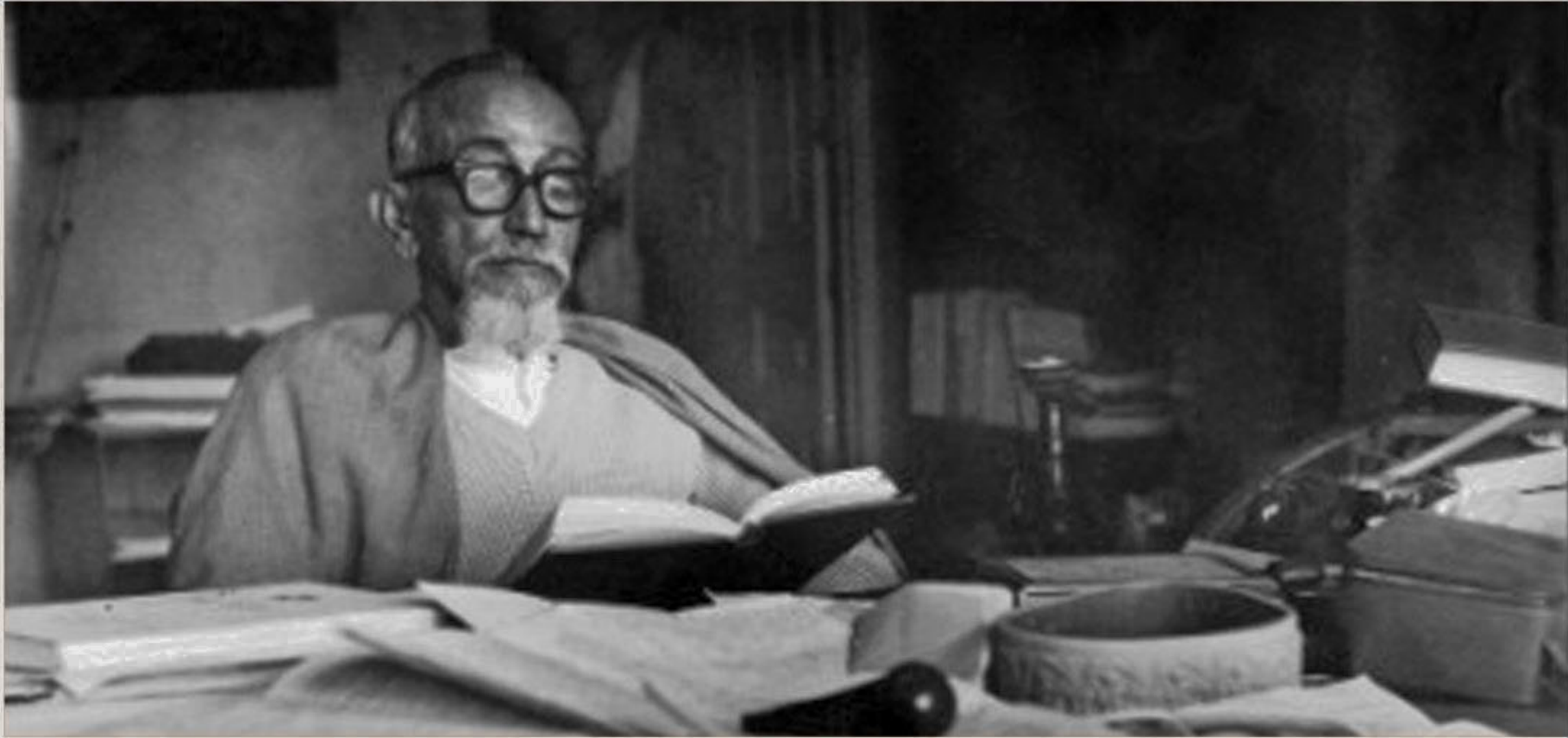


2014 is the birth centenary of renowned intellectual National Professor Abdur Razzaq. We are publishing this article to commemorate the occasion

# Prof. Abdur Razzaq on India's partition and independence

SALIMULLAH KHAN

PROF. Abdur Razzaq (1914-1999) played an important, even leading, role in giving a new orientation to intellectual life in Dhaka since 1950s. In 1931 he was admitted to the undergraduate classes of Dhaka University and in 1936 his alma mater accorded him the position of assistant lecturer. In 1945, after some ten years in Dhaka, he went on to London in pursuit of a post-graduate degree. A little over six years in the University of London did not prove enough for him to attain his goals. Abdur Razzaq returned home without a degree, although he did complete a Ph.D. dissertation under the noted pundit H.J. Laski. The topic of his thesis was 'Political Parties in India,' and it was date-marked May, 1950 for submission. Abdur Razzaq, in the event, did not pursue the matter further. Although Abdur Razzaq's thesis has not been published in full, I have been one of the few persons privileged to read it. A photocopy of previous photocopies that I now have access to is, to tell the truth, partly unreadable but the work itself is undeniably important and, despite ravages of time, deserves publication. Soon after his return from England, Abdur Razzaq was lured by the call of questions of unequal development and disparity in East Bengal and of course military rule in Pakistan. They perhaps explain, but not fully, throwing cold water on burning questions of 1947. Abdur Razzaq's thesis has two principal strands, namely that the greater credit for partition in 1947 goes to Indian National Congress, the premier political party in place, and that it was so because of the fact that the educated middle class had always been ruling the roost in Congress politics itself. Abdur Razzaq elucidates why in 1947, besides independence, partition of India also became a fait accompli, a God's act in a manner of speaking. Abdur Razzaq's first argument, a wide belief otherwise notwithstanding, is that India was bifurcated in 1947 at the instance primarily of the Indian National Congress. "The Congress was working hard," in our author's indelible idiom, "for the division of India, notwithstanding the numerous protestations to the contrary." "In the following pages," writes Abdur Razzaq, "an attempt has been made to explain the division of India by reference to the 'climate of thought' of the educated



Indian whose task it was to initiate the political movements in India." "The 'climate of thought' of the educated Indian," Razzaq added, "has been sought not so much in the writings in the newspaper press as in the permanent contribution of the two vernacular literatures, Bengali and Urdu, of India." "In the permanent contributions to these literatures, is enshrined the results of the 'searchings of heart' begun in the early years of the Nineteenth Century." The "uncompromising rivalry between the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League, resulting in the division of India," according to Abdur Razzaq, however, it was only a "consequence in the political field" of what has frequently been known as 'national renaissance' (or nationalism) in the field of ideology. "The Congress doubtless had a political objective," as an official historian of the Indian National Congress puts it, "but it was also the organ and exponent of national renaissance." Abdur Razzaq aptly cites a rather long extract from the historian Sitaramaya's work: "All these movements (referring to schools of Hindu religious thought) were really so many threads in the strand of Indian Nationalism and the Nation's duty was to evolve a synthesis so as to be able to dispel prejudice and superstition, to renovate and purify the old faith, the

Vedantic idealism and reconcile it with the Nationalism of the new age. The Indian National Congress was to fulfil this great Mission." Here comes the next strand, the question of a rising middle class or bourgeoisie if you will, in the argument. "The political movements in India led by the Congress, or by other political organisations, derived their character and characteristics from the fact that such movements were entirely led by the educated middle class," writes Abdur Razzaq. "Others participated, at least in the later stages," he admits, "but the leadership was exclusive." The educated middle class imprinted its principal characteristics on the character of the political movements, as Abdur Razzaq insists, even if culmination of the political processes was not a function of political movements alone. Abdur Razzaq, quite understandably, focuses on the last quarter century of colonial rule, (i.e. after the passing of the Government of India Act, 1919) when political power had to be devolved per force in Indian hands, albeit stage by stage. In the early days of political agitation, power being exercised by a foreign bureaucracy, politics had to be but tinged with colours of Indian nationalism, whereas in the last days of British India power was being handed out to Indian hands piece

by piece. Both stages left their indelible marks on the political field. It is in this period that contestation became confrontation. Political independence of India, insists Abdur Razzaq, was by no means the sole product of the political movement in the country. "If the end of the political process was in the independence of India, that end was being hastened, to a great extent, by the working of the machinery of government, as well as by the forces the economic evolution was generating." There was a degree of interdependence between the colonial government and the educated middle class. "The strength of the political movements," Abdur Razzaq observes, "was in the fact that the educated middle class which led them was also the principal class through which the government carried on its day to day existence. There was no question of strangling that class without strangling the government itself." The growth of legislatures in late colonial India thus closely reflected the composition of the machinery of the government. Abdur Razzaq locates two threads, other than political movements, in India's march toward independence. "The consummation of the political process resulted first from the transformation of the apparatus, civil and military, in composition as well as in character." A second thread is to be found nowhere

other than in the dwindling interest of British financiers in India. He cites data showing an actual shrinkage of export of capital from Britain between 1913 and 1927. More notably, India's share as a percent of British investment in the Empire was also dwindling in the 1920s. During the pre-war period America was the principal area of investment claiming fifty three percent. India was getting nine percent. India's share was not large. "But between 1924 and 1927 a revolutionary change had taken place. In the second period India was sharing with Trinidad, Jamaica and the Irish Free State the total of one fourth of one percent. The flow of capital from England to India, never very large, had practically dried up." "When capital used to flow to India," moreover, "it did not seek industrial investment to any large extent. It came in the form of government loans." But later, when the colonial government was beginning to float loans in the local market, it did so without having recourse to external borrowing. To cite only one instance, Sir Basil Blackett, finance member of the Government of India at the time, makes a remarkable declaration in 1926. The Government, he declares, would require to raise a loan of £220 million, "but there was no likelihood of our having to resort to external borrowing during 1926-27, this being the third year in succession in which external loans will have been avoided. More than the whole of new capital programme amounting to over £350 million will be financed without recourse to foreign borrowing." "Sir Basil Blackett was declaring that," remarks Abdur Razzaq, "new masters had arrived on the Indian scene." Political structures reflecting the importance they had attained by then had not yet surfaced. Political parties into which they could have federated, according to Abdur Razzaq, were yet of the future. Paths that political parties in independent India and Pakistan would follow in the near future were something altogether novel. Abdur Razzaq's arguments, by now also taken up by many others, have grown neither familiar nor quaint. Their relevance can be overestimated only at our peril. We, however, are running out of space here. The sustainability or otherwise of his arguments must await another occasion, especially the eventual publication of whatever can be rescued from the available material in our midst.

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## Chinese Foreign Minister's visit to Dhaka

### BOTTOM LINE



BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

China has assisted Bangladesh, among others, in infrastructure, power, industrial plants and telecommunications. Over the past few years, China has replaced India as Bangladesh's biggest import destination.

shows that China is appreciative of political parties which contributed to the strengthening of bilateral relations. On December 28, the foreign ministers of Bangladesh and China held wide ranging discussions which reportedly covered all bilateral issues of cooperation, including sectors such as agriculture, industrial, military and infrastructure. The meeting also discussed about celebration of their 40-year diplomatic ties in 2015. (China recognised Bangladesh on August 31, 1975 and opened its mission in October) China's past "ping-pong diplomacy" has been replaced by "cheque-book diplomacy." China is interested in investing in South Asia in sectors which would generate good returns, and it is reported that in the next five years China is ready to provide \$30 billion investment and \$20 billion loans to South Asia. In Bangladesh, China reportedly agreed to

invest about \$4 billion on six projects which include among others, a tunnel with multiple lanes under the Karnaphuli river, a second railway bridge on the Karnaphuli river at Kalurghat, construction of double-gauge railway from Chittagong to Cox's Bazar via Ramu and from Ramu to Gundhum. It is reported that the foreign minister of China welcomed Bangladesh's proposal of creating a specialised zone for investment of Chinese companies in Bangladesh. China has shown keen interest to build a deep-sea port at Sonadia. The deep-sea port is hugely important for Bangladesh because it can provide a gateway to the Bay of Bengal for the South Asian hinterlands comprising Bhutan, Nepal and India's seven northeastern states with a population of more than 70 million. This means Bangladesh can be a "hub" of regional economy and will be able to play a vital role as an inter-regional connecting-point between South Asia and South East Asia. China and Bangladesh are interested in building an economic corridor through land territory connecting Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM). The route, which is about 2,800 km long, is a part of the historic Silk Route and will cost about \$22 billion. The second meeting of officials of Joint Study Group of all four countries was held in Cox's Bazar on December 17-18, and it is reported that it will submit a combined report within six month to the governments of the four countries. The next

meeting is expected to be held in India. Once all the countries have agreed to build the route a multi-billion dollar fund might be established with the assistance of multilateral development partners and the private sector, apart from the funds of the governments. Bangladesh's relations with China have taken a multi-faceted direction. China has assisted Bangladesh, among others, in infrastructure, power, industrial plants and telecommunications. Over the past few years, China has replaced India as Bangladesh's biggest import destination, with bilateral trade of about \$10 billion during 2013 heavily in favour of China. The more investment Bangladesh receives from China and Japan, the quicker it will reach its goal of becoming a middle income country by 2021. The governments and the people of both countries interact closely in the case of investment and the relationship with the investor country is deep and lasting. For infrastructure construction in Asia, China has established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, with an estimated approved capital of \$100 billion. Bangladesh, India and Nepal have joined as founding-members of the Bank. The Bank will be complementing the work of other entities, like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Bangladesh is a nation of strategic importance not only for the South Asian region but also for the larger geo-political dynamics of Asia as a whole. The country constitutes a bridge between

South Asia and South East Asia. Bangladesh's access to the Indian Ocean is commercially and strategically important. Naturally, other countries such as the US, India and Japan are interested to keep close relations with Bangladesh for strategic reasons. Like India, the US and Japan are becoming closer, apparently to contain the influence of China in Asia-Pacific region including in South Asia, deepening of relationship between Bangladesh and China is being closely monitored by these countries. It is wrong to suggest that Bangladesh has to choose between India and China or China and Japan. Bangladesh must have friendly relations with all these countries. It is desirable that Bangladesh does not overwhelmingly align itself to one country to be an irritant to another. Many politicians and academics believe that with friendly relations with all these countries, Bangladesh will have more negotiating power regionally and globally. The policy "Look to the East" has ushered in a new phase of Bangladesh foreign policy under the current government. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited Japan in May and China in early June, 2014 and received commitment of financial support and investment from both countries for many infrastructure projects. Bangladesh has been vigorously pursuing a foreign policy of what some analysts label "more friends and fewer enemies."

The writer is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

QUOTE

Quote

All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

1 China flav

5 Smart-phone down-loads

9 Trailblazer Daniel

10 Pub projectiles

12 Wear away

13 Horse sound

14 Last

16 Phone bill addition

17 Golf pegs

18 Buff buff

21 Melancholy

22 Lets on

23 Feel blindly

24 Toasting word

26 Orange seed

29 O'Neill works

30 First-rate

31 Unrefined

32 Salad green

34 Be patient for

37 Bygone auto

38 Move on the ice

39 Exact copy

40 "The King and I" setting

41 Lane's coworker

DOWN

1 Eye part

2 Like cobras

3 River of Pakistan

4 Gaze

5 Spots on TV

6 Skillet

7 Bottom line number

8 Emphasize

9 Borscht base

11 Proofreading mark

15 Sign, as a check

19 Baseball officials

20 Spotted cube

22 Region

23 Tiara feature

24 Goes on all fours

25 Mauna Loa setting

26 Arsenic, for one

27 Dream up

28 Key's comedy partner

29 Pull along

30 Confuse

33 Adam's apple spot

35 Writer Tarbell

36 President pro -

Yesterday's answer

ISTS

MARIA

OVERT

FEBEGG

FRESCO

SKIRESORT

LOSER

SNOWMAKER

SHES

HOGIDA

AWARD

VITAL

ENEMY

SLDS

MODEL

UTICA

TEN

FONT

RESORT

MAKER

ASSAIL

SPY

LATER

THESE

ARTS

CRYPTOQUOTE

HZ JIQL PDHLEB JRM EDLIHLD GSIWRED, KJDN'M UDRW KJDHW GSBKIQDB DFDWN MRN SZ KJD NDRW, LSKTIBKSLJRYSUDDL.

- MSIEYRB GSIYRLM

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE: ANYBODY WHO DOESN'T KNOW THAT POLITICS IS CRIME HAS GOT A FEW SCREWS LOOSE.

- JAMES ELLROY

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker

OKAY, BEETLE, WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE THIS TIME?!

I STILL DON'T BELIEVE YOU

HENRY

by Don Trachte