

Dacca, Monday, February 27, 1978

A respected philanthropist, scholar and distinguished physician, HAKIM HABIBUR RAHMAN KHAN AKHUNZADA did his best to the service of humanity throughout his whole life. He pioneered the Unani system of medicine in this country and contributed much for the development of this system. His 31st death anniversary was observed on February 21

Portrait of a philanthropist

Hakim Habibur Rahman Khan Akhonzada was a descendent of the well-known Yusufzai family of old Yagistan (NWFP). His father Alhaj Moulana Mohammad Shah Akhonzada of Chinglai, a reputed scholar migrated to Bengal settled in Dacca.

Hakim Habibur Rahman Khan Akhonzada was born on the 23rd of March 1881. He received his primary education at home as well as in Government Madrassa and after that continued his further education at Kanpur in India. He completed his Unani education in Delhi and studied other Muslim Sciences at Lucknow and Agra in India.

In 1904 he returned to Dacca and started his practice as a Hakim. He soon made this mark and attracted the attention of the then Nawab Sir Salimullah Bahadur of Dacca who utilised his abilities as his personal physician in 1903.

He was one of the pioneers of the provincial Mohammedan Education Conference of East Bengal and Assam which was held at Dacca in April 1906. This conference was organised by the late Nawab Sir Salimullah Bahadur of Dacca in close consultation with Hakim Saheb and other prominent educationists of the province to find out ways and means for the uplift and renaissance of the Muslim population of the province which was then carefully backward in every aspect of life.

In 1921 the Government of Bengal through the efforts of the late Hakim Saheb appointed a committee with Col. Hassan Suhrawardy as Secretary and the late Hakim Saheb as one of its members to study the question of Unani

Tibbia System and on the recommendation of the committee. Tibbia Colleges were to be started at Dacca and Calcutta. But the government could not agree to the recommendations of the committee on financial ground. But the late Hakim Saheb was not discouraged by the indifference of the government. His one great aim was to popularise the Unani System of treatment in which he had great faith and at the same time to utilise the Madrassa Educated young men of Bengal opening for the employment of whom was few.

With this end in view, the late Hakim Saheb founded the "Tibbia Habibia College" at Dacca in the year 1930. This college is still running successfully. He made great sacrifices for the college. Not only that he met the entire cost of its establishment and management but he also provided free lodging to its students and teachers for quite a number of years. The products of this college are now scattered all over Bangladesh doing great service to suffering humanity. The college grew in importance and its annual and other important functions were always presided over and attended by very high and important personalities of the province. In this connection the names of Sir John Hubert, late Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq, late Mr. Khwaja Nazimuddin, late Nawab Habibullah Bahadur of Dacca, late Mr. H.S. Suhrawardy, late Moulvi Tamizuddin Khan and late Mr. Khwaja Shahabuddin may be specially mentioned because they always patronised the college.

As a Tabib (physician) Ha-

kim Habibur Rahman Khan Akhonzada enjoyed a great reputation throughout the Indo-Pak Subcontinent. He built up a unique practice and for more than forty years, rendered medical aid to millions of people. His diagnosis of diseases and their treatment were at time astounding. Merely by looking at the face of a man or by hearing his voice he could tell about his ailment.

Hakim Habibur Rahman Khan Akhonzada rendered great service to the Unani system of medicine. This service and his own accomplishment in this field brought him the well deserved recognition. The title of Sifa-ul-Mulk was conferred on him in the year 1939. A few years later he relinquished this title in pursuance of the All India Muslim League decision. During this time he published one Bengali Magazine "SHEFA" mainly dealing on the system of Unani treatment and the utility of various herbs and drugs which he could detect even from their smell. He was the founder president of the Anjuman-e-Attibba-e-Bengal and Assam which is now named as Bangladesh Unani Medical Association (Anjuman-e-Attibba-e-Bangladesh).

The late Hakim Saheb formed an organisation under the name Anjuman-e-Urdu Mashriqi Bengal and Assam, and regular mushaira and meetings used to be held under its auspices in the premises of Tibbia Habibia College, Dacca. Scholars, poets and elite of the city assembled and took part in the deliberations.

His knowledge of history and topography of Bengal was indeed remarkable. He was



the author of the well-known Asood gan-e-Dacca an authentic book on scholars and saints who lie buried in the soils of old Dacca. This was the last book which he published in October 1946 only a few months before being himself buried in the same soil.

Hakim Habibur Rahman had a fine collection of old coins numbering 211 which he presented to the Dacca Museum in November 1930. The curator of the Museum prepared a separate catalogue and published the same in 1936.

Hakim Habibur Rahman Khan Akhonzada was a great philanthropist and his generosity was spread in all spheres of life and among all sections of people. He helped poor students both Muslims and Hindus and paid their educational expenses. He occasionally made lump sum payments to Madrasa Authorities for poor and meritorious boys. A large number of his patients received free treatment.

Hakim Habibur Rahman Khan Akhonzada possessed a beautiful garden named Samaristan at Kurmitola. In this garden rare fruit trees and medicinal herbs and roots were grown. Plants, saplings and grafts for this garden were procured from the gardens of Maharajas and noted horticulturists of India at a huge cost. His own men were deputed for months for this purpose. Saplings and grafts from this garden were utilised by the Agriculture Department of the government to grow healthy and rare fruit trees in other parts of the country. A portion of this garden was set apart for growing medicinal herbs which Hakim Saheb utilised for curing some serious diseases.

This garden was acquired by the government during the Second World War.

Hakim Habibur Rahman Khan Akhonzada had a rare collection of books. These books were in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and other languages. After his death these books were donated to the Library of Dacca University through Dr. W.H.A. Shadani, a professor of that University. Manuscripts of several books written by Hakim Saheb himself were also handed over to the late Dr. W.H.A. Shadani according to his will by his wife and other members of his family so that they might subsequently be published for the benefit of the general public.

Hakim Saheb had a premonition about his death. A month before his death he told his friends that he would not live very long and that he would die a sudden death. On the day of his death he was quite normal. He examined his patients as usual. After Maghreb prayer he sat with his friends chatting and joking. He casually mentioned that Moulana Zafer Ahmed Usmani was not at Dacca and that worried him. He had expressed his desire that his Janaza prayer should be led by the Moulana. He had a heart attack at 3 a.m. He breathed his last before the doctors could come. In the absence of Moulana Zafer Ahmed Usmani, Pirji A. Wahab led the Janaza prayer at Lalbagh Shahi Mosque. It was attended by a very large number of people of all communities and class the like of which was never seen at Dacca. The markets and shops of Dacca were totally closed as mark of respect to his memory.