

Jinnah – Fazlul Huq Relations: An Appraisal

ABSTRACT

In order to win over the support of the Muslim masses of Bengal for the Pakistan cause, Mohammad Ali Jinnah needed patronage from the local influential. One of the better options was Abul Kasem Fazlul Huq, popularly known as Sher-i-Bengal, who was simultaneously well-linked with poor rural peasants of eastern districts of the province as well as the urban business class of Calcutta. On the recommendation of Jinnah, Huq presented the famous Lahore Resolution in the twenty-seventh session of the Muslim League held in March 1940 and thus is commonly recognized not only as one of the main leaders of Pakistan Movement but also as one of the closest associates of Jinnah. This paper intends to explore this myth by covering different ups and downs in the relationship between the two, mainly focusing on the events which took place between the two elections, i.e. 1936-37 to 1945-46.

Keywords: *Jinnah, Fazl ul Haq, Bengal, Muslim League, Pakistan movement, elections.*

Bengal had a unique position under the British rule in India. It was the first Indian territory to be conquered by the British. First Fort Williams and then Calcutta (Calcutta continued to be the capital of British India till 1911) remained the center of political activities of the colonial masters. Economically, British started the process of industrialization in India from the same area and the cosmopolitan city remained hub of their commercial activities. Educational and cultural institutions were also first established in Bengal and that resulted in the political consciousness of the inhabitants of the region. Likes of Ram Mohan Roy, Haji Shariatullah, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda brought social reforms while Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Brajendra Nath Seal etc. enlightened the minds of the people through their writings and philosophy. Movement against the partition of Bengal inculcated concepts of patriotism and nationalism at the grass-root level and can be seen as the first attempt to

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mobilize common masses to stand-up for their basic rights. Another important aspect of Bengal was that though Muslims were in majority in the province, yet their proportion in population was just slightly more than the non-Muslims. So when Mohammad Ali Jinnah, on his return from the self-exile, tried to popularize Muslim League, especially in Muslim majority provinces, he was in search of a local Muslim leader, who at the same time could feel the pulse of the Bengali society and also was popular amongst the Muslim masses of the province. The readymade choice was obviously Abul Kasem Fazlul Huq.

Huq, a son of the soil, was born in a middle-class, educated, urban, Muslim family in 1873 at Bakergang. His grandfather, Kazi Akram Ali was a scholar of Arabic and Persian and his father, Muhammad Wazid was a reputed lawyer of Barisal District. After getting his early education from his hometown, Huq shifted to Calcutta for higher education. Initially interested in science subjects, he first did his graduation from Presidency College in 1894 and then his masters in Mathematics from the University of Calcutta, two years later. He, however, ultimately switched to the field of his father and did a degree in Law from the University Law College. Between 1908 and 1912 he served British Government as a civil servant (Sanaullah, 1995: 31) but soon realized that it was not a good carrier for a person like him, who had an independent opinion. For the rest of his life, he practiced law, mainly in Calcutta High Court and actively participated in politics. He emerged as a radical voice in Bengal politics. He was simultaneously popular amongst the peasantry and the lower-middle class of the remote districts of East Bengal as well as among the Calcutta based Muslim elite.

Jinnah and Huq were almost of the same age group and belonged to the same profession, yet they hardly manage to develop even cordial relations. Huq was one of the pioneers of All-India Muslim League as he attended the inaugural session of the party held at Dacca on December 30, 1906, but he kept himself at a distance from the functioning of the organization due to its policy of reliance on the British during its early days. Jinnah also did not join the League in this period mainly because of the same reason. When the party, in its Lucknow session held on March 22, 1913, decided to change its basic objectives from the ideals of “showing loyalty to the British” to the protection and advancement of “the political rights and interests of the Muslims of India” alongside promoting “friendship and union between the Muslims and other communities of India” (Rahman, 1970: 67-69), Huq along with other young, educated and professional Bengali Muslims belonging to the middle class started showing more interest in its activities. It was also the moment when Jinnah, for the first time entered the folds of the party. However, the difference between the two was that Jinnah always remained loyal to the League and never left the organization while

Huq was always doubtful about the party and remained in and out of it on frequent basis.

Two of them started their parliamentary careers almost at the same time. Jinnah was elected as the member of Imperial Legislative Council, for the first time, in 1909, while Huq became member of the Bengal Legislative Council in 1913. It is interesting to note that Jinnah contested the election from Bombay Muslim constituency against the League sponsored candidate, Molvi Rafiuddin, while Huq was elected from Dacca Division with the backing of Muslim League leaders like Khawaja Salimullah and Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury. However, once they were in the parliament, both of them raised their voice for the rights of Indians in general and Muslims in particular. If Jinnah presented Mussalman Waqf Validating Bill and pleaded the case for the inclusion of amendment in the interest of the Muslims while debating on Elementary Education Bill, Huq always raised the voice for the rights of the Muslims of Bengal. In an aggressive speech delivered in the house on April 4, 1913, Huq asked the government to decide about “its future policy regarding questions affecting the Muhammedan community”. He bluntly told the rulers that they could not play with the feelings of the Muslim population “by the bestowal of titles and decorations on... leaders, or by providing for a transitory stay of the officials at Dhaka with all the paraphernalia of government”. He demanded for “something tangible” for his community, which could compensate for the decision of the “annulment of the Partition”. He also cautioned the Muslims that they had “to move with the times or else” they would be “doomed” (Broomfield, 1968: 203).

Both Jinnah and Huq were against the imperial rule and believed that the only way forward for the Indians was a joint resistance against the colonial masters. They were great advocates of Hindu-Muslim unity. Both of them were simultaneously members of Congress and the Muslim League. Jinnah was a respected voice in the Congress, while he also emerged as one of the most eminent leaders of the League. He presided over the important Lucknow session of the party in 1916. Huq, on the other hand, first became the President of Bengal Presidency Muslim League in 1914 and later in 1918 he was elected as the president of All-India Muslim League. At the same time he was the Joint Secretary of All-India Congress Committee (Rashid, 1987: 20). Jinnah, ever since becoming member of the League, started pleading the case for the change of mind-set in the party with the special focus on bridging up the gulf between Hindus and the Muslims. Likewise, Huq believed that if the League wanted its “politics to be of any value to anybody” they had to “recognize that the old methods will have to be abandoned” and party should adopt “the policy of co-operation with the other advancing communities in working out the common weal” of their “mother country” (The Englishman, 1913: November 6). He proposed for the

making of a committee of both Hindus and Muslims of Calcutta to settle the disputes between the two communities (The Englishman, 1914: June 4). In his presidential address to the League at Delhi, Huq said that “the Indian Muslims must learn to sink their differences” with Hindus and understand the “belief in an alien Government as a haven of refuge is as silly as it is incorrect” (Pirzada, Vol. I, 2007: 477-501).

Jinnah and Huq were both active members of the Muslim League Committee which was assigned the task to resolve the party’s differences with Congress. In the beginning Huq supported Lucknow Pact, which was Jinnah’s brain-child, but later on he started questioning the idea of weightage, which had actually reduced Muslim majority in Bengal to a minority (Chattopadhyay, 1984: 92).¹ Still, Jinnah actively participated in the activities of the party when Huq was its president. Jinnah also led a deputation to the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George during Huq’s tenure as president (Walport, 1989: 62). Both of them opposed Rowlat Act and Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. Jinnah and Huq, along with Muslims like Raja of Mahmudabad, Wazir Hasan, Abul Kashem, etc., disassociated themselves from Congress-League-Khilafat United Front. Both of them opposed the idea of non-cooperation and preferred working within the constitutional framework. If Jinnah resigned from the membership of Congress in 1920, Huq did the same almost eight years later. Huq participated in the Council elections in the winters of 1920-21, and for doing that he was expelled from the Bengal Presidency Muslim League (Mcpherson, 1974: 66). He also joined the Bengal cabinet in 1924, though only for a very short period (Lytton, 1942: 48). On the contrary Jinnah refused the offer to become part of the Governor-General’s Executive Council. However, he contested elections for the Imperial Legislative Assembly in 1923, and was elected as its member from the Bombay’s Muslim constituency. When Jinnah dropped the idea of separate electorates in his Delhi Proposals, Huq considered that it was not done in response of the feelings and demands of the Bengali Muslims; rather it was largely done to favor the Muslims of North-Western India. He termed it as a betrayal of the interests of the Muslim masses of his province (The Englishman, 1927: December 29).

When Jinnah decided to reorganize Muslim League and get it prepared for the 1936-37 election, he decided to bring prominent Muslim

¹ In his speech delivered at Muslim Conference held at Faridpur on May 2, 1925 Huq suggested that Muslims of Bengal should reject Lucknow Pact. Again in a statement issued in 1930, he declared that he was “no longer willing to adhere to” the Lucknow Pact and emphasized on the need for reviewing the agreement which had pushed the Bengali Muslims to a “perpetual dependency”.

leaders from Bengal, especially Huq, on board. However, the response from the Bengali politicians was not positive. None of them participated in the all-important Bombay session of All India Muslim League called by Jinnah in April 1936 to discuss the strategy about the forthcoming elections. Jinnah also sent invitation to forty Bengali Muslims including Huq to attend the first meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board of the League held at Lahore on June 8, 1936, but only Mirza Abul Hassan Ispahani and Abdur Rahman Siddiqui attended the meeting. Jinnah assigned two of them the task to launch “new Muslim League Party in Bengal” and assured them that he himself “would be available for advice and assistance” whenever they would require it (Ispahani, 1966: 23). Task before Ispahani and Siddique was to bring United Muslim Party² and Krishak Praja Party³ on one platform. Ispahani found an opportunity when he managed to convince United Muslim Party’s leadership to invite Huq and his colleagues to attend a three day’s convention of their party. He immediately wired Jinnah, telling him that a “wonderful opportunity” had emerged and he should “leave for Calcutta immediately” to take the advantage of the situation (Zaidi, 1976: 76).

Within a week, Jinnah reached Calcutta and tried to establish Muslim League as the only representative party of the Muslims of the province by promoting the idea of “Muslim Solidarity”. He told the Bengali Muslims that if there would be unity in Bengal it would prove to be “a bright day” for the people of the province and thus they should constitute an “indivisible whole and a single political entity”. He also asked the Bengali Muslim leadership not to neglect their “brethren of faith in other provinces” and thus they should unite “under the banner of the League” (Star of India, 1936: August 21). Jinnah was successful as Bengal Presidency Muslim League, United Muslim Party and New Muslim Majlis joined the League’s Parliamentary Board for Bengal and committed that they would contest the elections on the League’s tickets provided Jinnah would allow autonomy to the Provincial Parliamentary Board of the Bengal on the issues related to the province. Initially Huq also agreed to join the League but later he made his joining of the League conditional with the acceptance of his three demands: i.e. i) Muslim League should propagate the demand of the abolition of Zamindari

² It was founded by Suhawardy and Habibullah on May 25, 1936. Nawab family of Dhaka supported this group.

³ Huq founded Praja Party in 1929 with the idea to look after the interests of the Bengali peasants. He changed the name of the party to Krishak Praja party in 1936. Manifesto of the party for the elections was known as 14 points. It’s main features were the abolition of feudalism without any compensation, free universal primary education, release of political prisoners and completely responsible self-government for Bengal.

system and that too without any compensation; ii) Krishak Proja Party should have the right to retain their separate identity; iii) Jinnah would not impose his nominees on the Bengali politicians (Star of India, 1936: September 4). Jinnah, in principle, agreed to accept Huq's demands but asked for some time to execute them. To him abolition of the Zamindari system without any homework was not "practical politics" (Ahmad, 1992: 85-86).

Jinnah tried to convince Huq and his associates that he could understand about their "anxiety for the welfare of the peasants" but told them that it was not possible without "Muslim solidarity". He requested them to take the message of "Muslim unity" to each and every Muslim and by doing it, they could "serve the peasants more than" any other mean (Chattopadhyay, 1984: 141). Huq, however, was not ready to listen to Jinnah's call. He was banking on his party's popularity in rural Bengal and in order to gain more support from his basic constituency started criticizing the alliance of the other Muslims of the province. He termed them as "a Zamindar Party" and "a Ministerial Party". He declared that unity of Muslim Bengali politicians under League's banner was "only an election dodge" formed with the purpose of capturing votes and thus was not a "bonafide" attempt to unite Muslims (Star of India, 1936: June 16). Another issue with Huq was that he wanted his men to dominate the provincial politics and in the case of joining League's parliamentary board, he was "anxious to avoid the possibility of undesirable persons coming into Board and influencing the elections" (QAP, F. 288/53-54). He was not happy with the non-Bengali business community of Calcutta and knew that they were close to Jinnah. While taking to the students of Dacca university, he put the responsibility of "the failure to achieve unity among the Bengali Muslims" on the non-Bengali business elements. It is also a fact that many Bengali Muslim politicians, because of their previous differences with Huq, were not "happy to have Krishak Praja Party in the same boat" (Momen, 1972: 50). Khawaja Nazimuddin went to the extent that he even declared that Praja Party was "not a purely Muslim Organization" (Star of India, 1936: June 24).

When Jinnah asked Huq to give explanation for his conduct, Huq disrespectfully replied that Jinnah had no right "to ask for an explanation" from him as he was "associated with the Muslim League for a longer period than any other Muslim politician in India", who was alive at that time. He wrote that he was the President of the party back in 1918, while Jinnah could only attain the position when "the Bengali Muslims had been practically derived out of the League owing to the intrigues at Delhi and Simla". He blamed that Jinnah was "not working for Muslim solidarity at all" but was "playing a deep game". He added that the League Parliamentary Board was a creature of Jinnah's fancy and was a "breeding dissensions in Muslim

ranks". He claimed that Bengal Presidency Muslim League would "co-operating with the Praja Party" instead of Jinnah in the times to come. He went to the extent that he asked Jinnah to give explanation of his "conduct" to him (QAP, F. 288/53-54). When Jinnah received this letter, he immediately removed Huq from the Central Parliamentary Board of the League and charged him for being "guilty of... insubordination, and disloyalty to and defiance of the principles and policies of the Central Board" (Star of India, 1936: November 3).

During the election campaign Huq presented himself as the champion and savior of the rights of poor people of rural areas and he raised popular slogans such as *Dal-Bhat* (Dal and rice, i.e. food for the poor). He campaigned that the League's slogan of Muslim Solidarity and Muslim Unity were "mere eye wash and were being used to inflame religious sentiments in order that interested person might continue to trade on the credulity of the people". On the other hand the League launched an anti-Krishak Praja Party campaign by raising the slogans that "To vote for them is to cut your throat". They said, "Muslim Voters, Beware! If you – Send Fazlul Huq To The Wall: Smash up the Praja Party" (Star of India, 1937: January 13). Bengal League leaders wanted Jinnah to visit the province to meet the challenge of a "tough opposition" as his "presence" would "lighten" their cause (Zaidi, 1976: 103-04). Jinnah spent two weeks in the province and addressed public meetings at Calcutta, Dacca, Mymensingh, Comilla, Barisal etc. In his speeches he appealed to the Bengali Muslims to vote for "the solidarity of the 80 million Muslims of India". He asked them to "smash... those who create difference in your camp at this critical juncture" and to help him carry the "flag of the Muslim League" "into the Legislature". He criticized Huq for making "false promise" of abolishing "the Permanent Settlement" (Star of India, 1937: January 4).

The result of the Bengal election of 1937 showed a split mandate. Congress emerged as the single largest party with sixty seats. Krishak Praja Party got thirty-six seats, while there were forty-one independent members who won the election from Muslim constituencies. Muslim League's performance in Bengal was the best in all Muslim majority provinces as it managed to get thirty-nine seats. Many independent Muslim candidates joined League and Krishak Praja Party, which raised the number of formal in the house to sixty and the latter to fifty-eight (Mitra, 1937, Vol. I, 1990: 59-60). Keeping in view his pre-election tussle with the League, Huq formed a collation government with the help of Congress. However, this alliance could not last for long and differences arose between the two parties mainly because of the rigid stance taken by Sarat Bose, the Bengal Congress leader, on the issue of priorities of the program to be implemented by the Government (Ahmad, 1970: 35). Jinnah made a strategic move and offered

Huq the support of the League for running his government. Huq had no other option but to accept Jinnah's offer. A consensus was arrived between the two parties on a fourteen point parliamentary program (IOR, R/3/1/1). In the cabinet of eleven there were six Muslim and five Hindu members. Huq was made premier of the province with his party getting one other minister and one deputy minister. Muslim League got three ministries. In addition the offices of the speaker and chief whip were also given to the party (QAP, F. 566/1-3).

Huq's alliance with the League, to say the least, was a marriage of convenience. Though Huq managed to become the premier of the province, yet it was the League who gained the ultimate advantage. Huq had to compromise on many of the radical promises which his party had made during the election campaign. This annoyed many of his close associates as well as his followers, especially the left wing members, ultimately resulting in the split of the party (IOR, L/P&J/5/141). Huq termed the defection group as agents of Congress. During the elections campaign, League was criticizing Krishak Praja Party as the indirect supporters of Congress and now Huq himself was accusing a section of his party with the same allegation. This reduced his popularity amongst the masses. Muslim League was the beneficiary as its popularity graph kept rising in the province at a rapid pace. Prominent Bengali leaders including Akram Khan, Tamizuddin Khan and Abdur Rahman joined Muslim League. Under the circumstances, Huq considered the option of rejoining the League as the best bet to remain in power. Ispahani cautioned Jinnah that Huq was only showing his "lip-loyalty to the League". Yet Jinnah was interested in capitalizing on the opportunity provided by Huq's half-hearted, if not involuntary entry into the League (Hayat, 2014: 309). Jinnah, however, was looking for the long term gains as in a letter to Ispahani he wrote, "The aims are not achieved immediately when they are laid down" and "with patience and tact, things are bound to develop and improve more in accordance with our ideals and aims" (Ispahani, 1966: 143).

Huq attended the Lucknow session of the League held on October 15-17, 1937 and pledged his support for Jinnah and the League at Centre. In response Jinnah committed to support his provincial government in Bengal. It is important to note that during the Lucknow session some leaguers wanted to move a resolution to adopt Urdu as the official language of the Party. However, the idea was opposed by Huq and in order to satisfy him Jinnah asked his colleagues not to move the proposed resolution (Pirzada, Vol. II, 2007: 252-53). In his speech delivered at the occasion, Huq not only criticized the policies of the Congress government in different provinces but also threatened them that, "if the Muslim minorities were ill-treated in the other provinces the Bengal Ministry would retaliate" (Star of India, 1937:

October 18). At Lucknow session, Jinnah decided to revamp the party both at central and provincial levels. On October 26, 1937 he assigned the task of establishing Bengal chapter of the party to a twenty members organizing committee. Huq was elected as its President, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardhy as its Secretary and Ispahani as Treasurer (Afzal, 2013: 426). However, later Jinnah ignored Huq and mainly remained in contact with Suhrawardhy, Ispahani and Khawaja Nazimuddin, who were briefing him about the developments related to the reorganization of the League in the province. Though, by joining Muslim League, Huq extended his stay in office, but he lost his independence (Talbot, 1988: 63-64) and increasingly became the prisoner of the League's dominance.

League's popularity in Bengal kept increasing as both leaders and workers, including some who were previously with Krishak Praja Party, were joining the party in a big number (IOR, L/P&J/5/146). League won all the by-elections on Muslim seats for the Bengal Legislative Assembly. It also won eighteen out of twenty-two Muslim seats in the elections of the Calcutta municipal corporation. Its performance in the elections of the union boards was also remarkable. In April 1939, Jinnah in a letter to Ispahani suggested that "the time has come when there should be only one party" for the Muslims and that should be "Muslim League" (Zaidi, 1976: 129). In July 1939, the Working Committee of the Muslim League passed a resolution which declared that "no individual province should negotiate or come to any settlement with the Congress with regard to the Hindu-Muslim question in its area" (Mitra, 1939, Vol. II, 1990: 345). Three months later they passed another resolution in which they gave the president of the party power "to advise, guide and issue instructions to Muslim League Parties in various Provincial Legislatures in the event of some sudden emergency arising". The provincial Leagues were bound to carry out such instructions given by the President. In February 1940, another resolution, declaring that "no member of the Working Committee should give public expression to his views against the decision of the Committee or of the President", was passed (Star of India, 1940: February 5).

In spite of the fact that League was strengthening its hold on Bengal politics, Huq remained busy in pleasing Jinnah to remain in power. He hosted the special session of the party at Calcutta in early May 1938, which was attended by Jinnah. In his speech delivered at the occasion, Huq declared, "Let us prepare to fight... with our backs to the wall. If Panipat and Thaneshwar must repeat themselves, let the Muslims prepare to give as glorious an account of them as did their forbearers" (Mitra, 1938, Vol. I, 1990: 377-87). Huq also visited different parts of India and pleaded case of the League. His efforts helped boosting the moral of the party workers. During his public meetings both in and outside Bengal, people used to chant

slogans, “Fazlul Huq Zindabad, Quaid-i-Azam Zindabad, Muslim League Zindabad”. When Huq travelled to Karachi to attend 1938 annual session of the League, Jinnah had a one to one private meeting with him. On Jinnah’s demand, Huq published a detailed report of “Muslim Sufferings under Congress Rule” in which he listed in grim details of more than hundred events of violence, loot and murder against the Muslims in Bihar, the United Provinces, and the Central Provinces. He highlighted that the Hindus attacked Muslims during their prayers and sacrifice of animals on the occasion of Eid and other festivals. He added that the police not only remained silent spectators but at times had even sided with the Hindu rioters (Aziz, 1976: 403). Huq also gave his full support to Jinnah’s call to rejoice the resignation of the Congress ministries by celebrating Day of Deliverance on December 22, 1939.

Though apparently Huq was working as a close ally of Jinnah, from the inside of his heart he knew that the popularity of the League in Bengal would mean his political death. He openly opposed Jinnah for the first time when he along with Hayat favored to give unconditional support to the British during the Second World War. As early as in September 1939, there were speculations of a possible split in the Working Committee of the League on the lines of Muslim majority and minority provinces (Civil & Military Gazette, 1939: September 22). For the time being a consensus was reaching, however, the issue kept on surfacing again and again during the next year or so. In December 1939 Huq presented a motion in the Bengal Legislative Assembly in which he assured the British Government his “full co-operation in the successful prosecution of the war” (IOR, L/P&J/5/145). However, he had to face strong opposition from Siddiqui and Ispahani and thus he had to declare in the house that he would abide by the decision of the party and its president (Zaidi, 1976: 136). Commenting on Jinnah and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s negotiations on war with Linlithgow in February 1940, Huq said, “Whatever may be the result of these talks in high quarters, I stick to my resolve to try and bring about a peaceful solution of the problem that concerns Bengal... and object which must be dearer to the heart of every Bengalee” (Star of India, 1940: February 6). Once again, working against the instructions of Jinnah, Huq called for a conference of Muslim and Hindu leaders of Bengal on February 24, 1940 in which he requested the delegates “to find out a lasting solution of all differences” (Star of India, 1940: February 27).

When Jinnah decided to work for an alternative solution for the future of Indian Muslims, he knew the significance of having representatives from the Muslim majority provinces on board. He included both Huq and Hayat in the Working Committee’s High Command which met several times after March 1939 to consider various schemes for Indian’s political future. Jinnah’s

selection of Lahore as venue and Huq as the mover of the Lahore Resolution was primarily a “tactical move” (Sen, 1976: 125). He wanted to show the world that both Punjab and Bengal were with him. Many believe that Huq probably accepted the offer because he had the idea of two separate autonomous independent states in his mind and thought that it would help him achieve his aim of the liberation of Bengal. However, the facts suggested that at the last moment Huq wanted to avoid attending Lahore session on the plea that due to his “indisposition” he was not ready to take “such a long journey” (AFM, F. 213/37). But Liaquat, on behalf of Jinnah, ordered, “Presence necessary, do come please” (AFM, F. 213/38). In order to protect his government in Bengal, he not only unwillingly attended the session, but also actively participated in it and even presented the resolution. While presenting the resolution, Huq claimed that the position of Muslims was “not very safe” all over India and thus they had to stand on their own feet and cannot rely on anybody” (Philips, 1962: 353).

Even after the passage of Lahore Resolution, Huq’s suspicious activities continued. Without taking Jinnah in confidence, he along with Hayat, continued to support British in their war efforts. Two of them met Congress President, Abul Kalam Azad, on June 13, 1940 and discussed the issue of Hindu-Muslim settlement. A couple of days later, the Working Committee of the League held its meeting at Bombay and in order to avoid “any misunderstanding or misconstruction in future” imposed a ban on its members to meet Congress leadership without the permission of the president. The committee also prohibited its members from participation in the War Committees (AFM, F. 129/28). Huq strongly opposed the resolution. He said that his closeness with the War Committees would help Muslims to win over the British by showing them their loyalty (IOR, L/P&J/5/146). He believed that because of Jinnah’s decision all the key positions including Civil Guards etc. in Bengal set up during the war would be taken over by the Hindus (QAP, F.204/81-82). By that time, many Bengali League leaders were annoyed by the activities of Huq and his counterpart in Punjab and were not happy with Jinnah for not taking action against them. Ispahani termed them as Jinnah’s “two spoilt children” and warned that if their activities would not be halted, they would become “dictators of the Muslims” (Zaidi, 1976: 142-43). Jinnah agreed with the idea that “the League must be purified at all cost” (Zaidi, 1976: 146), yet he was looking for the proper time to take such a step.

Gulf between the two leaders kept on increasing. In November 1940, Huq asked for Jinnah’s permission to include Sarat Bose group of Congress in his collation ministry but Jinnah vetoed the idea (IOR, L/P&J/5/147). During the Census of 1941, Huq in a letter to Jinnah showed his concern about Hindu Mahasabha’s violent means to reduce Muslim majority in Bengal into a

minority and asked him “to launch an All India agitation” (QAP, F. 281/21-3). Jinnah politely rejected Huq’s proposal by replying, “You as the Premier of Bengal are in a strong position to fight the matter out with the Government of India firmly and determinately” (QAP, F. 281/27). In March 1941, Huq wanted Muslim League in Bengal not to celebrate Pakistan celebrations in the province, as to him it might cause communal violence. Jinnah, however, asked the party-men to carry on with the celebrations (IOR, L/P&J/5/147). Under the circumstances, Huq refused to attend the Madras session of the League held in April 1941, and criticized the leadership of the party for not assigning “much value to Bengal Muslims” (QAP, F. 281/27-A). Huq also, without consulting Jinnah, advised the Viceroy to form “national governments” both at center and in the provinces. There was a strong reaction from the League leaders, some of whom even suggested throwing him out of the Working Committee of the party. However, some Bengali members termed the idea as “fatal and disastrous” as it would give Huq an opportunity “to divide the Muslims of Bengal” (QAP, F.392/45-48). They suggested Jinnah that such an action would be a “tactical mistake” and that he should “wait for another opportunity” (Zaidi, 1976: 171-73). Jinnah agreed with the “powerful arguments” of these leaders and once again deferred the proposal of Huq’s expulsion from the League’s Working Committee” (QAP, F.392/49). This was in spite of the fact that he had solid reports that Huq had lost popularity in Bengal. He was informed in June that “Huq’s Praja Party exists only on paper with no office, no organization, no branch, no party fund and no paper” (QAP, F.204/173-78).

The viceroy announced the formation of Defence Council on July 21, 1941. Huq along with the premiers of Punjab and Asam decided to become part of it. Jinnah intended to take disciplinary action against them if they would not immediately resign from the Council. Hayat and Muhammad Saadullah surrendered to Jinnah’s directives (IOR, L/P&J/5/148) but Huq refused. However, eventually he had to resign mainly because he thought that after the resignation of the other two he could not achieve much from the Committee. In a letter to Liaquat, he also resigned from the Working Committee and the Council of the League as “a mark of protest against the arbitrary use of powers vested in its President”. He accused that Jinnah was a “political dictator” and blamed that “the principles of democracy and autocracy” in the party were “being subordinated to the arbitrary wishes of a single individual who seeks to rule as an omnipotent authority even over the destiny”. He also criticized the Working Committee for continuously ignoring the interests of the Muslim majority provinces. He claimed that all the Bengali Muslims with the exception of “few non-Bengalis residents in Calcutta and a few non-Bengali workers in the mills” were with him and he would “never allow the interests of 33 million of the Muslims of Bengal to be

put under the domination of any outside authority” (QAP, F. 880/13-14). Working Committee of the League in its meeting on October 27, 1941 condemned Huq for his letter and asked him to take back his charges against Jinnah. Huq withdrew his allegations and apologies before the committee (AFM, F. 133/93-5). He stated that he was sorry if he had hurt the feelings of Jinnah and hoped that the dispute would be settled (QAP, F. 880/27). The Working Committee accepted the apology by seven votes to six and one vote abstained.

Apparently the issue was resolved, but Huq started looking for other collation partners, with the help of whom he could keep his government intact without the help of the League. On November 27, 1941, leaders of various parties including Sarat Chandra Bose, Shamsuddin Ahmed, Hem Chandra Naskar, Shyamaprasad Mukherji etc. met at the residence of J.C. Gupta and formed Progressive Coalition Party with Huq as its leader and Bose as his deputy. When League leaders questioned this act of Huq, he first declined to accept that he had made a new party. Yet, when the League members of the cabinet resigned on December 1, Huq formed his new ministry with the help of Krishak Praja Party (Shamsuddin Group), Sarat Bose’s Forward Block of Congress, Hindu Mahasabha and Independent Scheduled Caste members (IOR, L/P&J/5/148). Huq put the entire blame of break-up on the intra-provincial conflicts of the League (QAP, F.107/29). The Muslim League supporters in Bengal, on the other hand, turned against Huq and they demonstrated against him in the streets of Calcutta. Muslim students held strikes. Even Suhrawardy openly turned against him. Under his guidance, the working committee of the Bengal Presidency Muslim League passed a resolution in which they virtually passed a vote of no confidence against Huq and put their full weight behind Jinnah (IOR, L/P&J/5/148). Governor John Arthur Herbert floated the idea of a “War Cabinet” in Bengal by involving all parties including Muslim League, with Huq as premier, but Jinnah vetoed the idea (QAP, F. 392/76-8).

Working Committee of the League under Jinnah’ guidance expelled Huq from the League and asked the Muslims of Bengal to unite under the leadership of Nazimuddin and try to overthrow Huq’s Ministry (AFM, F. 136/96). Jinnah put the charges of “gross misconduct” and “treachery” on Huq (Zaidi, 1976: 225) and declared him ineligible for its membership at any level. Central Working Committee, Bengal Presidency Muslim League, and the All-India Muslim League’s annual session confirmed his expulsion (Afzal, 2013: 428). Jinnah believed that Bose and Mukherji had “obtained documentary evidence about some shady transaction” of Huq and they had “blackmailed him to such an extent that the poor man had been forced to do many things, recently, against his convictions and his better judgment” (MSS, EUR, F.125/56). In a speech delivered at Nagpur, while criticizing the

pro-British policy of Huq, he ironically said that he wanted to “make a Christmas gift of Mr. Haq to Lord Linlithgow”. He added that he was “very glad” and “happy” that “Muslim India” managed to get rid of a person who was “guilty of the grossest treachery and betrayal of the Muslims” (Ahmad, 1996: 338-53). All India Muslim League in its Allahbad session held in April 1942 passed a resolution in which it showed “relief and gratitude” over Jinnah’s decision to expel Huq. The resolution declared that Huq had “completely forfeited the confidence of Musalmans by his repeated betrayal of their cause” (AFM, F. 255/84-9). There were hardly few Muslims in the new ministry of Bengal and with the passage of time the number even kept decreasing. This badly hurt the sentiments of the Muslim population of the province. Induction of Mahasabha further took the support of Bengali Muslims away from Huq. Many of them had started calling him as “Black sheep of Barisal” (Wopert, 1989: 195). Huq filed a civil suit against Jinnah’s decision of expelling him from the League (QAP, F.107/8-15).⁴

By that time, Jinnah had emerged as Quaid-i-Azam and the League had consolidated its position in Bengal. Like other Muslim majority provinces, the ideal of all-India Muslim solidarity and the demand for Pakistan had gained currency in the Muslim popular mind of Bengal. In early 1942, Suhrawardhy and Nazimuddin toured different parts of the province in order to launch propaganda against Huq’s ministry. They also propagated Huq as a “traitor of Islam” and asked the League workers to launch black flag demonstrations against the Chief Minister wherever he went (IOR, L/P&J/5/149). A campaign to register League members was launched in the province in which a large number of masses got themselves enrolled with the party. Jinnah was given royal reception when he arrived at Serajgang to preside over the provincial conference of the Bengal Presidency Muslim League held on February 14-15, 1942. In his speech delivered on the occasion, he declared that “Muslim Bengal cannot separate itself from the rest of India, and that it is Bengal and Punjab which would be most benefited by the establishment of Pakistan as embodied in Lahore Resolution” (Ahmad, 1968: 338-58). After the conference Jinnah toured the province for ten days and addressed huge public meetings at different places. League’s popularity was reflected in the by-elections at Natore and Baburghat where it defeated Huq’s sponsored candidates by a huge margin of votes (QAP, F. 307/151). Hindu Mahasabha organized meetings and rallies in the province to celebrate anti-Pakistan Day on May 10, 1942. Muslim League newspapers blamed Huq for encouraging Mahasabha. This further raised the popularity of the League and created trouble for Huq’s government.

⁴ The case stayed in the court till July 23, 1947, when it was eventually dismissed.

Huq started realizing that he had committed a blunder by annoying Jinnah. First in June 1942 he indirectly showed his frustration by writing letters to different prominent Bengali Muslims in which he claimed that Jinnah's followers were "busy organizing the League in order to crush" his popularity. He added that his ouster from the party was not "in the interest of the Muslims of Bengal" (QAP, F. 281/35-44). In July he approached Ispahani through Prince Dillan, the younger brother of Nawab of Rampur, and wanted to meet and convince Jinnah that Muslim League should support him "otherwise the Hindus would join hands and back the Nawab of Dacca and finish" the League's influence in the province. However, Jinnah's comrades gave no importance to this proposal and thought that if Huq was "brought to his knees by the weight of Muslim public opinion in seven short months, how long will Dacca alone stand? (QAP, F. 307/185) Jinnah himself questioned that how could he "discuss anything with Huq as long as he was associated with a party which was "inimical to the Muslim League"? (QAP, F. 307/190)

When chances of him losing majority in the house emerged, Huq decided to directly approach Jinnah. In a letter written on November 13, 1942, he told Jinnah that he wanted to meet him in order to show his "attachment" to him and "the Muslim League". He tried to assure Jinnah that he was willing to "abide by the discipline of the party and the instructions of the President of the Muslim League" (Pirzada, 1987: 85). He was even ready to exterminate his party and was prepared to resign as the Premier of Bengal if Jinnah was willing to take him back in the League. He appealed, "I hope you will render the barest possible justice by taking me back into the League as soon as your conditions are satisfied" (Pirzada, 1987: 86). He was even "prepared to retire from Bengal politics if a dignified way out, such as a seat on the Viceroy's Executive Council, was offered to him" (Samad, 1995: 70). Jinnah, however, was no more interested in trusting Huq. He replied that Huq had also "agreed to carry out these conditions within a fortnight" a year earlier (Pirzada, 1987: 87) but then he backed out from his promise. He told Ispahani that he was not ready to see Huq "as leader of the Muslim League in the Legislature" (Zaidi: 1976: 328). Under the circumstances Huq after a meeting with Herbert, tendered his resignation on March 29, 1943. In April, Muslim League formed government in Bengal with Nazimuddin as its parliamentary leader. This further accelerated the process of the influx of Huq's supporters in Muslim League. On the other hand Huq was not ready to miss any opportunity to discredit Nazimuddin's government. When famine broke out in Bengal, Huq influenced some twenty thousand students to march towards Nazimuddin's house and demand for food (IOR, L/P&J/5/151).

Huq realized that his Krishak Praja Party was no match for Jinnah's popularity in the elections of 1945-46 as many members of the party joined Muslim League after the Simla Conference. He himself made quite a few attempts to re-enter the folds of Muslim League. A few months before the general election, he approached Ispahani and asked him for his help to bridge the gulf between him and Jinnah (Zaidi, 2005: 278). He assured Suhrawardy that he would not take part in any "party elections" if he would be taken back in "Muslim League without losing dignity and prestige" (QAP, F.418/71-72). Some provincial Muslim League leaders were willing to take him back as to them they could use Huq's personal influence in some constituencies during the election campaign but Jinnah was not ready to compromise (Zaidi, 2005: 305). This compelled Huq to issue the following statement to the press, "all my attempts to clear up misunderstandings between me and the League have hitherto failed because of the haughty and arrogant attitude of the present leaders of the League... They think that I am vanquished enemy. I wish to tell them I am neither an enemy nor have I been vanquished. The question of imposing terms on me does not, therefore, arise" (Star of India, 1945: May 18). Huq was disheartened and was ready to retire from politics if the government agreed to send him in "some capacity to Saudi Arabia" (MSS, EUR, 48/4).

When Huq failed to rejoin Muslim League, he became Chairman of Congress-sponsored Bengal Muslim Parliamentary Board, a joint election body of various anti-League Muslim groups such as the Krishak Praja Party, Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind, the nationalist Muslims etc. However, "serious cracks" (IOR, L/P&J/5/153) appeared in the Board before the elections. Some of its important leaders including Shamsuddin Ahmed joined Muslim League while Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind decided to contest the elections from their own platform. Huq and his followers had to participate in the elections under the banner of Krishak Praja Party. On the other hand Muslim League had the support of all the segments of the Bengali Muslim society. *Pirs* played an important role in popularizing League's message in Bengal and *Urs* were used to gain support for the party. Students also became the ambassadors of Muslim League. According to rough estimate around seven and a half thousand students ran the campaign of the party in Bengal. Jinnah, in spite of his bad health, himself visited Calcutta and addressed a mammoth meeting on February 24. He propagated the twin message that his party stood for the have-nots and not the elite, and that it was contesting the election not to form government but to create Pakistan. This further created more problems for Huq as he, being the mover of the Pakistan Resolution, was contesting the elections against Muslim League which was fighting for the creation of Pakistan. In his election speeches he used to echo his faith in

Pakistan and claimed himself as its originator (Star of India, 1946: February 25).

Results of the elections showed complete dominance of the League on the Muslim constituencies. The party won all the six Muslim seats for the Central Assembly while the deposits of their opponents were forfeited. League also won 115 seats in the Provincial Assembly, by getting ninety-five percent of the urban Muslim vote and eighty-four percent of the rural vote. Jinnah claimed “that the results show 2013000 votes polled for Pakistan and only 232134... against” (IOR, L/P&J/5/153). Prominent opponents of the League such as Syed Nausher Ali and Nawab Habibullah of Dacca were badly defeated. Krishak Praja Party won only four seats. Yet, Huq proved his worth as he alone was able to withstand the League’s victory tide. He won the elections from two constituencies, including one from Dacca and that too against Nazimuddin. Still Huq continued his efforts to rejoin Muslim League. When Jinnah made a general appeal for the unity among Muslims, Huq considered it a good opportunity for him to rejoin Muslim League. He alongside his three parliamentary Muslim colleagues from Krishak Praja Party entered the folds of the League on August 31, 1946. He said that he felt it his “bounden duty to join the Muslim League” in “very difficult time for Muslims of India”. He further added, he simply as “A Leaguer” would sacrifice his “life” and all that he had “in the service of the hundred million Muslims of India” (Dawn, 1946: September 4). Different Muslims from Bengal requested Jinnah to forget the “bygone days” (QAP, F. 884/4) and lift ban upon Huq for joining the party in order to “save Muslim Bengal” (QAP, F. 559/558). Responding to their request, Jinnah issued a statement in which he lifted the ban. He hoped that Huq would “sincerely, earnestly and selflessly serve the Muslim League, the national authoritative, representative organization of the Muslims of India” and its “cause, the achievement of Pakistan” (Ahmad, 2001: 266-67).

Yet the personal relationship between Jinnah and Huq did not improve. One could hardly find any direct correspondence between the two in the coming days. On many of the matters of importance their opinions differed. Though Jinnah agreed to Suhrawardhy’s proposal of United independent Bengal, Huq remained silent on the issue. Nazimuddin, in order to defeat Abul Hashim in the elections for the office of President of Bengal Presidency Muslim League, requested Huq for his support and that give an opportunity to reemerge as one of the forefront leaders of the League in Bengal (IOR, GFR, L/P&J/5/154). Suhrawardhy in a letter to Jinnah complained that Huq was again “doing everything in his power to undermine the solidarity of the Muslims”. He inquired if Huq was “entitled to speak against the Muslim League Ministry? Can disciplinary action be taken against him and if so, which is the body that can do so?” (QAP, F.458/54-56) When Akram

Khan resigned as the President of Bengal League, Huq decided to contest for the position against Suhrawardhy. In order to stop Huq becoming President, Ispahani asked Suhrawardhy “to call off the election and to persuade” Akram Khan “to withdraw his resignation” (QAP, F. 309/319-320). When Huq failed to achieve his ambition to become the president, he had a meeting with Gandhi and then he delivered a speech in which he criticized Muslim League Ministry in Bengal and declared that “unless there was a change, Muslims could not expect justice” (QAP, F. 309/321). In March, he along with other members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly issued a statement declaring that Suhrawardhy’s government had “done positive harm to the Muslim cause” and thus it should be removed and “the best and the ablest men in the party should be called upon immediately to shoulder the heavier responsibilities of the Province” (QAP, F. 810/214-216).

Huq wrote a letter to Jinnah on July 17, 1947 in which he told him that he wanted to meet him ever since he was allowed to reenter the League but “something or the other” stood in his way. However, he thought that now the circumstances had reached the stage where his meeting with Jinnah had become inevitable. He wanted to caution Jinnah that though the Muslims of South Asia had won a fight against the “common enemy” but a new fight was expected to be started amongst the Muslims themselves over the “shares in the booty” (QAP, F.281/47-48). Jinnah did not give him any appointment. He perhaps was not ready to trust Huq anymore as he had not forgiven him for all he did over the period of time. Even in the happiest of his times, Jinnah was not ready to show a soft corner for Huq. When he was entering the Sindh Assembly Hall on August 11, 1947 to deliver his maiden presidential address, Huq bowed low respectfully and paid *farshi salam* to him, but Jinnah completely ignored him and passed by without showing any emotions (Rabbani, 1996: 86). After the creation of Pakistan many Leaguers from Bengal were thinking that Huq was interested in winning over the members of the provincial Legislative Assembly and with their help was trying to become Chief Minister. They reported to Jinnah that Huq and his supporter were “openly pleading the cause of sovereign Bengal and preaching provincialism” (NAP, F. 216 (II)-GG/176-9). They even invited Jinnah to visit “East Pakistan... to crush the growing menace of provincialism and Fazlul Huq’s designs on Pakistan’s integrity” (QAP, F. 204/353-62).

To conclude, both Jinnah and Huq had completely opposite approaches towards politics and thus it will not be wrong to state that the two leaders were poles apart. The only time when they made an alliance was when Jinnah wanted to show to the world that Muslim majority provinces were with him and Huq knew that the only way for him to remain in office was by getting the support of Muslim League. The relationship between the two of them was artificial and based on mistrust. Jinnah was always

interested in solving the problems of the Muslims of South Asia at large and for the same reason he wanted to emerge as a leader at the central stage while Huq's main focus was always his own province, Bengal. Huq wanted to dominate the politics of the province and was not ready to share the power with others. Jinnah, on the other hand, was also not willing to take dictation from anyone and thus was not ready to concede Bengal completely to Huq. So when Jinnah started interfering in Bengal politics especially through the urban businessmen of Calcutta, conflicts between the two activated. Huq started perceiving Jinnah as a threat while Jinnah always considered Huq as a rebel.

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