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# THE COLLAPSE OF KHAKSAR ORGANIZATION: A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE DISPELLING OF A POTENTIAL MOVEMENT IN BENGAL

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**Abstract:**

The development of Muslim politics in Bengal was somewhat different from the upper Indian Muslim politics because of the strongly agrarian connection of the Bengali Muslim masses. The zamindars and moneylenders happened to be Hindu. As a result of the first half of the twentieth century, the peasant revolt against the zamindars for the protection of their tenurial rights took somewhat communal character. In the urban area, the Muslim educated middle classes were latecomers in the job sectors, and naturally, they have to face stiff competition to find their foothold. In this situation, by the 1930s it became open for any Muslim party to mobilize the Muslim masses in their favour providing that it would safeguard their interests. In light of this changes, this present study will try to find out what were the ideology and programmes of the Khaksar movement and why did it fail to capitulate the existing situation in Bengal and make a stronghold in Bengal.

## I

**Introduction**

In pre-independent Bengal, Muslims were the majority community. But economically, they were backward. Even before the 1920s, they were politically backward, too, in comparison with the Hindus. The non-cooperation-Khilafat movement of 1920 brought the Muslim masses into organized politics. Before this

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movement, the 'Divide and Rule Policy' of the British Government injected a feeling of economically exploited, culturally subjugated and politically dominated by the Hindus among the Muslims from the late nineteenth century. This prompted them to quest their own identity from the late nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century, they began to pursue an independent political line. The development of Muslim politics in Bengal was somewhat different from the upper Indian Muslim politics because of the strongly agrarian connection of the Bengali Muslim masses. That is why the Krishak Praja Party, which was established in 1936 as a spin-off of the Nikhil Banga Praja Samiti (All Bengal Tenants Association) with the sole objective of protecting the interests of the Muslim Peasants, was succeeded to be predominating in Bengal for sometimes. This article on the Khaksar Organization, which was basically an upper India movement, tries to find out as to what was the nature of organizational structure and ideology of the organization that it failed to make its mark among the Bengali Muslims. In order to do that the present study also delves into the socio-cultural and politico-economic milieu under which development of Muslim politics in Bengal took place.

#### Literature Survey

Amalendu De in his two-volume books entitled *History of the Khaksar Movement in India* (Vol-1 & 2, Parul Prakashani, Kolkata, 2009) deals with a particular brand of Muslim politics and their connection with Fascist powers. He has also written a book entitled *Khaksar Andoloner Itihasin Bengali* (Gyananeshwan, Calcutta, 1375 B.S) (1968 A. D). The Khaksar movement was one such movement founded by Inayatullah Khan (1888 – 1963) popularly known Allama Mashriqi or Wiseman of the East. However, before Amalendu De, Dr. Y. B Mathur of the University of Delhi wrote a lengthy paper on this movement entitled "The Khaksar Movement" (published in the *Studies in Islam*, January 1969). The second important work in this field was done by Dr. Shari Muhammad of Aligarh Muslim University. He wrote a book entitled *Khaksar Movement in India* (Delhi, 1973). However, none of them did not consult the original Khaksar works viz. *Tazkira, Isharat, Maqalat* etc. written by Inayatullah Khan himself. Dr. Muhsammad also did not thoroughly examine the Khaksar literature and papers on 'Nazi Cell' of the Aligarh Muslim University.<sup>i</sup> Dr De has tried to fill these gaps and gave a detailed understanding of various aspects of Indian national struggle, Khaksar's attitude to the national movement, and its relation to fascist powers. Dr. De has also thrown light on regional divisions of the Khaksar movement, including that of Bengal. But he has comparatively neglected the issue as to why this organization failed to appeal to the Bengali Muslims. The author of this present study has also written an article on the Khaksar movement entitled "The Khaksar Movement and the Muslim politics in Bengal During the Crucial Decade of the 1940s" (*East Indian Journal of Social Sciences*, December 2018, Vol-V, Number-2, pp-32-40) which has dealt with how the Khaksar movement had made a contribution to Muslim politics of Bengal in creating an Anti-Muslim League front during the 1940s and how its approach had begun to change after the provincial elections of 1946. This present study is an

improvement of that work and tries to address a broader perspective of the organization's failure to find its hold among the Bengali Muslims.

## II

### Emergence and development of organized Muslim Politics in Bengal

Many people in the third quarter of the nineteenth century looked upon the word 'nationalism' as something synonymous with Hindu nationalism. Writings of Rajnarain Basu and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay made the educated Muslims despondent. Although Bankim did not assail against the honest Muslims and criticized only oppressive Muslim rulers, such as Aurangzeb and Kutlu Khan, in his two novels *Rajshingha* and *Durgeshnandini*, respectively. Professor Clerk alleged that the communalist trend, which was found in the activities of the extremist leaders, found its root in the writings of Bankim Chandra.<sup>ii</sup> Even Muslim social reformers such as Sheikh Abdul Jabbar criticized him for not giving fair treatment to Muslim characters in his novels.<sup>iii</sup> The anti-cow killing movement, which was started by Dayananda Saraswati in 1882, produced massive riots in upper India and Bihar. Bengal was also not able to make itself free from its flame.<sup>iv</sup> The leading Bengali Muslim journal *Masik Mohammadi* raised concern among the Muslims about the grave consequences that the *Shuddi* movement might produce in the Bengali Muslim society. The journal was equally concerned about the increasing influence of *Brahmoism* upon a section of educated Muslims in urban Bengal.<sup>v</sup> Many Bengali literature and newspapers of the period published anti-Islam writings. In 1898 Syed Nawab Ali Chaudhuri had sent a memorandum to the editor of *Bharati*, where he protested against such publications. But *Bharati* did not pay importance to it; on the contrary, it made a mockery of it. An article published in *Islam Pracharak* in 1903 condemned such attitudes of the Hindu editors. This article also alleged that Iswar Chandra Gupta, Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Hem Chandra Bandyopadhyay, Nabin Chandra Sen, and their successors all assailed on the Muslim race and their glorious past.<sup>vi</sup>

Moreover, using of words by these writers such as '*Jaban*' expressing their abhorrence against the Muslims. It is also said that the Muslims discovered in every Hindu writer a 'second Bankim Chandra'. Amalendu Dey (1982) has mentioned in his book entitled *Islam in Modern India* that the writer of this article expected that the Hindu writers might correct their mistakes. However, he was disappointed.<sup>vii</sup> The Grand Theatre of Calcutta staged Pratapaditya drama. After that, in 1905, *Nabanur* wrote that – the Muslims were unable to welcome this drama as the Muslim characters of this drama were not presented with high ideals. In the same year *Nabanur* condemned Bankim Chandra for distorting Muslim characters in his novel *Durgeshnandini*. Muslims were also feeling humiliated by using of terms such as '*Jaban*', '*Nere*', '*Mlechcha*,' etc by the Hindu writers of Bengali literature.<sup>viii</sup> So the Muslim leaders of that period perceived Hindu nationalism as an assault on their religion, culture, and tradition.

As a result of these developments, a sense of separate identity was gradually developing among a section of the Muslim community of Bengal. Hindu nationalist

'threat' was not the sole cause for this development, but one of the main causes. Their outlook towards the British also varied from time to time, from hatred to co-operation. The last one was the fruit of the British divide and rule policy. The publication of W.W. Hunter's book entitled *The Indian Muslims* (1871), during the aftermath of the so-called 'Wahhabi trials' (1864-1871), played a crucial role in influencing the colonial government's attitude towards the Muslims. Civil Servant Hunter had analyzed the factors responsible for Muslim grievances under the British rule in India and urged the government to take care of Muslim's education.<sup>ix</sup> The changing outlook of the British government was expressed in its passing of the Resolution of 7 August 1871, which gave 'special protection' to the Muslim community in education and job sectors.<sup>x</sup> But in spite of that the literacy rate did not increase in comparison to their population increase. Moreover, although Muslims were a majority of the provincial population, they were relatively insignificantly represented in the urban areas. For instance, while the Hindus constituted 11.78% of the total urban population of Bengal, Muslims were only 3.74%.<sup>xi</sup> They were also not able to make much headway in the job market. The Muslims of Bengal gradually realized their backwardness in education and job field in comparison to the Hindus by the end of the nineteenth century. This set the stage for their development of a politics which rivalled the Hindu nationalist politics. This 'growing self-perception of Bengal Muslim' made them conscious about their separate identity and further separated them from the Hindus. The competition for job soon filtered down from urban to rural areas. Although it did not immediately affect the masses, it did 'concern the aspiring social classes, keen to improve their condition and ready to move to the towns for a share in the scramble'.<sup>xii</sup> They soon discovered the benefits of acting as a community as it would facilitate the process of gaining special concessions and facilities from the government. The birth of the Muslim League in 1906 was the result of this community consciousness.

British Government's policy of "Divide and Rule" helped in crystallizing their ambition. The partition of Bengal manifested British object 'to foster in Eastern Bengal the growth of Mohammedan power, which, it is hoped, will have the effect of keeping in check the rapidly growing strength of the Hindu Community'.<sup>xiii</sup> The partition of Bengal by creating a Muslim majority province had markedly increased the ambition of the Muslim leaders in India. The Simla Deputation (1906) was an indication of this whetted ambition. The deputation claimed political safeguard from the British government, which the latter readily accepted in order to create a rift between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The Morley-Minto Reform Act of 1909 accepted the communal representation and separate electorate for the Muslims on the ground that the Hindus and Muslims not only had religious differences, they also had 'difference in life, in tradition, in history, in all the social things as well as articles of the belief that constitute a community'.<sup>xiv</sup> But the Muslim League's leaders mostly belonged to the elite section of the society whose demand for 'more than the fare share according to representation' did not represent the entire community.<sup>xv</sup>

As far as the agrarian scenario was concerned, there appeared another picture of communal tension. It is apparent that by 1911 Muslims were predominating, representing 52.3% of the population and outnumbering Hindus (45.2%) by over three and half millions. Another significant point to be noted here is that the diminishing number of Hindus was most clearly visible in the case of Eastern Bengal. In West Bengal (the Burdwan Division) the Hindu represented 82% of the total population. In Central Bengal, the proportion was 51%, while in North Bengal, it was only 37%, the minimum 31% being reached in East Bengal.<sup>xvi</sup> It is also to be noted that in northern and eastern Bengal Muslims formed the overwhelming bulk of the peasantry, the landlords were mainly Hindu. Partha Chatterjee (1982), however, has argued that – the crucial element which deflected ‘peasant agitations in anti-Hindu movements was not that most zamindars were Hindu and that the grievances of the predominantly Muslim tenantry consequently took on anti-Hindu overtones, but the fact that Muslim rent-receivers, where they did exist, were considered part of the peasant community whereas Hindu zamindars and talukdars were not.’<sup>xvii</sup> He has also shown that the Hindu zamindars were extremely exploitative in nature, and this exploitation again became clear in the operations of outside traders or moneylenders and as these people was racially or culturally distinct from the peasantry, the rural tension took a communal character. He has noted in this regard the significance of religious festivals and processions, which were institutions of demonstration of feudal wealth and power, and there took place numerous disputes since the 1920s.<sup>xviii</sup>

Chittaranjan Das had tried to mitigate the tension between Hindu and Muslims through his Bengal Pact (1923), but after his death in 1925, widespread riots broke out in Calcutta in 1926-1927. After Das’s death, a section of the Calcutta based Hindu *Bhadralok*<sup>xix</sup> took control of the provincial Congress by using the organizational support of the revolutionary groups and they on the one hand repealed the Hindu-Muslim pact and on the other virtually ousted from all important positions the new district leadership which had emerged in the course of the non-cooperation movement. At that time, many Muslim leaders dissociated themselves from Congress. The final break up took place on the issue of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1928. The entire Congress block in the legislature spoke and voted in support of the rights of the landlords, while the Muslim members fought in favour of the tenants but in vain.<sup>xx</sup> Abul Mansur Ahmad (189-1979) a former Congressite who later join the Muslim League, stated in his autobiography entitled *Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchas Bachhar* (Fifty Years of Politics As I Saw it) at that time Congress could not be a reliable organization protecting either tenant interest or Muslim interests in general.<sup>xxi</sup> At this juncture, the Krishak Praja Party (hereafter KPP) began to be powerful. However, in 1936-37 elections, the party did not win an absolute majority. It had to form a coalition ministry with the Muslim League. But once the coalition ministry formed, the nature of politics of KPP changed from pro-tenant to what some radicals of the party described as ‘subservient to British imperialism and Bengal Landlordism’.<sup>xxii</sup> As a result, the KPP began to lose its popular support from 1937 onwards. It was also from this time

the agrarian economy of eastern Bengal started changing. Partha Chatterjee described this change in the following words-

'...rapid changes in the agrarian economy of eastern Bengal in the 1930s meant a quick decline in the former resilience of the small-peasant economy and the rise of a new class of substantial peasants. The extension of the franchise, the penetration of formal governmental institutions into rural areas, and the opening up of governmental appointments at local levels to a somewhat larger section of the rural population meant that there were more people now available to fill up the linkage positions between the structures of organised politics and the peasant communities in the villages. There was thus considerable extension of the arena of 'representative' politics as well as of the rhetoric of populism.'<sup>xxiii</sup>

In this backdrop, this article will try to find out what were the ideology and programmes of the Khaksar movement and why did it fail to capitulate the existing situation in Bengal and make a stronghold there.

### III

#### **The Khaksar Movement and its failure in Bengal**

The Khaksar Movement was founded by Inayatullah Khan popularly known Allama Mashriqi or Wiseman of the East in 1931 in his village Ichhra five or six miles distant from Lahore. He was hostile to both Gandhian Congress and the British government. Although the movement believes in the policy of respecting the religious and social sentiment of various religious communities that live in India,<sup>xxiv</sup> he awfully criticized the Hindus and Gandhi in the following words –“Your effeminate leader was the leader of a community which never wielded the sword. What else could this poor creature teach them than that they are meant for being beaten, so they should go on being beaten...Tell me frankly what else would the naked Mahatma teach them? The poor man, not finding his people fit for anything else, devised the ridiculous methods of satyagraha, ahimsa, non-violence, and non-cooperation, in the name of Hindu Philosophy, and these have staggered the whole World.”<sup>xxv</sup> It was essentially a military movement. Its organization was dictatorial, believing in leadership and the necessity on the part of the followers to place implicit faith in and to give implicit obedience to the leader. It aimed at establishing sovereignty over the whole world, including India. It believed in the domination of India by the Musalman and was as such a communal movement, although it professed general tolerance for other communities.<sup>xxvi</sup>

However, recent researches have revealed different facts about the Khaksar Movement. For example, Nasim Yousaf in his various works has shown that Allama Mashriqi and his Khaksar Movement wanted to demolish the British rule in India. But the movement had a bigger goal beside this. The movement wanted to remove all kinds of sectarian feeling and religious bigotry through their virtuous and beneficent activities (but keeping religion intact) and to create a new egalitarian and tolerant world order. It also wanted to cross the borders of India and bring justice, peace, and unity of the human race and to lead mankind to higher goals of scientific development, exploration of the universe, other discoveries and

inventions, etc. He has also shown that the movement might have a military character, but it was essential at that moment as Mashriqi believed that no nation could ever become a ruling power unless it possessed strong character and strict discipline. Mashriqi held that one of the major reasons for the downfall of any nation was lack of character. This ideal of Mashriqi appealed not only to the Muslims but also to the non-Muslims.<sup>xxvii</sup> Nasim Yousaf has also shown that the All India Muslim League established the Muslim National Guard in 1938, which was inspired by the Khaksar organization. But the authenticity of this statement is not well-established. However, his work has also shown that by the late 1930s, when the Khaksar began to capture the Muslim politics in all over India, both the British Government and Muslim League tried to suppress the movement. The Punjab Premier and member of the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, imposed a ban on Khaksar activities in early 1940. Since then, the relationship between the Khaksars went through various ups and downs. Even during the crucial phase of India's freedom struggle in 1945-46, the two could not be able to unite.<sup>xxviii</sup> Malik Muhammad Aslam, a biographer of Mashriqi, however, has found in Khaksar's ideals of absolute obedience to its leader and unity of all Muslims in a state of militancy, etc features of a kind of aggressive Islamic movement similar to present-day Taliban. He has also traced the embittered relationship and conflict between the Muslim League and the Khaksars during the pre-independence period and even after that.<sup>xxix</sup> This present study will also focus on apart from other factors how the conflict between Khaksars and the Muslim League made it difficult for the Khaksars to find a strong foothold in Bengal.

The Khaksars had its branches in Calcutta and other parts of Bengal.<sup>xxx</sup> The principal Khaksar centres in Bengal were – Calcutta, Howrah, Kidderpore, 24 Parganas, and Dacca. The chief organizers were –Fida Muhammad, alias Fida Hussain, Sultan Zia, Mullick Muhammad Yasin of Calcutta, and Munshi Shamsul Haq of Dacca. In 1939, Fida Muhammad, a close disciple of Inayatullah Khan, became the Chief organizer of the movement in Bengal. At that time the total number of Khaksars in Calcutta, Howrah, Kidderpore, and 24 Parganas was about 1200. Azad Sobhani and a few other Calcutta merchants staunchly supported the movement.<sup>xxxi</sup> After the Lahore incident on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1940, when a contingent of 313 Khaksars held a parade in Lahore and police arrived at the scene to stop the Khaksars, there took place a clash between Khaksars and the police, the Khaksar Association was declared unlawful in Punjab and Delhi.<sup>xxxii</sup> Then the headquarters of the All-India Khaksar organization, which had hitherto been located in Lahore, was moved to Calcutta.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The reason for this transfer was probably that the Muslim League was in power in Punjab government at that time, whereas the Premier of Bengal at that time was A. K. Fazlul Haq and his Krishak Praja Party. As a result, the Khaksar probably had thought that they would found a congenial atmosphere in Bengal to carry out their activities. So they shifted their headquarter to Calcutta. The Calcutta Khaksars had carried on persistent agitation

for the release of Allama Mashriqi and had continued to hold parades in uniform and carry belchas.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Various reasons can be attributed to Khaksar's failure in Bengal. At that moment, the basic requirement of the Bengali Muslim was an organized party with concrete ideology for safeguarding their interests. The rural agricultural Muslim population in which was numerically the larger section wanted the abolition of landlordism and protection of their tenurial rights, which the KPP failed to provide. But the Khaksars in Bengal did not produce any clear-cut objectives relating to the agricultural question. There was, in fact, no clarity of its vision. A Government report dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 1941 stated that in Bengal, the movement was said to be in inspiration and direction almost entirely an extraneous organization with little cohesion, and its members were very vague about the implications of the movement. Such co-coordinating control as existed was exercised centrally, but there was some reason to doubt how effective that control was at that time somewhat amorphous condition of the organization.<sup>xxxv</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1941 a conference which was attended by about 300 of the leading Khaksars of India was held at Rafi Manzil, Qutub Road, Delhi. Fida Muhammad, Waresh Ali, Muhammad Ali and Mushtaq Ahmed attended the conference from Bengal. At this conference, it was suggested that in view of the continued detention of Allama Mashriqi in Jail, the Khaksars should join the Congress satyagraha movement. However, they ultimately decided to continue negotiations with the British Government for the release of Allama Mahriqi.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

From March 1940 to January 1942 the activities of the Khaksars in Bengal as also in other province was limited to secure the release of Mashriqi. As the release or detention of Allama Mashriqi was of little or no interest to Bengal Muslims, the Khaksar leaders had little to offer local Muslims to induce them to join the movement. The Muslim League, on the other hand, could offer its supporters political advancement and power of patronage. Another important fact is to be noted here. The Khaksar association in Bengal was dominated by the upcountry Muslim leaders. Apart from Muhammad Ali and Manzur Elahi, other prominent leaders like Qoraishi, Dr Tahir, etc held from North India.<sup>xxxvii</sup> As a result, the Bengali Muslim looked upon this movement had little in common with their socio-cultural and political aspirations.

There had been some opposition to the movement as well. Maulana Abdur Rauf Dinapuri and Mufti Aminul Elisen of the Nakhoda Mosque disapproved of the movement chiefly on religious grounds, while Muslim League leaders for political reasons were prepared merely to tolerate the movement so long as it did not attempt to rival the Muslim League organization. It was thus unlikely that the Khaksar movement would make any progress at the expense of the Muslim League during this period. There was, however, a tendency for the Muslims who were unpopular with the Muslim League to join the Khaksars. The quasi-military nature of the Khaksar movement moreover, made a certain appeal to younger Muslims. About 100 students had joined the Khaksars in March 1941. But on the other hand,

about the same number of Khaksars, who were formerly active, had ceased to take any interest in the movement.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

During the late 1930s and the beginning of 1940s communal politics was very powerful in Bengal. Semanti Ghosh in his book entitled *Different Nationalism: Bengal, 1905-1947* comments in this regard that – “With the spread of the League’s power in Bengal in the early 1940s, the word ‘Pakistan’ was transformed into a symbol signifying almost everything for everybody. The widespread construction of a national ‘Muslim’ identity and its political articulation led to a whole new imagined world of rights and freedom borne within a single word ‘Pakistan’.”<sup>xxxix</sup> But the Khaksars took a different path. After his release from Vellore Central Jail on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1942, Mashriqi rejected Cripps proposals in entirety on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1942, considered them meaningless, unreal while enemy actually at India’s door, unless every party was unhesitatingly fully armed, in order to defend India utmost, also unless an Indian Defence Minister, capable of galvanizing India utmost was immediately appointed.<sup>xl</sup> He had sent a telegram to Sir Stafford Cripps on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1942 stating that he would join the Congress, the Muslim League, and the Hindu Mahasabha to demand complete independence of India.<sup>xli</sup> Muhammad Ali, who was then acting as the Hakim-i-Ala (Chief Officer) of Bengal in place of Fida Muhammad, had printed 2000 leaflets in Urdu and Bengali containing the text of this telegram and distributed in Calcutta. He had also received a leaflet in Urdu from Syed Sultan Mohiuddin Bahmani, Hakim-i-Ala, Madras, which contained the same as that of the aforesaid leaflet. Only one exception was there. At the end, there was an appeal of Bahmani to the Congress, Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha leaders to unite and demand the complete independence of India in order to expose the British propaganda that Indians were fighting among themselves and hence were unfit to get anything.<sup>xlii</sup> This fact might not have appeared attractive to a section of the Muslim masses in Bengal.

After the end of the Second World War, the Khaksar party wanted to crush the Muslim League with the ultimate object of dominating all other Muslim parties. So the Khaksar had allied with other nationalist Muslim groups and started preparation to take part in the election of 1946.<sup>xliii</sup> In Bengal, it allied with Fazlul Haq’s KPP along with other nationalists Muslims.<sup>xliv</sup> But at that moment, KPP’s influence was waning in Bengal and its support base was drifting towards the Muslim League. This alliance did not make Khaksar powerful in Bengal. On the contrary, Khaksars’ participation in the provincial election to weaken the League yielded the opposite result. It rendered the Khaksars unpopular in Calcutta. A Special Branch report dated 16<sup>th</sup> January 1946 stated that the number of local Khaksars was fast decreasing as a result of the Muslim League propaganda that the Khaksars had been the agents of the Congress. Manzur Elahi and several ordinary Khaksars had joined the Muslim League. According to Dr. Tahir and Elahi Buksh, the Khaksars could not mobilize more than 70 Khaksars from Calcutta, Howrah, and suburbs at any of their Ijtemas (consolidation) in future. The number of Khaksars in Dacca had also decreased considerably. Qoraishi and Dost Muhammad Anval met Fazlul Haq and Nawab Bahadur of Dacca several times and persuaded

them to run the Muslim candidates on Khaksar tickets in the provincial elections, but they failed to get any definite reply from them. Fazlul Haq himself had not then made up his mind as to what he is going to do in the ensuing elections. He was also negotiating with the Muslim League to surrender unconditionally to the president of the All India Muslim League, although his own followers like Humayun Kabir and the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca were still dissuading him from taking this step.<sup>xlv</sup> Qoraishi admitted that it had been a great setback in the Nationalist Muslim Groups in Bengal because of Shamsuddin Ahmad and several other members of the Krishak Proja Party joining the Muslim League in early January 1946.<sup>xlvi</sup> All these factors rendered the Khaksar-Nationalist Muslim cliques weaken, and they defeated crushingly.

After this defeat, A. K. Fazlul Haq, with certain followers, had joined the League. On the other hand, many Khaksars had become League-minded after the Calcutta riot of August 1946, and they began to feel that at this critical time, all Muslims should remain united. Golam Ghaus and several other Khaksars had written to Mashriqi to join the Muslim League in response to the appeal made by Jinnah in his Id Day message to all Muslims and also decided to send a deputation to convince him. In the meantime, Mashriqi had sent a letter to the effect that the Khaksars would join the League provided the League leader promised in writing to him that he would work in collaboration to achieve the independence of India and Pakistan. The Khaksars in Calcutta had not approved this conditional offer of Mashriqi to Jinnah, and according to Dr. Tahir it was an absurd condition for joining the League. Khaksars had become even more unpopular amongst Muslims than before, not only in Calcutta but in other parts of India because of Mashriqi's opposition to the League through the medium of "Al-Islah" (organ of the Khaksars) and other means.<sup>xlvii</sup>

The Khaksar, as a volunteer movement, was also not able to win the confidence of the Muslim masses. During the late 1930s and the beginning of 1940s several Muslim volunteer organizations began to grow up against the Hindu Volunteer movement, e.g., Akhras, etc. The most important Volunteer organization of the Muslims in Bengal was the Muslim National Guard, which was affiliated to the Muslim League. It had its branches in different districts of Bengal such as Jalpaiguri, Pabna, Calcutta, Mohanpur etc. Besides, there were Muslim Students Volunteer Corps, Khilafat Committee Volunteer Corps, Muslim Volunteer corps, Muslim League volunteer committee etc. The main aim of these organizations was to protect and promote the interests of the Muslim community. Most of these Volunteers wore the uniform in a military fashion. Some of them took regular drills.<sup>xlviii</sup> Besides these volunteer organizations, Khaksar was numerically very weak in Bengal. Because of this weakness, they had to call Khaksars volunteers from the N.W.F.P and Punjab to work against the League in the provincial election of 1946.<sup>xlix</sup> Even after the Calcutta and Noakhali riots of 1946, many Khaksar leaders in Bengal broke with the organization to join the Muslim League. On 31<sup>st</sup> October 1946 A.K.M. Shamsul Alam and Dr. Tahir had left for Aligarh, U.P, and tried to confer with the leaders there on the question of working in collaboration with

the Muslim League. Dr. Tahir had decided to work in alliance with the League and to disown the leadership of Mashriqi because as he held the contemporary situation required that the Khaksars should not be out of the League as the Hindus would not show any toleration towards them.<sup>i</sup> As a result of the secession of the leaders from the association and decreasing number of Khaksar volunteers, the movement collapsed in Bengal by the end of 1946 and on the other part from the beginning of 1947. Finally, in July 1947, Mashriqi had to disband the organization. It was sought to be kept alive by some Khaksars for a time till the 'curtain was drawn' on it when the Government of India dealt a death blow by disallowing it just a few days before the partition of India in August 1947.<sup>ii</sup>

#### IV Concluding Remarks

In the final analysis, it can be said that during the 1930s, an opportunity was created for any Muslim party in Bengal to mobilize the rural as well as urban Muslim masses to mobilize in their favour, provided that the interests of the masses should be safeguarded. KPP failed to take the fullest advantage of this opportunity and failed to abolish the zamindari system without compensation. The failure of Huq's KPP led a sudden shift in popular support from the KPP to the Muslim League in the late 1930s. The Khaksar organization was more than a match for the Muslim League. It wanted to diminish the League and take its place. But it remained an up-country organization for the Bengali Muslims, so did its leader. Lack of concrete objectives, strategic weakness, lack of particular programme that would be beneficial for the Bengali Muslim masses, the secession of the leaders were responsible for Khaksars' failure to launch a powerful movement in Bengal. It remained a marginalized organization in Bengal throughout the period.

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#### References and Note

<sup>i</sup> The Author of this article has seen Archival documents on Nazi connection with the Aligarh University and also the Khaksar connection with the Nazis at the Nehru Memorial Museum library and at the Maharashtra State Archive. For reference see Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi, Microfilm Section, Reel No-902; also see Maharashtra State Archives, Home Department (Special), File No-830 (1), Year- 1939, Sub-Nazi Propaganda in India

<sup>ii</sup>Tripathi, Amalesh (1987). *Bharater mukti samgrame charampanthi parbo* (Nirmal Dutta,Trans.). Ananda Publisher. p 29.

<sup>iii</sup>Dey, Amit (2004). *The image of the prophet in Bengali Muslim piety, 1850-1947*. Readers Service, p 82.

<sup>iv</sup>Ahmed, Rafiuddin (1988). *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A quest for identity* (2<sup>nd</sup>ed.). Oxford University Press. p 171.

<sup>v</sup>Dey, Amit (2004). *The image of the prophet in Bengali Muslim piety, 1850-1947*. Op cit. pp 82-83.

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<sup>ix</sup>Hunter, W.W (1871). *The Indian Muslims: Are they bound in conscience to rebel against the queen?* Trübner and Company. p 150.

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- <sup>xii</sup>Ahmed, Rafiuddin (1988). *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906*. op cit. p 159.
- <sup>xiii</sup>Prasad, Rajendra. (1947). *India Divided* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Hind Kitabs LTD. Publishers. p 111.
- <sup>xiv</sup>Extract from Lord Morley's speech of 1909 (1915)*Indian constitutional documents (1773-1915)*.Mukherji, Panchanandas (Ed.). Thacker Spink & Co. p 295.
- <sup>xv</sup>"Mussalman representation". (March, 1909). *The Modern Review*. 5 (3), p 270.
- <sup>xvi</sup>O'Malley, L. S. S. *Census of India* (1911), Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim, the Report 5 (1). pp 199-200.
- <sup>xvii</sup>Chatterjee, Partha (1982). "Agrarian relations and communalism in Bengal, 1926-1935". Guha, Ranajit. *Subaltern Studies*, 1, Oxford University Press. p 11.
- <sup>xviii</sup>Ibid, p 19-24.
- <sup>xix</sup>The *Bhadralok* or the elites of Bengali Society emerged as a renter class who enjoyed intermediary tenurial rights which excluded the vast majority of Bengali Muslims and lower caste Hindus from the benefits of land ownership and the particular privileges it provided. They acquired western education. This 'modern' intelligentsia was drawn mainly from the middle and lower strata of 'rent receiving hierarchy'. They considered Western education as an avenue for advancement under the British government. Some were recruited into the Bureaucracy through whom the British ruled Bengal. It is true however that only the lower levels of administrative posts were assign to the Indians. Although they established themselves in Calcutta and district towns, the Western educated Bhadraklok retained strong ties with the countryside. Chatterji, Joya. (1995). *Bengal divided: Hindu communalism and partition, 1932-1947* (First Indian Edition) Cambridge University Press. Publish in India by Foundation Books. p 4-8.
- <sup>xx</sup>Chatterjee, Partha (Published online -25<sup>th</sup> March, 2008). "Bengal politics and the Muslim masses, 1920-1947". *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 20 (1), The author of this article downloaded this article from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf> on 8/1/2020 at 3:09 P.M, p 34.
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