

Today is the 114th birth anniversary of Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq. Muhammad Abdul Khaleque records here contribution of the Sher-e-Bangla in the field of education.

Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq was born on 26 October, 1873, at village Chakhar in greater Barisal. From his very childhood, Fazlul Huq was a very meritorious student. He obtained scholarship in his mid-level examination and passed the Entrance examination with distinction in 1899. In his F.A.

examination, too, he got scholarship. In 1894, he passed degree examination with honours in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry from Presidency College, Calcutta. Next year one day when Fazlul Huq was busy preparing himself for his Master's degree in English one of his friends came and told him that he was studying in English because he was not good in Mathematics. Fazlul Huq took it as a challenge and the same year — after a few months' preparation — obtained his Master's degree in Mathematics with distinction. It is worth mentioning that he was the first Muslim in the pre-1947 Bengal to obtain M.A. degree in Mathematics. He also passed the Law examination with distinction in 1897.

The Sher-e-Bangla believed that education was essential for the progress of any people. He was one of the pioneers of the 1906 All-India Education Conference. He in his deliberations at the conference put forward programmes of mass education for the common people of the country.

In 1912 the Sher-e-Bangla formed an educational institution at Calcutta under the name and style of Central Muslim Educational Institution. Through this he carried forward his movement for

the education of the deprived common masses step by step. In 1914, he delivered a memorable speech at the Muslim Education Convention held in the premises of Dhaka Ahsanullah Engineering College. The convention was presided over by Nawab Sir Saadullah and Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah was one of the participants.

Though Fazlul Huq was also a leader of the Indian Congress he did not support their 'quit education' policy. He feared that without education the already backward Bengal Muslims would become further backward.

Fazlul Huq in his Presidential address at the All-India Muslim League and All-India Khilafat Convention in 1920 opposed the proposal for boycotting the schools and colleges by the students. In this convention he categorically stated that it would not do any harm even if all the Hindu boys stopped attending their schools because they could get their education at home since all the members of their families were educated. But for the Muslim boys boycotting would be suicidal as they would not get education at home.

In 1924 Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq became Education Minister of Bengal. The tenure of his office was as short as six months. Yet during

this short period he set up a college in Calcutta. Later on this college was named as Islamia College. He set up a separate directorate and the 'Muslim Fund' for the education of the Muslims. He knew that Muslim boys did not like the compulsory study of Sanskrit. But apart from a few government schools there was no provision for teaching Urdu or Arabic. So he passed an order that in order to get government assistance every school will have to have one Muslim teacher and one Moulavi teacher. The Muslim students used to find it difficult to get admission in many government schools and colleges. Fazlul Huq introduced the system of 'reserved seats' for Muslim boys in all schools, colleges, medical and engineering colleges. This system actually helped the Muslims to make significant progress in the field of education.

It was alleged at that time that the system of writing names in the examination scripts went against the interest of the Muslim students because the teachers were mostly non-Muslims. Sher-e-Bangla did away with the system of writing names and only the roll numbers were allowed to be written in the scripts. As a result, the percentage of passes of the Muslim students started increasing.

In those days, it was also

very difficult to get recognition from the Calcutta University for schools and colleges established for the education of Muslim boys. Sher-e-Bangla made a special system to remove this. Besides these, under his leadership and encouragement the Baker Hostel, Carmichael Hostel, Elliot Hostel, Engineering College, Muslim Hostel and Muslim Institute buildings were set up.

During his tenure of office as Education Minister of Bengal for six months the Sher-e-Bangla played a remarkable role in converting the All-India Anglo-Oriental College into an university in collaboration with the Aga Khan and Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk. He was a founder member of the first Court of the newly established All-India University.

After the 1937 general election an eleven-member cabinet was formed under the leadership of Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq. He became the Prime Minister and unlike all other former Prime Ministers he instead took the charge of the Ministry of Education. At that time he made budgetary provision for the education of the 'Taqalli' community.

In 1938, by passing and implementing the 'Mahajoni Law and Tenancy Act' and setting up a large number of Debt Settlement Boards, Fazlul

Huq not only saved millions of Muslim peasants from the clutches of zamindars and userers but also helped them to carry the light of education to every house. He set up the Mowla Box Committee for the extension and development of education.

During his Prime Ministership he established the Lady Brabone College in Calcutta. He helped to improve the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' College of Calcutta set up by Begum Rokeya by bringing the college under the control and management of the provincial government.

In 1940, under the patronage of the Sher-e-Bangla the Fazlul Huq Hall of Dhaka University and the Haraganga College of Munshiganj were established. This time he also set up a college at his village Chakhar. The madrasah and the school beside the college, too, are his contributions. He had positive contribution to the establishment of the University of Dhaka. He helped to develop the Adina Fazlul Huq College at Rajshahi. He also helped the Sarshina Madrassah.

The Bangla Academy was established in 1954 when Fazlul Huq was the Chief Minister of the East Bengal. Besides the establishment of a lot of schools, colleges, institutions and hostels, he had significant contributions towards the establishment of the Eden Girls' College, Tejgaon Agriculture College, Bulbul Lalitkola Academy, Central Women's College etc.

Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq will always be remembered for his great contribution towards the spread of mass education.