

Sir Salimullah Khan Bahadur (b. 1871 - d. 1915)

If Nawab Siraj al-Dawlah's defeat at the hands of Sir Robert Clive of East India Company in 1757 represented a major shift in the political landscape of India in general and that of Bengal in particular, then the Permanent Settlement operation instigated by the British in 1793 led to the socio-economic regeneration of the Hindus of Bengal at the expense of the Muslims.

As it happens, through the Permanent Settlement operation the British not only assumed full control of land and properties which belonged to the Muslims; they subsequently sold the land to the Hindu Zamindars (landholders) who, in turn, consolidated their politico-economic grip on Bengal on account of their ownership of significant land and other resources. This enabled the Hindus to pursue business and trade and thereby increase their economic stakes. In so doing they actively pursued and promoted modern education in their communities.

As the Hindus of Bengal consolidated their politico-economic clout and improved their socio-cultural position through the pursuit of modern education, the Muslims of Bengal suffered political isolation, economic deprivation and educational backwardness, thanks to their political opposition to the British and their unwillingness to pursue modern education; they feared that exposure to modern Western education would lead to the dilution of traditional Islamic values, morality and ethics.

During this difficult and challenging period in the history of Bengal, a great Muslim leader, visionary, reformer and educationalist was born in Dhaka who was destined to transform the political, socio-economic and educational fortunes of the Muslims of Bengal. Referring to some of history's great men, George Bernard Shaw once wrote, "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, some have greatness thrust upon them." If this is true, then it would not be an exaggeration to say that only one Muslim personality of Bengal combined these three measures of greatness: he was none other than Nawab Sir Khwajah Salimullah Khan Bahadur GCSI.

Salimullah was born into the Nawab family of Dhaka, which was one of the most famous and wealthy Muslim families of Bengal.....

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THE MUSLIM HERITAGE OF BENGAL:
*The Lives, Thoughts and Achievements of Forty Great Muslim Scholars, Writers
and Reformers of Bangladesh and West Bengal*

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