

**Contribution of AzizulHaque to the Institutional Political Consciousness and Electoral
Politics of Colonial Bengal**

Mrityunjoy Paul

Assistant Professor of History, SivanathSastri College

During the late 19th century intense desire of Muslim society of Bengal to reach at the focus of political power takes its extreme form reaching 20th century. **Bengali** Politicians were not inclined to politics at the beginning. Many of them thought that British Empire has been established in India to protect them from Marathas and Sikhs. But, when they saw that British Government was in darkness regarding their problems; they realized the need of all-Indian organization to uphold their scarcity and accusation. And from here, the concept of Institutional Politics emerged. As, Indian National Congress had been established in order to publicize the claim of representative administration of Indian, many English educated Muslims such as Abdul Latif, Amir Ali thought that their just set up relationship with British government might be disrupted if they joined the organization. They firmly believed that minority Muslims would be overwhelmed by the majority Hindus in all steps despite of the establishment of representative administration. The aim of their loyalty to the king (British government), was to keep their dominance over their own community as well as to keep them aloof from Anti-government politics being under the safe protection of British rule. Seeing the structure of National Congress, many of the Bengali Muslims apprehended that Hindus will grab the advantages acquired by congress. But, a part of them perhaps started to tend to Congress in the absence of any other political community as they thought Congress as neither anti-British, nor anti-Muslim seeing their program and activities.¹

In 1909, the Morley-Minto Reforms provided for reserved seats for the Muslims in imperial as well as provisional legislatures, in numbers much in excess of their numerical proportions and in keeping with their political importance. This granting of separate electorate for the Muslims thus provided an official legitimacy to their minority status and the separate political identity of the Indian Muslims.² Despite the theoretical criticism of separate electoral society in report of Montagu-Chelmsford reforms(1919), the community based deputation and reservation

was not only sustained but also augmented enough.³In Govt. of India act of 1935, enough importance had been given to the Muslims and other electoral society in both the central and state government. But, Muslim politicians thought that there was possibility of the danger of being dominance of majority Hindus as proposed federal structure was still unitary.⁴In the politics of undivided Bengal, AbulKasemFazlulhaque was the first who emphasized on the unity of Hindu-Muslim in association with National Congress. Peasant-agitation began in Bangladesh with his efforts. ⁵Among the Muslims, Sayed Amir Ali realized the necessity of establishing political organization. His motive was to gain advantages for Muslims through constitutional political movement.⁶ Sir AzizulHauque was one of the greatest among the part of the English educated Bengali Muslim who were established, familiarized and the pioneer personality and intellectualist in educational qualification.⁷

In the act of 1919, government published last code regarding representing the Lat-council and the nature of government (mixed or separate). Muslims such as FazlulHaque, Abdul Karim was enticed in the possibility of being representative in the parliament.⁸ Giving up the Institutional Politics seemed to be imaginary to one group of English educated Bengali. As a result of unwillingly division in the question of adopting western education and reluctance in giving up the Institutional Politics, some of the English educated professional Bengali likeFazlulHaque was gradually keeping themselves aloof from the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement.⁹Khilafatannouncement campaign left enough influence in Bengal. Boycott began at all fields such as governmental job, Court and reformed council. According to the proposal accepted by the provisional Muslim League, Azizulhaque ,Fazlulhaque , Abdul Karim withdrew their names in spite of nomination of election. Later they although stand for the election. English-educated Bengali Muslims realized that they would have no importance in the political society if they remained them aloof from the Council. They also felt augmentation of their political power is possible through the co-operation with the Government.¹⁰

When Khilafat-Non-cooperation movement was going on, many educated Muslims thought that for the sake of spreading education fast in Muslims in Bengal; they should enter in Lat Council to put forth best efforts to increase government help for making Muslims literate in modern education. Even the wealthy peasants

or people especially who gained the right of vote by reforms of 1919. They undertook an enterprise to send their own representatives in the Lat Council for their self-interest.¹¹ In the perspective of proposed India-tour of Royal Statutory Commission to India, election in provisional parliament acquired much importance to the educated Bengali Muslims at about the last of 1926. Few political consciousness Muslim leaders said a United Muslim Council Party was to be formed due to keeping the self-interest of Muslims of Bengal. On the other hand, Abdul Rahim, the ex-Executive Councilor of Bengal Government declared establishing a group named Bengal Muslim Party on March, 1926. In the meantime, in 1926, some famous persons among the twenty-eight contemporary leading Muslims of Bengal signed in an announcement in order to expand the basis of United Muslim Council Party, were Azizulhaque, FazlulHaque and Nasim Ali. There was not a lot of difference in the two parties in the perspective of announced aim.¹² Only one person among the 39 Muslim members elected by the 3rd Reformed Council, was elected as an candidate of Swarajya Party. Though the Governor summoned Abdul Rahim to set up ministry, he failed to form it. So, finally Abdul Karim Gajnavi formed ministry with ByomkeshChakroborty. As a result, a major part of Muslim community in Bengal opposed it as ByomkeshChakroborty formerly refused to join the ministry. Meeting with Gajnavi, a group of members under the leadership of FazlulHaque, AzizulHaque and Hasan SaheedSurabardi demanded his resign.¹³

In accordance with the Indian administrative rule of 1919, a royal Commission under the Presidentship of Sir John Simon in 1927, had been appointed to examine how much the reformed constitution effective. Muslim leadership announced to oppose the governmental proposal concerning the formation of sub-committee to help that commission by the elected members of Muslim -society. But in the council assembly of 1928 when the proposal of forming the committee was raised, it was seen that 32 members out of the selected 39 including AzizulHaque and FazlulHaque voted in favor of the proposal. As a reason of voting, they thought that after opposing the proposal, it would not be possible to submit the objections and constitutional claim of Muslims before the commission. In this context, AzizulHaque remarked, the people who elected Muslim candidates of Swarajya Party by major votes in 1923, defeated the same candidates one by one in 1925 election. It was as clear as daylight by the result of 1925 election that Muslim electors gave vivid instruction to accompany with the government. This was why it was desirable to accompany with the Simon commission, a part and

parcel of governmental management. AzizulHaque also said that Muslims of Bengal may get nothing at last, but something may be got; that may be good, with the hope that some right may be given we want to present ourselves before the Commission.¹⁴

At the end, realizing that forming a permanent ministry by the elected members of 3rd Reformed Council was impossible, governor of Bengal declared new election commencement. Election commenced in June, 1929 was so essential to Muslims of Bengal. After election, some of the Muslim leaders, as alternatives of Congress, endeavored greatly to set up a united platform to accomplish the interest of Muslim people especially of peasant citizen. For that, a convention of Muslim leaders was held at Faridpur Town Hall under the Presidentship of FazlulHaque in 1929. Members of Executive Council came to a conclusion of forming a Muslim committee under the aegis of a powerful Constitution. After some days of Faridpur Convention, Sir Abdur Rahim held an assembly at his home. 27 Muslim members of Bengal Council were present at the place. AzizulHaque suggested forming United Muslim Party in Constitutional structure to keep the self-interest of Muslim Community. Many persons opined to form a non-communal party named Bengal Praja Party instead of forming party only for self-interest of a particular community. After that, formation of a United Muslim Council Party was concluded in accordance with the proposal of FazlulHaque. 18 members out of present 27 members agreed to it. They were recognized as Bengal Praja Party. At the same time, Nikhil BangaPrajaSamiti was formed outside the Council. Sir Abdur Rahim and MoulanaAkram khan became the president and secretary of the party respectively. Establishment of it may be considered as a new gesture of political consciousness of educated Bengali Muslims because that was the first time when a part of educated Bengali Muslims consciously established such a political alternative which was to some extent disrupted non-communal.¹⁵

In accordance with the Govt. of India act in 1935, no party in 1937 election got single majority making formation of union government became essential coalition. Finally covering the way of long-lasting complexity, on 2nd march 1937, first Coalition Govt. of Bengal was set up under the leadership of FazlulHaque along with krishakPrajaSamiti, Muslim league and other parties and KhanbahadurAzizulHaque was elected as the first Speaker of Legislative Assembly of Bengal acquiring maximum votes of 116.¹⁶ As the first Speaker of Legislative

Assembly of Bengal, AzizulHaque (1937-1942) enabled to solve the problems immaculately, appeasing the parties impartially with very much eligibility.¹⁷ Legislative assembly of Bengal is considered to be the pioneer of Indian parliament because of the contribution of the Speaker and M.L.A s of Legislative Assembly of Bengal during that time. Parliamentary manners and customs were originated at that time. Both of Sir AzizulHaque and JalaluddinHashemi (who was temporary Speaker for 1 year) had extraordinary competency to manage Parliament. They were respected by governmental and opposing parties. With their intellectual opinion, eruditely decision and unbiased viewpoint, they often enabled to restrain the disquieted Legislative Assembly. Many of their ruling are still mentioned as precedent.¹⁸

At the time of AzizulHaque, **many** agitations took place in Legislative Assembly by different forms. No formerly Speaker had to manage the kind of risk what he had to do. He believed that, we had to keep in mind about the opposing team in the foremost place to manage properly the democratic institution like Legislative Assembly. He said, "At the fetus of majority there is the power of voting, the minority should be given the power to express opinion." But every political team and community could depend on AzizulHaque. He was restrained as a speaker but determined about disciplines of Legislative Assembly. His many rulings and decisions were mentioned in other provinces even in central assembly of India. He wrote a chart on the words which were adverse to Parliamentary Manners. He opined that decisions of political party, activities of a minister relating to his party would not be referred in Legislative Assembly. In spite of being a member of Muslim League, he kept enough distance from party-politics. His contribution to reform the office of Legislative Assembly was also extraordinary.¹⁹ Mourning motion had been a practice for a long time. He himself attempted to write these motions.²⁰

It would not be irrelevant to mention that in Colonial Period, adroitness in maintenance Ruling, decisions of EvanCuttan, AzizulHaque, JalaluddinHashemi, Nouser Ali gave great dignity to the Legislative Assembly. Legislative Assembly of Bengal was imitable to other provinces of India. Keeping the speaker beyond the concern for party politics was raised many times but it remained at the stage of discussion. Still After 68 years of independence, speakers both of central and

states are the totally representatives of their parties. All political parties confess that it is a hindrance to the apt activities of Parliamentary structure but political leaders failed in indicating any solution still now.²¹ Azizul haque resigned after the appointment of High commissioner of India in Britain. He was congratulated by all parties and communities. M.L.A David Hendry remarked, "The pride of this assembly will become pale in many respects in your absence."²² After the appointment of AzizulHaque as the high commissioner in London, deputy speaker, JalaluddinHashemi(1942-1943) managed the activities of committee with so much proficiency.²³

At the first part of 1942, the bridegroom of good luck, Sir AzizulHaque was appointed as the High-commissioner of India. He was the first among Bengali Muslims to achieve the position. Showing his perfectness in even this post, he gained the reverence of entire India. When he was abroad, Midnapurdistrict was devastated by severe storm. Getting this heart-rending news, he became anxious and stretched his helping hand to the wretched from abroad. After the discussion with famous foreign persons, he advertised his appeal through B.B.C. All foreign estate responded his appeal and he collected more than 5 lakhs and sent them all to poor Indians. After continuing in this post throughout 1 year, he returned to India. But, he had not to be abroad for long time. Seeing his unparalleled genius and political experiences, contemporary Governor General of India engaged him as the membership of ruling council. Before him no single Muslim of Bengal had the luck to receive this prestigious position. At the middle of 1946, he returned to Bengal after the time-limit his post came to end. Immediately after his return, he was elected as a member of Bengal Legislative Council without any competition. Government formed a commission for the enquiry of the frantic affair of homicide, happened on august, 1946 in Kolkata. He was appointed as a law-consultant on behalf of Government of Bengal.²⁴

References:

1. Chandi Prasad sarkar, *BangaliMusalman 1863-1947*, Kolkata, 2007, Introduction and PP. 30-31
2. SekharBandyopadhya, *From PlasseyTo Partition: A History of Modern India*, New Delhi, 2009, P. 275
3. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, Trans. SoumitraPalit et.al. , Kolkata, 1993, P. 168

4. Ibid, PP. 343-344
5. Dr. Sachhidananda Banerjee, *FazlulHaque- Jiban o Rajniti*, Kolkata, 2001, Preface
6. Ibid, P. 2
7. Chandi Prasad sarkar, op.cit. P.35
8. Ibid, P.87
9. Ibid, P.90
10. Ibid, PP.93-95
11. Ibid, P.111
12. Ibid, PP. 135-136
13. Ibid, PP. 138-139
14. Ibid, PP. 143-144
15. Ibid, PP.151-153
16. KaziSufiorRahaman, *Muslim Manas: SamajRajnitiAndolan (1905-1947)*, Kolkata, 2013, PP. 77-79
17. Amir Ali, *Santipur o MusalmanSamaj*, Dhaka,1973, P.103
18. Satyabrata Dutta, *BanglarBidhansabharEkshaBachar: Rajanugattotheke Ganatantra*, Kolkata, 2002, P.142
19. Ibid, PP. 300-302
20. Ibid, PP. 141-142
21. Ibid, PP. 309-310
22. Ibid, P.302
23. Ibid, P.291
24. Amir Ali, op.cit. PP. 104-105