The then Chief Minister of Bengal A. K. Fazlul Huq (1873-1962) tabled a proposal to the effect that autonomous sovereign Muslim states comprising the North East and the North West regions of India would be created.⁴¹ In fact the proposal spoke of more

37 **Select Documents, op. cit., pp. 350-351.**

38 **Speeches and Writings of Jinnah, op. cit., p. 180**

39 Serajuddin Husain , **Looking into the Mirror** (Dhaka : **Khoshroz Kitab Mahal**, 1974), p. 1.

40 Amalendu De , **Bangali Buddhijivi O Bichchinnatabad** (Calcutta : 1944), pp. 310-311.

than one state although nothing was then spoken of the mutual relations of the proposed states. In the following year in the Muslim League Conference of Madras this demand for separate states was accepted as the goal of the Muslim League.⁴²

Though the Muslim League termed the proposal as the 'Lahore Resolution', it became familiar as 'Pakistan Proposal'. It was partly due to the interpretations put on the proposal by the news media not sympathetic to the Pakistan idea.⁴³ The World War II was then continuing and the league leaders gradually began patronising communal feelings. The league fought the election in 1946 on the Pakistan issue, put importance on the communal basis of Pakistan and won a clear majority in the election. In the same year the convention of the Muslim League members of the Legislative Assembly in Delhi made basic modifications in the Lahore Resolution. After delivering a strong communal speech Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister of Bengal moved a proposal for a free and sovereign state with the Muslim majority regions of India.⁴⁴ Although Abul Hashim, the Secretary of the Provincial Muslim League of Bengal raised objection, the proposal was carried.

Next year on the eve of the partition of the country Shyamaprasad Mukherjee (1901-1953), President of the **Hindu Mahasava**, after a discussion with Governor Baros raised the demand for partition of Bengal.⁴⁵ To counter this demand Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim joined hands with the Congress leaders in a bid to create a free and sovereign Bengal. They held

41 Syed Sharifuddin Pirazad, **Foundations of Pakistan (All India Muslim League Documents, 1906-1947)**, (Karachi : National publishing House Ltd., 1970) p. 341.

42 *Ibid*, p. 371.

43 *Ibid*, pp. 425-426.

44 *Ibid*, pp. 513

45 Nicholas Mansergh (editor-in-chief), **The Transfer of Power, 1942-47, Vol X** (London: Her Majesty's stationary office 1981).

Abul Hashim, **In Retrospection** (Dhaka : Mowla Brothers, 1974), pp. 109-110

an initial discussion on the creation of a Sovereign Socialist Republic of Bengal and prepared a programme on the question of forming an interim government.⁴⁶ The people of Assam expressed their eagerness to be incorporated into the proposed state and unanimously preferred a proposal to name the state **Bangasham**.⁴⁷ The plan got foiled on the eve of its actual materialisation and a truncated portion of Bengal was ultimately included into Pakistan. It will never be possible to know why such a defeat at all happened when the victory was at door. The reason is that those who are supposed to be responsible for the failure are no more alive and none had confessed anything at death to atone for the failure.⁴⁸

The conspiracy of the British Government and of the central leaders of both the Congress and the Muslim League is held responsible for the failure of the plan.⁴⁹ Abul Hashim had offered a guess. Prior to the partition of Bengal in a statement he blamed it on the machinations of the coterie of the Anglo-American and Indian Capitalists, who were afraid of the spread of socialistic ideals.⁵⁰

46 Serajuddin Hussain, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

47 Waliullah, **Amader Mukti Sangram**, 2nd ed. (Dhaka: **Nowroz Kitabistan**, 1967), pp. 378-379.

48 Md. Waliullah, **Yug Bichitra** (Dhaka : Maola Brothers, 1967), p. 530.

49 M. A. Rahim, **Muslim Society and politics in Bengal: 1757-1947** (University of Dhaka, 1978), pp. 324-339.

Shila Sen, **Muslim Politics in Bengal : 1937 - 1947** (New Delhi: Impex India, 1976), p. 243.

50 Cent percent alien capital, both Indian and Anglo-American exploiting Bengal is invested in West Bengal. The growing socialist tendencies amongst us have created fears of expropriation in the minds of our alien exploiters. They have the prudence to visualise difficulties in a free and united Bengal. It is in the interest of alien capital that Bengal should be divided, crippled and incapacitated, so that neither part thereof may have strength enough to resist it in future.

Serajuddin Hussain, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-105.

Since its formation in 1906 the Muslim League had not much organisational activity for many years. On the eve of the election of 1937 Maolana Akram Khan (1869-1968) was its President and Hussain Shahid Sahrawardy and Abul Hashim were the Secretary and Assistant Secretary respectively. Since then the influence of middle class and lower middle class began to be felt in the League. Three groups emerged in the party: Maolana Mohammad Akram Khan and Khawza Nazimuddin represented feudalistic interests; Abul Hashim led the socialist and anti-imperialist group, and Shahid Sahrawardy of the middle class bourgeoisie worked as a co-ordinator between the two.⁵¹ In the party election of 1944 the younger section led by Abul Hashim secured a overwhelming lead over the others. Under their relentless effort the Muslim League became a popular organisation all over Bengal. After two years the Muslim League scored a massive majority in the election on the issue of Pakistan and formed the ministry. Sahrawardy was nominated as Chief Minister. But after partition he was eliminated from his position in East Bengal and Khawja Nazimuddin was elected as the Chief Minister.

Sahrawardy and Abul Hashim did not or could not come to Dhaka immediately after partition. The young followers of them organised themselves on their arrival to Dhaka, but failed to make any headway due to the obstacles created by the league leadership. As a result the provincial Muslim League turned into a pocket organization controlled by the rightist group. Factional rivalry and palace conspiracy spread. In fact the honest workers of the party came to feel frustrated.

The sphere of the league having been restricted, the mass-oriented and practical programme got bogged up to a great extent. During the prepartition days, the constructive programme of the party was kept aside for giving greater importance to the question of attaining Pakistan. After achieving Pakistan those constructive programmes came to the forefront. But the leaders without giving proper attention to those nation-building programmes avoided them on the pleas of Islam, the future of a

51 Kamruddin Ahmad, *Purba Banglar Samaj O Rajniti* (Dhaka: Students' Publications, 1376 B. S. pp. 64-67.

new-born state and solidarity of Pakistan. In the First Council Convention of the Pakistan Muslim League in 1948 under the chairmanship of M. A. Jinnah the proposal for adopting Islamic ideals to solve all national and international problems was taken up. In 1952 the East Pakistan Muslim League adopted other aims : to establish democracy, equality, freedom, forbearance and social justice strictly on the principles of Islam and to create an atmosphere for building an integral Muslim society on the tenets of the **Quran** and the **Sunnah**. The idea was evidently orthodox and could not make any headway in society. In the meanwhile the economic conditions quickly worsened. Immediately after the partition the prices of daily necessities, the locally-produced and imported consumer good went up gradually. On the otherhand, the prices of exportable raw materials to foreign countries tended to go down alarmingly. The material condition of the peasant gradually worsened.⁵²

During these days a famine broke out throughout the country. It began in 1948-49 and its virulence somewhat lessened in 1950. But it reappeared in the last part of 1951 and continued till 1952.⁵³ At the end the salt problem was added to it. The price of salt per seer reached Rs. 10/- in the city of Dhaka and at some places it reached Rs.16/-. The death toll of the famine, was estimated at about 20,000.⁵⁴ Thousands of people migrated to Assam from East Bengal.

Though the Muslim League Government took up mass oriented development programme, those could not be implemented owing to the stark indifference or animosity of the Central Government. Vested class interests had also much to do with this. An evidence is the Zamindari Abolition Act of 1951. As the majority of the zamindars of East Bengal were the Hindu

52 A. Sadeque, **The Economic Emergence of Pakistan (With special reference to East Pakistan)**, Part-I, Dhaka : 1954, pp. 1-2.

53 Badruddin Umar, **Purba Banglar Bhasa Andolan O Tatkalin Rajniti** (Language and contemporary politics in East Bengal), Dhaka : **Maola Bros.** , Vol. II, 1362 B.S. p. 88.

54 **Comparative statement of the Muslim League, United Front and the Awami League**, p. 3.

community, the Government was particularly careful in abolishing the zamindari system in the case of land ownership. As a result the Hindu zamindars were merely replaced by Muslim land owners as exploiters.⁵⁵

Steadily and gradually the displeasure and discontent against the Muslim League Government spread. From 1948 to 1952 the Dhaka Police, students, physicians, government employees, journalists, shopkeepers and farmers separately organised massive movements for realisation of their respective demands and in some cases achieved success.

Thus the popularity of the Muslim League in East Bengal went down. In a bye-election in Tangail in 1949 a powerful leader was miserably defeated. After this the Chief Minister Nurul Amin kept many bye-elections in abeyance but he could not avoid the downfall of the party in the general election in 1954.

In the cultural arena we notice remarkable. An organisation under the title of **Dhaka Muslim Shahitya Samaj** was established in 1926 by Abul Hussain and Quazi Abdul Wadud for **emancipation of the intellect**. Their desire was to discard all superstitious beliefs and ideas prevalent in the then muslim society. They were inclined to European culture and wanted to make a break-through in the muslim society as was done by the **Hindu Young Bengal** of the nineteenth century. But they failed in their attempts. Their mouthpiece was **Shikha** and they were sometimes called **Shikha Gosti**. Although outwardly it seemed to be a Muslim organisation, Hindu intellectuals used to participate in its activities. The pioneers of the **Gosti** always tried to maintain a healthy atmosphere and good harmony among its Hindu-Muslim participants.

Abul Kalam Shamsuddin used to criticise the members of the **Shikha Gosti** as followers of Ram Mohan and Abul Mansur Ahmad tried to give it a communal colour. The Nawabs of Dhaka,

55 Kamal Siddiqui, **The Political Economy of Land Reforms in Bangladesh**. In Inayatullah (ed) - **Land Reforms : Some Asian Experiences** (Kualalumpur, Malayasia) : Asian and Pacific Development Administration Centre, 1980, pp. 95-96 Badruddin Umar, *op.cit*, pp. 156-158

their associates and the monthly **Mohammadi** and the daily **Azad** vehemently opposed the activities of the group and created hindrances on its way. However, the **Shikha Gosti** tried its best to make a lasting impression in the society but it failed and lost its way as its exponents had to leave Dhaka due to adverse socio-political atmosphere in the pre-partition days.

Bengali Muslim women also started a movement during this time for their emancipation and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) was the pioneer in this regard and she established the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' High School in Calcutta.⁵⁶

In April 1936 an organisation was set up at Lucknow under the name **Nikhil Bharat Progati Lekhak Sangha** and in July of the same year **Bangio Progati Lekhak Sangha** was established in Calcutta by some literary personnel. Its Dhaka branch was set up in 1939. In the manifesto of the **Sangha** it was stated that the main problems of the society such as poverty, hunger, social backwardness and political dependence are to be included as themes of literature.⁵⁷ Its meeting place was the **Progati Pathagar** situated in the **Jor Bridge Lane** of South Maisundi. Renowned persons like Satish Pakrashi, Somen Chanda, Ranesh Dasgupta, Kiron Sankar Sengupta and others regularly assembled there and later on Munir Chowdhury (killed by the occupation army during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971) and Sardar Fazlul Karim also joined them. The first convention of the Dhaka **Sangha** was held in the Gandaria High School ground in 1940 and was presided over by Quazi Abdul Wadud. In the following year in the background of the German attack on Russia, the Soviet Friendship Society was founded and in 1942 an anti-fascist rally was arranged. On his way to the rally Somen Chanda was brutally killed.⁵⁸ As a marked reaction to this incident an

56 **Chaturanga**, June, 1987, pp. 167-178

57 Dhananjoy Das (ed), **Marxbadi Shahitya Bitarka**, Vol. III, (Calcutta, April, 1978), pp. 456-474

58 Dilip Majumder (ed.), **Somen Chanda O Tar RachanaSangraha**, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1977.

anti-fascist sentiment developed and a large number of writers and artists expressed their sympathy with the **Sangha**.⁵⁹

A compilation of articles read in the regular sittings of the **Sangha** was published in 1940 under the title **The Kranti. The Sanket and other stories of Somen Chand** and the fortnightly mouthpiece, **The Protirodh**.

Thus the **Progati Lekhok Sangha** through composition of poems, articles and mass songs and also through holding of literary meetings, seminars and conventions created a progressive atmosphere in the literary arena of Dhaka and this wave spread to Sylhet, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Rangpur. But chaos in the wake of the partition of the country in 1947 and the repressive measures of the Muslim League government after the partition compelled most of the members to migrate to India. Those who stayed back were put behind the bar as communists. As a result the activity of the **Sangha** mostly abruptly ended.

On the otherhand, the Muslim League which had been upholding the Lahore-Resolution from 1940 to 1947 i.e., the partition of India into two states of Hindustan and Pakistan, kept mysteriously silent over the issue of Pakistani nationalism. It does not mean that the self-styled experts had altogether abstained from discussing the pattern of Pakistani culture. Soon a section of the Bengali Muslim literary men took initiative to incorporate the main theme of the Pakistan Movement in literature and culture. With this object in view two literary organisations came into being— one in Calcutta and the other in Dhaka. The first one in Calcutta bore the name of the **Purba Pakistan Renaissance Society** (1942) and the second one, the **Purba Pakistan Shahity Sansad** (1942). The convenor of the Society was Mujibur Rahman Khan. Abul Kalam Shamsuddin and Abul Mansur Ahmed and like others were associated with it. The President and the Secretary of the "Sansad" were Syed

59 Kiron Shankar Sengupta, **Fasci Birodhi Rachana Sankalan**, Calcutta, 1975.

Sajjad Hossain and Syed Ali Ahsan respectively. Naturally, the first one had much more importance and prominence than the other. The aim of this society was to give a literary shape to the Pakistanism as an incentive to national renaissance, to arrange seminar on scientific and psychological aspects of Pakistanism and to repudiate anti-Pakistani feelings in literature. By the term Pakistanism in literature they would mean to create literature on Muslim life in Bengal with much use of Arabic, Persian, Urdu words, keeping aloof from Hinduism and to reform Bengali language to suit the purpose. They took religion as the chief factor of culture.⁶⁰

On the otherhand, the **Purba Pakistan Shahitya Sansad** of Dhaka tried to orient its activities to three directions: to acquire literary elements from the ever-flowing tradition of Islam, to make the Islamic **Puthi** literature much more refined and make it an integral part of acceptable literature and to ensure greater representation of rural life in literature. The first conference of the Sansad was held in 1943 in the Salmullah Muslim Hall of Dhaka University. Abul Kalam Shamsuddin joined the conference from the Renaissance Society as chief guest. In his address Shamsuddin declared: 'Pakistan has come to stay, conveying the messages of renaissance not only in the political field but also in the field of literature.' He viewed the formation as an expression of self-realisation. He had a special anxiety to note that the Muslim writers had been following the Hindu writers in thoughts and language. So he urged all concerned to shun the practice of following other and to be more tactful in respect of their expression and of the assertion of muslims in literature. In the following year the first annual conference of the '**Purba Pakistan Renaissance Society**' was held in Calcutta. In his address as chairman, Abul Mansur Ahmed (appearing, of late, as a strong supporter of Pakistan Movement) discussed threadbare the interrelation between Pakistan nationalism and culture. The themes of his speech were as follows :

60 Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, **Atita Diner Smritikatha** (Dhaka : 1968), pp. 225-249.

- i) Whatever meaning 'Pakistan' may offer in the estimation of politicians, Pakistan to the literary men means freedom of art and culture, self rule of culture and autonomy of culture.
- ii) It is admissible that there are hundreds of identical similarities and affinities in the Hindu and Muslim culture, yet it is also be admissible that there are many differences as well.
- iii) Religion and culture are same. Religion may transcend the barrier of geography but culture cannot go beyond the geographical barrier. Rather culture is born and developed within the geographical boundary.
- iv) The people of East Pakistan as a nation are a separate entity from the other Indian nations and religious brethren of Pakistan.
- v) The Literature of East Pakistan or the literature of Bengal is the literature from Vidyasagar-Bankim to Rabindranath-Sarat. It is a very well developed literature. Rabindranth has given it a special place in the world literature.

Yet this literature is not the literature of East Pakistan. The reason is that it is not the product of the Bengali Muslims. In this literature there has been no worthwhile stimulus for the Muslims. In other words, the Muslims do not get any inspiration from this. The obvious reason is that this literature is not created by the Muslims nor its themes are Islamic.

- vi) In fact whereas the Bengali Muslim has a culture of their own, they have a language of their own. That literature is known as Bengali Muslim literature or the Puthi Literature.
- vii) The literature of East Pakistan would be created in the common language of the people of East Pakistan. This language would not adhere to the rules and sanctions of the Sanskrit and Bengali grammars.
- viii) To talk of language, automatically involves the question of alphabets ... I do only summarise of this that we would

not maintain the rubishes of present structures of letter.⁶¹

Later on Abul Mansur Ahmed wrote that his address became very popular.⁶² But though he tried to base his theme on the Lahore Resolution the stalwarts of the Muslim League like Khawja Nazimuddin, Sahrawardy and Abul Hashem who were present there could not accept his idea. It is also difficult to ascertain how far the writers and artists accepted his notion relating to the past trends of culture.

However, in 1944 on behalf of the organisation a reception was given to Kaikobad as it was he who highlighted the traditional Islamic tradition during the days when the Muslims were blamed for following traditions other than those of Islam.⁶³

As the mouthpiece of the organisation the fortnightly **Pakistan** was published. The aim of the journal was to defend the code of national literature with the distinctive mark of individuality in the field of politics, to compose poems based on themes from folk literature and to propagate Islamic philosophy in literature.⁶⁴ Nazir Ahmad, a student of the Dhaka University was the editor of the journal and he was killed brutally in 1943, about one year after Somen Chanda. The Govt. was convinced that it was done by the communists with the intention of creating obstacles in the way of Islamisation. As a repercussion to this killing communal massacre started at Dhaka and afterwards in other places.

61 Abul Mansur Ahmad, **Pak-Banglar Culture** (Dhaka : Ahmed Publishing House, 1966), pp. 156-157, 161-69 & 176-77.

62 Abul Mansur Ahmed, **Amar Dhaka Rajnitir Panchash Bachhar** (Nowros Kitabistan : Dhaka, 1970), pp. 240-41.

63 Sardar Fazul Karim, **Pakistan Andolan O Muslim Shahitya**, Dhaka, 1960, pp. 103-111.

64 Syed Ali Ahsan (ed.), **Nazir Ahmad**, Calcutta, 1944, pp. 78-79

Thus it has been observed that the Muslims took an increasing interest out of feeling that they had been neglected by the British administration and being deprived of a share in the services took an increasing interest in English education. Side by side they cultured Bengali also. With a very few exceptions their writings were not upto the mark. The writings of the Hindus were much more perfect. As such the Muslim writers suffered from an inferiority complex and could not stand the supremacy of the Hindu intelligentsia. Hindus, on the other hand, generally looked down upon the Muslims, often as **Chasas** (cultivators). They never thought that these cultivators could receive education and contribute something to literature. This partly explains the growth of communal feelings. Some of them tried to overcome the feelings, but the atmosphere in general was not congenial and the conflict could not be averted.

When Pakistan came into being again such a conflict was noticed. This time the conflict was between the two groups of the Muslim intelligentsia : one aspiring to maintain the natural trend of Bengali literature and the other intending to give it an Islamic touch.

Rulers, politicians and even some intelligentsia of the period took advantage of this conflict to secure their position and to build their material career.

Chapter - IV

INSTITUTIONALISATION (POST 1947) AND REACTION

When East Pakistan came into being many of her imaginary features changed. The Muslim League claimed the whole of Bengal as part of Pakistan, but in reality the province was partitioned - obviously there cropped up a few new questions. Among the Muslim writers Nazrul who earned the greatest popularity stayed back in Calcutta in broken health. A big question mark arose : would the Pakistanis be able to accommodate him, now a citizen of a separate state, as an integral part of their cultural tradition ? The question was not related only with Nazrul. There were a few more : Quazi Abdul Wadud, S. Wazed Ali, Humayan Kabir, Golam Quddus opted for Indian citizenship. Syed Mustaba Ali left Pakistan and went over to India. Even Abul Kalam Shamsuddin and Abul Mansur Ahmad had not immediately migrated to the new state. They remained busy in their effort to edit daily papers from Calcutta. So it was neither possible to find out a solution in the context of religious consideration nor from the view point of political division.

Under the circumstances, as a possible solution of the problems was hard to get and so unity of thoughts was equally unattainable. As such divergent schools of thought arose on the question of the cultural heritage of East Bengal. One school stressed the contribution of the Muslims to Bengali literature and either ignored or rejected the contributions of the non-Muslim writers. The attitude of this school of thought is evident in the memorandum submitted to Jinnah in 1948 by the **Rashtra Bhasha Karma Parishad**, composed only of Muslim youths of the Dhaka University and other organisations.¹ In one of the arguments in favour of Bengali language as one of the national languages of Pakistan it recorded only the

contributions of the poets Alaol, Nazrul, Kalkobad, Emdad Ali, Wazed Ali, Jasimuddin and many more Muslim literary stalwarts to the development of Bengali literature. It is strange enough that in the memorandum even the name of Rabindranath was omitted as he was a non-muslim. In another argument of the memorandum it was stated that 'about 50% vocabulary of Bengali literature originated from Persian and Arabic languages. It was however clearly understood that the **Karma Parishad** adopted such a strategy in the struggle for national language as it could not resist the idea of giving greater stress on the necessity of giving Islamic touch to Bengali literature because the opponents of Bengali language (Islamic-minded intellectuals) had already begun describing Bengali language as an offshoot one based on the Sanskrit literature.²

Yet the whole affair was not only a temporary strategy. To those who were thinking of a national tradition it was a matter of conscious efforts. Syed Ali Ahsan explained this as follows :

'The stock of former complete Bengali literature shall never run out. Both the Bengals should have full right on it. But the very right does not mean that we have to accept the tradition of this whole Bengali literature. For the stability of the new state we must reach for new life and philosophy in our literature simultaneously : fully true it is that to preserve the individuality of our national culture and for the sake of national solidarity we are ready to disown poet Rabindranath, if need be. The necessity of national solidarity is greater than literature at this particular hour. Our national heritage in the literature of East Pakistan is the ever-flowing Islamic tradition, countless vulgar **Puthi-Shahitya**, innumerable rural folk-lore, the **Baul** and non-Sanskrit rural songs.'³

He was fully influenced by such ideals and therefore the stories of any non-Muslim writers could not find place in the

2 **The Morning News**, 17 December, 1947 (Editorial).

3 **The Mahe Nao**, 3rd year, 5th issue (August 1951) Syed Ali Ahsan, "**Purba Pakistaner Bangla Shahityer Dhara**".

Galpa Sangraha edited in two volumes by him. Another similar collection was the poems from East Bengal published by the P.E.N. of Pakistan. It consisted of English versions of selected Bengali poems from the 14th to the 20th century. In the collection eleven of Nazrul poems and one of Humayun Kabir were included. Among the non-Muslim poets, only a single poem of one contemporary poet was included, one having as its theme the holy festival Idd. The very method of selection could be ascertained from the following remarks of the translator editor :

'Rural Bengal, comprising of weavers, artisans and peasants, is mainly Muslim . . . They delve into the store-house of Muslim legends and Islamic history, besides native customs and rites for their matter and materials . . . Often the charge is made against the heathen character of East Pakistani literature . . . But it is perhaps the most unjustified of charges . . . images drawn from a romantic pagan past became nevertheless the stock-in-trade of Urdu poetry. Precisely in the same manner the East Pakistani poet used terms such as "Rudra", "Tandav", "Binapani", "Mahakaal" which are pregnated with associations abstract or personified effortlessly.'⁴

Yet those in favour of banishing all these words from East Pakistani literature could not be satisfied with the above explanation.

Nazirul Islam Mohammad Sufian went further to counteract the charge of idolatry in Bengali literature. He revived a rejected notion about the origin of Bengali language. In his opinion the Hindu scholars were on the wrong track in their attempt for proving Bengali language as the language deriving from Indo-European stocks. In reality Bengali language was a language of the Dravidian stock, prevalent in pre-Aryan period and as such it had no link with Sanskrit or the Aryan tradition.⁵ Golam Mustafa was the main exponent of

4 Yusuf Jamal Begum, **Poems from East Bengal** (Karachi : PEN 1954), pp. 13-15.

5 Nazirul Islam Mohammad Sufian, **Bangla Shahityer Nutan Itihasha** (Dhaka : 1950), p.44

this theory. Although all the scholars of Bengali language rejected the theory. Mustafa took an opportunity of editing the **Shahitya Sankalan** prescribed for the Matriculation examinees as a compulsory reader in the sixties.

In deed, Golam Mustafa had an individual contribution of his own in respect of the disputes on cultural tradition. In 1950 he presented a new yard-stick for acceptance of the past and contemporary literature. He argued that the acceptable literature was that which confirmed to Islamic ideology. He paid a high tribute to Rabindranath by discovering an astounding similarity between the themes on life and nature expressed in his lyrics and the attitude of Islam to them.⁶ Rabindranath often went on tours to visit his zamindari in Shahzadpur (Pabna district) in the then East Bengal. At that time he got ample time to observe the nature at close quarters from his boat. He was enchanted by the **Baul** songs whose themes are based on religion and nature. Being influenced by this **sangeet** and nature he composed some poems where, like the **Bauls**, we find a similarity between themes on life and nature. Simultaneously Mostafa attacked Nazrul Islam for want of such qualities in his poems. He described his method of judging literature as a Pakistani ideal and proposed to the effect that the major portion of Nazrul's literature which was connected with Hindu philosophy be declared undesirable and be rejected.⁷ He repeated this objection in 1958.⁸ Two years earlier he declared Madhusudan as the epic poet of Pakistan as he composed a long poem **Meghanad-badh Kavya** depicting the deeds and adventures of **Ravana** as a hero and disregarded **Rama** for adopting fraudulent means in killing **Virabahu** and others. He also stressed that the birth place of Madhusudan fell within East Pakistan; he accepted Christianity forsaking Hinduism; he selected **Ravana** of the **Ramayana** as the

6 **Banglo Muselman Shahitya Patrika**, 5th year, 2nd issue (Shaban 1329 B.S.)

Golam Mostafa, "Islam O Rabindranath".

7 Mahfuza Khatun (ed), **Golam Mostafa : Probandha Sankalan** (Dhaka : Ahmad Publishing House, 1375 B.S.), pp. 191-215, 234-64

8 **Ibid**, pp. 154-64

hero of his epic and called Rama a coward.⁹ As a devotee of Muslim philosophy Abdur Rahman Khan like Golam Mustafa, urged the dramatists of East Pakistan to compose dramas without any female character.¹⁰

We now came across two types of assertions on the culture of the past : one purely based on Islamic ideals and the other on the basis of philosophical ideology. The third trend could be called secularism. Despite having a special pride in the Muslim contributions it expressed a clear awareness of the wholeness of the cultural life of Bengal. A noteworthy expression of this notion might be gathered from the Assembly speech on 6th April, 1948 of Mohammad Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury, the then Health Minister. He could easily find that Bengali literature is the creation of the creative efforts of both Hindus and Muslims. In his speech he also mentioned the contributions of Kirtibash, Kashiram Das, Vidyapati, Chandidas, Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra, Rabindranath and Sarat Chandra in the development of Bengali literature. In his opinion : 'The great mass of people have so far been denied their legitimate place in literature. Now it is the chief duty of Pakistani writers to give them their proper share in their works. Their joys and sorrows, laughs and tears should now be reflected in the literature. In one word, our aim should be to create a real mass literature.'¹¹ In 1948 in his presidential address in the East Pakistan Literary Conference Chowdhury again presented his remarks in the background of Bengali literature as a whole.¹²

After 1947 the conservative Muslim leaders constituted a significant component of the ruling group in East Bengal. In the field of literature and culture they adhered to the principles initiated by the East Pakistan Renaissance Society and Purba Pakistan Shahitya Sansad. It was remarkably apparent in the use of the Bengali language, and in order to

9 Ibid, pp. 113-16

10 Abdur Rahman Khan, **Purba Pakistan Shahitya Sanmelen : Avyarthana Samitir Savapatir Abhibhashan** (Dhaka : 1954).

11 **East Bengal Legislative Assembly Official Report**, First Session, 1948, pp. 153-158

12 **The Azad**, 1st January, 1949

give the language an Islamic character uses of Arabic, Persian. Urdu words were widely encouraged. Added to this was the attempt of the Central Government for making Urdu as the only National Language of Pakistan.

The attempt at Islamisation and Pakistanisation of Bengali language was justified with reference to history. It was said that in the past there had been changes in language and literature in the wake of political changes in the middle ages. The Mohammadan rulers gave it an Islamic character and afterwards in the British period the scholars of the Fort William College had given it a Sanskrit character, and in accordance with that tradition it was necessary to give it a Pakistani character. The pioneers of this theory put forth their argument in a peculiar language. Radio Pakistan was directed to broadcast the news in the same language.¹³

The Central Government tried to introduce the Arabic script for Bengali language since 1947. The chief exponents of this attempt were the Bengali Central Education Minister Fazlur Rahman and the non-Bengali Education Secretary of the Government of East Pakistan (Province) Fazle Ahmed Karim Fazle and Maolana Zulfiquer Ali, the founder of the **Harful Quran Society** of Chittagong.¹⁴ The Maolana was of the opinion that the education of the Muslims should be conducted in the Arabic scripture of the Quran. He used to publish newspapers in Bengali written in Arabic scripts through which reading and writing would become easier. Bengali consists of many joint letters and as such there is much disadvantage in respect of using them in type-writing and short-hand writing. On the contrary, Arabic language has a definite advantage in this respect. Besides 90% of the people of the country are acquainted with Arabic scripts and for this it has a definite advantage over Bengali. Through Arabic scripts the political and cultural unity between the two wings of Pakistan would be much easier to consolidate.¹⁵

13 **The Mahe Nao**, October 1949, pp. 54-55.

14 Abul Fazl, **Rekha Chitra**, 2nd edition (Chittagong, 1968), P. 307

15 **The Asad**, 28th December, 1948 & 12th March, 1949.

Later on teaching of Bengali in Arabic scripts began. As many as twenty centres were established for the purpose. In this context, books written in Arabic scripts were distributed free of cost among adult learners.

A strong resentment grew among the public against this attempt of the government. The 'Language Committee' of the East Pakistan Muslim Students' League condemned this attempt as a wanton conspiracy for keeping the vast mass of people illiterate. The **Pakistan Tamuddun Majlish** (established on 1st September, 1947) also protested against this attempt of the government. The students of the Bengali Department of the Dhaka University submitted a protesting memorandum to the authority saying : "the absurd aspiration for regional supremacy is thus going to create animosity with Pakistan and a fear of subjugation in the minds of the people of **Pak-Bangla** has been engraved permanently."¹⁶ Besides, protest was also raised by the Central Students' Union of the Dhaka University, Students' Union of Iqbal Hall and Eden Girls' College.

LANGUAGE COMMITTEE :

In view of these pervasive protests, the Provincial Government set up a "**Language Committee**" on 9th March, 1949 to examine the question of standardisation, simplification and reform of the Bengali language current in East Bengal.¹⁷ The personnel of the Committee was :

- i) Maolana Mohammad Akram Khan - President
- ii) The Hon'ble Mr. Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury.
- iii) The Hon'ble Dr. A.M. Malik.
- iv) Dr. Muazzam Hossain, Vice Chancellor, University of Dhaka.
- v) Maolana Abdullah-al-Baqi, M.L.A., Dinajpur.
- vi) Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah, Head of the Department of Bengali, University of Dhaka.

16 **The Shainik**, 22nd April, 1949

17 **Government of East Bengal Resolution No.590 Edn.** 9th March, 1949.

- Vii) Mr. Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, M.L.A., Editor, The daily **Azad**, Dhaka.
- Viii) Mr. Syed Abul Hasanat Mohammad Ismail, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Government of East Bengal, Dhaka.
- ix) Mr. Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Secretary, Education Department, Government of East Bengal.
- x) Mr. Majduddin Ahmed, Late Principal, M.C. College, Sylhet.
- xi) Maulvi Sheikh Sharafuddin, Principal, Islamic Intermediate College, Dhaka.
- xii) Mr. A.Q.M. Adamuddin, Professor, Islamic Intermediate College, Naogaon, Rajshahi.
- xiii) Maulvi Zulfiqar Ali, Proprietor, Alawiya Press, Chittagong.
- xiv) Babu Ganesh Chandra Bose, Professor of Bengali, University of Dhaka.
- xv) Babu Mohini Mohan Das, Dhaka.
- xvi) Maulvi Golam Mustafa, Headmaster-Secretary.

Besides a few linguistic experts were co-opted at different stages :

- i) Dr. Muhammad Enamul Huq, Professor and Head of the Department of Bengali, Rajshahi College, Rajshahi.
- ii) Mr. Abul Majid, Bengali Translator to the Government of East Bengal (Press Officer designate).
- iii) Babu Ajit Kumar Guha, Professor, Jagannath College, Dhaka.

There were three terms of reference for the committee :

- i) to consider the question of simplification, reform and standardisation of the language of the people of East Bengal (Bengali including

grammar, spelling, etc.) and to make recommendations in this regard.

- ii) to suggest methods for coining new words and phrases for translating as far as possible technical terms and other words from foreign languages for which synonyms do not exist in the said language.
- iii) to make such other recommendations as the Committee may consider necessary for bringing the said language in harmony and accord with the genius and culture of the people of East Bengal in particular and of Pakistan in general.

After an elaborate study and discussion for about a year and a half, the Committee prepared a report and submitted it to the Government on 7th December, 1950.¹⁸

In the report, the envisaged language was given the name of **Shahaj-Bangla** (Easy Bengali) which was a peculiar innovation of the Committee. It suggested that all the **Kars** be written to the right side of the consonants they follow. "The Bengali vowels assume two forms when they are in actual use, one being their independent forms and the other being their representative or **Kar** forms equivalent to **Harkata** in Arabic and Persian. These two forms of Bengali vowels deserve to be noticed separately."¹⁹ Probably the hon'ble members acted on two principles : they themselves were inclined to Arabic and Persian alphabets, which is evident from their reluctant and repeated use of the very words 'Sanskrit', 'Sanskritic principles', 'Sanskrit Grammar' etc. and Secondly, they instructed the Central Government to devise ways and means to introduce Arabic scripts for Bengali. Although Bengali was developed as a language in its present form during the centuries of Muslim rule in Bengal (1204-1757) yet its script is derived from **Deva Nagri**. **Deva Nagri** is the script of Sanskrit, the classical language of Hindu Scriptures. It was for

18 **Report of the East Bengal Language Committee, 1947 (Govt. of East Pakistan).**

19 **Ibid, p. 92**

its Sanskrit origin that the advocates of Urdu as a national language maintained that the adoption of Bengali would not only undermine national unity, but would also be un-Islamic. This helped the central leaders to form a hostile attitude towards Bengali tradition and culture. In their anxiety to maintain the solidarity of the Muslim nation, the League leaders from East Pakistan were even willing to give up their own language in order to adopt Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan to unite themselves with the people of West Pakistan. One possible reason for this attitude may be that the language of some of the prominent leaders of Bengal, namely, Khawja Nazimuddin and Khawja Shahabuddin was Urdu, and they knew little Bengali. Even Bengalis like Fazlur Rahman, a leader of the Bengali group in the First Constituent Assembly, used to speak Urdu. Perhaps it was in view of this that they considered initiating a policy of language reform, according to which, Bengali was to be written either in the Arabic or the Roman script. The intention of the Central Government was not only confined to imposition of Urdu as the State Language of Pakistan, but also to resist the natural growth of Bengali language and culture. In 1948 came the declaration of Jinnah and other central leaders, advocating Urdu as the only national language on grounds of Islam and national unity. As a means to suppress Bengali language and literature the Central Government made serious efforts to introduce the Arabic script for Bengali in 1949, and the pioneer of this move was the Central Education Minister Fazlur Rahman, a representative of East Bengal. This policy of achieving linguistic unity in Pakistan could also be regarded as a necessary concomitant of the idea of Pakistan as an Islamic state. For these reasons, the central leaders condemned the advocates of the Bengali language as anti-state and anti Islam and let loose repression on the liberal and democratic elements.

Due to serious opposition, the Committee failed to please the government by its recommendations, although it tried to give some Islamic touch to Bengali language. This perverse attempt of the Committee can be inferred from an incident when Ganesh Chandra Bose, one of the members of the Committee and Professor of Bengali Department of Dhaka University expressed dissent on some vital questions, other

members commented : "Well Ganesh Babu, you being a Sanskrit scholar should refrain from commenting on the process by which we want to make Bengali language free from Sanskrit influence." Later on he opted out of the Committee.²⁰

Of course the Committee also recommended postponement of writing Bengali in Roman and Urdu scripts at least for twenty years and also recommended reformation of Urdu language during this intermediate period. Perhaps for this the report was not published at that time and for this very reason it was published in 1960 during President Ayub's regime.

SHAHITYA SANSKRITI CONVENTIONS :

The first Cultural Convention in East Bengal was held under the auspices of the government. Later four more conventions were held at private initiative. In these conventions poets, artists and literary persons of different philosophies assembled and attempted to analyse the literary problems. The conventions had a significant role in the cultural current of this country.

PURBA PAKISTAN SHAHITYA SANMELON, DHAKA :

The East Pakistan Literary Convention was held from 31st December, 1948 to 1st January, 1949 under the auspices of Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury, Health Minister of East Bengal, at Curzon Hall, Dhaka. In the convention, discussions on poetry, children's literature, philology, **Puthi Shahitya** and folk literature were held. Mohammad Shahidullah (1885-1969) was the President of the convention.

The convention began with a massive attendance. Maolana Abdur Rahim recited from the Holy Quran, the artists of Radio Pakistan presented the national anthem. Golam Mostafa delivered a lecture on the spirit of the newly

20 Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, **Atita Diner Smriti**, Dhaka 1968, pp. 333-334.

created state of Pakistan and the new responsibility of its literary men. The President of the Reception Committee, Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury once again delivered a speech on the development of Bengali literature. He opined that the history of Bengali literature is the history of a struggle between the aristocrats and the common people of Bengal, because the language of the Hindu aristocrats (**Kshatriyas and Brahmans**) was Sanskrit and that of the general mass (lower castes) was Bengali. Similarly the language of the Muslim rulers was Persian. Both these Hindu-Muslim aristocrats hated Bengali. But the Muslim rulers realised that they came from outside and if they intended to establish their rule in Bengal, they should gain the support of the general people whose mother-tongue was Bengali. Thus in the medieval age the Muslim rulers patronised Bengali literature and helped bring literature to the door steps of the common people. During the British regime Bengali literature came under the control of the middle class. But he sincerely believed that in Pakistan literature would again reach the door steps of the general people.²¹

In his Presidential address Mohammad Shahidullah expressed among others:²²

'As it is true that we are Hindus and Muslims so also it is equally true that we are Bengalis. It is no ideology but a practical truth. Nature has inscribed such an indelible impression of Bengalism on us in physical features and language and it is not possible to shelve it under cover of Mala-Tilak-Tiki or Tupi-Lungi-Dari'.

For this version Shahidullah had to face many hostilities. The Urdu-speaking civil servant Fazle Ahmed Karim Fazle, Secretary, Ministry of Education and Health vehemently criticised the opinion. But he had to leave the conference house in the face of tough opposition from the audience. Next day the daily 'Azad' published an editorial attacking M. Shahidullah in a virulent language.²³ It did not seem that

21 **Purba Pakistan Shahitya Sanmelan, 31st December, 1948.**

22 **Ibid.**

23 **The Azad, 1st January, 1949 (Editorial).**

there was any adverse comment on the remarks of the **Azad**. Rather the weekly '**Shainik**' joined the **Azad** in opposing **Shahidullah** and published some articles criticising his views. According to them **Shahidullah** through his version expressed his allegiance to the whole of Bengal.²⁴

PAKISTAN TAMUDDUN MAJLISH :

Immediately after the birth of Pakistan some students and professors of Dhaka University established **Pakistan Tamuddun Majlish** on 1st September, 1947. It was the most active cultural organisation of the period. The chief patron of the organisation was **Abul Qasem**, Professor of Physics of Dhaka University. Its aims were (a) to create a healthy and sound culture by removing the elements of conventions, reactionary elements and imitations; (b) to lead the people to the path of religion-based socialism depending on established arguments; (c) to create through literature and art a new society and state based on human values; and (d) to create sterling character to help mass development.²⁵

The activities of the **Majlish** at the initial stage are notable. The first **Sangram Parishad** on the Language issue was formed at the initiative of the **Majlish**. It would also organise cultural conventions, debates and seminars with a special stress on the language problem and it also helped the language issue to acquire a political status. For this it had to face adverse comments of the leading newspapers of the period such as **The Morning News**, **The Assam Herald**, **The Pasban**, **The Yugabheri** and the like.

The weekly **Shainik** was the mouth-piece of the **Majlish**. It played a vital role in creating public opinion in favour of Bengali language. The other publications of the **Majlish** were **Historical Materialism**, **Laws of Evolution**, **Theory of creation and Existence of Allah**, **Islamic Movement in Pakistan**, **Literature and Culture of Pakistan** etc.

24 **The Weekly Shainik**, 9th January, 1949.

25 **Pandulipi**, Vol. V (1382 B.S.), pp. 53-96

The role of the **Majlish** was very remarkable in the first phase of the National Language Movement, so to say, till it was confined to a cultural movement, but while the language issue took the shape of a political movement the influence of the **Majlish** steadily declined and eventually disappeared. This was due to differences of political ideologies among its members and workers.

SANSKRITI SANSAD :

The Dhaka University-based **Sanskriti Sansad** was set up in 1951. In the initial stage its activities were confined only to staging of dramas like **Jabanbandi**, of Bijan Bhattacharya, **Pathi** of Tulshi Lahiri and **Kavya** of Banaful etc. The characteristics of these plays were humanitarianism and mass awareness. Gradually the **Sansad** took the regular programme of holding patriotic and mass songs. The **Sansad** expressed altogether novel ideas : the end of feudalism, the fall of capitalism and triumphs and achievements of socialism and alongside also identified the evolution of modern political and economic thinking and cultural trends.²⁶

For the first three years Khan Sarwar Murshid, Mustafa Nurul Islam and Abu Zafar Obaidullah acted as presidents of the **Sansad**. Although it was Dhaka-based, its members became influential personalities in the cultural arena of East Pakistan in later times. The Dhaka University being the focal point of the political and cultural movements during the time, it could spread an indirect and far-reaching influence in the province. But it failed to create any such influence on the general people.

PAKISTAN SHAHITYA SANSAD :

At this stage the Islamically-minded cultural workers fully seized the opportunity to fill the vacuum created after the abolition of the **Progati Lekhak Sangha**.²⁷ They started a conscious effort for bisecting the time-old literary tradition, continuity and humanism of Bengali literature. Syed Ali Ahsan, through regular contributions in the daily **Azad** and

26 **Sanskriti Sansad** (Booklet).

27 Said-ur-Rahman, **Purba Banglar Rajniti-Sanskriti O Kabita**, Dhaka University, 1980, pp. 24-25

Government sponsored **Mahe-Nao** endeavoured to define the course of creating the new literature. It was advised to create a new literature fully based on Islamic life by jettisoning the timelong tradition of Bengali literature.²⁸ It was also advised to disown Rabindra Nath and reform the Bengali Language.

An urgent need was felt by the new organisations and artists for repudiating unitedly this perverse attempt. For practical reason it was not possible to revive the **Progati Lekhak Sangha** and the communist and liberal writers assembled afresh on the same platform to counteract the intention of the Islamic-minded writers and established the **Pakistani Shahitya Sansad** in the last part of 1952. Right from the beginning Kazi Motahar Hossain was its President and Foez Ahmed its founder Secretary. In 1954 Atoar Rahman was elected Secretary for two years and later on Hasan Hafizur Rahman became Secretary. As Vice-Presidents Ajit Guha, Quamrul Hassan and Abdul Gani Hazari were associated with it from the very beginning and the editorial board consisted of Hasan Hafizur Rahman, Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, Anisuzzaman and Abdullah Al-Muti Sharafuddin.

Regular fortnightly seminars of the organisation were held. Sometimes additional meetings were also held.²⁹ The remarkable discussions and functions held by **Sansad** were on Maxim Gorki in 1952-53, Bankim Chandra in 1953 and Rabindra Nath in 1955. Besides, the principal artists would also participate in these memorable functions—Ustad Alauddin Khan, Kazi Abdul Wadud and Maolana Mohammad Akram Khan used to recall their own memories. In 1953 the first publication under the auspices of the **Sansad** edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman came out on 21st February. But the chief success of the **Sansad** was the holding of the literary convention of all parties in 1954. Thus the **Sansad** succeeded in creating a congenial atmosphere for a better cultivation of Bengali.

28 **The monthly Saugat, Agrahayan, 1950, B.S.**

29 **The Weekly Bichitra, 10th year, 16th issue, (Faiz Ahmad, Madhya Rater Ashwarohi), pp. 31-32.**

PURBA PAKISTAN SANSKRITIK SANMELON, CHITTAGONG :

Simultaneously in 1947 the progressive literary workers of Chittagong set up two organisations one after another : **Sanskriti Parishad** and **Prantik**. These two organisations jointly arranged holding of the Purba Pakistan Sanskritik Sanmelson of 16th March, 1951 at the Harikhola field of Chittagong. Abul Fazl and Syedul Hassan were the president and secretary respectively of the reception committee. The **Morning News** and the **Azad** of Dhaka began a massive propaganda against the convention alleging that it was being sponsored by the communists and as such many literary persons of Dhaka declined to participate in it. In spite of this Begum Safia Kamal and Abdul Karim Shahitya Visharad joined the convention as chief guest and president respectively. From Calcutta Satyaendra Nath Majumder, editor of the **Satyayug**, joined the convention. A painting show was organised depicting the rural life of Bengal. Moreover **Kritan**, **Rabindra Sangeet** and **Kabigans** contributed to the success of the convention.³⁰

In the discussion the main focus was on the continuity of the cultural and literary traditions of East Bengal. The sponsors of the conventions claimed themselves as the heirs to the ancient Bengali literature and modern Rabindra-Nazrul literature. In the address of the President, a similar notion was expressed :

"Tradition in the fields of literature and culture is like a guiding star. To follow the tradition and make that traditional current ever flowing was the chief jobs of the exponents of culture. Those who have no link with the traditional background are like parasites."

The central resolution of the convention was in connection with the role of literature in moulding social changes. The convention considered literature as a great force in this field and declared, "We believe that literature is not only a reflection of social life but also a powerful means for social development. To preserve and save the social life from

30 Abul Fazl, *op.cit.* p. 307

the concourse of hunger, unemployment and chaos and to maintain its ever flowing evolution are sacred tasks of the literary men and the artists. We have faith in that kind of literature that brings social well being and sustains social notion."³¹

PURBA PAKISTAN SANSKRITIK SANMELON, COMILLA :

After this under the auspices of the **Comilla Progati Majlish**, another Convention was held in Comilla on 22, 23 and 24th August, 1952. The branches of the progressive political and cultural organisations and institutions like Forward Block, **Yuba League**, Communist Party and Revolutionary Socialist Party co-operated with it. In fact, it might be stated that all anti-government cultural organisations assembled there. **Shawkat Osman**, Professor of a Government College, could not participate in the discussion officially though he was physically present. The convention published a booklet **Ahvan** elaborating the objects of the function :"

"The main purpose of our proposed convention will be self-analysis. In an unbiased attitude we like to assess how far we as citizen of Pakistan have advanced in the field of national culture, how much we have contributed to art, music, literature, science and to what respect we have failed.

The convention began on the 22nd August, 1952. In the address of welcome **Asit Nath Nandi**, stressed the need for realignment of cultural traditions and coordination between the **Bhadra (urban) Sanskriti** and the **Loka Sanskriti**. In his opinion the obvious perversion created in the wake of subjugation by the English aimed at a wanton imitation and craving of favour. The **Bhadra Sanskriti** evolved during this period had got detached from the main cultural current of the country and brought forth miseries.³²

31 **Dhananjoy Das, Amar Janmabhumi : Smritimoy Bangladesh**, 2nd edition (Calcutta, 1971), p. 83

32 **Address of Welcome by the President of the Reception Committee (Booklet).**

The president Abdul Karim Shahitya Visharad mentioned in his address the existing condition of Bengali culture and literature, the dispute over state language, the conflict among different literary ideals etc. As to state language he commented:

Today they perhaps want to submerge the country into deep sea of sin. They have raised the question that Bengali cannot be the medium of our culture... There are many ways of ruining culture... anti-people and anti-social brute policy is one of them. But this policy must meet the fate of the Arabians in Persia.³³

Mahbub-Alam, the President of the meeting discussed the progress of literature and culture in the post partition period. He remarked that 'revolution was sure to occur in the light of conflict among the different opposing social and cultural forces and in consequence the present economic structure of the society would tumble down and new socialism for distribution of capital must emerge in its place and religion would become a personal affair of man.'³⁴ In the concluding session Atindra Mohan Roy, chairman of Comilla Municipality extended thanks to the participants and expressed the hope that the culture of this country would develop in an open atmosphere basing on the principle of equality and the Comilla Convention is the pioneer in regard to the achievement of that cherished goal.

In the cultural function **Nazrul Geeti, Rabindra Sangeet, folk and mass sangeet** were sung. The **Zabanbandi** of Bijan Bhattacharya was staged while the **War Vs. Peace pala** was staged in folk songs.

A resolution was adopted in the Convention castigating the malafide attempt for suppressing the Cultural and Bengali Language Movement. In another resolution it was resolved to gear up propaganda in favour of peace and against war as war is a counter force against the spontaneous advancement of

33 **Address of the President (Booklet).**

34 **Mahbub-ul-Alam, 'Khatian'Sankat Kete Jaschhe (Dhaka).** p p. 47-48.

culture and as such the Convention declared in unequivocal term its plan to create life on the basis of progress and peace.³⁵

The comilla Convention had been a great step forward in the advancement of culture of the country. Its main appeal was non-communal and humanitarian. The convention had ensured the philosophy of keeping the traditional cultural current of East Bengal in tact and to involve all to create non-communal humanist and people oriented literature being fully merged in the stream of people's life.

ISLAMI SNASKRITIK SANMELON, DHAKA :

To counteract the awakenings created by these conventions the **Pakistan Tamaddun Majlish** convened the **Islami Sanskritik Sanmelon** in Dhaka on 17-20th October, 1952. The chairman and the secretary of the **Sanmelon** were Ibrahim Khan and Abdul Gafur respectively. The **Sanmelon** was divided into five sections: social science, Islamic movement, folk culture, literary seminars and varieties. As to the aim of the **Sanmelon** it was stated:

'If we want to build Pakistan as an Islamic state, we should have clear conception of the character of an Islamic state. We want to test Islam in the light of the different philosophies of modern world and problems. Without any haziness or vagueness we want to understand Islam as the greatest humanitarian philosophy and make other understand so.'³⁶

Shahadat Hossain, Motahar Hossain, M. Barkatullah, Syed Ali Ahsan, Hassan Zaman and others participated in the literary sessions of the **Sanmelon**. M. Barkatullah, as President of the session expressed regret that the Muslim literary men had forgotten their own tradition and instead had swung to the post-war European materialism and communism of Russia.³⁷

35 Saralananda Sen, **Dhakar Chitti**, Vol.I, (Calcutta, 1971), p. 217.

36 **Islami Sanskritik Sanmelon** (Booklet).

37 **The Weekly Shainik**, November 7, 1952, pp. 5-8.

Hassan Zaman in his article **Islami Tamuddun** showed that 'the basic theme and justice of Islam are universal and are destined to yield greater benefit for mankind and they are also favourable for developing fine and humanistic instincts. So he appealed for rebuilding culture on the basic philosophy of Islam.'³⁸

The **Sanmilon** took up proposal to make Bengali and Urdu as State Languages of Pakistan; to form a permanent organisation under the name of Islamic Cultural Congress to foster healthy cultural communication and fellowship between the two wings of Pakistan and to declare illegal all the local and foreign sex literatures and organise movement in every district of Pakistan through Islamic cultural **Sanmilon**. In another resolution the **Sanmilon** desired the government to refrain from misusing Islam in matters relating to administration.³⁹

From the organisational point of view the **Sanmilon** was successful and the **Shainik**, the mouth-piece of the **Pakistan Tamuddun Majlish** published glowing sentiment. But in those days its influence was not so remarkable. As the main stay of the **Sanmilon** was feudal based, it failed to touch the mind of the rising middle class. On account of the abolition of zamindari system by this time, the feudal base in East got weakened.

PURBA PAKISTAN SHAHITYA SANMELON, DHAKA:

In the later part of 1953 when the **Yukta Front** (United Front) came into being as an opposing force of the Muslim League, the exponents of culture endeavoured to organise cultural conventions unitedly. The main role in this respect was taken up by the **Pakistan Shahitya Sanshad**. After several changes of the timing 23rd April, 1954 was finally fixed for holding the **Sanmilon**. The Chairman of the **Sanmilon** was Abdul Gafur Siddiqui and it was opened by M. Shahidullah. The

38 Hassan Zamman, 'Islami Sanskriti', "Samaj, Sanskriti, Shahitya" Dhaka, 1967, p. 7.

39 **The Weekly Shainik**, November 7, 1952, p. 5

joint appeal issued by 108 literary men and artists contained the main object of the **Sanmelon**. They were the representatives of different newspapers and cultural organisations. For the sake of literature and culture they stressed the need for unity among the artists and literary workers of East Bengal. Along-side they also spoke of the development of literature of other languages of Pakistan. As to the duty, responsibility and faith of the writers, they pointed out the principles of national prosperity, universal peace and people's welfare to which the creative faculty of the writers should be directed. They also appealed for steering ahead of the ever-flowing traditional glaring current of Bengali literature shunning all kinds of perversion, conventions and stagnation and upholding the human philosophy irrespective of caste, creed and endeavouring hard to establish Bengali in all walks of life.⁴⁰ In another statement issued on 20th December, 1954 under the caption **Shahitya-o-Sanskritir-Yanya-Byapok-Aikya-Gare-Tulun** it was pointed out that the main cause of the barrenness of East Pakistani literature was disunity among the literary persons, country-wide illiteracy, downward swing of economic condition of the country, problems relating to publication, political narrowness and inroads of nasty foreign literature.⁴¹

Representatives from almost all the districts attended the **Sanmelon**. Besides nine literary men from West Bengal, few of Urdu litterateurs attended the **Sanmelon**. Discussions, exhibition, **moshaira**, cultural functions etc. were the main features of the **Sanmelon**. The latest was opened by Maolana Abdul Hamid Khan Bashani. Discussions were divided into prose fiction, **Kavya** literature, psychology, contemporary art and literature, language, literary science and fine arts.

M. Shahidullah in his speech openly pointed to the erroneous policy adopted by the Muslim League Government in the field of literature and culture: 'On the 14th of August, 1947 our country achieved independence after a long subjugation of foreign rule and it was hoped that in the free atmosphere, the

40 **Purba (East) Pakistan Shahitya Sanmelon** (Booklet No. 1).

41 **Shahity-o-Sanskritir-Yanya-Byapok-Aikya-Gare-Tulun** (Booklet No. 2).

Bengali literature would be able to find out its way to prosper. With great hope and aspiration I delivered my speech in the conference of the literary **Sanmelen** held in December, 1948 in Dhaka. But the reaction that followed made me understand to the core that we had been too much intoxicated with the new zeal of independence. As a result the very names of Bengali language and its cultivation, Rabindra Nath, Sarat Chandra and other poets and scholars of West Bengal and discussion on their works and even the very name of Bengali began to be termed as a deliberate conspiracy against Pakistan... it would be they who would ruin Pakistan.'⁴²

On an overall estimation the **Sanmelen** was a success. On the whole the exponents of the **Sanmelen** were successful in raising the philosophies of non-communalism, the indigenous inheritance of literature and the existing social and political conditions of the country. Although the bourgeois value was prominent, in a greater sense the defeat of communalism and feudalism was not less remarkable. The chief weakness of it was the absence of thought of equality.

In the foregoing discussions it has been observed that there had been three ends of thinking in the cultural tradition at that time. The ideological cultural conception as advocated by poet Golam Mostafa was so narrow in treatment that it failed to enlist so much support. Yet it seemed his opinion on School Text Book would be sought for and accepted. As a result he could assert his opinion in the selection of essays and in changing the original texts by inserting **Rahman** in place of **Bhagawan** (God) in Nazrul's poems. Later the Radio authority adopted a policy akin to this. But this was more evident in the selection of publicity compositions than in school texts.

The community based theory comparatively lasted long. Mainly under the influence of the theory and perhaps partly under the inspiration of ideological trend, there arose a strong demand for introducing texts of Muslim writers instead of those of the non-Muslim writers. The demand was conceded to a certain extent. The scholars, however, at a certain stage did not agree to incorporate further on grounds

42 **Opening Address** (Booklet).

of deterioration of the basic purpose of education. That this theory had a sway in other fields was evident in some books compiled and published by the Bangla Academy. Mention may be made in this respect of the **Madhya Yuger Sangraha** compiled by Ahmed Sharif and **Adhunik Gadya Sangraha** and **Adhunik Kavya Sangraha** compiled by the Bangla Academy itself. All these were the collection of poems and essays of only the Muslim writers. There might be objection to such compilation but it was not understandable from the titles of all these compilations. Under the inspiration of same conception, there was an attempt for installing Nazrul Islam as the national poet of Pakistan. In the light of this as Nazrul became the Bengali complementary to Iqbal so also a positive opponent to Rabindranath. This attitude was markedly evident in the Islamic Cultural Conference held in Dhaka in 1956 and in Purba Pakistan Shahitya Sanmelon held at Chittagong in 1958. In the latter conference Moulavi Abdur Rahman, the Chairman of the Reception Committee categorically declared:⁴³ 'Now I am no more a Bengali, I am now an East Pakistani.'

43 **The Mohammadi, 19th year, 9th issue (Ashar 1365 B.S.)**

Chapter - V

NATIONAL LANGUAGE ISSUE

The wholeness of Bengali literature and culture and its assertion was felt afresh after the **Rastra Bhasha Andolan** Language Movement of 1952. But before we discuss it in details let us find out the causes which led to this movement.

The influential leader of the Muslim League, Chowdhury Khaliquzzaman, declared in Hyderabad (Sind) on 19th May 1947, about three months prior to the partition of India, that Urdu would be the National Language of Pakistan. At that time no protest was raised against it. After the establishment of Pakistan it was understood through various process of government activities that the Government of Pakistan was eager to make Urdu the State Language of Pakistan. As a result, protest began brewing in East Bengal. On 7th September, 1947 the **Ganatantric Juba League** in a convention demanded Bengali as the medium of instruction and official language. On 15th September, 1947 the **Pakistan Tamuddun Majlish** in a booklet demanded that Bengali should be accepted as the medium of instruction and official language in East Bengal and Urdu should be accepted as the inter-provincial language and English should be adopted as an international language. In two articles of the booklet Gazi Motahar Hossain and Abul Mansur Ahmed judged the language problem in the light of political and social conditions, and stated that if Urdu was made the only state language of Pakistan, East Bengal would be severely harmed.¹ In a similar article Enamul Hoque more clearly argued that in the event of Urdu becoming the only state language, the political, social, cultural and economic basis of East Bengal would be undermined and East Bengal would be a colony of the Urdu-speaking Pakistanis.² In spite of all the protests in the Education Conference held on 5th December 1947 in Karachi, Urdu was recommended as State Language under the garb of lingua franca.

1 Badruddin Umar, **Purba Banglar Bhasha Andolan O Tatkalin Rajniti**, Vol. I (Dhaka, 1970), pp. 14-17

2 Muhammad Enamul Huq, **Manisha Manjusha**, Vol. II (Dhaka 1976), pp. 105-124.

In this connection it may be mentioned that one of the major factors that usually cause bitterness and ill feeling among various linguistic national groups within a state is language.³ If a national group in a multilingual and multicultural society has a distinctive language which is different from others, that group is expected to make efforts for the development of a unique culture based upon its language and literature. A culture, whether rich or poor, is very much dear to its own people and it becomes one of the proudest possessions of the people who are identified with it. The desire of a cultural or sub-national group to retain and express its identity takes the shape of greater attachment of its own region. The call of cultural identity may become much more powerful than the sense of religious unity or territorial integrity

TABLE
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION
SPEAKING DIFFERENT LANGUAGES
IN 1951

	Mother Tongue as % of total population			% Literacy in Main Languages		
	Pak	E. Pak	W.Pak	Pak	E. pak	W. pak
Bengali	56.40	98.42	0.02	9.50	16.60	0.01
Punjabi	28.55	0.02	67.08	0.09	0.01	0.19
Pushto	3.48	-	8.16	0.03	-	0.07
Shindhi	5.47	0.01	12.85	0.51	-	1.18
Urdu	3.27	0.64	7.05	3.76	0.86	7.63
Baluchi	1.29	-	3.04	-	-	0.01
English	0.02	0.01	0.03	3.12	3.69	2.35

3 R. L. Watts, **Multi, Cultural Societies and Federalism** submitted to **B and B Commission** (Canada), Book - I, Appendix V, p. 221.

Authorities on the question of nationalism⁴ have emphasized that linguistic unity is a prerequisite for the development of national consciousness and national identity. A breakdown of the total population in various linguistic groups in percentage terms, as presented in the first Census in Pakistan in 1951, is given in the following table.⁵

The statehood of Pakistan was based on the promises of a common religion. About 97 percent of the population in West Pakistan and about 80 percent of the population in East Pakistan⁶ were Muslims. It was hoped that Islam would act not only as a cementing force among distant cultural groups, but also as the most vital factor in the process of developing a unified national character for the whole state. But this hope has been belied by the course of events which since Independence began to pull apart the various cultural units,

4 **Carlton J. A. Hayes , Nationalism : A Religion (New York : The Macmillan Co., 1960)**

Hans Kohn , Nationalism : Its meaning and History (Princeton : Van Nostrand, 1955).

Louis Snyder , The Meaning of Nationalism (New Brunswick N. J. ; Rutgers University Press, 1954).

Louis L. Snyder , The New Nationalism (Ithaca, N. Y. : Cornell University Press, 1968).

5 **Compiled from the Census of Pakistan Population, 1961, Vol. I (Karachi : Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Home and Kashmir Affairs, 1961), pp. IV, 33-35.**

6 **Until 1955, province of East Pakistan was known as East Bengal. After the dissolution of the first Constituent Assembly (1947-54) by the Punjabi Governor General Ghulam Mohammad by an Extraordinary Decree on 24th October, 1954 which empowered the Governor-General, *paripassu*, to make provision (i) for framing the constitution of Pakistan; (ii) to constitute the province of West Pakistan; and (iii) name East Bengal as East Pakistan.**

The Morning News, 29th March, 1955

The West Pakistan Establishment Bill, passed in September, 1955 changed the name of 'East Bengal' as 'East Pakistan'.

Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (CAP) Debates, Vol.I (September 20, 1955), p. 955.

particularly the Bengalees and the non-Bengalees. The disenchantment of the Bengalees developed into a predominant concern with regionalism⁷ which ultimately shaped into Bengali Nationalism and a successful movement for secession.

Although only about 3.3 percent of the total population of Pakistan had Urdu as their mother tongue, yet the Central Government decided to adopt Urdu as the sole National Language of Pakistan.⁸ This led to a serious controversy on the national level, particularly in East Pakistan as to the propriety of the decision. To the East Pakistan, Urdu is almost a foreign language. So this decision seemed to them to be an unnecessary and undesirable imposition.

The students of the Dhaka University raised protest against it and resolved :

7 Regionalism has been defined as "a consciousness of and loyalty to, a distinct subnational or supra-national area usually characterised by a common culture, background and interests".

Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language (Springfield, Mass: G&C. Merriam company Publishers, 1966). pp. 1912

Regionalism is basically a cultural phenomenon. According to Prakasa Rao, an Indian geographer, the cycle of regionalism begins with the cultural medium of language and literature, and culminates in plans for economic and industrial development of a particular region and demands for more autonomy in the political sphere.

Bernard S. Cohn, **"Regions Subjective and Objective : Modern Indian History and Society"**.

In Robert I Grane (ed.), **Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies, Mono No. 5** (Duke University Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, 1967) pp. 27.

Regionalism or "Subnationalism" being contrary to the spirit of nationalism leads to disintegration and baffles nation-building efforts.

8 The term 'National language' has been used interchangeably with 'State language' or Official language of Pakistan.

- i) That Bengali should be declared one of the State Languages of the Pakistan dominion and the official language and medium of instruction for East Pakistan.
- ii) That the confusion that is being created on the issue of State Language and lingua-franca was designed to camouflage the central problem and amounted to a betrayal of the cause of Bengali literature and the people of East Pakistan.

It further condemned the hostile attitude of some of the East Pakistani Ministers towards Bengali language and the role of the 'Morning News' for its anti-Bengali propaganda.⁹

The people of the other walks of life joined the protest movement of the students and the language movement rose to the level of politics. To conduct the movement the Pakistan Tamaddun Majlish formed 'State Language Movement Parishad' (**Rashtra Bhasha Sangram Parishad**). On 1st February 1948 in consultation with the **Sangram Parishad**, the then Education Minister of Pakistan Fazlur Rahman gave assurance that Bengali would be used in the Money Order Forms, Postal Stamps and coins along with Urdu and English.¹⁰

In fact, the language controversy, started during the debates of the Constituent Assembly as early as February, 1948 in connection with adoption of the Draft Rules of Procedure. Under the Rules, the members of the Assembly were allowed to address either in English or in Urdu. Bengali was altogether excluded as one of the official languages. It was on this occasion that Dhirendranath Dutt, a Congress member from East Bengal, raised a voice of protest and moved an amendment to the Assembly Rules pleading inclusion of Bengali along with English and Urdu. He pleaded :

" I can assure the House that I do so not in a spirit of narrow provincialism ... I know Sir, that Bengali is a provincial language, but so far our state is concerned, it is the language of the majority of the state and it

9 **Badruddin Umar, op. cit., pp. 20-21.**

10 **Ibid., p. 42.**

stands on a different footing, therefore, ... the state language of the state should be the language which is used by the majority of the people of the state and for that. Sir, I consider that Bengali Language is a *lingua franca* of our State.¹¹

As this suggestion was coming from a Hindu member, the Muslim league leaders doubted his sincerity and suspected that the suggestion was thrown in order to create interprovincial tensions. Opposing the motion, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan retorted : "I had thought that the object of the amendment was an innocent one, in that it was intended to include Bengali among the media of expression of the Assembly, but now the object seems to be to create a rift between the people of Pakistan and to take away from the Muslims that unifying link which can be achieved by a common language."¹²

In concluding his speech Liaquat Ali Khan declared in unequivocal terms the resolve of the central Government to adopt Urdu as the *lingua franca*¹³ of Pakistan and observed :

11 C A P Debates, op. cit., Vo., - II (February 25, 1948) pp. 17-46.

12 Ibid, pp. 17-46.

Besides the Prime Minister, Tamizuddin Khan, Khawja Nazimuddin and Gazanfar Ali Khan opposed the motion. Gazanfar Ali Khan gave a communal twist of the motion tabled by the Congress leaders and asserted that "there would be only one general language in Pakistan, Urdu. Urdu is not a provincial language but the language of Muslim culture, and in fact, Urdu is Muslim Culture." Khawja Nazimuddin opposing the motion argued "it is the feeling of most of the people of East Pakistan that only Urdu can be accepted as the national language."

13 Urdu was generally regarded by the linguists as a *lingua franca*, so indeed the problem did not really lie in adopting it as a *lingua franca*, but as the sole national language of Pakistan. What Liaquat Ali Khan and other referred to the adoption of Urdu as a *lingua franca*, they really meant to make it the sole national or official language of Pakistan.

'Pakistan is a Muslim state and it must have as its **lingua franca** the language of the Muslim nation... the mover should realise that Pakistan has been created because of the demand of the hundred million Muslims in this sub-continent and the language of the hundred million muslims is Urdu. It is necessary for a nation to have one language and that language can only be Urdu and no other language.'¹⁴

This debate in the Constituent Assembly was the starting point of the Language Movement.¹⁵ The students and teachers, newspaper and journals and the secular intelligentsia in East Bengal took the cue from the episode in the Constituent Assembly and organised a mass movement against the categorical announcement of the Prime Minister and other central leaders. On 26th February the students of the Dhaka University and other institutions called for a strike (**hartal**) and organised a protest demonstration against the decision of the government to impose Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan. They made it abundantly clear that the motion tabled by Dutt had represented not only the view of the minority community alone but of all Bengalees. The processionists demanded that Bengali should be declared a national language although only seven percent of the total population of Pakistan could read and write it. In their view, if Bengali were not adopted as a national language it would constitute a great injustice to the people of East Bengal who formed fifty six percent of Pakistan's total population. They also exposed the machinations of the central leadership by pointing out that only Urdu inscriptions were made in coins, stamps, currency notes and money order forms. These arguments greatly appealed to the politically articulate segments of the East Pakistan Society. Ziring truly reflects the prevailing mood of the people:

"The Bengali claim was in fact so valid that the only conclusion which could be drawn from the policy of

14 **Ibid**, pp. 17

15 **The Bichitra**, 21st February, 1983, pp. 35-42

the central government was that it hoped to maintain Bengal in a subordinate position¹⁶

Towards the end of february, 1948, agitation for making Bengali the official language gained momentum. A committee of Action was formed on 2nd March with two representatives from Peoples' Freedom League, two from **Tamuddum Majlish**, two from Salimullah Muslim Hall, two from Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall and two from East Bengal Muslim Students' League, which outlined the demand with more precision. The politicians, specially the members of the Provincial Assembly, were conspicuous by their absence in the committee. It was by and large a demand of the younger generation and the students of the Dhaka University led the movement.¹⁷

The language movement developed violent forms on 11th March, 1948 — the day of the first All East Pakistan general strike -when about fifty students were injured as a result of **lathi** charges by the police outside the East Pakistan Secretariat where students gathered to press their demand that Bengali be given the national status. It was the intention of the students to picket at the gates of the Secretariat, High Court and other offices. They showed displeasure to Khawja Nazimuddin and his ministry and insisted that the East Bengal members should resign from the Constituent Assembly unless they were all prepared to support the Bengali language movement.

The government circular characterised the demonstrations as nothing but a plot of the Hindus and enemy agents designed to destroy Pakistan by fomenting discontent. In their view the National Language Movement was inspired by these anti-state elements. However, as a result of continuous agitations Khawja Nazimuddin became panicky, especially because Jinnah was to visit Dhaka on the 19th March, 1948

16 Lawrence Ziring , **The Failure of Democracy in Pakistan : East Pakistan and the Central Government, 1947 - 58.** (Columbia University, 1962) , pp. 120-121

17 Kamruddin Ahmed, **The Social History of East Pakistan,** (Dhaka, 1907), pp. 109.

his first and only visit after Independence and reluctantly agreed on 15th March to negotiate with the State Language Committee of Action. At the conclusion of their meeting the government announced an agreement. It reads as follows ¹⁸

- (1) The East Bengal Assembly (which was in session at that time) shall adopt a Resolution for making Bengali the official language of East Bengal and the medium of instruction in all stages of education.
- (2) The East Bengal Assembly shall by another resolution recommend to the Central Government to make Bengali one of the State Languages.
- (3) Shall release all political prisoners arrested during the movement.
- (4) Shall withdraw bans from all newspapers both in East Bengal and in Calcutta which supported and gave publicity to the movement.
- (5) Shall set up a high power commission to enquire into the atrocities of the police and officers commanding them.
- (6) Shall declare that the movement was inspired by highly patriotic motives and sentiments and the Chief Minister to broadcast the same from the Dhaka Radio Station.
- (7) Shall withdraw all warrants of arrest against all political workers who had joined in the movement.
- (8) The Chief Minister shall withdraw his previous statements in which he called the agitators communists and agents of the enemies of the state. (This point was not in the Draft. It was included later by Nazimuddin and was written by himself in the agreement).¹⁹

18 **Ibid.**, p. 110.

19 **Badrudin Umar. op. cit.** p. 82.

Only two days after signing the agreement. Nazimuddin made a **volte-face** and the East Bengal Assembly completely ignored the language issue. When the students came to know about this they took to the streets to renew demonstrations. Police resorted to lathi charges and opened fire into the air.²⁰ Nazimuddin, unnerved at the renewal of agitation by the students, invited the Governor General Quaid -E-Azam M.A. Jinnah to visit East Bengal immediately. The invitation letter to the Governor General was addressed in such a language that Jinnah could not refuse.²¹

Jinnah came and tried to clarify the government position but was not prepared to amend or modify the previous decision. His approach to the State Language issue was autocratic. At a public meeting at Dhaka (Race Course) on 21st March, 1948, he started by saying that he would not tolerate the enemies of Pakistan even if they were Muslims, and stated in unequivocal terms : " . . . let me make it very clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language."²² The audience shouted their disapproval with no's more than once. Three days later at the Dhaka University convocation he called the language agitators " fifth columnists" and accused them of injecting the "poison of provincialism" with the object of destroying the state. He pointed out that the Bengalees could choose any language they wished for official use in the province, but he reiterated the need to make Urdu the language of communication between the provinces and restated :

"make no mistake about it. There can be only one language, if the component parts of the state are to

20 Nazimuddin even commented that "the continuing disturbances, undoubtedly proved that the language controversy is only a smoke screen".

The Statesman , March 18, 1948.

21 Hector Bolitho, **Jinnah : Creator of Pakistan** (London 1954), pp. 210-11

22 **Quaid-E-Azam Mohammad ali Jinnah, Speeches as Governor General of Pakistan, 1947-48** (Pakistan Publications, Karachi), pp. 82-91.

march forward in unison, and that language, in my opinion, can only be Urdu. ⁻²³

The graduates listened to him but interrupted his speech several times with shouts of no's.

The statements of central leaders along with this categorical announcement by the Quaid-E Azam caused much shock and disappointment in East Bengal. The Bengali intelligentsia considered these statements to be a direct affront to the Bengali sentiment and their language. Since language is the means of expression of ideas and aspirations of people, this attitude on the part of the government seemed to be aimed at endangering the very existence of Bengali culture group within the state. Just to pacify the angry people Naimuddin moved the following resolution on 6th April, 1948 in the East Bengal Assembly. Ironically, the resolution in favour of Bengali was drafted in English. ²⁴

- a) Bengali should be adopted as the official language for replacing English in the province of East Bengal ; and
- b) the medium of instruction in educational institutions in East Bengal shall, as far as possible, be Bengali, or the mother tongue of the majority of students in the institutions.

After a hot and prolonged debate it was accepted unanimously with some modifications, ²⁵ such as -

- a) Bengali shall be adopted as the official language for replacing English in the province of East Bengal, and it will be implemented as soon as the practical difficulties are removed ; and
- b) the medium of instruction in educational institutions in East Bengal shall, as far as possible, be Bengali or the mother tongue of the majority of students in the institutions.

23 **Ibid**, p. 98

24 **Official Report, East Bengal Legislative Assembly**, First Session, 1948 (Vol. 1, No. 4). pp. 57.

25 **Ibid**, pp. 135-165.

But this could not restore the people's confidence. As a result suspicion and distrust of the people of East Bengal took the shape of a political movement on the issue of language so early in the wake of Independence, and this mainly gave birth to regionalism in East Bengal laterly known as East Pakistan.

The working of muslim mind in Bengal in relation to language and culture has to be understood in its proper perspective. During the earlier phase of British rule, the Muslim elite of this region showed total apathy, in some cases even antipathy, to English learning and the new system of education.²⁶ The Hindus, on the otherhand, felt no constraint in acquiring new knowledge from the West. The more enterprising among them grabbed the opportunity that came their way, learnt English, came closer to the ruling authority and managed to get into most of those professions that could be found open for the "natives" of the region. This in part led to the emergence of the Hindu '**bhodralok**' class in Bengal.²⁷ Mastery of English and a snobbish pride in their new

26 A. R. Mallik, **British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 1757-1856** (Dhaka : Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1961) :

and

Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, **The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent (610-1947): A Brief Historical Analysis** (The Hague: Manton & Co. Publishers, 1962),

27 **Bhodralok** ' literally means the 'respectable people', the 'gentlemen'. The basic and most rigidly maintained destination between '**bhodra**' and '**abhadra**', between high and low, the respectable and others, was the '**bhodralok**', absention from manual labour and their belief in the inferiority of manual occupations. In the late 19th century the term '**bhodralok**' was frequently used as a synonym for high caste. At the beginning of the 20th century the Hindu '**bhodralok**' class was a socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent upon landed interests and professional and clerical employment, and keeping its distance from the masses by its acceptance of high caste proscription and its command of education.

learning made them a class apart. Proximity to British rulers and or the bureaucratic and professional functions they were entrusted with for the smooth running of the new administration gave them more social prestige and power than what their real service could warrant. Within a short time they were able to monopolise almost all the important social positions they were made available to the people of Bengal.²⁸

In the second half of the nineteenth century, it began to dawn slowly on the Muslim elites of the subcontinent that they had erred in not accepting the new education that paved the way for power and glory in society. To make amends for their past mistakes they began to make arrangements for English education for the Muslims of British India. Pioneer among them was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who established the Anglo Oriental School for the Muslims at Aligarh. This was transformed into the famous Aligarh Muslim University.²⁹

H. Broomfield, **Elite conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth Century Bengal** (Berkly : University of California Press, 1968) pp. 5-41.

N.S. Bose, **The Indian Awakening and Bengal** (Calcutta, 1960)

R.C. Majumdar, **Glimpses of Bengal in the 19th Century** (Calcutta, 1960).

B.B. Misra, **The Indian Middle class : Their Growth in Modern Times** (London, 1961).

28 H. Broomfield, *op. cit.* pp. 5-41.

29 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98) realised the necessity of having a centre of Muslim higher education on the pattern of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. With this object in view, he established a school at Aligarh in 1875. In 1877 Lord Lytton laid the foundation stone of the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College, which ultimately developed into Aligarh Muslim University in 1921- a residential and teaching university - the centre of Muslim education for the sub-continent.

Shan Muhammad, **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan : A Political Biography** (Merrut : Meenakshi Prakashani, 1969).

Associated with this effort was the object of rejuvenating the culture of the Muslims of the subcontinent. In the context of the whole of India, they were to be made conscious of their separate identity. Imparted education and training of a very high order and made aware of the need for going into official and administrative services under the British for acquiring greater social power within the framework of new colonial norms. Sir Syed Ahmed's institute was built up to achieve these ends. Since it became the most important seat of Muslim higher learning, it attracted students from all over India. Aligarh, being in the heartland of Muslim culture of the subcontinent with Urdu as the dominant language, began to shape the outlook of the students in its own image. The new Muslim elites of India found Aligarh their rallying point and also a source of their identity.³⁰ This made them inclined to the Aligarh language, Urdu, which could be viewed as a common language of those elites of the sub-continent. This is true of the new Muslim elites of Bengal in the late nineteenth century as well. Nawab Abdul Latif, Sir Syed Ameer Ali are eminent examples in this regard. These new Muslim elites had their roots in landed property or were busy in making landed property with aspirations for superior official and administrative jobs and greater social power. In a sense, it was the Muslim counterpart of the endeavour to acquire **bhodralokhood** via the respectability earned in their landed interests and official positions. The Muslim League later came to be dominated by the group of men immersed in the Aligarh ideology with a weakness for Urdu as the most acceptable and respectable language for communication. It is not for nothing that many of the prominent Muslim houses of Bengal used to practise Urdu as their mother tongue. The Nawab family of Dhaka and the Sahrawardy family of Midnapore may be mentioned in this connection. Some of them were even

30 "It gave it a new hope, a new sense of mission. From the deepest despair it pulled the Muslims out into a new field of fruitful activity. It brought up generation of Muslims who were aware of the new developments in the world and its thought without undermining their fundamental loyalty to Islam. Indeed Aligarh was the cradle of the feeling of nationalism among the Muslims. . . .

I. H. Qureshi, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

reluctant to declare themselves as Bengalis. There are pointed references to the 'Muslim' identification of the Urdu Muslims of Bengal in the Bengali literature of the early twentieth century.³¹

But there was simultaneously a parallel flow of rural folk culture originating from and encompassing the activities of the larger section of the people living in the vast countryside. The approach of this culture was more towards a synthesis of the world view of the people, irrespective of the differences in their communal identities. The **vaishnava** and the **baul** cults, various transformations of the shrines and the deities are the products of the synthesis emerging from and encounter and admixture of Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist views, all adjusted to the traditional mode of production in a predominantly agrarian rural society. The medium of communication of this folk culture was Bengali, the only language spoken and understood by the overwhelming majority of the rural population. The Muslims of rural Bengal were not only no exception to it, but also as much responsive, to the appeal of the folk culture as anyone else. Their religious identity was to a large extent transfused by this cultural identity. The vast wealth of folk literature, particularly the **dobhashi puthis**, **momenshahi geetika**, **murshidi**, **marfati** and **baul songs**, etc. bear testimony to this.³²

31 Anisuzzaman, **Muslim Manash O Bangla shahitya** (Dhaka: **Lekhok Sangha Prokashani**, 1964).

32 Quazi Abdul Mannan, **The Emergence and Development of Dobhashi Literature in Bengal**, 2nd Edition (Dhaka : **Bangla Academy**, 1974)

Mohammad Abdul Hai and Syed Ali Ahsan, **Bangla Shahityer Itihasha** (Chittagong : **Boighar**, 1975) pp. 23-29.

Din Mohammad, **Bangla Shahityer Itihasha**. Vol. IV (Dhaka : **Student Ways**, 1969), pp. 231-236.

Dinesh Chandra Sen (ed.), **Moimonsingha Geetika** (Calcutta : **University** 1923).

Badiuz Zaman (ed.) **Momenshahi Geetika** (Dhaka : **Bangla Academy** 1968).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when a section of the Muslim elites of Bengal, settled in urban areas, were painfully busy in working out an all India identity through a linkage of Urdu most of the Muslims in the countryside could conveniently by-pass that issue by way of using their mother tongue as the most trusted vehicle for communication. It was easier on their part to feel deeply attached to it, proud of it, as one feels proud of one's motherland and to defend it against an onslaught of vilification from the protagonists of Urdu-oriented all India Islamic brotherhood. Since their culture was ture to their basis, they did not feel any inferiority complex in declaring their unequalled loyalty to the language of that culture. The vernacular periodicals and journals, published by the Muslims during this period, are full of glowing adoration of their mother tongue; this was not by any means conflicting with the expression of their demands for rights and privileges as Muslim citizens of the land they lived in.³³

A third category among the Bengali Muslims was emerging at and around the time of partition(1947). They were the liberal and progressive elements, trained in western education and developing a secular outlook. The secular culture of modern Bengal, enriched by the contributions of outstanding men like Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Jasimuddin, Mohammad shahidullah and others, was to them part of their glorious heritage, which they thought could not be dispensed with. Bengali language, literature and culture were to them indivisible and their identity, more a product of them than anything else they were, no doubt, a small percentage of the total population. But when the language issue came to a head, it is these people who came forward to provide the leadership for the causes of Bengali, and their call got an immediate response from the vast mass of population immersed in the folk culture of the region. Only the urban elite of the Muslim league type continued to oppose to the cause.

33 **Mustafa Narul Islam, Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as Reflected in the Bengali Press, 1901-193 (Dhaka : Bangla Academy, 1973), pp. 226-229.**

There is no doubt that the adoption of a single national language greatly helps the development of a sense of national unity between the peoples of different regions. Particularly in the case of Pakistan, in the absence of a common national language, communication between East and West Pakistan would have become difficult. But the question that may reasonably be asked is why of all languages, was Urdu given preference over others by the central leaders. The importance of that language in the context to the socio-political set up of the country should, therefore, be closely examined.

Urdu, is a **Tartar** word which literally means "royal encampment".³⁴ It is so called because it had grown as the **lingua franca** of the soldires of different ethnic groups during Muslim Rule in India (1526-1857). The origin of Urdu is traced to the "will of the Muslims of the sub-continent to create a language which conveyed in the native idiom the tradition of their common Persian culture and their Arabic heritage. Hence Urdu developed out of an intermingling of the words from such languages as Persian, Arabic and Hindi. The accidence and syntax of Urdu originated from Hindi, but the vocabulary is generally derived from Persian and Arabic. Urdu is written in the Persian script. As the emergence of Urdu, had been associated with the Muslim rulers and the upper section of Muslim society, it came to be regarded as the **lingua franca** of the Muslims in the sub-continent. Again, during the era of the Muslim renaissance, the national awakening of the Muslims was closely associated with the protection of Urdu in the course of the Hindi-Urdu controversy between the Indian National congress and the All-India Muslim League. Although Urdu was spoken as mother tongue by approximately 3.3 percent of the total population of Pakistan its importance lay far beyond that number. Urdu, more than any other language was popular either as the medium of instruction, or as the second language of the Muslims in West Pakistan and the Muslim minority provinces of undivided India, and therefore, it was generally regarded as

34 S.M.Ikram and P. Spear (edgs), **The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan** (Karachi : Oxford University press, 1955) p. 119

H.M. Matin, **National Languages of Pakistan** (Karachi : Marsh Publishing House, 1954).

the lingua franca particularly among the educated classes. Moreover, during the British Period, with the decline of Persian in India, Urdu was regarded as the sole repository of Muslim culture and tradition.

Economic factors were no less important in contributing to the acceptance of Urdu by the West Pakistanis as the national language of Pakistan. The main centres of economic decision making were located in a few cities like Karachi and Lahore in West Pakistan. These were also the administrative and banking headquarters of the country. A large section of the bureaucrats and entrepreneurs of Pakistan had been immigrants from India. Their mother tongue was Urdu. The other big entrepreneurial houses that grew up in these centres were owned and managed by a few families,³⁵ who were at home in the use of Urdu as a language of communication. These entrepreneurs and bureaucrats, in the absence of a socially significant and politically conscious middle class could emerge as the principal decision makers in the country. It was just natural that they would like to keep their control undisturbed over the whole economic and political system. The choice of Urdu did fit in perfectly with this intention on this part. Within the Urdu-speaking group they could successfully establish their position of power and supremacy. They would have been doubly sure of their position if Urdu were equally accepted by others in the country, for in that case they could have imposed the burden of a difficult language on the rest of the people who, with this extra burden, would have found it more difficult to get into the magic circle of power. To break their hold on the bureaucracy in such a situation would have been extremely difficult. Their economic hold, as a result, would have remained undisturbed. The concentration of administrative and economic headquarters in West Pakistan already helped create the process of economic discrimination and social inequalities and the people there were in favour of maintaining the *status quo*. There was thus very little resistance in West Pakistan to the adoption of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan. The people whose mother

35 The economic wealth was concentrated in the hands of some twenty-two families of West Pakistan.

tongue was not Urdu did not find it so difficult to communicate through this language. Moreover, the people who were economically and socially important had Urdu as their mother tongue or had been brought up in the tradition of the Urdu language and culture. In West Pakistan the acceptance of Urdu as the national language was, therefore, almost complete.

The situation in the eastern region was, however, fundamentally different. Unlike in West Pakistan, the people of this region, from the linguistic point of view, were more or less homogeneous.³⁶ We have already noted that except for a small group of urban elites or the aspirants for such social positions as held by them, the rest of the people in the society were bound together by a common love for Bengali language and culture. They were proud of Bengali, which is considered to be one of the richest of the sub-continental languages and literatures and were deeply conscious of belonging to a distinct cultural group. As Von Vorys puts it, they were attached to their language and culture "vigorously and aggressively."³⁷ However, the Bengalis were not opposed to Urdu being accepted as one of the national languages. What they wanted was that Bengali and Urdu should be the national languages of Pakistan.

Those who favoured the adoption of both Bengali and Urdu supported their argument by citing examples of multilingual states, such as Canada, Switzerland and Belgium. It was further argued by them that their demand in favour of Bengali was legitimate and democratic as it was the language of the majority of Pakistan's population, and that acceptance of Bengali as a national language would also greatly strengthen the bonds of unity between the two regions of Pakistan.

36 According to the 1961 census, out of 50,840 235 total population of East Pakistan, there were 375, 876 Buddhist (0.7) Percent, 148, 903 Christian and 47, 415 other people. The mother tongue of majority of them is Bengali.

Population Census of Pakistan, 1961.

37 Karl Von Vorys, **Political Development in Pakistan** (Princeton . Princeton University Press, 1965), p.28

In analyzing the language controversy, the deeper economic aspects should not be overlooked. The adoption of Urdu as the only national language would have imposed additional burden on the Bengali youth. They were to learn Urdu as well in addition to Bengali, English and Arabic, because Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran of the Muslims. English continued to be the official language and it also had been the medium of instruction in the college and universities till that time. Without a thorough grounding in all these languages it would have been very difficult for the Bengali youth to play an effective role in the public affairs of the nation. The imposition of Urdu alone would have also adversely affected the career of the average Bengali. The people of East Pakistan were underrepresented in public services, and with the introduction of Urdu as the only official language, their chances of getting into the central services would have been greatly reduced. Therefore, it would have been contrary to the economic interests of the East Pakistanis to agree to such a policy. Thus the sensitivity of the intelligentsia of East Pakistan to the language issue had not only political but also economic foundations. Hence it was difficult, if not impossible, for the people of East Pakistan to accept Urdu as the sole national language. Thus the language issue assumed the nature of a democratic movement for cultural identity, secularism and freedom from political domination and economic exploitation.

The Muslim League leaders, however, were not only opposed to Bengali but were psychologically prepared to adopt Urdu as the national language. This was inconsistent with the wishes of the people. Even though most of the people of East Pakistan were for Bengali, the league leaders from Bengal were not prepared to give it an equal status with Urdu. In addition to their own cultural predilections, there were also some shrewd political calculations behind their attitude to Bengali in relation to Urdu.

Unlike Urdu, the development of Bengali Language and literature during the past 190 years of British Rule (1757-1947) had been closely associated with the Hindus who still constituted almost one-fourth (23.2 percent according to 1951 census) of the population of East Pakistan. Another reason for their opposition was perhaps the awareness that

Bengali is the language of the neighbouring Indian state of West Bengal. The presence of Hindu minorities in East Pakistan and the common use of the Bengali language formed important links between East Pakistan and West Bengal. The old guard of the Muslim League had been anxious to sever these links as early as possible in order to prevent the Hindus from making encroachments upon their newly gained independence. The fear of the infiltration of Hindu influence in the Muslim majority East Pakistan had persisted in the league circles since the days of the first Partition of Bengal in 1905 which held out a prospect of liberation for Muslim East Bengal from the domination of the Hindus.³⁸ But this partition was short-lived because it was annulled in 1951 under the pressure of Bengali nationalistic agitations, mostly engineered by the Hindu leaders. Thirdly, the Muslim leaders were reluctant to adopt Bengali as one of the National languages as they apprehended that it might serve to strengthen the ties of Muslim East Bengal with Hindu West Bengal, and might undermine the fraternal relations of the East Pakistanis with the people of West Pakistan. Finally, although Bengali was developed as a language in its present form during the centuries of Muslim rule in Bengal (1204-1757),³⁹ yet its script is derived from Deva Nagri.⁴⁰ It was for its Sanskrit character that the adoption of Bengali would not only undermine national unity, but would also be un-Islamic. Hence the attitude of central leaders had mostly been hostile towards Bengali tradition and culture. In their anxiety to maintain the

38 M. K. U. Molla, **The New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-1911**, London University, 1966)

39 Sir Jadunath Sarkar (ed) , **History of Bengal, Vol. II**. (Dhaka University, 1950). "During the course of the development of the Bengali Language, it had absorbed no less than 300 Persian and Arabic Words".

Muhammad Hossain, **East Pakistan : A Cultural Survey**

(Karachi : P.E.N. Centre, 1955), p.21

40 "Deva Nagri is the script of Sanskrit, the classical language of Hindu Scriptures."

R.D. Banerjee, **The Origin of the Bengali Script**, Calcutta University of Calcutta, 1919.

solidarity of the Muslim nation, the League leaders from East Pakistan were even willing to give up their own language in order to adopt Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan to unite themselves with the people of West Pakistan. I have already discussed the state of affairs in this regard in the previous pages.

In the flush of enthusiasm immediately after the achievement of Pakistan, no one could visualize that the policy of imposing Urdu as the national language would avoke such widespread frustration and resentment among the Bengalis. In pursuing the strategy of achieving antional homogeneity, the league leaders might have been sincere but they were wrong in so far as they did not take into acount the wishes of the people. They neither visualized the tragic repercussions of such a policy, nor did they realise the extent to which this policy would ultimately undermine national unity. The government leadership both at the centre and in the province utterly failed in measuring the depth of the feelings among the people of East Pakistan concerning the issue of the national language. They naively tried to propagate through the communication media that the Hindus and the enemy agents were out to destroy Pakistan by fomenting discontent. This attitude of the league leaders made the people of East Pakistan at large to become more determined to continue the struggle until Bengali secured its rightful place as a national language of Pakistan.

The national leaders, on the other hand, were tenaciously ignoring the claim of Bengali and persisted in the policy of maintaining Urdu as the only official language. The object behind this imposition of Urdu was interpreted in East Pakistan as an attempt by the Central Government and West Pakistan to ensure political domination over the Bengalis whose culture and language not only made them distinct from others but were also treated potentially dangerous to the perpetuation of the communal charater of Pakistan. This was also regarded as an attempt by the government to undermine and eventually to destory the Bengali language and culture, and dilute the cultural distinctiveness of the Bengalis who were a nation by themselves. The attempts of the government to 'Islamise' Bengali and to introduce the Arabic or Latin script were also possibly motivated by the same objective. The Bureau

of National Reconstruction, the Pakistan Council, the Iqbal Academy, the Writers' Guild and similar organisations were created for the encouragement of obscuration of values and corruption of intellectuals. Hence Sexton observes : "more than cultural pride was involved in the language dilemma."⁴¹ The assumption of Sexton is indirectly endorsed by Ziring who writes "... the only conclusion which could be drawn from the policy of the Central Government was that it hoped to maintain Bengali in a subordinate position."⁴² "To the East Pakistanis", according to Maron, "it meant that a decision of vital national interest was to be imposed on the majority of the people against their will, at the behest of a minority in West Pakistan."⁴³ The Bengalis, proud of their language and cultural heritage, reacted sharply in defending their rights of language. The language movement was, thus, a struggle against political domination, cultural aggression and communal approach to politics. The resulting agitation culminated in the police firing on the students at Dhaka on 21st February, 1952.

The tragic incident of 21st February was occasioned by Prime Minister Khawja Nazimuddin's statement in a public meeting in Dhaka in the last week of January that Urdu must become the *lingua franca* of the nation. Though after the departure of Jinnah the language agitation gradually subsided, the issue was too sensitive to go unnoticed and by 3rd February the student community and intelligentsia exploded in anger. The **All-party State Language Committee of Action** formed on 31st January had given a call for a general strike (**hartal**) throughout East Bengal and notified that it would organise a mammoth demonstration in favour of adoption of Bengali as a national language on 21st February from the Dhaka University Campus. It was thought opportune to stage the demonstration

41 Roy Keith Sexton , **Pakistan : The Divided States; A study in National Unity** (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1956) p. 61

42 Lawrence Ziring, **The Failure of Democracy in Pakistan : East Pakistan and the Central Government, 1947-58**, pp. 120-21

43 Standley Maron, "The Problem of East Pakistan" *Pacific Affairs* June, 1955, p. 133.

on that date as it coincided with the meeting of East Bengal Legislative Assembly.

The Muslim League government, faced with a serious challenge, responded to it in a negative way. First, it banned the **Pakistan Observer** one of the two English dailies and supporter of Bengali, for its criticism of the government leaders in an editorial entitled "**Crypto-Fascism**". Secondly, the government promulgated section 144 of the criminal procedure code on the night of 20th February for one month which meant prohibition of processions, demonstrations, meetings and assembly of more than four persons in any public place within the Dhaka municipal areas. The strategy of the government hardened the attitude of the students and reinforced their decision to go ahead with their programme and violate Section 144.

The day 21st February, 1952 will be remembered as a sacred day in Bangladesh for a long time to come. One who has not seen the morning of 21st February cannot possibly imagine how the day began. It gave the impression of a deserted city. There was no movement of any traffic or people going to work. The students of different institutions in Dhaka began to assemble at the Dhaka University Campus after 8 a.m. When the Campus was about to over-flow, it was decided to send students out in groups of ten. The police arrested each group coming out of the University Campus and at a point the rush was such that police were unable to cope with the situation. It is at that point that the police tried to disperse the students by throwing teargas shells. The students ran helter skelter towards the Medical college hospital where police faced with a similar situation opened fire at the students. Several lives were sacrificed on that day as a result of the firing.

Thus the language movement, bathed in the blood of the martyrs, came of age and became a full-blown issue. The event generated intense emotion and when the news of the killing of students and others spread throughout the country the whole of East Bengal exploded in anger. This aroused Bengali nationalistic sentiments on the basis of the demands for adoption of Bengali as a national language and for regional autonomy. Thus the 21st February can be regarded as the beginning of a total revolution in Pakistani politics. Even after

the acceptance of Bengali as a national language, the memories of the February tragedy continued to provide a residuum of resentment which ultimately turned the language movement into a cultural revolution shaping Bengali nationalism.

The tragedy of the Twenty-First February is a landmark in the history of Bangladesh.⁴⁴ Since then it has been observed in East Pakistan and subsequently in Bangladesh as a day of mourning, dedication and determination. The observance of the Twenty-First February as a 'Shahid' (martyr) day reminds the Bengalis every day afresh of those "who gave 'their todays' for 'our tomorrow'".⁴⁵ Every year hundreds and thousands of people walk bare-footed in silent procession from the **Shahid Minar** to the burial ground for offering prayers. Memorial meetings and symposia are held regularly. Newspapers and magazines bring out special issues. Hundreds of commemorative volumes are published.

Within twenty-four hours of the firing the Chief Minister Nurul Amin moved a special motion in the Provincial Assembly recommending Bengali as one of the National Languages.⁴⁶ The

44 To commemorate the language martyrs, the students erected overnight with spade, brick and mud a monument in the Dhaka Medical College compound where the firing took place. Known as the '**Shahid Minar**', it was inaugurated on February 23 by the parents of one of the martyrs. Subsequently **Shahid** memorials of this type had been built all over East Pakistan. All these memorials were destroyed by the Pakistani army following the night of 25th March, 1971 during the liberation struggle. After the liberation all these **Shahid Minars** (memorials) have been reconstructed and students and people of every locality of Bangladesh observe the day with due solemnity.

45 A. Abdullah "The Twnty-First February", *The Dhaka Times* February, 21, 1966.

46 The motion reads as follows :

"This Assembly recommends to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan that Bengali be one of the State Languages of Pakistan".

East Bengal Legislative Assembly, Official Report, Vol. VII (February 22, 1952), p.89.

motion was unanimously adopted. But it was too late. Had it been accepted in 1948, the tragedy could have been averted. Had the East Pakistan leaders in the province and the Central Government taken a unanimous stand in favour of Bengali, the Muslim League regime would have been much more reluctant to impose Urdu on the East Pakistanis and a compromise solution could have been found at the first sign of a popular movement for Bengali Language.

After the February tragedy, the movement sharply gained momentum and became a dominant issue. All political parties, cultural organisations⁴⁷ and almost all newspapers came out strongly in support of the movement. The Morning News was the only newspaper which supported government on the language issue. In an editorial it commented that Bengali could never be accepted as a state language as it was identified with Hindu culture and as such it could not be the vehicle of cultural aspiration of the Muslims.⁴⁸ For this attitude it had to face several attacks by the students. At this stage, the language controversy was entwined with other constitutional issues, such as the quantum of representation in the Federal Assembly, and provincial autonomy, as well as the issues of inadequate representation of the Bengalis in the Central Superior Services, and the unequal economic development of the regions of Pakistan. The occasion offered the Bengalis the first opportunity of throwing themselves into a massive political agitation. In describing the stakes of the Bengalis in the language controversy, Ziring observes : "the language movement affected the Bengalis as a people; a latent cultural nationalism was fused to a political cause."⁴⁹

47 The political organs in East Pakistan, such as the Provincial Muslim League Council, the Muslim League Parliamentary Party, the East Pakistan Legislature, the Pakistan National Congress, East Pakistan Jama, atī-Islam, and associations such as the Executive Council of the Dhaka University, the Dhaka High Court Bar Association and the Press of East Pakistan supported the claim of Bengali as a State Language of Pakistan.

The Azad, February 22nd April 3, 1952.

48 **The Morning News**, December 17, 1947.

49 Lawrence Ziring, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

Chapter - VI

THE PERIOD AFTER 1952

The history of this phase is tarnished by conspiracy, party factions and self-seeking. The language controversy remained unresolved for another two years; during this period inter-regional feelings were greatly embittered. The situation became worse when, two months after the tragic events, Nur Ahmed, a Muslim League member from East Pakistan, moved a resolution in the Constituent Assembly demanding that both Bengali and Urdu be recognised as the national languages of Pakistan.¹ Thereupon, Pirjada Abdus Sattar, the Law Minister, immediately moved an amendment motion shelving the issue as there was "no immediate necessity of taking a decision thereon."² In the course of the debate, Nur Ahmed's motion was supported only by Dharendra Nath Dutt and Raj Kumar Chakrabarty from East Pakistan. All the members of the Muslim League Parliamentary Party from East Pakistan who were already committed to supporting the demand for Bengali failed to respond favourably to Nur Ahmed's resolution. No other member from East Pakistan raised his voice. Dutt openly accused the government party members from East Pakistan of being deliberately silent and of neglecting to champion the cause of Bengali language. He strongly appealed to the House :-

"The demand that Bengali should be one of the state languages of Pakistan, is in the interest of Pakistan. For the interest of Pakistan, and for the integrity of Pakistan, the Eastern wing and the Western wing should be connected and they can be connected if my friends from Western Pakistan start to learn Bengali and we learn Urdu."³

Dutt further observed that postponing a decision at this stage was only motivated by a desire to shelve the issue for ever. Professor Chakravorty made a fervent appeal :

1 Ziring, *op-cit.*, p. 139

2 CAP Debates, *op-cit.* Vol. XI (April 10, 1952), p.22.

3 CAP Debates, *op-cit.*, Vol. XI (April 10, 1952), p. 38.

"If the House adopts this motion, it will lead to a better understanding among all sections of the people of Pakistan, especially its two wings. The stage has now come, Sir, when the matter brooks no delay and we should come to a decision."⁴

The motion was, however, supported by some West Pakistani members : Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan (Punjab), Sardar Asadullah Jan Khan (NWFP), and Seth Sukhdev (Sind). Shaukat Hayat Khan in course of pleading for a national status for Bengali struck a note of warning, and observed:

"If we from Pakistan are going to oppose that urge of the people of East Pakistan, we will be responsible for starting trouble in East Pakistan, which may damage the very fabric of my country and my nation"⁵

The motion moved by Nur Ahmed was turned down.

Prime Minister, Khawja Nazimuddin, presented the 'Final' Report of the Basic Principles Committee (BPC)⁶ before the Constituent Assembly in December, 1952. The report did not contain any reference to the question of the state language.⁷ This only heightened the sense of frustration of the East Pakistanis who had been agitating all the time for a categorical decision in favour of the Bengali language. Thus the wishes of the people were flouted again. The resultant policy of procrastination tended to generate feelings of ill-will between the people of the two regions. These events eventually shaped the course of Pakistani politics.

The provincial elections in East Pakistan, held in March, 1954, provided an opportunity to the people to express themselves on the fundamental national issue including that of

4 **Ibid**, p. 23

5 **Ibid**, p. 25.

6 The BPC was appointed by the Constituent Assembly in March 1949 to recommend a framework of the future Constitution of Pakistan.

7 The Interim Report of the BPC presented by Liaquat Ali Khan in 1950 flatly recommended Urdu as the only state or national language of Pakistan. It raised a storm of protest in East Pakistan and finally the report was shelved.

the language. Here was a clear chance for the people to test once and for all by ballot the representative character of the Muslim League in East Pakistan. All the forces of opposition joined hands to form a grand alliance known as the "United Front" on the basis of a 'Twenty-One Point' election manifesto to 'turn the rascals out.'⁸ The manifesto committed the Front among other things, to--

- (a) make Bengali one of the State Languages of Pakistan;
- (b) erect a monument to commemorate the memory of those martyrs who gave their lives for the Bengali language on 21st February, 1952, and to compensate the bereaved families ;
- (c) declare the Twenty First of February as '**Shahid Day**' and as a public holiday ;
- (d) secure full and complete autonomy and bring all subjects under the jurisdiction of East Bengal, leaving only defence, foreign affairs and currency under the jurisdiction of the centre. Even in the matter of defence, arrangements shall be such as to have the head-quarters of the army in West Pakistan and to establish ordnance factories in East Bengal with a view to making East Bengal self-sufficient in matter of defence⁹ in accordance with the historic Lahore Resolution.¹⁰

8 R.L.Park and R.S. Wheeler, "**East Bengal under Governor's Rule**", *Far Eastern Survey* (September, 1954), p. 129.

9 Professor Abul Kashem, **Ekush Dafar Rupayan**, Dhaka, 1954.

10 The historic Lahore Resolution, adopted in 1940, declared "... that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary that the areas 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 constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

Liaquat Ali Khan, **Resolutions of the All-India Muslim League** (from December, 1938 to March, 1940) Delhi, n.d.). pp. 47-49.

In the election, the United Front won a landslide victory. The ruling Muslim League Party was completely routed; it was able to secure only nine seats out of 309.

A wave of great rejoicing swept all over the country. Amidst such rejoicing and enthusiasm A.K. Fazlul Huq formed the ministry on 3rd April, 1954. On 30th May he went to Calcutta, his field of activities in his youth. Although he went there on ground of medical treatment, he seized this opportunity to meet the physician Chief Minister of West Bengal, Bidhan Chandra Roy, and discussed with him matters relating to trade and commerce of the two Bengals, communication between the two and cultural visits. In different welcome meetings he openly expressed his views in respect of the oneness of cultures of the two Bengals and the necessity of building up intimate relations between the two. On 3rd May he stated in a welcome meeting :

"I do not believe in the political partition of a country. In reality I have not been able to make me familiar with the two disputable words-- Hindustan and Pakistan. Those who partitioned my golden country into two are the country's enemies. In my opinion Pakistan yields no significant meaning -- the word rather a means to create confusion and achieve self-aggrandisement."¹¹

Under political pressure Huq later denied having made the statement. But it aroused suspicion in the minds of the Pakistani leaders and they became more cautious when Fazlul Huq, in a bid to achieve for East Pakistan freedom from domination and exploitation by Karachi, demanded complete regional autonomy. This led the **New York Times** correspondent in Karachi to write in a despatch : "East Pakistan wished to become an independent state."¹² Dismissing this despatch as untrue, Huq reiterated his position and said : "East Pakistan should be an autonomous unit of Pakistan. This is our ideal and we will fight for it."

11 Amitabha Gupta , **Bangladesh, Natun Sanskaran** Calcutta : Anandadhara Prokashan, 1378 B.S., p. 54.

Khondker Abdul Khalique , **Ek Satabdi (Life of Sher-E-Bangla)**, 3rd edition, Dhaka : Prokash Bhavan, 1973, p. 225

The Monthly Mohammadi, Jaistha 1381 B.S., p. 615

12 **The New York Times**, 23rd May, 1954.

Pakistan Government regarded it as a 'treason', dismissed the popular ministry and imposed central rule with Major General Iskander Mirza as the Governor of East Pakistan.

The reactionary camps wildly rejoiced at the dismissal of the United Front Ministry. **The Morning News**, the mouthpiece of the reactionary camp, wrote a special editorial¹³ :

"East Pakistan arise : Thy long night is over. A danger to the fair name of East Pakistan has been removed This is a day too for prayer and thanks-giving to God for this act of divine mercy on millions of the Prophet's followers in East Pakistan."

During the period Pakistan signed some military pacts with the capitalistic block, specially with USA to check the spread of Socialism and Communism. After the victory in the general election in East Pakistan all the elected members belonging to the Front and all other leaders signed a joint statement calling upon the Pakistan government to come out of the military pacts. West Pakistan then craved for American aid and necessarily followed a rigid anti-communist policy. West Pakistanis could not tolerate the pro-communist leanings of East Pakistan and their demand for autonomy. Dissolution of the United Front ministry was thus the safest proposition for West Pakistan.

The younger generation under twenty-five had a separatist tendency. They were determined to achieve economic and political control. But the overwhelming majority was still for a kind of federation of the East and the West, specially, the older generation who had gone through the terrible civil war in the wake of the partition. Separatism and social radicalism had not as yet achieved a hold over East Bengal's workers and farmers. The intelligentsia were more interested in improving the standard of living and in the availability of more jobs through economic development. To achieve these goals they wanted to share power equally with

13 **The Morning News**, 31st May, 1954.

West Pakistan. They thought that no modern society could really be the master of its destiny unless it had control of monetary, credit and tariff policy. In Pakistan these were controlled by the central government which was predominantly West Pakistan. Most of the East Pakistani leaders also believed that if East Pakistan was to achieve its aims the constitution had to be confederal.

After the election, the Constituent Assembly was reconvened in April, 1954. This time the Muslim League members from East Pakistan realised the gravity of the situation. It was no longer possible for them to defer a positive action concerning the language issue. This was achieved in two stages. First, the members of the Muslim League decided at a parliamentary party meeting that both Urdu and Bengali should be the national languages of Pakistan, and English should continue as the official language for another twenty years.¹⁴ Then, on the basis of the above decision, the Constituent Assembly adopted on 9th May, 1954, the following formula of the language question which was incorporated in the BPC Report :

"The official languages of Pakistan Republic should be Urdu and Bengali and such other languages as might be declared to be such by the Head of the State on the recommendation of the Provincial Legislatures concerned. Members of the Parliament should have the right to speak in Urdu and Bengali in addition to English.¹⁵

It may not be out of place to point out here that the language formula accepted by the Constituent Assembly was directed not only to satisfy Bengali regionalism, but was also aimed at pacifying the Sindhis and the Pathans.¹⁶ Khan Abdul

14 **The Morning News**, 21st April, 1954.

15 **CAP Debates, op-cit.**, Vol. XVI (May 7, 1954), p. 72.

16 The language movement in East Pakistan had provided an impetus to the forces of regionalism among the pathans and the Sindhis. Following the example of the Bengalis, the Pathans and the Sindhis demanded that Pushto and Sindhi, their respective mother tongues, should also be recognised as the national languages. They also started focusing attention on demands for the adequate representation in the civil services and urge for economic development of their neglected regions.

Quyyum Khan, a Muslim League stalwart of the North-West Frontier Province, evidently pleased by the resolution, observed that this resolution "fulfils the dream of the eight million Pushto-speaking people in Pakistan."¹⁷

The Constituent Assembly finally adopted the draft bill of constitution on 21st September and adjourned till 27th October, 1954. It was announced by the Prime Minister that the new constitution would become effective from 1st January, 1955 and Pakistan would be declared a Republic.¹⁸ However, the Constituent Assembly was itself dissolved by the Governor General on 24th October, 1954 by a "Proclamation of Emergency."¹⁹ A new Constituent Assembly was set up in June,

17 CAP Debates, op. cit., Vo., XVI (May 7, 1954), p. 91.

18 Report of the BPC (as adopted by the CAP on the 21st September, 1954) op. cit., (Karachi, Government of Pakistan, 1954).

19 It is significant that the Constituent Assembly was dissolved barely seventy two hours before it was to reconvene to approve the final draft of the constitution bill. During twentyfour years of United Pakistan, the power groups that dominated the social, economic and political scene consisted of the army, bureaucracy, industrial magnates and semi-feudal land lords. Most of these people again came from more or less the same social back ground. The very nature of their social and economic behaviour made them anti-democratic. Their strength and authority were likely to be very much reduced in a system of true democracy where people's representatives elected on the basis of adult franchise were expected to wield real power. It was, therefore, very likely that the power groups having greater chance to thrive in a non-democratic system would try to thwart any move towards the establishment of a representative government. It is considered by many that the (i) dismissal of Khawja Nazimuddin as the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1953 when he commanded absolute confidence of the Muslim League Parliamentary Party; (ii) the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in 1954 when it was ready with the draft bill of a constitution; and later (iii) the imposition of Martial Law in 1958 when the country was on the threshold of a general election under the 1956 constitution; and finally (iv) Pakistan army's brutal assault on the unarmed civilian population of East Pakistan on the night of 25th March, 1971 without allowing the National Assembly, elected in the first

1955. Thirty nine out of forty newly elected members from East Pakistan were committed to supporting the **"Twenty-one Point"** programme. With the reopening of the language question along with other constitutional issues, the East Pakistani members had their opportunity to press the demand for adopting Bengali as a national language. Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish delivered the first speech in Bengali in the Constituent Assembly. Later on, it was confirmed by the ruling given by the Speaker to the effect that Urdu, Bengali and English are the official languages of Pakistan.

The Constitution was inaugurated in March, 1956. The language formula referred to above adopted by the First Constituent Assembly (1947-54) in May, 1954 was substantially incorporated into the constitution. This represented the final victory of the movement for the Bengali language. Article 214 of the Constitution stipulated : ²⁰

214(1) The State languages of Pakistan shall be Urdu and Bengali :

Provided that for the period of twenty years from the Constitution Day, English shall continue to be used for

ever general election held in Pakistan in twenty four years, to frame a constitution for the country, were engineered by these power groups who were not prepared to see their grip on the economic and political structure of the country loosened by the 'irresponsible' behaviour of the people in a system of free choice and democracy. That the Pakistan army had been involved in the internal politics of the country since 1953, if not earlier, was evident from General Ayub Khan's own admission that it was he who as early as 1954 conceived of the one-unit scheme for West Pakistan and strong centre.

Safar A. Akanda, **East Pakistan and Politics of Regionalism**, University of Denver, 1970, pp. 236-282.

Md. Ayub Khan, **Friends not masters : A Political Autobiography** (New York; Oxford University Press, 1967)

20 **The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1956** (Karachi: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Law, 1965), p. 82.

all official purposes for which it was used in Pakistan immediately before the Constitution Day, and Parliament may by Act provide for the use of English after the expiration of the said period of twenty years for such purposes as may be specified in that Act.

- (2) On the expiration of ten years from the Constitution Day, the President shall appoint a Commission to make recommendations for the replacement of English.
- (3) Nothing in this Article shall prevent a provincial Government from replacing English by either of the State languages for use in that Province before the expiration of the said period of twenty years.

On 7th October, 1958, the 1956 constitution was abrogated and Martial Law was promulgated.

It has already been noticed that the United Front Ministry was dissolved for its alleged pro-communist leanings and its stand on the question of autonomy. This was the first major blow to democratic movements in East Pakistan.

The political situation during the period was fluid. H.S. Sahrawardy was taken in as the Prime Minister but it was a very delicate situation both for him and for his party. The Awami League was certainly the most organised and powerful political party in East Pakistan but it had scarcely any support in West Pakistan. A Prime Minister of Pakistan was expected to have support in both the wings. As the Awami League could not make any headway in West Pakistan, it had to form a coalition with the Republican Party of West Pakistan. There were only thirteen Awami League members in a Parliament of eighty. The Republican Party had about twenty-seven members in the parliament. The coalition did not produce a majority, so other parties were also asked to join the coalition. Most people in East Pakistan thought that it was unwise of Sahrawardy to head such a coalition. Apart from the Awami League being a minor partner in the coalition, the Republican party represented privileged and feudal interests in West Pakistan, whereas the social base of Sahrawardy's party in East Pakistan was mostly the lower middle class. Before Sahrawardy formed the Government his followers in the Parliament, confined their speeches mostly to the problems of Bengal. They demanded

for the province of East Bengal all the powers except defence, foreign affairs and currency; they protested against centralization of power - sometimes their speeches gave the impression that they were secessionists. This was natural -- because the Awami League under the leadership of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani agitated for complete autonomy ever since its birth in 1949. The political and economic attitudes of the leaders of the two parties were thus bound to be different. Under the circumstances it was impossible for one group to understand the other. Political thinkers of East Pakistan failed to appreciate the move of Sahrawardy. The Awami League parliamentary Party in East Pakistan supported the Prime Minister because the provincial Awami League government thought that it could work with greater confidence if they were backed by a sympathetic Central Government. For East Pakistan was exploited economically, oppressed politically, discriminated against socially and dominated culturally under the Muslim League government so far and they were determined to put an end to this trend in Pakistan.

In his first broadcast to the nation Sahrawardy declared that he would follow a new independent foreign policy. The first country he decided to visit was Red China. The announcement shocked the older generation who believed that communism was a contagious disease and a danger for humanity. The bureaucracy was disturbed, and the landlords, industrialists and commercial magnets who depended completely on American aid became gravely concerned. But Sahrawardy refused to listen to them, and within three months after the formation of his government he left for Peking.

Pakistan had no friends in Asia except Iraq, Turkey, Thailand and Philippines. They were friendly because they were all members of military pacts engineered by the Anglo-American bloc. All its neighbours-India, USSR, China and Afghanistan - were hostile. Burma was unfriendly and Ceylon indifferent to Pakistan. Pakistan had been suffering from contradictions ever since her birth. Just as Jinnah's life was haunted by his self-imposed solitude, so Pakistan was living in solitary terror of her giant neighbours, constantly searching for willing partners to help her escape from the geographical

reality. This made her forget that she belonged to Asia. Sahrawardy's visit was followed by a return visit. The Chinese leader was allowed to address the largest public meeting in Pakistan's history. The leftists in Pakistan, especially in East Pakistan, were upset and had failed to appreciate the friendly gesture of the Chinese Government to Sahrawardy who was always known to be an enemy of communism. Political workers were confused though there was no reason for such confusion because even in 1921 V.I. Lenin himself opted for a cautious policy of support for nationalist but non-communist regimes. "In semi-colonial countries it was essential," Lenin maintained, "to strengthen forces of national independence even though they were working for bourgeois revolutions. It would help to undermine the economic foundations of imperialism." Lenin supported Kemalist Turkey, though communists were persecuted there. Communists believed that national democracies were expected to emancipate themselves step by step from the imperialist system and move steadily to the socialist camp. Sahrawardy and Chau-en-Lai became great friends, and the two countries came closer to each other for reasons which were completely different. Sahrawardy aimed at getting Asian and Russian support for Kashmir, and Chau-en-Lai aspired for the leadership of Asia by isolating India.

KAGMARI CULTURAL SAMMELON :

A rift began between the Prime Minister and Maulana Bhashani over the country's foreign policy. Maulana Bhashani's contention was that the Prime Minister was leading the country into the capitalistic camp giving up his independent foreign policy. He called a meeting of the East Pakistan Awami League Council, the highest body of the organisation, at **Kagmari** to decide the issue. The meeting was convened in February, 1957, at the same time that the Security Council was to discuss the Kashmir issue.²¹ the convenor of the preparatory committee was A.Z. Shamsuddin.

To give it an international status, artists of different countries of the world was invited. The USA, the UK, Egypt and India sent representatives. The other countries sent messages wishing success of the **Sammelon** and expressed regret on their inability to attend. The Indian delegation was

21 Kamruddin Ahmad, **The Social History of East Pakistan** (Dhaka, 1967), pp. 127-151

headed by professor Hamuyun Kabir. About a hundred literary persons and cultural exponents of West Pakistan were invited to participate. Through news media the general public were requested to attend the **Sanmelon**. To go to Kagmari from Dhaka special bus services were arranged at a reduced rate. The guests were requested to take with them beddings and curtains only. The organisers arranged their food and lodging. About 50 highly decorated gates were erected on road leading to Kagmari from Mirzapur.²² Among the erected gates in the names of VIP of home and abroad were gates of **Jinnah, Iskandar Mirza, Jamaluddin Afgani, Zaglul Pasha, Sirajuddowla, Titumir, Moulana Hali, Mohammad Ali, Allama Iqbal, Syed Ahmed Khan, George Washington, Lenin, San Yat Sen, Gandhi, George Bernard Shaw, Shakespeare, Rabindra Nath and Suvash Bose**. Moulana Bhashani said : "The road to Kagmari : the road to world fraternity and liberty."

The **Sanmelon** commenced on 8th February under the presidentship of Qazi Motahar Hossain. Though the **Sanmelon** was scheduled to be inaugurated by the Pakistan Prime Minister Hussain Shahid Sahrwardy, in his absence it was opened by East Bengal Chief Minister Aatur Rahman Khan. He said that the renaissance of the glorious culture of the country would not be possible without economic development. The address of welcome was made by Maolana Bhashani. He remarked that the main purpose of the **Sanmelon** was to establish intimate relations with the people of different regions of Pakistan and understanding with the other states of the world. He also said that to keep the country alive the development of fine arts like that of agriculture was very much essential.²³

The cultural function that was held in the evening included songs of **Lalan Fakir** of Kushtia, the **Jatra** performance of 'Satma' (Step-mother) of Muluk Chand of Dhaka and the picture show on Qazi Nuzrul Islam by the Indian Information Bureau. The attempt for displaying 'Hungary fights for freedom'

22 **The Daily Ittehad**, 5th February, 1957.

23. **The Daily Sangbad**, 9th February, 1957.

by the American Information Centre was cancelled owing to strong protest.

Literary discussion was held in the morning session of the conference on 9th February. In the session under the presidentship of Qazi Mothahar Hossain, M. Shahidullah, Enamul Hoque, Moalona Abdul Qader of Peshawar and David Girth of America read articles on '**Language of Pakistan**', '**The Muslim influence on Bengali Literature**', '**The trend of the post-war Literature**' and '**The Cultural life of America**' respectively. The leader of the Indian delegation delivered a speech on the identical aspects of the cultural relations between Pakistan and India. He also highlighted the fact that it was strange to think that conflict among mankind had occurred even in the age of scientific mass communication.²⁴

The literary discussion on the 10th was dominated by the members of the Indian delegation. Tara Sankar Bandopadhaya paid glowing tributes to the martyrs of Bengali Mother Tongue and extended profound regards to Maolana Bhashani.²⁵

The organisation of such a **Sanmelon** and the programmes and messages issued in this **Sanmelon** aroused a great reaction in the existing political and cultural atmosphere of Pakistan.

At noon over two hundred '**Lathials**' took part in **Lathi**, **Sword** and **Ramda** displays. In the evening the cultural function was held in open stage. Two stages were erected at the Rajbari of Santosh. On the first stage **Chharagan of Ramesh Sil**, **Jarigan of Tashar Ali** and his party were held and on the second stage the **Jatragan** and **Kanchan Pala** were staged. Besides these, the Indian team arranged cinema show of '**Pather Pachali**', the American Information Centre, '**Cow Boy**' and East Bengal Information Department on Agricultural Show.

The **Dawn**, the **Morning News** and the **Azad**, the mouth-pieces of the Muslim League, the daily **Ittefaq**, the mouth-piece of Sahrwardy group of Awami League, the weekly **Shainik** of the

24 **Ibid**, 10th February, 1957

25 **Ibid**, 11th February, 1957.

Pakistan Tamuddun Majlish unitedly opposed the themes of the **Sanmelon**. The different aspects of the **Sanmelon** were derided and disfigured in editorials, features and letters. The **Azad** termed it as a wanton conspiracy against Pakistanism.²⁶

The **Kagmari Sanmelon** received its special importance due to the simultaneous holding of the special session of the council of the Awami League. Sahrawardy was convinced that Maulana Bhashani was playing in the hands of some vested interest and decided to face the challenge and went to **Kagmari** to attend the conference. He submitted his viewpoints before the delegates and spoke in support of the military pacts and he received the endorsement of his policy both from the students community and the people at large. Yet the cultural characteristics of it was no less significant. It was noticeable that the organisation was not at all swayed by communal feelings. The **Sanmelon** had further confirmed the idea that the development of Bengali literature was possible by the concerted efforts of all Bengalis—Hindus and Muslims and the cultural root of the two Bengals was one and indivisible. It was also significant that there was an attempt at unification of both the town and rural cultures. It was throughout evident that there was a great need for possible coordination of both the townbased culture and the traditional rural culture to make culture much more forceful. Above all literature must be enriched through internationalism and the fact was fully evident in the **Sanmelon**. The central idea was to arrange seminars of scholars and artists of the two countries for exchanges of views and experiences.

SIPAHI BIPLAB (SEPOY MUTINY) CENTENARY :

To counteract these influences, several cultural organisations, formed on the basis of Islamic ideologies, decided to observe the centenary of the Sepoy Mutiny. Professor Hassan Zaman was the convenor of the preparatory committee. Among other participants were the **Pakistan**

26 **The daily Azad**, 14th February, 1957, (Editorial : **Kagmari Sanmelon** (3)).

Tamuddun Majlish, Pakistan Majlish, Pak-Bangla Shahitya Mahfil, Shilpa-Sanskriti Parishad and the East Pakistan Jamiat-e-Tolaba. The function continued for three days. It commenced on 29th March, in memory of the commencement of the Mutiny a hundred year back. The function was inaugurated by Ataur Rahman Khan and the Principal President was the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, Justice M. Ibrahim.

At 10 A.M. the function commenced in the Curzon Hall with the recitation of the Holy Quran, slogans of **Narai Takbir, Allahu Akbar, Pakistan Zindabad, Sipahi Biplab Zindabd** and the singing of the Pakistan National Anthem '**Pak-Sar-Jamin-Saad-Baad**'. Khan said : 'The year 1957 was the pioneer of the Freedom Movement but the movement for freedom began long before it. In fact the revolutionary martyr **Muzahid Syed Ahmed** was the main forerunner of our Freedom Movement.'²⁷

The principal president said that if we still remained indifferent to ideals, cultures and values for which these martyrs selflessly shed their blood, the very philosophy of the newly established Pakistan would lose its main significance.

Many articles on literature and culture were read out in three days' function. Among them were '**The influence of Islam in Pakistan Movement**' by Golam Wahed, '**The National Awakening in Bengali Literature**' by Qazi Din Mohammad, and '**The contribution of the muslims in Bengali Literature**' by Aminul Islam. In the cultural soiree songs of Qazi Nazrul Islam and Forrukh Ahmed written on the background of the Freedom Movement were sung and the play '**1957**' by Askar Ibne Shayek was staged. Besides there was the pepes' assembly. On the last day Professor Mahfuzul Huq extended vote of thanks to the assembled scholars on behalf of the function. He said that the main object of the function was to revive the cultural values which the Sepoy Mutiny sought to defend, and which led to the establishment of a separate state of Pakistan in later days²⁸ Some members of the intelligentsia

27 **The Weekly Shainik**, 5th April, 1957.

28 **Ibid.**

seized the opportunity and termed it as the '**First War of Independence.**'"

ROWNAK SHAHITYA GOSTI :

In line with this in March and April, 1958 a few Pakistani minded literary persons formed a private Literary Organisation under the name of '**Rownak**'. Its aim was to harness attempts for assisting to create literature and culture on a pan - Pakistan basis.²⁹ They decided to confine the organisation to twenty - five members having allegiance to the same ideology. In the initial stage the co-opted members were M. Barkatullah as President, Ibrahim Khan and Golam Mostafa as Vice-Presidents and Abul Kalam Shamsuddin as Secretary. A rule was framed to hold discussion meeting every month at the house of each members by rotation — one member would read out an article in the discussion meeting and others would discuss it. It was also decided that the member at whose residence the meeting would be held would arrange feast for the members present.³⁰

The first meeting of the organisation was held on 11th May at the lodge of Golam Mustafa. He read out an article on '**Pak Bangla Bhasha**'.

The discussion concluded that in the past due to political conspiracy there had been an influx of Sanskrit words bearing Hindu culture into Bengali literature and that those words should be eliminated from the Bengali language in line with the political ideology of Pakistan.³¹ In July meeting Abdur Rahsid Wasekpuri read out article on '**Bangla Bhashar Abhidhan**'. The reader and the assembled were unanimous on the plan for the immediate compilation of '**Pak-Bangla Abhidhan**'. They also opined that it was necessary for the purpose to depend on the prevailing Sanskrit words, Puthi

29 **The Daily Azad**, 27th April, 1957.

30 Abul Kalam Shamsuddin , **Atita Diner Smriti** (Dhak: 1968), pp. 366-369.

The daily Azad, 13th May, 1958.

literature and regional folk literature, and if there be need they futher recommended elimination of obsolete Sanskrit words. They futher stated that the dictionary of **Pak-Bangla** language would be compiled in line with the **Pak-Bangla** literature and for this the Bengali language needed to be reformed.³² Khan Md. Moinuddin read out an article in the August session of the organisation. The main theme of the article was that the existing trend of the application and use of similes in the **Pak-Bangla** literature needed to be altered as those were the off-shoots of Sanskrit practices and opposed to Pakistani culture.³³

In August 1959 a discussion was held on '**Bangla Paribhasha**' (transliteration). The discussion opined that in the light of the national philosophy and the cultural solidarity and above all Pakistan's national unity the '**Paribhasha**' should be compiled and if necessary with an extensive use of the Arabic-Persian language.³⁴ A session on importation of foreign literary works was held in November. The participants recommended prohibition of importation of foreign books, more particularly books of West Bengal. Their argument was that those kinds of books which were full of anti-Pakistani themes, were misleading the young learners of the country and also had been endangering the future of Pakistani writers.³⁵

The sessions of the '**Rowank**' gradually became irregular. Many of them objected to holding sittings in their lodges.

This might be taken as a different trend but its influence in the field of literature and culture was not so significant, as the discussion, was limited and it did not leave any impact in the wider field. Of course, it succeeded in banning the import of books, journals and motion pictures from India in general and West Bengal in particular.

32 **Ibid**, 22nd July, 1958.

33 **Ibid**, 19th August, 1958.

34 **Ibid**, 11th August, 1959.

35 **Ibid**. 15th December, 1959.

LITERARY SEMINAR UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE DHAKA UNIVERSITY:

At this time the Rockefeller Foundation made a contribution of US \$ 3,700/- to Dhaka University in 1958 to discuss by stages the contemporary literature.³⁶ The Department of English took up the responsibility. For the purpose altogether eight discussion meetings- one in a month, were held. In every seminar one or more articles used to be read and discussion held on it. The seminar was held in the auditorium of Fazlul Haq Hall and the participants held discussion both in Bengali and English.

The first session was held on 27th February. The Vice-Chancellor of the Dhaka University inaugurated the session. He pointed out that to evaluate Bengali literature in the light of Western literature, to introduce Bengali literature to foreign countries and to develop Bengali literature as one of the state languages were the main issue of the seminar.³⁷

The articles read in the seminar included 'The Present Standard of Bengali Criticism in East Pakistan', 'Contemporary Fiction in East Pakistan and in the United States', 'Divergence between contemporary writing in England and East Pakistan', "Bangla Shahitye Bhabaluta," "Samakalin Katha Shahitye O Nataka Bhabaluta", "Bangla Katha Shahitye Samaj Chetana," "Vimurta Chintar Vahan Hishabe Bangla Gadya ". Among those who participated in the reading of articles were Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Nurul Momen, Abul Hossain, Khan Sarwar Morshed, Hasan Zaman, Munir Chowdhury, Askar Ibn Shaikh, Kabir Chowdhury and S. Sajjad Hossain.

The participants discussed the problems in literature from different angles. But it was a sort of academic discussion and no one tried to analyse deeply the real problems of literature and its remedy. In discussing the tradition of the contemporary poetry in East Bengal Zillur Rahman Siddiqui pointed out that it lay in the successful coordination between the Islamic trend and the time long tradition of Bengali literature. His contention was not appreciated by anybody.

36 **Ibid**, 14th January, 1958.

37 S. Sajjad Hossain (editor), **Report : Dhaka University Seminars on contemporary writing in East Pakistan** (Deptt, of English, University of Dhaka) p.2

Hasan Zaman and Abdur Rashid Khan felt that the controversy over diction, far from being futile, was serving to crystallize thought on the relation between the national and the literary traditions. The aim of the writers in East Pakistan was, or, in the opinion of some of the speakers, ought to be the creation of a characteristically national literature and to this broad purpose everything else was to be subordinated.³⁸

It is revealing to find out how imperialism had infiltrated into the rank and file of the literary and cultural exponents of the country and had been trying to dissociate literature from contemporary realities.

EAST PAKISTAN LITERARY SEMINAR, CHITTAGONG :

During this time the **East Pakistan Shahitya Sanmilon (Literary Seminar)** was held in 1958 in Chittagong under the auspices of the **East Pakistan Shahitya Mahfil**. The President and the Secretary of the **Sanmilon** were Moulvi Abdur Rahman and Moulvi Nurul Islam Chowdhury respectively.³⁹ As to the background of the **Sanmilon** Abdur Rahman recorded in his autobiography that the victory of the United Front created hindrances to the establishment of Islamic tradition in East Pakistan. They were trying for creating a literature and culture by assimilating it under the notion of greater Bengal. The intelligentsia of East Pakistan convened this **Sanmilon** in his opinion, to prevent those onslaughts and to create an atmosphere favourable to the Pakistani ideology.⁴⁰

There were four discussion meetings in the **Sanmilon** on the **Ideology and literature of Pak-Bangla, the Language and Culture of Pak-Bangla, the Fine Arts of Pak-Bangla and the Paintings of Pak-Bangla**. The main president was Maolana Mohammad Akram Khan and the session presidents were Ibrahim Khan, Abul Mansur Ahmed, Abul Kalam Shamsuddin and Zainul Abedin respectively. The **Sanmilon** was held in the Jatra Mohan Sen Hall.

38 **Ibid.** p. 17

39 **The Monthly Mohammadi, Sravan 1365 B.S., P. 898.**

40 **Abdur Rahman, Yatatuku Mane Pare (Autobiography), Chittagong, 1972, p-482.**

In the gateway of the **Sanmilon**, arches in the name of **Alawol, Nazrul, Iqbal** and **Quaid-e-Azam** were erected. The dias was decorated with paintings and drawings of different artists and painters, with a large map of East Pakistan and with inscriptions of writings from Nazrul, Iqbal, the Quran and the Hadiths in the background.

The **Sanmilon** was inaugurated on 2nd May in presence of a huge gathering. Matiul Islam and Abdus Salam read out poems welcoming the assembled literary celebrities. Then the President Maolana Mohammad Akram Khan delivered his speech, pointing out that Pakistan was established with a view to materialising the Islamic philosophy of life. But everyone had forgotten the main spirit behind Pakistan after the achievement of Pakistan and the writers and composers had joined hands with the communists. Such **Sanmilon** had been held at Comilla, Dhaka and Kagmari. 'I am a Muslim and an East Pakistani. . . now I am no more a Bengali'. He appealed to all to engage themselves to create a literature on the basis of this faith.⁴¹

On 3rd May, Ibrahim Khan, Golam Mostafa and Ashraf Siddiqui read out articles. Strange was the speech of Golam Mostafa on the origin of Bengali language, the history of Bengali literature, the modern poetry of East Bengal and the ingredients of future literature and poetry. He was of the opinion that Bengali language was not of the Indo-European stock; that it derived from the Semitic stock and as such it bore memories of Islamic civilization. He pointed out that the great influx of Arabic-Persian words into Bengali language was quite obvious and constituted a vital factor in the reformation of the language. In the middle age, Muslim poets could create a strong lyrical language and apart from everything else, their names would ever be remembered because they were able to give the Bengali language a fascinating Islamic structure.⁴² During those glorious days of this language they began writing Bengali in the Arabic script but at a later stage the attempt failed due to the conspiracy of a few Hindu scholars and the English missionaries. Now in order to reform culture in line with the changed circumstances we had to go the looms of the languages of the **puthis** and oral speeches.⁴³

41 **The Monthly Mohammadi, 1365 B.S., PP. 857-60.**

42 **Ibid, p. 785**

43 **Ibid, p. 790.**

In fine, Golam Mostafa sought to create a new tradition, reform the language and collect literary themes on the basis of the Pakistan ideology. In his opinion the foundation of Pakistan is Islam. 'Hence our literary aim must be Pakistanism. All ideologies would reflect it.'

The afternoon session was held under the chairmanship of Abul Mansur Ahmed. Moniuddin, Azharul Islam and Sultan Ahmed Bhuiyan read out articles. The chairman also read out an article '**Pak-Banglar Bhasha O Sanskriti**'. He did not count Islam as the only controlling force of the culture of East Bengal. He suggested the need to create a culture of East Bengalis on the basis of its own religion, sorrows, and sufferings, dance and music. As to language he was of the opinion that in the changed political circumstances, language for literature would be different. Dhaka would cast a great influence on language and literature. The colloquial language of the literary middle class of the region should be the language of literature.⁴⁴

In the session on the following morning Principal Abdus Sobhan Khan Chowdhury of Chittagong Commerce College, M. Barkatullah and M. Azrof read out articles. The article of Azrof deserves a special mention. At the outset he made an analysis of the different phases of Islami movements in India. He could identify three active cultural movements in Pakistan, namely, the **Movement of Jamat-e-Islam**, the **Movement of the Tamuddun Majlish** and the **Movement of Vishwa-Bharati-Moscow** group. The exponents of the first movement had its limitation, it was silent on the issue of education and fine arts. In comparison with it the second one was much wider while the cultural activities of the third one were not beneficial to the state security. Finally, he drew the conclusion that for the spread of Islamic ideology and Philosophy, Bengali should be transformed into an Arabic language.⁴⁵

On 5th May the concluding session was held. Maolana Akram Khan urged all to harness their energy to materialise the recommendations and suggestions of the intellectuals.

44 **Ibid**, p. 767.

45 **Ibid**, p. 802

Different resolutions were then taken:

- i) to form a permanent organisation under the name of **"East Pakistan Shahitya Mahfil"**.
- ii) to publish books of the writers through Government sponsored co-operative publication enterprise;
- iii) to award prizes to outstanding literature every year through the **Bangla Academy**;
- iv) to send scholars and literary persons to different cultural missions;
- v) to safeguard the interests of the writers from the profit-mongering publishers.⁴⁶

In the estimation of the sponsors of the **Sammelon** it was no doubt a success. In no such convention was the question relating to literature and culture so thoroughly discussed by the Pakistan-oriented literary workers and artists.

INTRODUCTION OF ROMAN SCRIPT AND ATTEMPT FOR CREATION OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE.

On the promulgation of the Martial Law an ardent effort was made to achieve national solidarity. Chief Martial Law Administrator Gen. Md. Ayub Khan envisaged to create one nation, one religion, one language, one culture and identical tradition. Although there had been a faint attempt at decentralization in the administrative and economic phases quite a different attempt was made in the spheres of language, culture and politics. For this purpose different efforts had been made and the **"Bureau of National Reconstruction"** had been formed. All these attempts and endeavours produced opposite results; the talk of a separate entity and longing for self-right and rule became eloquent in East Bengal. The main symptom of the cultural movement of the days was based on it.

The new government right from the very beginning took step to evolve only one language for entire Pakistan. The plan was to coordinate Bengali and Urdu and write in reformed **Roman scripts**.⁴⁷ Ayub Khan discussed the matter at ministerial

46 **The daily Azad**, 7th May, 1958.

47 **Dhaka University Patrika**, 2nd issue, December, 1974. pp. 185-203

meetings, press conferences and sittings with the newspaper editors and gave a positive hint of this plan. In a Government press note, it was stated that in consultation with the people of the country the Government aimed at developing a language easily intelligible to the entire people of the country.⁴⁸ In his book "**Friends Not Masters**" Ayub Khan wrote:⁴⁹

"It is quite clear to me that with two national languages we cannot become a one-nation state; we shall continue to remain a multi-nation state. I am not necessarily arguing against this; I am just stating a fact of life which has to be recognised. For it is the case that one language cannot be imposed on the whole country; neither Bengali nor Urdu can become the language of the whole of Pakistan. It is equally true that if the people both in East and West Pakistan want to develop cohesion they must have a medium to communicate with each other. And this medium must be a national medium. To evolve such a medium we have to identify common elements in Bengali and Urdu and allow them to grow together through a common script."

To give shape to this project the newly formed Education Commission made recommendations in 1959. The Commission had two proposals : to provide financial grant to persons or organisations who or which had been endeavouring to evolve **Nasak** or **Raman** scripts and to reform **Bengali Scripts**; secondly, to determine an ideal Urdu script quite fit for printing, to reform the **Bengali script** and to set up committee of renowned linguistics to evolve **Roman scripts** suited to **Urdu** and **Bengali scripts**. The commission expressed an opinion that the time for taking the final decision would come when the preparatory steps were completed.⁵⁰

The Government by this time published the Report of the East Bengal Language Committee of 1949. In the report

48 **The Daily Azad**, 2nd April, 1960.

49 Md. Ayub Khan , **Friends not Masters** (Oxford University Press, Karachi), p. 102.

50 **National Education Commission Report** (Government of Pakistan), 1959, p. 373.

there were recommendations for wide - ranging reforms of the Bangali language. Syed Ali Ahsan, Director of the **Bangla Academy**, made remarkable efforts in this respect. In 1962 the **Bangla Academy** held a seminar under the title '**Bengali and Urdu : A Literary Encounter:**' In order to strengthen national solidarity, the Director appealed for finding out the common words of both Bengali and Urdu and popularizing them among the masses. He was of the opinion that the gap between the two state languages could be narrowed if **a dictionary of Arabic-Persian-Urdu-Turkish words of Bengali Language** and that of **Sanskrit-Pali-Bengali words of Urdu Language** be published.⁵¹

Azam Khan, the Provincial Governor, inaugurated the seminar. He appealed to all to find out a positive solution in respect of the linguistic disunity between the two provinces. He also pointed out that as the two languages had Islamic origins a solution would not be hard to find.⁵²

In that very year a committee under the chairmanship of Syed Ali Ahsan was set up for reforming the Bengali language. The committee suggested omission of some alphabets and other far-reaching changes. In the fourth anniversary meeting of the Academy, Governor Abdul Monem Khan welcomed the effort and requested the intellectuals to arrive at a positive compromise.⁵³

But strong protests were soon raised against such efforts when the Education Commission was asked for its opinion on the **Roman scripts**, the **Daily Ittefaq** in protest issued two editorials.⁵⁴ The **monthly Mohammadi** also protested⁵⁵ and in the combined meeting of the students on the occasion of the observance of the 21st February, 1959, the proposal of Roman scripts was outright rejected. The meeting was presided over by M. Shahidullah. In a meeting held in the Bengali

51 **Bengali and Urdu : A Literary Encounter : A Seminar** (Dhaka, Bangla Academy, 1964), P-9.

52 **Ibid**, p.9

53 **Bangla Academy Patrika, Sravan-Aswin issue, 1370 B.S., P.115.**

54 **The daily Ittefaq, 19-20th February, 1959(Editorial).**

55 **The Monthly Mohammadi, Chaitra, 1365 B.S., p.501.**

Department of the Dhaka University with Ahmed Sharif in the chair a resolution against Roman script was also adopted. Enamul Huq and M. Abdul Hye also questioned the propriety of the proposal.⁵⁶ The opinion of M. Ferdous Khan was also identical.

On the **Shaheed Day** of 1960 also the students protested against the attempt at the introduction of Roman Scripts. During the students' movement of 1962, this was one of the major issues.

Side by side the plan for language reformation also met with opposition. A meeting of the **Bangla Academy** opposed the recommendations of the East Bengal Language Committee. In an article Refiqul Islam also condemned the recommendations of the **Bangla Academy**.

EASTABLISHMENT OF PAKISTAN WRITERS' GUILD :

At the initiative of the Urdu short-story writer Qudratullah Sahab, Education Secretary of the Pakistan Government, and a few other Urdu writers, a convention of literary persons of different languages was held on 29 to 31 January 1959 in the **Goanese Hall** of Karachi. **The Bangla Academy**, the East-West Unit Fund and several business men of Lahore and Karachi contributed about Rs. 50,000/= towards the expenditure of the convention.⁵⁷ President Ayub Khan delivered a speech in this convention, expressing satisfaction at the effort of the writers and their eagerness for the solidarity of Pakistan and advised the writers to cultivate Islamic ideologies in language and literary works.⁵⁸ Qudratullah Sahab directed the writers in the following way:

A Writer is not above law. He cannot show allegiance to any other country even by living in a neighbouring country, nor can he take up materials from other beliefs and faith in the context of his own ideology'. He further urged the writers to

56 **The Monthly Samakal, Chaitra, 1365 B.S.**

57 **The Monthly Mohammadi, Falgoon, 1365 B.S., p-379**

58 (Ibid, p-350) Md. Ayub Khan, **Pakistaner Sanghati O Lekhakder Bhumika**

be active in propagating Pakistani philosophy.⁵⁹ And lastly he thanked President Ayub Khan for granting real freedom that was denied in the pre-Martial Law period. In the convention Zaved Iqbal, son of Allama Iqbal, also delivered a speech urging the writers to adopt ideals for opposing the class struggle and secularism and requested them to materialise Islamic philosophy in their works.⁶⁰

In the **Sannmelon** the '**Pakistan Writers' Guild**' was formally formed. In the central committee eleven representatives were taken from East Bengal. They were Ibrahim Khan, Golam Mostafa, Jasimuddin, Abdul Qadir, Syed Waliullah, Begum Shamsunnahar Mahmmod, Abul Hussain, Ashkar Ibn Shaikh, S. Sajjad Hossain, Dewan Md. Azrof and M. Abdul Hye.⁶¹

In the first year the government provided an interest-free loan of one lac rupees to the Guild. With this money the Guild drew up many projects. Those were to establish publishing houses of its own in Karachi, Lahore and Dhaka, to arrange life insurance policy of rupees 5000/= for members below the age of 60, to provide facility to the members for travelling at half the usual rate in rails and steamers, to send cultural mission abroad every year, to arrange translation of the writings of the members into different languages of Pakistan, to publish books with the life history of the writers and to publish a journal as its mouth-piece.⁶²

The name of the mouth-piece of the Guild was the '**Purabi**'. Its aim was to cultivate greater human love transcending the barrier of motherland. Later on it took name of '**the Journal of the Writers' Guild**'.

The guild also arranged several literary awards. Among them was the **Adamjee Literary Award** with the financial assistance of the industrialist Adamjee and the **Daud literary Award** with the financial assistance of the industrialist Daud

59 **Ibid**, p. 375.

60 **Ibid**, p. 375.

61 **Ibid**, **Jaistha**, 1366 B.S., pp. 615-23

62 **The Purabi**, **Sravan** 1365 B.S., pp. 38-39.

and the **National Bank Award** to be made by the National Bank of Pakistan. Besides, after the imposition of the Martial Law the highest state award for literature and art '**President's Award for Pride and Performance**' was introduced.

OBSERVANCE OF HUNDREDTH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF POET RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The hundredth birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore was being celebrated all over the world. East Bengal provided a contrast. Although there was no open opposition from the Martial Law authority, on some pretext or others, Alauddin Al Azad, K.G. Mostafa, Anwar Zahid and some other prominent persons in the field of literature and culture were put behind the bar. An uneasy state of affairs prevailed in the field of culture. In the circumstances news of some arrangements for holding the anniversary in outlying (*mufassil*) towns began to be reported in the newspapers - even the names of district administrators were mentioned as chairmen of the birth anniversary functions in Bogra and Faridpur. Thus the sign of uneasiness surrounding the cultural exponents began to clear off. Since then the news of holding functions began to be regularly featured in the newspapers. Even in Dhaka some big and small organisations took up elaborate programmes on the occasion.

Although the Martial Law government remained indifferent to the question, the Pakistani-minded intellectuals did not remain silent or indifferent. They noticed in the spontaneous functions the signs of a plan for a united Bengal and the combination of forces opposed to Pakistani philosophy and Islamic ideologies and came forward to counter the trend. **The Daily Azad** became their mouth-piece. Thus on the first **Baisakh** the **Azad** in an editorial cautioned everyone not to indulge in such activities.⁶³

On 12th **Baisakh** (1968 B.S) the editorial of the **Azad** on '**Rabindranath and East Pakistan**' stated that the observance of the Rabindra anniversary by the Muslims is (The greatest sin) punishable with death. Two days' later another editorial argued

63 **The daily Azad, 1st Baisakh 1968 B.S. (Editorial).**

that 'Rabindranath was not sympathetic to the national ideals, languages and literature of the Muslims and in most cases impatient.' Besides these three editorials in the month of **Baishakh**, 23 more articles and letters were published pinpointing the shortcomings of Rabindra literature, unacceptability of it by the Muslims and the anti-Pakistan mentality of the sponsors of the anniversary.

These writer-artists held several seminars in Dhaka, Chittagong and Feni to evaluate Rabindranath in the context of Pakistan. On the 24th **Baisakh** in a meeting held in the Dhaka District Council Hall Fazlul Huq Selbarshi, poet Moynuddin, Dewan Abdul Hamid, Bishweshwar Chowdhury, Golam Azam, Maolana Mohiuddin and Hafez Habibur Rahman delivered speeches. Sanjoy Barua and Abdul Mannan Talib respectively recited '**Bandi Bir**' and '**Shivaji Utshab**'. They adopted several resolutions characterising Rabindranath as an opponent of Pakistani nationalism, and inheritor of the legacy of Bankim Chandra and a follower of a reactionary ideal :

- 1) This meeting observed with great concern and disdain the activities of the so-called cultural exponents who have been indulging in nefarious cultural activities for presenting Poet Rabindranath as the national poet of East Pakistan, who dreamt of a united India and **Ram Rajya**, with a view to dismantling the Islam-based state of Pakistan.
- 2) The meeting by way of caution urges every patriotic Pakistani and the government to take care of those who being unexpectedly solvent and affluent have been bearing the standard of an alien culture and philosophy and have been secretly planning to sell out Pakistan to another country.
- 3) The meeting appeals to the government of Pakistan to take steps for making the East Pakistan Radio, University and different academies free from the curse of alien songs and literature and adopt constructive measures for rearing the children and youths of Pakistan in line with its national culture and philosophy.⁶⁴

64 Ibid, 23-24th April, 1961.

But the frowning of the Government and the propaganda of its eronics did not yield result. Seminars, literary competitions, recitations, musical functions, dramas, dance-dramas, staging of plays began to be continually held throughout the province during the months of **Falgun**, **Chitra** and **Baishakh** and they created a new throbbing of life in the field of culture after a prolonged stagnation. Three main committees of Dhaka took the initiative under the auspices of the central students' union of Dhaka University. The main function was held on 11th **Baishakh** in the Curzon Hall. Begum Sufia Kamal was the chair person. She described poet Rabindranath as a great poet, well above all political narrowness. Abdul Hye presided over the second day's discussion. Different speakers pointed out the universalism of Rabindra literature, his sympathetic analysis of the problems faced by the Muslims and of the contribution of the folk life and nature of East Bengal to the creation of that great literature.⁶⁵

The central committee for the Rabindra anniversary was formed with Justice S.M. Murshed of Dhaka High Court as Chairman and Khan Sarwar Morshid, Professor of English, Dhaka University as Secretary. Under the auspices of the committee, a four-day-long ceremony began in the Technical Community Centre on 24th **Baishakh** (1368 B.S). Chief Justice Imam Hossain Chowdhury took part in the first day's sitting. He described Rabindra literature as a great asset to the humanity at large and remarked that the poet's thoughts and ideas were beneficial to the modern world torn by different problems. The chairman also argued that the Rabindra literature transcended the limits of provincialism and was embedded in the best Indo-pak traditions. On the second day S.Sajjad Hossain unequivocally declared poet Rabindranath to be the greatest of the creative writers, such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Balzac, Voltaire and other world-famous intellectuals. The two day function ended with musical soirees, recitations and theatrical performances.⁶⁶

65 *Ibid*, 23-24th April, 1961.

66 *Ibid*, 8th May, 1961.

In the Dhaka Press club the joint Rabindra Brith anniversary ceremonial committee was formed with artists, literary workers, journalists and students. Through symposia, staging of plays, shows of paintings and books and children's functions the committee offered its homage to Rabindranath.⁶⁷

FOUNDATION OF CHHAYANAT :

When the Birth anniversary of Rabindranath ended in a grand success, some workers felt the necessity of a permanent organisation for leading cultural movements in a proper way. They took a definite decision in two meetings at Dhaka and Joydevpur. Thus '**Chhayanat**' came into being. Begum Sufia Kamal and Farida Hassan were the President and the General Secretary respectively.

The '**Chhayanat**' is mainly a musical organisation. Its aim was to make culture and music fully oriented to tradition and nature of the country. It held its first function in the Technical Community Centre of Dhaka. Among other functions were the observance of the birth anniversaries of Rabindra-Nazrul, the Bengali New Year's day **Barsha Mangal**, autumn and spring festivals. The function of the Bengali new year's day used to be held under the banyan tree of Ramna green while the autumn ceremony was held at the Baldha garden. Attempts were made to reflect in the functions the various aspects of the indigenous environment.

In 1963 under the auspices of the '**Chhayanat**', a music school was established for training in Music.⁶⁸

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE WEEK :

Under the auspices of the Bengali department of the Dhaka University, '**The Bengali Language and Literature Week** was observed on 22-28 September, 1963 in the University

67 This Committee was financed by the Indian High Commission at Dhaka.

Saidur Rahman - **Purba Banglar Rajnity, Sanskriti O Kabita**, Dhaka, 1983, p. 81 (Foot note).

68 **Chhayant Sangeet Viddyayatan : 1360 B.S.** (Booklet), Dhaka

library community centre with the financial assistance of the Central Development Board of Bengali and the East Pakistan National Reformation Board. The principal aim of this convention was to take necessary steps to inculcate a sense of curiosity, regard and awareness about language and literature by spreading the experience of students and teachers of the department of Bengali gained outside the confines of the University, the shackles of **puthis** and laboratory microscopes.⁶⁹

The entire arrangement was phased in different sections like discussions, recitations from poems, dramas, songs, exhibitions etc. The exhibition had four branches : Evolution of language, Development of Literature, Changes of Alphabets and History of Painting. Through charts, sketches, fixed sketches, hand-written **puthis** and printed books of the earlier ages, the exhibition sought to communicate the message to the masses. Among the pictures were the studies of the Bengali literature of the **Shidhacharyas**, the advent of the Muslims in Bengal, the **Vaishnava** literature, the Royal Court of Rosang, the conquest of Bengal by the English etc. On the gate of the exhibition, famous couplets of poet Abdul Hakim of the 17th Century were inscribed.⁷⁰

At 9 a.m., of 22nd September the convention was inaugurated. In the inaugural speech M. Abdul Hye opened " the basic foundation of the ancient Bengali literature was made in East Bengal, a separate Bengali department was opened for the first time in the Dhaka University in the sub-continent, in this country Bengali has become the state language, the research Institute for Bengali language and literature has been set up here. The implied significance of all these is that "God has thrust on the people of this country the great responsibility for the different development of Bengali Language."⁷¹

69 Muhammad Abdul Hai (Ed) , **Language and Literature Week (Dhaka University)**, Bengali, Dept. 1370 B.S., p-109.

70 'Je sab Vangeta janmi hingsa Vangabani
 Se sab Kahar janma nirnayan jani.
 Deshi Bhasha vidya jar mane na juray
 Nij Desh Tyagi Keno Bidesh na jay '.

71 *Ibid*, pp. 18-20.

The Language and the Literature week was a stirring event in those days. Thousands of people visited the exhibition everyday, listened to the discussions and enjoyed the functions. Each and every daily and weekly of Dhaka published reports and articles on it.

The importance of the function lay in providing a clear conception about the traditional aspect of the Bengali literature. The programme of the function was not influenced by communal thought, although more stress was given on the literary works of the Muslims of the medieval age. Such an attempt for creating a clear conception of secular attitudes and traditions was very much essential in those days.

OBSERVANCE OF PAHELA BAISHAKH (BENGALI NEW YEAR'S DAY) :

The Bengali New Year's Day is a meaningful day to the Bengalees. To observe the day through various rituals and functions is a time - long custom of the Bengali culture. The business community on this day opens new account books and fairs are held in rural areas. In the initial year's of Pakistan, this function gradually lost its importance and the observance of **Pahela Baisakh** became stray and rare as it was preached by the Islamically minded people as a function of the Hindus. But in the years after 1960 the number of **Pahela Baishakh** functions greatly increased, and in 1964 i.e. in 1371 B.S. the **Pahela Baishakh** was observed with great enthusiasm. The East Pakistan Government declared the day as a public holiday and on the occasion, different functions in Dhaka attracted an unprecedentedly large crowd. The **Bangla Academy, Pakistan Shahitya Sangsad, Chhayanat, Pakistan Tumuddun Majlish, Nikkan Lalitakala Kendra, the Social Welfare College, Students' Union, Medical College Students' Union, Engineering College Students' Union, Arts and Music Sangsad** etc. arranged the function. The crowd in the function of the '**Aikatan Gosti**' in the **Bangla Academy** premise was so heavy that a few got injured in the melee. In spite of the University being closed due to disorder in the convocation ceremony, some news

media expressed surprise at the great number of spectators at different functions.⁷²

A war broke out in September, 1965 between India and Pakistan. The performance of the East Pakistani defence personnel, specially in air and land in the Lahore sector of West Pakistan during the war, was really remarkable and their courage, valour and war tactics made every Pakistani more particularly East Pakistani feel proud of them. So long East Pakistanis were hated and neglected as cowards by the West Pakistanis specially by the Punjabis but now they could realise that Bengalis were no less courageous than any body else. The performances of the East Pakistani soldires received admiration of all the West Pakistanis and this helped to develop a strong sense of Pakistani nationalism among the Bengalis for the time being. Many a writer-artist made attempts to stir up **Jehadi Zeal** by denouncing this conflict in their stories, articles, poems, dramas and songs. They identified Indians as the aggressor. The Radio Pakistan played an important role at this time and through different programmes sought to create communal sentiments. The Government felt satisfied at the spontaneous inspiration of the writers and tried to make it lasting. From January, 1966 new guide-line for Radio Pakistan was accepted and it was directed to reflect through different programmes the ideals of Pakistan, Islam as the force of progressive Muslim society, the Holy Quran as the guide of Political, social and individual life, preparation for long term struggle for solution of the Kashmir problem and the foundation of Basic Democracy.⁷³ The broadcasting of **Rabindra Sangeet** was prohibited during the war and the prohibition continued.

The Regional Publication of the Central Government and Department of Information and Broadcasting published booklets, folders and cinema slides on issues like the futility of naked Indian attack, the justification of demand of Pakistan in respect of Jammu and Kashmir, the message of the President... the world opinions in respect of war of India against Pakistan.

72 **The Pakistan Observer**, 2nd Baishakha, 1371 B.S.

73 **The Monthly Mahe Nao**, January, 1966, p. 66.

Compilations of patriotic songs and poems and messages of the **Quran and Handiths** were also published.

Concerted efforts of the writers and artists also began. The **National Writers' War Front Abd Allah Academy and Co-operative Writer's Guild** were formed to reflect fully in songs, poems and literature the Islamic Philosophy and to infuse in every citizen a full sense of national awareness. The first one published books and a monthly journal.⁷⁴ Also remarkable in this respect were the compilations of songs and poems of national inspiration.⁷⁵

Through different functions the same attempts continued. On 7th October, 1967 the artists and intellectuals of the Pakistan Council of Dhaka discussed threadbare to find out ways and means for preserving the sense of united Pakistan. The Islamic Academy arranged a seminar on 17th October on issues like the significance of **Jehad** and its practical implication. In December under the auspices of the **Nikkan Lalit Kala Academy** the melodrama, 'Kashmir' was staged. At the end of 1966 the Islamic Academy arranged a series of lectures. The speakers were unanimous that the main philosophy of Pakistan Movement was to get rid of the British subjugation and the conspiracy of Hindu nationalism and to build life in full freedom on Islamic principles. After the war a few Bengali scholars were taken to the Western War Front. On a spot survey of the war zone they tried to have a first-hand knowledge of the feelings roused by the war.⁷⁶

The Pakistan Writers' Guild on 6th September, 1967 introduced award of prizes. Books written in Bengali and Urdu on National heroes of Pakistan or on the soledarity of Pakistan were considered for the awards. Poet Hasan Hafizur Rahman was the first recipient of the award.

74 **Ibid.** November 1966 , pp 38-40.

75 **Ibid.**, October, 1966, pp. 77-78.

76 **Ibid.**, March, 1967, pp. 143-44.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NAZRUL ACADEMY AND ITS ACTIVITIES :

Although an attempt was made in 1964 to establish the Nazrul Academy, the actual work for it formally began in 1967. Three aims were identified for it to keep Nazrul's role everlasting as a pioneer of the Muslim renaissance; to assimilate all modern and progressive ideals in keeping with the Pakistan philosophy and to develop Pakistani culture on the basis of Muslim tradition. Among its programme were the circulation of the literature and poems of the poet, or evaluation of his contribution to the Muslim renaissance of the Bengali Muslims and setting up Kindergarten Schools to build a movement for Pakistan and Islamic culture. Justice Abdul Moudud was on the first working council of the Academy as President and Abul Kalam Shamsuddin as one of the Vice-Presidents and Talim Hossain as General Secretary.

On 24th May, 1968 the Academy was inaugurated and after two days the poet's birth anniversary was observed at **Darirampur**, a village associated with the poet's memory.⁷⁷ In this year on 1st July a **Jalsha of Hamd and Naat** was held in the Dhaka Engineer's Institute. In the **Jalsha** as many as 18 **Hamds** and **Naats** of Nazrul were sung. The chief guest Governor Abdul Monem Khan urged the young citizens of the country to uphold the Islamic philosophy.⁷⁸

Four months later a song and dance function was arranged at the hotel Intercontinental (now Dhaka Sheraton hotel) in honour of President Ayub Khan. Through dance it was depicted that if the beacon light shown by poet Nazrul to the bewildered Muslims be properly utilized in the daily life of the Muslims, they might become a mighty nation free from the darkness of life, anarchy and cowardice. At the end an attempt was made through a song to kindle a new awakening.⁷⁹ In the function the President appealed to all to be imbued with the Islamic ideologies and to build a nation, a culture and a language in Pakistan.

77 **Nazrul Academy Patrika**, 1st year First issue, Summer, 1376 B.S.

78 **The Dainik Pakistan**, 2nd July, 1967.

79 **The Monthly Mahe Nao**, Kartik 1376 B.B., pp. 81-82.

The activities of the academy could not proceed further. At the time of the mass uprising its activities came to a standstill.

DISPUTE OVER THE ISSUE OF RABINDRA SANGEET :

In the Budget Session of the Pakistan National Assembly in June, 1967, hot words were exchanged between the Government party and the opposition party over the issue of Rabindranath and in the culture of East Bengal. Gradually the dispute spread outside the house and the question of the cultural tradition of East Pakistan generated much bitterness.

On 20th June, leader of the government party Khan A. Sabur stated that, of late, he had observed with great concern the unholy activity toward the revival of the culture of East Bengal of the pre-partition days. 'In the name of observance of **Pahela Baisakh** and the **Rabindra Joyanti**, attempt had been directed to hit hard at the very base of Pakistan founded on Islamic ideologies by making infiltration of foreign culture. After the general election in India such activities had increased in an alarming proportion and unless proper attention be given to it the very existence of Pakistan might be jeopardised.'⁸⁰

On 22nd a member of the Assembly could know from the Information Minister Khawja Shahabuddin that **Rabindra Sangeet** was being broadcast twice a week from the Dhaka Radio centre. At this stage Mokhlesuzzaman, a member of the house, wanted to know the reason why the Dhaka Radio Centre broadcast **Rabindra Sangeet** when the leader of the house held adverse attitudes towards **Rabindra Sangeet**. The minister said in reply that he was quite aware of the feelings of the members and that he would therefore see to a further reduction of the hours of broadcasting of **Rabindra Sangeet** in future. The Minister in reply to Dr. Alim-Al-Razee, an opposition member added that the broadcasting of **Rabindra Sangeet** had already been reduced to the minimum and that the works of the poet

80 **National Assembly of Pakistan Debates, Official Report, 4th July, 1967, p. 2663.**

that would prove alien to the Pakistan ideal would be completely prohibited.⁸¹

This declaration raised a great commotion in the intellectual circles. Issue of statement for and against the declaration began and through it the **Rabindra** issue again came back to the Assembly. In the session of the 27th Yusuf Ali took part in the debate. He said that if the principle be adhered to, broadcasting of **Rabindra Sangeet** would gradually come to the zero point. 'Sixty million Bengalis have their own culture which has reached such a stage through the cultivation of ages after ages. It would be suicidal to the entire nation if attempt be taken to destroy it by brute force and introduce a new culture. He appealed for non-interference with cultural freedom.'⁸²

In the debate several members of the government party took part. Citing some poems of Rabindranath they tried to show that he painted Muslims as inferior castes and as such he could not be acceptable to the Pakistanis. At this stage A.K. Solaiman, an opposition member, challenged the government party members to come to Dhaka with such a declaration and at this a rowdy scene started in the Assembly.

In the concluding speech of the Budget session Khan A. Sabur harped on the history of Bengali literature. He said that Bengali literature developed under the patronage of the Muslim sultans, specially Sultan Hussin Shah. At that time there were many Arabic-Persian words in Bengali. But at a later stage through the endeavours of Vidyasagar, Michael, and Bankim Chandra Bengali became Sanskritized. This change seemed regrettable to Sabur. In this connection he declared that he had no sympathy for those 'howling idiots' who had been advocating Rabindranath.⁸³

In support of the declaration of Khawja Shahabuddin two or three statements were published. In one of them five teachers of the Dhaka University and in the second forty cultural exponents contributed their signatures. A few among

81 **Ibid.** 22nd June. 1967. p. 1940.

82 **Ibid.** 27th June, 1967.p. 2238.

83 **Ibid.** 29th June. 1967.pp. 2381-83.

them were M. Barkatullah, Abul Mansur Ahmed, Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, Ibrahim Khan, Talim Hossain, Farrukh Ahmed, Hasan Zaman, and Mujibur Rahman Khan etc.⁸⁴ Besides, there were thirty Maolanas and a statement by forty singers.⁸⁵

But protest against the government declaration was universal and eloquent. Nineteen intellectuals signed the first protest statement. They found the decision of the government extremely regrettable.⁸⁶

Besides Maolana Bhashani, eleven Urdu poets of Dhaka, three Urdu institutions, seventy intellectuals of Khulna opposed the policy of the government. The policy was also opposed by different organisations and institutions such as **Kranti, Chhayanat, Srijoni, Apurba Sangsad, Aikatan, Sanskriti Sangsad, East Pakistan Students' Union (Menon Group), Amra Kejana, Bangla Bhasha Sangram Parishad, Banichakra, Purabi** and fourteen cultural institutions of Khulna, and all of them claimed Rabindra literature as an indivisible part of Bengali tradition.⁸⁷

Alongside the protest statements, meetings and protest marches were also held. The Central Students' **Sengsad** of the Dhaka University and the Central **Sangsad** held protest meeting and protest marches. At the residence of Jasimuddin a meeting of the different cultural institutions was held where a programme for a counter movement was drawn up. On the following day the **Kranti** and the like minded people held meetings at the Dhaka Press Club. The speakers claimed that the functions of the **Rabindra Sangeet** and **Pahela Baishakh** were inseparable part of Bengali culture. They explained that culture is determined by geography and history and cautioned that in case there was an attack on Bengali culture, the events of 1952 would recur. The meeting was presided over by Begum Sufia Kamal. Another protest meeting was held at the Engineer's institute under the presidentship of Kudrat-e-Khuda. Abul Hashim and Badruddin Omar took part in the

84 **The Azed**, 30th June, 1967.

85 **Ibid.** 1st July, 1967.

86 **Ibid.**, 28th June, 1967

87 **The Pakistan Observer**, 25th June to 4th July, 1967.

discussion. They stated that attack on culture amounted to attack on politics and economics, and the government of Pakistan had been indulging continuously in such attacks in the name of solidarity of Pakistan. They also stated that Pakistan is a multi-national state and every region of it has its individual culture and tradition. At the end of the meeting the Cultural Right **Prishad** was formed with Kudrat-e-Khuda as President. At Khulna a similar Cultural Right **Parishad** was formed.⁸⁸

The rapid progress of the movement in East Bengal worried the government. On 4th July Information Minister withdrew his declaration by issuing a statement in the National Assembly. In a Passionate voice he stated that his statement had been distorted in the news media. He had never told that all of Rabindra songs were anti-Pakistani in ideology. He had only said this far with regard to an Urdu poet that if any song of Rabindranath be found opposed to the Pakistani ideology, that would not be broadcast from Radio Pakistan.⁸⁹

ATTEMPT AT REFORMATION OF BENGALI LANGUAGE AND CREATION OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE :

a. ACTIVITIES OF DHAKA UNIVERSITY :

On the proposal of M. Shahidullah, a member of the Dhaka University Academic Council work for reformation of the Bengali language and creation of a national language began about this time. To the Registrar of the University he proposed that a sub-committee be formed for reformation of Bengali language, alphabets and spelling and the affiliated colleges under the University be directed to adopt the reformed Bengali.⁹⁰

Accordingly the Academic Council formed a sub-committee of which the President was M. Shahidullah and the

88 **The Pakistan Observer**, 2nd July to 13th July, 1967.

89 **National Assembly of Pakistan Debates, Official Report**, 4th July, 1967.p. 2663.

90 Dhaka University Registrar's Office, General Section, Sl. No. IA. File No. 26/2-12(66-67), Collection No. 26/C.

Secretary. Dr. Kazi Din Mohammad. On the 14th February, 1968, the recommendations of the sub-committee were accepted. M. Enamul Huq, M. Abdul Hye and Munir Chowdhury, gave their notes of dissent. At the session of the Academic Council on 3rd August, 1968 the recommendation was accepted. This time too Abdul Hye and Kabir Chowdhury opposed it. The recommendations were similar to those of the Bangla Academy excepting the one of writing 'Kha' instead of 'Kheya'. In that very meeting of the Academic Council, a sub-committee with Kazi Din Mohammad as convenor was formed to implement the recommendations.⁹¹

The publication of the news in the Newspapers provoked a great reaction. A great number of Pakistani minded intellectuals came forward in support of it. About 58, including Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, Abul Mansur Ahmed, Ibrahim Khan, Abul Qasem and Talim Hossain, issued statements in support of it. Another statement by 25, mostly Professors of Dhaka College, was published in its support. But the extent of the opposition was wider. An all party meeting was held under the auspices of the Central Students' Union of the Dhaka University and a protest march passed through several roads of Dhaka. 41 intellectuals protested against the changes of Bengali scripts, arguing that this would create chaos and confusion. Besides them the East Pakistan **Niharika Sangsad** and the Cultural **Sangsad** of Bhairab also protested. Maulana Tarqabagish, leader of the Awami League, also denounced the move. In different newspapers articles were published pointing out the impropriety of the proposal.

b. TALK OF ROMAN SCRIPT AGAIN :

A hectic propaganda in favour of Roman Scripts was afoot in the early part of 1968. On 18th February in a meeting held in the district of Hazara in West Pakistan, Gauhar Ayub, son of the President, recommended compulsory study of Urdu in East Pakistan and Bengali in West Pakistan for the sake of greater solidarity of Pakistan. On 27th he through a letter in

91 Minutes of the Academic Council (D.U.) held on 3.8.68.

the **Pakistan observer** offered his proposal to the Bengalis. On 2nd March in another letter, A.R.H. Enamul Huq, an Engineer, made a proposal for writing Bengali in Roman Scripts. On the following day Mominul Huq, a physician, in an article, 'Roman script for Bengali' made a similar proposal. On 22nd March in another letter Engineer Enamul Huq explained the propriety of writing Urdu also in the Roman script. Along with it a host of letters were published, all opposing the move for introducing the Roman script. Certain writers commented that solidarity could not be achieved only by changing the scripts of the state languages. To achieve it honest and sincere attempts were called for.

**c. AGAIN THE RECOMMENDATION OF CREATING
A PAKISTANI LANGUAGE BY THE PRESIDENT :**

At the completion of the first decade of his assumption of power the President again began speaking about a Pakistani Language. At a function of the Dhaka Nazrul Academy held on 24th September, 1968 he appealed for building a **Pakistani Language** out of the different languages of Pakistan. He remarked that it would not be a difficult task when the state of Pakistan, based on Islamic ideology, had a single homogeneous culture. He expressed a similar view in a message given a few days later to the Annual Magazine of the Inter-Provincial Students' Union. In his monthly message of October he further elaborated his views in this respect.⁹²

A sharp and instant reaction followed in East Bengal. At First different Students' units protested : 'The President, by raising the slogan of one language, one culture and one religion, has adopted a device for the elimination of the national identity of people speaking different languages and professing different religions'.⁹³

'Regional languages and cultures are not opposed to Islam'. said Nurul Amin and Maolana Abdur Rashid Tarakabagish. The East Pakistan Students' Union and East Pakistan Students' League raised a protest and in the editorials

92 **The Asad**, 3rd October, 1968

93 **Ibid**, 29th September, 1968.

of the **daily Azad** this was denounced.⁹⁴ Maolana Bhashani in his statement said that it was an attempt at depriving Bengali of the status of a state language. The working committee of the Awami League sounded caution against the government characterising the move as a deliberate attempt to destroy the solidarity of the state through reviving the question of state language, and raising the question of creating a national language. The National Awami Party (Moscow) of East Pakistan branch adopted resolution to the effect that the language dispute would harm the national solidarity. The Narayanganj **Mukhteer** Bar Council demanded Bengali as the only national language of Pakistan. The **Pakistan Tamuddunik Movement** denounced the irresponsible remark in respect of state language. The East Pakistan Students' League adopted resolution demanding Bengali as the only state language.⁹⁵ The government at last abandoned the plan.

ACTIVITIES OF THE WRITERS' GUILD OF THE EASTERN BRANCH :

In 1968 the activities of the Writers' Guild of Eastern Branch increased appreciably. Two functions of the year indicated a great headway in the cultural movement of the country. The first one was the ceremony in memory of the great poets and the second one was the cultural and literary functions of Afro-Asian countries.

a. MEMORIAL CEREMONY OF GREAT POETS :

A function was held in July 1968 in memory of five great Bengali and Urdu poets. Among the poets were **Rabindranath Tagore, Mirza Galib, Allama Iqbal, Michael Madhusudan Dutt** and **Qazi Nazrul Islam**. Through reading out articles, discussions, recitations of poems, songs, moshaira, staging of dance dramas the greatness of the five poets was represented for five consecutive days. The Dhaka Engineers' Institute was the venue of the functions of every evening.

94 **Ibid**, 3rd October, 1968

95 **Ibid**, 3-21st October, 1968

The first day, the 5 July, was the Rabindra day. Abul Hashim, Director of the Islamic Academy was in chair. Anisuzzaman read out an article on 'Rabindranath', discussing threadbare the various trends of thoughts and varieties therein in the works of Rabindranath and offering his homage to the poet as the great builder of Bengali language and literature.⁹⁶ The President in his speech sought to expose the real motive of the government and public organisations for their anti-Rabindranath activities. He clearly stated that this antipathy did not stem from any lofty ideals or from a literary judgement but from an ingrained communalist⁹⁷ sentiment.

The second, third and fourth days were observed respectively as Iqbal day, Galib day and Madhusudan day. On the last day a comic drama was staged for the first time in East Bengal. The last day was fixed as 'Nazrul day'. Rafiqul Islam read out an article on Nazrul, focussing attention on the fact that 'a section of fanatic communal Muslims had not accepted Nazrul in simple and liberal way before partition and even in East Bengal an organised move had been going on to that end.'⁹⁸

With great enthusiasm the Memorial Ceremony of the Great Poets was observed. In the face of an adverse situation a big crowd attended the ceremony every day. The culturally minded citizens of Dhaka with great interest and joy enjoyed every evening. Almost all the papers of Dhaka welcomed the enterprise.⁹⁹

The grand success of the ceremony infuriated the reactionary pro-Pakistani section. The sponsors of the ceremony were not spared even though they held discussions on Iqbal and Galib. The coterie could not accept without reservation the discussion on Rabindranath, the demand for an entire acceptance of Nazrul. Specially the speech of Abul Hashim was not pleasant to them. So they protested in filthy

96 **The Monthly Parikram, Mahakabi Swaranothsab issue, July-August, 1968, p.7.**

97 **Ibid, p. 59.**

98 **Ibid, p. 46.**

99 **The Daink Pakistan, 11th July, 1968.**

languages. The leadership of the criticism was taken by the daily Paigam, conducted by the son of the provincial governor Abdul Monem Khan. On the day following the Rabindra day a lengthy editorial was published in which it was stated that with the establishment of Pakistan the question of Rabindranath had been pushed to the grave and the very observance of Rabindra Day to rehabilitate Rabindranath is a wanton attack on the Islamically-minded East Pakistanis and the Pakistanis should rise as one to counteract the attack. Their heart-burning on the Nazrul Day celebration was also understandable. One Nazrul Islam through a letter in the **Dainik Pakistan** characterised the speech of Abul Hashim as a political stunt and as self-contradictory.¹⁰⁰

b. THE FUNCTION OF AFRO-ASIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE :

The function dedicated to the people of Asia and Africa struggling for freedom was held on 20-21 December, 1968 in the Dhaka Engineers' Institute. It was termed as the function of Afro-Asian literature and culture.

In the decorated background of white pigeons and red coloured sun, poems and articles were read out in the inaugural function. Translations of poems of Mao-Tse-Tung, Ho-Chi-Minh and poems of China-Kenya-Kongo-Korea were recited. It was followed by the mass songs of the 'Sandwipan Sangeet Gosthi' of Khulna on the Vietnamese fighting against imperialism and neo-colonialism.¹⁰¹

Ahmad Sharif presided and Hasan Azizul Huq and Safdar Mir, a journalist of West Pakistan, read out articles. Hasan Azizul Huq in his article pointed out that the main trend of the literature of these two continents was anti-imperialism and anti-fascism. The president in his speech remarked that the material and cultural well being of the people of different regions of the world was conditional upon the united stand of the people concerned against exploitation and repression. The writers, he thought had a great role to play in this regard.

100 Ibid, 12th July, 1968

101 Ibid, 28th October, 1968.

since they were normally attracted by lofty idealism, unsullied by craving for material gain.¹⁰²

On the second day the **Trend of Afro-Asian literature** was discussed. Journalist Ahmed Humayun read out a brief article in which he showed that the Afro-Asian literature, by its association with the peoples' movement for freedom and economic salvation, had acquired an altogether new stature. Sikandar Abu Zafar, who presided, appealed to the oppressed people of Pakistan to unite with the repressed people of Afro-Asia and break down the citadel of repression built by the exploiters. In his opinion only the peoples' movement could alter the environment of threat and only then would the writers get courage to create literature for the people.¹⁰³ Last of all, the Bengali version of Chinese melodrama **White-haired girl** was staged. The central theme of the opera was that the old feudal social set up made a ghost of a man while the new social structure turned ghosts into men.¹⁰⁴ The group was frankly Marxist in its cultural orientation. It celebrated the birth anniversary of Sukanta, arranged large-scale mass participations in songs and theatrical performances.

BUREAU OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION IN NEW STRUCTURE :

The mass upsurge of 1969 resulted in the downfall of President Ayub Khan. His successor President Aga Mohammad Yahya Khan had the chief aim of preserving Pakistan intact by establishing Islamic values in all spheres of life. With this intention he revised the Bureau of National Reconstruction. This organisation was set up by President Ayub Khan immediately after overthrowing President Iskander Mirza through a 'Bloodless coup' and declaring himself as the Chief Martial Law Administrator of the country with the intention of creating one nation, one religion, one language and culture for both the wings of Pakistan. The organisation from the beginning tried to utilize religion but it could not rouse religious frenzy.

102 **The Monthly Parikram**, September-October, 1968, p. 217.

103 **Ibid.** p. 210

104 **Ibid.**, pp. 210-11

Hasan Zaman, Professor of Political Science, Dhaka University was put in charge of the organisation. Although no new guidelines were given to him he pursued two-fold aims : to publish communal, conservative and anti-Bengali books and booklets, and to circulate them among half-educated peoples. Zaman cautiously entrusted the job of writing such books or booklets to such writers whom the proverb "a little learning is a dangerous thing", was eminently appropriate. Secondly, he carefully approached renowned writers to write books of a high standard on Islam and Islamic values by depicting Islamic tradition and culture. These writers were paid handsome honoraria. Many a writer could not resist this material temptation. Zaman succeeded in his design for the time being and was able to keep in good humour the majority of the renowned writers.¹⁰⁶ But his evil designs frustrated by the students in 1970, a few months prior to the liberation war of Bangladesh.

MOVEMENT AGAINST FORFEITURE OF BOOKS :

At the end of 1969 notices were served on the publishers of several books to show cause why those books would not be proscribed. Among the books were : **'The Social History of East Pakistan'** by Qamruddin Ahmed, **'The crisis of culture and cultural communalism'** by Badruddin Omar, **'Thirty years in Jail'** by Trailokyanath Chakravorty, **'Alberuni'** by Satyen Sen and **'Notorious as Truth'** by Abdul Mannan Syed. A similar notice was also issued on a booklet by Maolana Bhashani.

This trend in the official policy worried the cultural workers. Thirty intellectuals in a statement stated that the government steps were alarming and claimed that those books were valuable contributions to Bengali literature. Several politicians, labour leaders and journalists denounced the notice on the booklet of Maulana Bhashani as a deliberate interference with the freedom of political parties and democratic principles. The writers of the **'Sampratik Goshti'** appealed to the government to revoke the prohibition on writings of a high order. In the Bangla Academy premises a

105 **Bureau of National Reconstruction in New Form - People's Opinion, 1970** (Dhaka : BNR, July, 1970) pp. 20-21.

protest meeting was held. Begum Sufia Kamal presided and Abul Hashim was the main speaker. Abul Hashim said that 'we are at the same time Bengalis, Muslims and Pakistanis : our Bengalism is unalterable'. He also said that the solidarity and fraternity of Pakistan consist in the encouragement of free thought and wanton interference with the freedom of the writers might jeopardize the same.¹⁰⁶

At a later stage of the movement, the Committee of Preservation of Writer's Right was formed. Twenty cultural organisations of Dhaka City joined it. Sikandar Abu Jafar, Hasan Hafizur Rahman and Syed Atiqullah were elected conveners. The committee held a few street-corner meetings in Dhaka. Supporters of the movement gradually increased in number. Maolana Bashani and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in separate statements appealed to the government not to interfere with the basic freedom of the writers and demanded abrogation of the Press and Publication Ordinance. 27 teachers of the Dhaka University, the President of the **Chhatra Sakti**, 12 Painter-artist, 92 teachers of the Rajshahi University, 30 Cinema artists and the **Gana Sanskritic Sangha** issued statement affirming their unity with the writers' struggle.¹⁰⁷ 13 noted poets and persons of literature demanded withdrawal of the ban on the book '**Bhashani Jakhon Europe**' by Khonoker Md. Ilyas. Besides these the East Pakistan Peasants' **Samity**, Labour Peasants' **Samajbadi** party and East Pakistan Students' League criticised the government Policy.¹⁰⁷

Several students' organisations arranged protest meetings under the historical **Banyan tree** of the Dhaka University. The student leaders urged government to refrain from making assaults on Bengali culture, Bengali nation and free thought. The **Bangla Chhatra'** League, the National Students' Federation and the East Pakistan Students' Union arranged the meetings.¹⁰⁸ On 15th January, 1970 the Committee for Preservation of Writer's Rights held a meeting at the **Bangla Academy** premises. In the meeting under the chairmanship of Enamul Hug an appeal was issued to the

106 **The Dainik Pakistan**, 6th January, 1970.

107 **Ibid**, 2-16th January, 1970.

108 **Ibid**, 15th January, 1970.

government for abrogation of the Press and Publication Ordinance, withdrawal of bans on all books, revocation of all control over culture, making radio and television free from the control of government, stoppage of espionage over culture through the Bureau of National Reconstruction, stoppage of interference with culture and literature through the Pakistan Council and the Pakistan Art Council.¹⁰⁹

In the face of the movement the Government adopted a clever policy and formed an Advisory Council with Kabir Chowdhury, Director of **Bangla Academy**, as convener to review different books. Mohammad Enamul Huq, Kazi Din Mohammad, Hasan Zaman and Ashraf Siddiqui were on the committee.

The policy of the government was successful. The vigour of the movement tended to decline. No letter protesting against the formation of the committee was published at that time. It was published as a news feature on 5th February, 1970 in the **Dainik Pakistan**. The latter stated that the formation of the committee had no honest motive behind it, as the last three persons had always been indulging in Anti-Rabindra activities and collaborating with the reactionary policy of the government and opposing the Bengali culture.

MOVEMENT AGAINST 'PAKISTAN : DESH O KRISHTI' :

Necessary changes were done in the school text books to inculcate the ideals of Pakistani nationalism in the school children. An advisory council was formed with A.R. Mallick, Vice-Chancellor of the Chittagong University, as chairman and Serajul Islam of the Department of Islamic History of the Dhaka University as member. They composed a book in two volumes under the title '**Pakistan : Desh O Krishti**'. In 1970 it was published by the East Pakistan School Text Book Board and in the following year was prescribed for Classes IX-X.

In the first volume of the book the origin of Muslim nationalism in India and its final development through the achievement of Pakistan was discussed. In the second volume

109 **Ibid**, 16th January, 1970.

attention was focussed on the foundation of Pakistan culture and on the need for creating awareness of nationalism through language, literature, sculpture, paintings etc. and on matters relating to unity of different regions of Pakistan.¹¹⁰

The school students began a concerted movement for withdrawing the book from the school syllabus. Two action councils were formed : one under the Dhaka University Central Students' Organisation and the other under the East Pakistan Students' Union. Both of them began strikes, protest meetings and processions in schools in August, 1970 and continued them till 17th September (**Shiksha Dibash**). Meanwhile the **Biplabi Chhatra Union**, The **Bangla Chhatra Union** joined it and 16 intellectuals issued a statement in the newspaper demanding the withdrawal of the book.¹¹¹

In the face of the movement the government adopted a soft policy. On 21st August a press note announced that a portion of the first volume of the book and the entire second volume would be omitted for the S.S.C. candidates of 1971 and for 1972 the book would be rewritten in 100 pages. The movement still continued and after September it lost its momentum. The impending general election deeply engaged everyone's attention.

LAST MANOEUVRE OF PAKISTANIS TO SUPPRESS BENGALIS :

During the 1969 mass upsurge President Ayub Khan was relieved by General Yahya Khan, who promulgated Martial Law in the country for the second time and announced that he would immediately hold a general election to hand over political power to elected representatives.

On 12th November, 1970 a devastating cyclone-cum-tidal bore hit the offshore islands of East Pakistan and took a toll of nearly half a million lives. The government of Pakistan did not realise the gravity of the crisis even though President Yahya on his way back from China stopped at Dhaka on 14th

110 **Pakistan : Desh O Krishti'**, Vol. II, pp. 1-2.

111 **The Dainik Pakistan**, 29th August, 1970.

November, 1970. He made an aerial trip of the affected areas, announced some token grants, ordered the administration to meet the crisis and left for West Pakistan on 16th November, 1970.

News of the appalling tragedy attracted world attention : saving the survivors was as much a problem as burying the dead. While relief goods from outside Pakistan were hurriedly being rushed to Dhaka, the Pakistan army could not send its transport planes or helicopters to the scene for almost ten days. The government of East Pakistan with its meagre financial and physical resources could not make much headway. The world press and international voluntary agencies appealed for relief assistance but the government of Pakistan would not come out with a prompt appeal on the false pretence of assessing the real needs before making any request for help. In fact, the government of Yahya did its best to underrate the disaster and hinder relief work.

The experience of the disaster embittered the Bengalis. It emphasised once more the need for provincial autonomy.

However, the first nation-wide elections were held during December, 1970 and January, 1971. In the election the Awami League got the sweeping majority. The situation was extremely alarming to the vested interests of West Pakistan. Political instability resulted in strengthening the bureaucracy and the military. Divisiveness among the Bengalis placed West Pakistanis on the top. Failure of people's rule provided the opportunity for economic exploitation and cultural aggression on East Pakistan by West Pakistan. Now, the decisive electoral victory of the Awami League struck at the very roots of the power and privileges of the vested interests of Pakistan. The surprise and disappointment of the power elite, therefore, was great and some sort of conspiracy was being hatched behind the curtain.

On 13th February, 1971 Yahya Khan announced that the new Assembly would meet at Dhaka on 3rd March, 1971. But Z.A. Bhutto, the chief of Pakistan Peoples' Party, who next to the Awami League, secured the largest number of seats in the election, by this time finalised his deal with both the military and bureaucrats and pressed the President hard for

postponement of the National Assembly Session. The President finally announced on the 1st March, 1970 the postponement of the Assembly Session sine die. This action appeared to the Bengalis as a deliberate assault on the democratic process. And finding no way out, Sheikh Mujib called for a country wide strike on 3rd March and a public meeting on 7th March, 1971.

Spontaneous demonstrations of disappointment and resentment began on 1st March, 1971, soon after the announcement of Yahya Khan. This took violent turns as the armed forces attempted to contain the demonstration. From 3rd March, 1971 the Awami League launched a civil disobedience movement and it continued till the dusk on 25th March, 1971 and by mid-night the Pakistan army launched the assault on the unarmed population of East Pakistan and with this started the 'Liberation War of Bangladesh'.¹¹²

Thus we observed that from 1954 onwards the influence of America made a massive headway in Pakistan. Through the Pak-American friendship treaty, SEATO and CENTO treaties, the imperial power consolidated their control in Pakistan. The ruling United Front Government of East Pakistan expressed strong opposition against all these pacts but in consequence the United Front had to lose power. After this by suppression and diplomacy the United Front was divided. In politics there was chaos, despair and disunity. Taking advantage of the situation, the reactionary forces gained ground. With the financial assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation, a discussion seminar was held on the contemporary literature in the Dhaka University. The old members of the Renaissance Society set up a literary Organisation under the title 'Rownak'. Under the auspices of the Tamuddun Majlish and like-minded organisations, the anniversary of the Sepoy Mutiny was observed. Then followed a huge Sammelon of the Pakistani-minded literary workers and artists at Chittagong, the birth place of Islam in East Pakistan. From four speeches the aims of the Sammelon can be inferred : Poet Golam Mostafa observed,

112 A.M.A. Muhith, **Bangladesh : Emergence of a Nation** (Bangladesh Books International Ltd., Dhaka, 1978).

Mohammad Ayub & K. Subrahmanyam, **The Liberation War** (S.Chand & Co. (Pvt.) Ltd., Delhi, 1972).

'Bengali is not of the stock of Indo-European language, it is mainly a Dravidian and Semitic language and the aim of East Pakistani literature must be **Pakistanibad**.' The plan of Principal M. Azrof was 'to reconstruct culture, Bengali language should be converted into an Arabic language like Persian' and the President of the Reception Committee Abdur Rahman declared : 'I am no more a Bengali now, I am a Pakistani.'

At this movement the bourgeois-democratic and communist forces could not organise any active offensive against the onslaught on culture. In the **Kagmari Sannelon** of 1957 they were divided within themselves and the bourgeois democratic forces reached an understanding with the Pakistani colonial and world imperialistic forces. The name of East Bengal was transformed into East Pakistan, the Islamic Constitution of Pakistan was framed on the basis of equality of the two provinces, Bengali and Urdu received equal status in the national life and administration and the **Pak-Bangla** sentiment made a great headway in Bengali literature. Thus the influence of Pakistan colonialism and world imperialism spread over the cultural thoughts of East Bengal.

But the ideals of **Pak-Bangla** could not sustain their sway in the cultural sphere. At the end of 1958, Martial Law was promulgated in the country. President Ayub Khan sought to impose a rigid control on politics and on culture as well. The aim of the ideal initiated by President Ayub Khan was one language, one nation, one religion, one culture and to create literature on one ideal-the ideal of Pakistan. Attempts were made to bring all writers under a single control; the directives to them were, in Ayub's Language: 'to propagate and preach the ideals of Islam in modern minds, thoughts and language.' With regard to language an attempt was made for evolving a Pakistani language in the Roman script with combination of Bengali and Urdu. The activities alarmed the workers having a faith in the distinctiveness of Bengali culture. So protests and opposition ensued. This was very much evident at the time of observance of the Tagore Birth centenary in 1961. The ceremony continued for about two months throughout the province. '**Chhayanat**' was set up to popularise the message of Rabindranath. With great enthusiasm the first **Baishakh**, the twenty fifth **Baishakh**, eleventh **Jaistha** and such other days were observed and these ceremonies acquired a national

character. **Jatra Pala** was introduced in towns, the popularity of folk literature increased, the movie '**Rupbhan**' based on folklore had an unbelievable commercial success.

For the right ingredients of literature the writers turned their eyes to rural life. Bengali words began to be used in naming places, shops and children. The cinema Halls bore such names as **Balaka, Madhumita, Hansha, Jonaki**; the satellite towns took the names as **Banani, Uttara, Shyamoli, Baridhara** and the shops bore names as **Sagarika, Sagar Theke Fera, Sagar Samvar** etc.¹¹³

A short lived **Pakistanibad** awoke among the Bangalis as a result of the 1965 war with India. Attempts were made to revive communalism, anti-India sentiment and a spirit of **Jihad** through songs, poems and dance dramas. The Writers' Guild introduced the '**Sixth September Award: National Writers' War Front Abd-Allah Academy**' to preach Islamic ideals. **Jihad** songs were published.¹¹⁴ The Nazrul Academy ventured to make out Nazrul as a poet of Islam. Radio Pakistan was directed in 1967 to stop broadcast of **Rabindra Sangeet**. The Dhaka University Academic Council took endeavour to reform Bengali language and the President himself took initiative to build a national language.

So again protest was voiced. The protest of this time was spontaneous, universal and of a fighting spirit. The students' organisations, the political parties and the peasants' institutions united in the protest. The Cultural Right Preservation Committee was formed.

So with the beginning of the 1960's there commenced an age of Bengali awakening and self discovery. In course of time it widened and became enriched, the nationalist bourgeoisie became so much powerful that the communists entered into a compromise with them. The leftist thought also

113 The oft heard song of the time was :
'Abar tora manush ha
Anukaran Kholash Vedi Kayomane Bangali ha
Abar tora manush ha'

114 Lyric compilations : '**Chira Durjay**', '**Jehader Gan**', '**Chira Unnata Shir**'.

began gaining in strength. The Afro-Asian literature and cultural function was held, the poems of Shukanta received more popularity. Mass songs and mass dramas were introduced, poems of communist poets began to be translated. During the mass upsurge of 1969 and the Martial Law of Yahya Khan the influence of literature tended to become pervasive. At the commencement of the liberation struggle on 5th March, 1971 the writers and artists appeared at the foot of the Shahid Minar and took a solemn oath to continue the struggle for realising the autonomy of East Bengal and to identify themselves as **Bengalis**.

Conclusion

About thirty years ago, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his memoirs, **India Wins Freedom**, had foretold : "Jinnah and his followers did not seem to realise that geography was against them... The two regions (East Pakistan now Bangladesh and West Pakistan) have no point of physical contact. People in these two areas are completely different from one another in every respect, except only in religion. It is one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest that religious affinity can unite areas which are geographically, economically, linguistically and cultural by different... No one can hope that East and West Pakistan will compose all their differences and form one nation."¹

This was a political forecast and he has identified some differences between the two parts of Pakistan in which language and culture formed a vital cause for the break-up of Pakistan. Our study centres round this language and culture, specially culture conflicts enshrined in East Pakistan during the Pakistan regime (1947-1971). To deal with the conflict I had to recall the state of affairs of the Bengali Muslims for about a century.

(I)

Bengali Muslims were proud of the Muslim rulers and poets of the middle ages for their contribution to the development of Bengali literature. But things considerably changed in the 19th century.

The Muslim reactions then were not of a homogeneous kind. There were two groups among the Muslims of Bengal- 'ashraf' (upper) and 'atraf' (lower). These groups reacted differently. The former normally came from outside with alien culture, claimed noble lineage and the original inhabitants of Bengal who embraced Islam came to be known as **atraf**s. The spoken language of the **ashraf**s was Urdu and that of the **atraf**s

1 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, **India Wins Freedom : An Autobiographical Narrative**, Bombay, 1959, p. 227.

was Bengali. Hence a conflict arose over the issue of the mother tongue of the Bengali Muslims and it continued upto the first quarter of the current century. In fact one of the most heated discussions in the Bengali Muslim Press, time and again, centred round the question of the position of Bengali vis-a-vis Urdu. The protagonists of Urdu were not only against the cause of Bengali, but they also gave themselves airs as outsiders of noble origins. Their loyalty to Pan-Islamism was stronger than their love for Bengal.

On the otherhand, a large number of Muslims of Bengal hardly received any education in either English or Bengali, primarily because of their poverty. However, some of them who had a love for Bengali acquired some education at the **maktabs** and composed '**dobhashi**' puthis. These **maktabs** could provide only elementary education in Bengali. Of course, by the turn of the century some of the writers gained considerable fame but the Muslims of Bengal as a whole lagged far behind the Hindus in regard to education. These Muslim writers created a small world of their own which was actually not so Arabicised and its orientation was not consistently Islamic but it was a dreamland where a socially and economically backward community tended to seek shelter and find psychological comfort.

(II)

By the end of the 19th Century, Bengali language and literature came to be regarded as the most developed among the modern Indian languages and literature. But as a result of the role the Hindu litterateurs played in this efflorescence, the life that was depicted in the Bengali literature was predominantly Hindu. This aspect of Bengali literature became increasingly pronounced during the last for decades of the 19th century. This was the period of the rise of Hindu nationalism. On the otherhand, the Muslims, even before they became politically oriented, had become conscious of a distinct communal identity. The conflict was evident in the writings of both the Hindu and Muslim writers of the period.

This rivalry pushed the Muslims to identify themselves with a world-wide Muslim community, and, as a result, they tended to develop an affinity with Arabic, the language in

which the Islamic religious and theological ideas were expressed. Consequently, their distance from Bengali language considerably increased.

(III)

From the beginning of the 20th Century till 1940 the exponents of Bengali culture were divided into two rival camps and religion played the dominant role in it. In the same year the Lahore Resolution was adopted in which it was stated that only the Muslim majority areas would form a separate State. The Resolution did not say that the State would be an Islamic State or that it would be called Pakistan. But a section of the Bengali Muslim literary men took the initiative to incorporate the theme of the movement in literature and culture which was purely Islamic in nature. This partly created the condition favourable to the **Pakistan Movement**. With this object in view two literary organisations—the East Pakistan Renaissance Society (1942) in Calcutta and the East Pakistan Literary Organisation (1942) in Dhaka came into being.

The aim of the society was to give a literary shape to the idea of Pakistan in order to promote national renaissance, to arrange seminars on scientific and psychological aspects of the idea and to reject anti-Pakistani sentiments in literature. On the otherhand, the organisation adopted a policy of choosing literary themes from the tradition of Islam to make the Islamic **Puthi** literature much more refined and make it an integral part of Islamic literature and to ensure greater representation to rural life in literature. These groups could not, however, enlist the support of many, yet it could open up a new dimension.

(IV)

Immediately after the partition of Bengal the Muslim intellectuals of East Bengal felt a strong urge to find out a satisfactory answer to the intriguing question of how far East Bengal would maintain a relation with West Bengal in respect of language and culture. On the otherhand, the diehard Pakistanis were hesitant to accommodate Bengali culture and literature. Thus a confusion emerged in the literary fields of East Bengal. Divergent schools of thought appeared. One school

stressed the contribution of the Muslims to Bengali literature and tended either to belittle or even to ignore altogether the contributions of the non-Muslim writers. The second school opined that Bengali language belonged to the Dravidian stock, prevalent in the pre-Aryan days and as such it had no link with Sanskrit or Aryan tradition. The latter group possessed a clear awareness of the cultural life of Bengal as a totality as it was formed out of the contributions of both the major communities over the years. Though these separate trends persisted for long, the later idea became more prominent.

At that time the conservative Muslim leaders constituted a significant component of the ruling group in East Bengal. In the field of literature and culture they adhered to the principles initiated by the Renaissance Society and the Literary Organisation of the pre-partition days. In order to give Bengali language an Islamic character, use of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words were widely encouraged. Added to this was the attempt of the central government to make Urdu the only national language of Pakistan.

A strong resentment grew among the people against this attempt. In view of this the provincial government set up a "Language Committee" in 1949 to examine the question of standardisation, simplification and reform of Bengali language current in East Bengal. Although the report was ready in time, it could not be published until 1960 due to reasons not known to the public.

(V)

The question of a national language came up simultaneously. Jinnah, Governor General of Pakistan, visited East Bengal in 1948 and in the Dhaka race course meeting unequivocally declared Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan, although Urdu was the mother tongue of 3.3 percent of the total population of Pakistan. The Bengalis, proud of their language and cultural heritage, reacted sharply. The movement for the defence of Bengali which had already started was now stimulated. The Language Movement in East Bengal, was thus, a struggle against cultural aggression, political domination and communal approach to politics. The resulting agitation ended

with the police firing on the students at Dhaka on 21st February, 1952. The government, finding no way out, declared Bengali as one of the national languages of Pakistan in 1954.

(VI)

The idea of the wholeness of Bengali Literature and culture revived after the Language Movement of 1952. The contribution of the language movement to the development of a consciousness of secularism was considerable. The East Pakistan Cultural Conference at Comilla in 1952, the East Pakistan Literary Conference of 1954 and the Cultural Conference at Kagmari in 1957 strengthened the trend, Shahidullah thus described the prevailing anti-Bengali sentiment in the pro-government circle : "... a group of our literary men has been obsessed with the mad idea of introducing the system of writing Bengali letter in Arabic... A few had gone so far as to term it an act of conspiracy against Pakistan to read and discuss the Bengali language and literature, Rabindranath, Sarat Chandra and works of other writers of West Bengal. Some began speaking nonsense at the fear of the ghost of United Bengal and castigated violently. "

This anti-Bengali sentiment became pronounced again at the time of the birth centenary of Tagore in 1961. The government tried its best to stop it. The public strongly reacted again. The idea was that Bengali literature had been the product of an evolution over a long stretch of time. In 1963 under the auspices of the Bengali Department of the Dhaka University the '**Bengali Language and Literature Week**' was observed. There the audience listened with rapt attention to the recitation beginning from unintelligible '**Charyagiti**' to difficult modern poems. During this week-long function, the poets and writers, whose works were recited, sung and read, belonged to all communities of Bengal. Among them was Jibanananda Das who by birth belonged to East Pakistan but died as an Indian. The aspect of East Bengal which he represents in the poem, made him popular and this popularity grew with the wave of Bengali nationalism sweeping over the country.

In this environment Abul Mansur Ahmed, the Chief exponent of cultural movement of Pakistan wrote in 1962 :

The language and the alphabets of the Bengalis of both East and West Bengal are one and the same. Our literary tradition is also the same. Rabindranath, Sarat Chandra, Nazrul Islam and Satyen Dutt all are pride of and inspiration for the Bengalis. Munir Chowdhury of Bengali Department of the Dhaka University was more emphatic : 'Bengali literature and language date back a thousand years. All great literary products of this language are an integral part of our cultural tradition. This declaration came at a time when the Indo-Pak War (1965) generated a strong pan-Pakistan feeling. Attempts were made to revive communalism, anti-India sentiment and spirit of **jihad** in songs, poems, dance, dramas and so on. Radio Pakistan was directed in 1967 to stop broadcast of Tagore song as they were against the cultural themes of Pakistan.

Again protests came from all quarters and the government had to abandon the idea. Yet a new movement originated over the issue. In July, 1967, an organisation under the title of the '**Sanskritik Swadhikar Pratistha Parishad**' was found in the Dhaka conference of cultural workers. In the following month the death anniversary of Rabindranath was observed for the first time in East Pakistan with much solemnity. The Bengali New Years Day and other ceremonies were observed with much enthusiasm. These ceremonies had a national character. **Jatra Pala** was performed in urban areas; the popularity of folk-literature vastly increased. Writers and poets turned to rural life for their themes. Bengali words and clauses began to be used in naming places, shops and new born babies and so on.

Thus when the Hindu threat passed away with the partition of the Sub-continent in 1947, a new question arose over the issue of cultural identity specially of the East Pakistanis - to which they would be loyal : the historically determined regional culture depending on language or the new politically-determined culture embodied in the notion of Pakistan basing on Islamic conception? And in the conflict religious considerations were superseded by linguistic foundations which led to a re-assertion of regional identity in 1971 with the liberation of Bangladesh.

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