

MAULANA BHASANI: THE BUILDER OF POLITICS OF OPPOSITION AND AGITATION IN BANGLADESH DURING THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF PAKISTAN

M. Waheeduzzaman (Manik)

Born in 1886 [circa] in the village of Dhangora of Sirajganj subdivision of the then Pabna District, 'Majloom Jononeta' (leader of the oppressed) **Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani** (henceforth Maulana Bhasani) had breathed his last at Dhaka Medical College Hospital at 8:20 p.m. on November 17, 1976, and he was buried at Santoosh, Tangail on November 18, 1976 with State honor. Throughout almost six decades of his struggling political life, he was both a demanding spirit and a dauntless voice for freedom and emancipation of the humblest and disinherited citizens against the overwhelming powers of the governmental machinery and the overweening grip of the ruling elite of the society. Doubtless, Maulana Bhasani's long political career was characterized by his selfless dedication for championing the causes of the most underprivileged segments of our society. Indeed, he had to his credit an unblemished and impeccable record of life-long relentless struggle for the downtrodden and the disinherited. However, he was more than a spokesman of the peasantry and working class. Maulana Bhasani's legendary name is also integral part and parcel of Bangladesh's struggle for freedom and independence. He was both the maker and shaker of political events during the most turbulent years of the then East Pakistan. The seed of

politics of opposition and agitation was carefully planted by him in the formative years of Pakistan. He was also responsible for founding the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (EPAML), the first viable opposition party in Pakistan.

The main purpose of this commentary is to appraise the sanguine role of Maulana Bhasani as the builder of politics of opposition and agitation in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in the formative years of Pakistan. Given the fact that he was intimately associated with all of the progressive movements during the Pakistan era, no attempt has been made to provide chronological details of any of those movements within the limited scope of this paper. No attempt has been made to discuss his role as the founder of the National Awami Party (NAP). Rather, the intent here is to underscore Maulana Bhasani's central role in the formation of the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (EPAML).

To accomplish this objective, first, an attempt has been made to briefly discuss the genesis of a hostile anti-Bengali political environment in the new nation of Pakistan that led to the spectacular emergence of Maulana Bhasani as the most volatile and relentless organizer of politics of opposition and agitation in Pakistan's Eastern province. While an effort has been made to briefly discuss his fearless role in building-up the EPAML as a viable opposition political party in the then East Pakistan, some of his accomplishments as the most articulate dissenting voice in the early years of Pakistan have also been highlighted.

Finally, some concluding remarks have been made about the relevance and salience of Maulana Bhasani's politics of opposition in the formative years of Pakistan.

The Emergence of Maulana Bhasani in the Political Scene of East Bengal in an Era of Authoritarian Mode of Governance

The Muslim League, under Mohammad Ali Jinnah's leadership, had successfully mobilized the Bengali Muslims in favor of the Pakistan movement. It is a verified fact that out of 100 million Muslim population of British-India, almost 33 million Muslims were from Bengal. Most of the dynamic leaders of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League (BPML) were also in the vanguard of the Pakistan Movement. In fact, M.A. Jinnah had effectively utilized most of the popular Muslim leaders of Bengal for mobilizing the mass support for a separate Muslim homeland. Yet, the central leadership of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) was always disproportionately skewed in favor of non-Bengali leaders of different provinces. At the behest of M.A. Jinnah, most of the celebrated and popular Muslim League leaders of Bengal were either banished or marginalized immediately before or after the creation of Pakistan. Thus the dice of Pakistan's anti-Bengali design was cast even before Pakistan's independence was achieved.

The seed of colonial mode of governance in East Bengal (East Pakistan) was also planted by M.A. Jinnah, the Founding Father of Pakistan. Thus the genesis of the

disintegration of Pakistan was conditioned, to a great extent, by his quest for installing the anti-Bengali collaborators and rightist Muslim Leaguers both in the party apparatus and the Governmental structure of the then East Bengal. Instead of fostering and nurturing the charismatic and independent-minded Bengali leaders, the Pakistan's Founding Father had sponsored only those orthodox Muslim League leaders who had already earned their reputations for their anti-Bangalee stand to assume the leadership roles in the party and the Government of East Bengal. To employ the party as an instrument of subjugating and controlling the political scenes of various provinces of Pakistan, Jinnah had co-opted Choudhury Khaliquzzaman to be the Chief Organizer of the Muslim League party after he became the Governor General of the new nation of Pakistan. A deliberate policy was quickly initiated for packing the East Bengal (East Pakistan) Branch of Muslim League with their loyalists, and most of the celebrated Bengali Muslim League leaders were kept out of the newly revamped provincial branch of the Muslim League. As the Chief Organizer of the party, Choudury Khaliquzzaman, had literally leased the provincial branch of Muslim League in East Bengal to Khawaja Nazimuddin and Maulana Akram Khan. Neither Nazimuddin nor Akram Khan had any mass support or charisma. Nor did they have any extraordinary organizational capabilities. They mentored and sponsored within the party hierarchy only the conservative leaders who were extremely loyal to them.

One of the hidden political agendas of Khwaja Nazimuddin and Akram Khan coterie in the provincial Muslim League was to keep the doors of the party closed to the most progressive and dynamic members of the former Bengal Provincial Muslim League. The followers of both H.S. Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim were specifically excluded even from the primary membership of the Muslim League. As the stalwarts of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League (BPML), H.S. Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim were in the vanguard of the Pakistan movement. Yet, after independence, there were hardly any leadership roles for those dedicated leaders in the newly revamped provincial Muslim League. As the Chief Minister of East Bengal, Khwaja Nazimuddin also saw to it that neither H.S. Suhrawardy nor his followers have any prominent role in the party. He lost no time to characterize H.S. Suhrawardy as the "Indian agent" and an "enemy of Pakistan." Khwaja Nazimuddin had also misused his official position for the purpose of relieving H.S. Suhrawardy from the membership of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (CAP). As if that was not enough of an insult for the one of the most dynamic contributors to the Pakistan Movement. As the Chief Minister of East Bengal, Khawaja Nazimuddin had the audacity of prohibiting H.S. Suhrawardy from entering or addressing public meetings in any place of East Pakistan. In his widely acclaimed book, Amar Dekha Rajneetir Panchash Bachar (p. 248), Abul Mansur Ahmed observed that Liaquat Ali Khan, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, had publicly castigated H.S. Suhrawardy as the "mad dog let loose by India."

Maulana Bhasani was the legendary figure in Assam politics, and as the President of Assam Provincial Muslim League, he had spearheaded the Pakistan movement in Assam. Immediately after his return to East Bengal from Assam in November 1947, he was also discredited and maligned by the ruling party. For instance, Maulana Bhasani had won an assembly seat (through an uncontested bye-election) in the East Bengal Provincial Legislative Assembly (EBLA) from the South Tangail constituency. However, the Muslim League clique had hatched out a conspiracy to dislodge him from the Provincial Assembly. His election to the Assembly was declared null and void on flimsy ground. Above all, he was declared disqualified by the provincial Governor to run for election or for holding any public office! Maulana Bhasani and the progressive forces within the Muslim League had vehemently protested this kind of exclusionary policy of the then East Bengal Muslim League.

Maulana Bhasani as the Authentic Founder of the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League

It is evident from the preceding that the political environment in the then East Pakistan in the early years of the new nation of Pakistan was not conducive for building-up any kind of opposition party. Yet, Maulana Bhasani had shaken the foundation of the ruling coterie of the then Pakistan by building-up an effective and popular opposition party from the scratch in a very hostile political environment. His courageous and relentless determination to confront and challenge the Muslim League leadership

in the then East Bengal led to a resistance movement. Being essentially aided by more liberal factions of the ruling Muslim League, various groups of dissidents, and other progressive forces of the province, Maulana Bhasani had formed the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League [EPAML] on June 23, 1949 (the word 'Muslim' was formally rescinded from the nomenclature of the party in 1955). There is no doubt that the establishment of this opposition party was a milestone at a critical juncture of the new nation of Pakistan.

The EPAML, under the charismatic leadership of Maulana Bhasani, had emerged, much sooner than later, as the most effective opposition party in the early years of Pakistan. Maulana Bhasani was the President of the Awami League for eight long years (1949 through 1957). During those turbulent years, he sincerely tried to build-up this party as the most effective political instrument for ventilating and articulating the genuine grievances and demands of the people of the eastern province of Pakistan. Both Maulana Bhasani and the EPAML had played pivotal roles in articulating Pakistan's Bengali speaking people's desire and quest for autonomy and self-determination. He and his party had also played various crucial roles in all of the progressive movements in the then East Bengal. Notwithstanding the deliberate distortions of Bangladesh's political history, it is a fact that Maulana Bhasani was the most authentic founder of the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League. Many credible writers attest to the fact that he was the driving force behind the establishment of East Pakistan Awami Muslim League

(EPAML) in an era that was invariably dominated by the Muslim Leaguers.

For instances, in his seminal assessment of the role of the Awami League in the political development of the then Pakistan, M. Rashiduzzaman underscored the central role of Maulana Bhasani in building-up a sustainable opposition in the then East Bengal during the early years of Pakistan: "If any one man should be given credit for the rise of an opposition in East Pakistan, it is Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani. Maulana Bhasani became a popular figure in the 1930's when he organized the peasant movement in East Bengal and Assam. Later, in the 1940s he gave his support to the Pakistan movement led by the Muslim League. Maulana Bhasani was frustrated by the closed-door policy of the Muslim League in Pakistan, however, and eventually, it was under his leadership that the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League [EPAML] was born at Dacca, on June 23, 1949" (M. Rashiduzzaman, "The Role of Awami League in the Political Development of Pakistan," Asian Survey, July, 1970).

Talukder Maniruzzaman has observed that the 1948-phase of the Bengali language movement had "spearheaded the formation of the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (EPAML), representing both genuine social protest and the political ambitions of the frustrated Muslim Leaguers. Maulana Bhasani was elected the President of the party and (H.S.) Suhrawardy soon after became convener of the All-Pakistan Committee of the new party" (Talukder Maniruzzaman, Bangladesh

Revolution and Its Aftermath, UPL, 1988, pp. 20-21).

According to M.B. Nair, a noted Indian political scientist, "Maulana Bhasani was primarily responsible for the growth of the Party [EPAML]. He united the various opposition groups and pitted them against the ruling Muslim League. Though Suhrawardy's contribution to the formation of the [East Pakistan] Awami Muslim League was much less than that of Bhasani, his followers who were the best party workers of the undivided Bengal [Provincial] Muslim League [BPML], constituted core of the party." M.B. attests further about Maulana Bhasani's dominant role in the formation of Awami League: "The Awami League, the first Muslim opposition party in Pakistan, was founded by the dissident Muslim Leaguers. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani was rightfully considered as the founder and guiding genius behind the organized opposition to the Muslim league Government in East Pakistan" (M.B. Nair, Politics in Bangladesh: A Study of Awami League, 1949-'58, New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1990, p. 61 and pp. 248-249).

The hostile political atmosphere in the then East Bengal had worsened due to the fact that more stringent measures were taken by the provincial government against the leaders of the newly formed opposition party. Nurul Amin, the Chief Minister of the then East Bengal, and his cohorts quickly characterized the EPAML as an "anti-national" or an "anti-state" organization. Being essentially goaded by the Central Government of Pakistan, Nurul Amin had expressed its determination to deal with the "menace" of the EPAML. As observed by M.B.

Nair, the 'bonafides' of the leaders of the newly formed political party were being openly questioned, and their patriotism and loyalty to the new nation of Pakistan were being doubted. "The opposition leaders, especially the communists and the Hindu leaders of the then East Bengal, were being routinely branded as the 'fifth columnists and spies of India.' Many Bengali Muslim leaders who opposed the Muslim League Government in East Bengal were also branded as the 'traitors' and paid agents of India." (M.B. Nair, *ibid*, p. 61).

There were also instances where the Awami League-sponsored public meetings and processions were disturbed or dispersed by the "hired goondas" of the ruling Muslim League. As the principal founder as well as the first President of the (EPAML), Maulana Bhasani and scores of his party loyalists and progressive forces had to face stiff resistance from the Muslim Leaguers, and they were also the victims of repressive measures of both the Central Government of Pakistan and reactionary provincial government of East Bengal. The hostile political environment of the then East Bengal is well reflected in the words of M. Rashiduzzaman: "The political climate for an opposition party was not favorable in Pakistan at that time. Only a few months after it [EPAML] came into being, an Awami League procession and meeting was lathi (baton) charged and teargassed by the police. After this incident, nineteen Awami League leaders, including Maulana Bhasani, were arrested. In 1951, the Awami League public meeting scheduled to be addressed by H.S. Suhrawardy could not be held as the government imposed

Section 144... in certain parts of the city. This repressive policy towards the opposition was the natural consequence of an attitude typified by a statement of Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, at Mymensingh, East Pakistan, in December 1950: 'Pakistan has been achieved by the Muslim league. As long as I am alive no other political party will be allowed to work here.' "[M. Rashiduzzaman, "The Role of Awami League in the Political Development of Pakistan," Asian Survey, July, 1970.].

Pattern of Maulana Bhasani's Resistance Movement in a Hostile Political Environment

Immediately after the formation of the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (EPAML), Maulana Bhasani started organizing and addressing hundreds of mass meetings throughout the province in order to arouse an awareness among the public about the ineptness of the repressive Muslim League Government. He had also addressed many meetings in the city of Dhaka.

For example, on June 24, 1949, in the first public meeting of the EPAML at Dhaka's Armanitola Maidan, Maulana Bhasani vehemently criticized the provincial government for its blatant failures in fulfilling the minimum demands of the people. In another public meeting which was organized by East Pakistan Muslim Student League (EPMSL) on September 11, 1949, Maulana Bhasani earnestly appealed to

the people to dislodge the autocratic and repressive government of Pakistan through organizing resistance movement.

In a mammoth public meeting on October 11, 1949 at Armanitola Maidan, he forcefully demanded the immediate resignation of Chief Minister Nurul Amin's inept government for its blatant failure in solving the food crisis in the province. In defiance of the Section 144, Maulana Bhasani also led the 'hunger march' to press for redressing the food crisis in the province. Of course, the police force had lathi-charged the procession in which several dozen hunger marchers were injured. Maulana Bhasani was arrested under special powers act on October 13, 1949, and his illegal detention was protested by spontaneous demonstrations throughout the province. He was kept in jail till he was released on December 10, 1950. In fact, the East Bengal Government was compelled to release him from detention after he started a prolonged fasting inside the jail.

The Awami League leaders had vehemently opposed the anti-Bengali recommendations of the infamous Basic Principles Committee (BPC) Report. Although the anti-BPC movement was short-lived, it provided a golden opportunity for the EPAML to arouse an awareness among the masses throughout the province about the anti-Bengali constitutional design of the Punjabi and non-Bengali-Mohajir dominated Central Government of Pakistan.

The anti-BPC movement took place in two phases: first one started

immediately after the "Report of the BPC of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (CAP) with regard to the future Constitution of Pakistan" was published in the national dailies on September 29, 1950." The second phase of the anti-BPC movement started soon after the Second draft of the BPC Report was submitted to the central legislature of Pakistan (CAP) on December 22, 1952.

Immediately after the publication of the first draft of the BPC report on September 29, 1950, there was a widespread condemnation for its anti-Bengali bias throughout East Bengal. There is no doubt that the EPAML leaders spearheaded this phase of the anti-BPC report movement. The opponents of this Report had clearly demanded that any future Constitution of Pakistan must ensure "full regional autonomy for East Bengal" and "recognition of Bengali as one of the State languages of Pakistan."

Although Maulana Bhasani was in jail when the first phase of the anti-BPC movement started, he joined the movement immediately after his release. For instance, in addressing a public meeting at Armanitola Maidan on December 24, 1950, he demanded for immediate withdrawal of all anti-Bengali policies of both the central and provincial governments. On his sarcastic queries, the attendees in the meeting had expressed votes of no confidence in the Central Government of Pakistan and the East Bengal government. Neither Liaquat Ali Khan nor Nurul Amin had any reason to feel amused or elated with such authentic and popular votes of no confidence in their governments on a Day when the new nation of Pakistan

was celebrating the Seventy Sixth Birth Anniversary of M.A. Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan! Characterizing the BPC Report as both "un-Islamic" and "un-democratic," Maulana Bhasani, in a pamphlet on January 1, 1951, directed all of his party workers to mobilize public opinion against the evil design of the ruling coterie of Pakistan. The stiff resistance from all quarters of people of the province had compelled Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister, to announce "the postponement of any discussion" on the BPC Report.

The second phase of the anti-BPC movement was ignited after Khwaja Nazimuddin, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, had tabled the Second draft of the BPC Report to the CAP on December 22, 1952. The truth of the matter is that there was hardly any substantive modification of the BPC Report excepting Khwaja Nazimuddin's new anti-Bengali ploy for introducing the so-called parity-principle between the two wings of Pakistan. Maulana Bhasani and other leaders of his party (EPAML) were also in the vanguard of this phase of the anti-BPC movement. The concerned and patriotic people of the then East Bengal had quickly rejected Khwaja Nazimuddin's version of the BPC Report. Maulana Bhasani had the distinct honor of presiding over a large public meeting at Paltan Maidan on December 11, 1953, organized by the All-party anti-BPC movement, in observance of the Anti-BPC Protest Day.

Maulana Bhasani had relentlessly articulated the genuine grievances of Bangalees including the demand for

Bangla to be recognized as one of the State languages of Pakistan. Although the Bengali Language Movement was spearheaded and sustained by the student community of Dhaka University, all historic resistance movements in the then East Pakistan in the early years of Pakistan, including the 1952 phase of the language movement, had received a great deal of support both from the Awami League and its founding president Maulana Bhasani. He had presided over the historic meeting of the "All-Party Language Working Committee" on January 31, 1952. In a public meeting in Dhaka on February 4, 1952, he had vehemently criticized the anti-Bengali policies of the then ruling coteries of Pakistan, and vowed to continue his struggle till the goal of making Bengali as one of the State languages Pakistan was accomplished. On February 6, 1952, he had presided over a meeting of the All-Party State Language Committee at 150 Mugholtuli Road, Dhaka, and in the following weeks he toured several towns in various districts in order to enlist mass support for his anti-government movement. He was out of Dhaka when the language demonstrators were brutally gunned down by the police on the fateful day of February 21, 1952. On hearing the news of police atrocities, he had rushed back to Dhaka, and led the 'Gaibe Janaza' for the language martyrs on February 22, 1952 at the Dhaka Medical College premise.

For his relentless support and direct involvement in the 1952-phase of the Bengali language movement, Maulana Bhasani was arrested on April 10, 1952, and he was put behind bar without trial till he was released from jail on April 21,

1953. However, he did not deviate from his commitment toward making Bengali as one of the State languages of Pakistan when the first Council Meeting of EPAML was held on November 14-15, 1953. The newly adopted party manifesto, adopted by the EPAML Council Meeting, demanded that "Bengali" should be recognized as one of the State languages of Pakistan. Nor did he compromise on the State language issue when the Jukta Front (United Front) was formed on December 4, 1953. There is little wonder why the first and foremost demand of the Ekush Dofa (21-Point Program) of the United Front underscored the need for the "recognition of Bengali as one of the State languages of Pakistan."

The United Front (Jukta Front) was formed in December, 1953 as an electoral alliance of several political parties that included East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (EPAML), Krishak-Sramik Party (KSP), Nezam-e Islam Party (NIP), Gonotontree Dol (GD), and Khilafat-e Rabbani Party (KRP). Maulana Bhasani, of course in collaboration with A.K. Fazlul Hoque and H.S. Suhrawardy, was instrumental in the formation United Front (UF). Given the fact that the EPAML was the largest party of this historic electoral alliance, the 21-point election manifesto of the 'Jukta Front' reflected most of the popular demands that were thus far articulated by Maulana Bhasani and other progressive forces of the then East Pakistan. A great deal of credit was also due to Maulana Bhasani's charisma, relentlessness, and his oratory and organizational skills for the landslide victory of Jukta Front in 1954 election in which the ruling Muslim

League party was virtually routed out from the political scene of the then East Bengal.

Maulana Bhasani vehemently criticized the Central Government of Pakistan for illegally dismantling Shere Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq's United Front Government in East Bengal. Although he was outside the country when the Governor's rule was imposed in 1954 under the provision of the infamous Act 92A, he had launched a vociferous attack on the colonial mode of Pakistan's Central Government. However, he was dismayed when H.S. Suhrawardy had joined the Central Government of Pakistan as a Minister in Mohammad Ali Bogora's Cabinet without any regard to the pre-election pledges of the United Front and the illegal removal of a legitimately elected Government in the then East Bengal. Maulana Bhasani was also deeply hurt after Shere Bangla Fazlul Huq had joined the Central Government of Pakistan as the Interior Minister

The Awami League and its chief leader Maulana Bhasani became the ardent champions of full-blown autonomy for East Bengal in the early years of Pakistan. The historic Convention of the dissidents from the ruling Muslim League and the progressive forces of East Bengal that created the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (EPAML) on June 23, 1949 had declared its pragmatic "aims and objects" pending the preparation and adoption of formal party manifesto. Of all the declarations of that historic Convention, "the recognition of Bengali as a State language of Pakistan" and "full regional autonomy for East

Pakistan" were the most significant ones. The EPAML manifesto which was adopted in 1953 "also declared that there would be complete autonomy for the East and West constituent units of Pakistan." One of the most professed popular demands of United Front's "Ekush Dofa" also underscored "full autonomy to the provinces in accordance with the 1940 Lahore Resolution, leaving only defence, foreign affairs and currency to the Central Government of Pakistan."

Although the Awami League, as a party, had vacillated or moderated its stand on the issue of "provincial autonomy" when H.S. Suhrawardy became the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Maulana Bhasani never shelved or compromised his commitment to "full-fledged regional autonomy for East Bengal." On a matter of principle, he had sharply disagreed with H.S. Suhrawardy's opportunistic version or convenient interpretation of East Pakistan's demand for full autonomy. He also openly criticized H.S. Suhrawardy's advocacy for adopting the so-called "One Unit" plan for uniting or centralizing the Western regions of Pakistan.

Maulana Bhasani had vehemently opposed H.S. Suhrawardy's support for "Parity Principle," an "anti-Bengali" policy deliberately crafted into the 1956 Constitution in order to deny the numerical majority of Bangalees in the Central Legislature and the Central Services of Pakistan. Being totally disgusted with the deplorable state of political affairs in mid-1950s, Maulana Bhasani had started demanding complete separation of East Pakistan from the rest of Pakistan, and his oft-

quoted "Assalamalaikum" to West Pakistan was early warning for subsequent separation of East Pakistan from the rest of Pakistan.

Concluding Remarks

The political development in East Bengal in the early years of the new nation of Pakistan was very much conditioned by the anti-Bangalee policies and ploys of both the Central Government of Pakistan and the collaborationist provincial Government of the then East Bengal. The chief intent of the Karachi-anchored Punjabi-Mohajir dominated Pakistani rulers was to perpetuate their colonial policy in the then eastern province of Pakistan through the use of the loyalist Muslim League Government. The reactionary provincial regimes of both Khwaja Nazimuddin and Nurul Amin had willingly initiated and enthusiastically implemented various repressive and discriminatory measures in East Bengal for furthering and sustaining the colonial interests of the Central Government of Pakistan. However, the progressive forces of the then East Bengal had made a conscious determination to fight the evil policies and ploys of those renegades and reactionary collaborators. Instead of being browbeaten by the anti-Bengali ruling coterie of Pakistan, the people of the then East Bengal had started their fight for establishing their legitimate rights.

Maulana Bhasani had played a defining role in the difficult task of building-up a viable opposition party in Pakistan in an era when the overwhelming majority of Muslim population of the then East Bengal was not yet ready to be

disillusioned with the euphoria of Pakistan movement. Doubtless, his was the fearless dissenting voice in those formative years of Pakistan. Therefore, the appearance of Maulana Bhasani in the regressive political scenario of the then East Bengal as the most dauntless dissenting voice and an effective organizer of a sustainable opposition party that was capable of building-up a sustainable resistance movement was nothing short of a miracle

Maulana Bhasani's stature as one of the greatest political heroes of Bangladesh's history comes not from any single action or accomplishment but from his lifelong commitment toward establishing or accruing social justice for all through political activism. He espoused a genuine cause for protecting, articulating, and enhancing the interests of the common people of the then eastern province of Pakistan. Underneath the flowing beard, Maulana Bhasani was a serious man with a deep sense of compassion for the disadvantaged segments of the society.

It is understood from whatever limited literature is available on the early phase of his life that he had learnt to be compassionate in his youth by doing compassionate acts for the underdogs of the society, and he cared for them even more as he grew older. He had remained a dedicated fighter till he breathed his last for accruing social justice for those people who were unjustly dispossessed, disinherited, abandoned, and humiliated. Maulana Bhasani's action orientation to his life, moral tone in his politics, and his lifelong commitment to social justice and fairness were the determining factors for

his spectacular emergence as the most authentic planter and organizer of politics opposition and agitation in the then East Bengal in the formative years of Pakistan.

The author writes from Clarksville, Tennessee, USA where he is a Professor and the Chairman of the Department of Public Management and Criminal Justice at Austin Peay State University.

