

Lest We Forget: AK Fazlul Huq Sher-e-Bangla

AZIZUL JALIL

"The gods of Karachi...think that East Bengal contains only milch cows and that the Royal Bengal tiger is dead. Sher-e-Bangla they think is no more. The time is coming when Sher-e-Bangla will roar again,"

"I am the living history of Bengal and East Pakistan of the last sixty years. I am the last survivor of that band of unselfish and courageous Muslims who fought fearlessly against terrific odds..."

AK Fazlul Huq (1873-1962)

In 1939, when he was the Premier of undivided Bengal, we were living quite close to his house. As a young boy, walking by his house I used to notice a small crowd always in front of his spacious house, including some Kabuliwallas. Security was not so tight those days and protocol was low-key. In 1946, I saw him in the Bengal assembly chambers, when my father took me there to watch the proceedings. As a student of class 10, my friends and I went to his house in Park Circus in Calcutta in 1947 to raise funds for a Milad at the school. He had the reputation of giving away to students, widows and shrines money. He was 'the benevolent insolvent.' We found him examining some legal briefs, the great lawyer that he was. He listened to us about the purpose of our visit, opened a rickety old drawer in his desk. With an affectionate grandfatherly smile, out came a ten-taka note, a lot of money those days. In 1951, as University students we went to his house on K.M.Das Lane in Tikatuli for selling tickets to a drama we were staging from the Dhaka University Sanskriti Samsad. Again, it was a rewarding visit.

During Hamidul Huq Choudhury's PRODA (Public Representative Office's Disqualification Act) trials in the Dhaka High Court, as a university student I went to attend the proceedings. I believe it was 1950 and the case related to irregularities in the disposal of the Allenbury Drum Factory, located in the road passing by the old Tejgaon airport. Fazlul Huq saheb was defending Choudhury in front of two former-ICS judges, Justices Shahabuddin and Ellis, constituting a special tribunal. He asked several searching questions to Aziz Ahmad, then the Chief Secretary of East Pakistan. During questioning, Aziz Ahmad, also an ex-ICS officer had to admit that he was keeping secret files on the activities of the ministers of the East Pakistan government (all belonging



to the then party in power the Muslim League.) He was sending reports to the central government without the knowledge of Nurul Amin, the chief minister of East Pakistan. It was an extraordinary practice, which embarrassed everyone present in the courtroom, including the judges, but the chief secretary was unabashed!

The next time I saw Fazlul Huq was in 1953. It was at a lunch in celebration of the wedding of an uncle of mine, Mirza Gholam Hafiz at the house of Justice Ameeruddin Ahmad. Sher-e-Bangla arrived a bit late, and took his seat on the farash under a shamiana, like all of us. He was in a great mood, joking around with the young and the old. People were of course highly respectful to the great man. I saw Huq saheb, known for his great appetite, devour with relish whole a roast chicken. At that time, he was eighty years of age. In 1954, I saw him in the Palton Maidan on a high rostrum with Bhashani and