Chapter - V

HINDU MUSLIM UNITY
AND
JOURNALISM
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Hindu Muslim Unity:

The views of Azad as expressed by him in the first eight issues of the Al-Hilal have already been discussed in the previous chapter. One can compare them with his views in the later life and see if there was any deviation or difference between his earlier and later view. What has been discussed above was his ideological belief which he enunciated in the light of the Quran and the Sunnah and stuck to it till his death as his religious belief.¹ To him religion and politics were not separate nor he needed their separation. His rational approach to the religion provided him with sufficient room for new interpretations in the new circumstances. He did not believe that religion was in any way a hindrance to the Muslims joining the national polities. To him it was a religious imperative to the Muslims to struggle for truth and righteousness singly or jointly as the case may be but consciously irrespective of the decisions of other communities. Whether other communities do it or not but for Muslims it was the first duty being Muslims that they should raise their voice against the foreign rule. For taking the decisions they need not look to other people, because they themselves are best guided by their own religion and their religion does not teach them to support untruth and injustice. Whether they should join the moderates or the extremists, it was to be decided by their own discretion.
As is known Azad had a revolutionary bent of mind. His early attachment with the revolutionaries of Bengal reveals his true nature. The period from 1905 to 1915 was the period when all the revolutionary movements in India were repressively crushed. The extremists were not allowed to join the Indian National Congress. The Congress as an organization boycotted the extremists and their view. They were expelled from the main organization and were subject to the wrath of the Government. The moderates had captured the congress and had framed the constitution of the party which wedded to the constitutional means. The constitutional means, as defined by the extremists were nothing but the political mendicancy, which was not liked by the Indians who had self honour and self respect and wanted to assert their rights strongly against the Government. The extremists and revolutionary methods could not be preached openly through the journal. The extremists existed as a group not as an organisation, country as a whole was not wiling to welcome the extremist methods. The Government was successful in creating rift among the earnest political workers for the cause of independence. The stern repression of the extremists by the Government had further terrified the masses.

When eight issues of the Al-Hilal were out and people read Azad’s views they started doubting him and thought that he was inviting the Muslims to join the ‘Hindu–extremists’. A letter was addressed to Azad in which suspicions were given place. The letter which was published in the Al-Hilal number 8, volume 1, dated first September 1912 asked him to separate religion
from politics. It also asked him to clarify that he did not mean Muslims join the Hindu extremists who believed in the cult of bomb and revolver to get the country free from the foreigners. After this clarification only he (Azad) could expect their support. The letter was replied in brief in the same issue but a detailed reply was given in the form of an article in the next issues where Azad clarified his views. He over ruled the separation of politics from religion because he thought that the political views were drawn from religion only if they are separated from religion nothing is left to get inspiration from. Any teaching which is other than the teachings of the Quran is anti-Islamic. He also viewed that the teachings of Quran were complete in themselves, and the one who is aware of the true spirit of Islam need not bow either to the Government or to Hindu extremists. Religion does not lead a man to nothingness. It brings him from darkness to light, and if somebody has a political way before him he can certainly be guided by the Quran. He deplored that all the wrongs among Muslims were due to their negligence to the teachings of the Quran. It takes the man to the ‘Right Path’, and the term ‘Right Path’ is so comprehensive that it encompasses the balanced reasoning in all the situations whatsoever they may be. One can see from the above quotations how Azad had interpreted the Quran and that in the name of the Quran he declared that the way of ‘Muslim League’ was not the right path chosen by the Muslims. He had demanded them in very clear words to join their Hindu brethren. It was impossible for Azad to think even for a moment that to join the just cause of the national movement could be anti Islamic or anti–Quranic. Any movement to weaken the just cause was
unjust. That is why he declared that the more the Muslims were away from the Quran the more the world was away from them. With regard to the second question, whether to join the extremists or not, Azad advised them to decide independently in the light of their religion. He told them that they had sufficient guidance and they need not beg their political policy from other parties or groups. Neither they should have undue confidence on the Government nor beg the Hindu extremists. He discussed the fundamentals of the policy of the Al–Hilal and concluded thus: “So this should be the duty of the Muslims to struggle to achieve the true independence till they get the parliamentary Government. These are the principles which help us in making our political policy and one need not depend either on the moderates or the extremists. If we adopt this way we will be balanced but fearless. Nobody will have fear from us. We will struggle for the liberty and progress of our country according to our religious principles but our struggle will be free from terror, revolts and rioting.” He further declared, “It is no doubt true that the Government has maintained peace order and freedom of conscience, but the Government should remember that if we become true Muslims we will be equally useful to the Government, to our neighbours and to ourselves. But this too should be clearly understood that Islam has taught us to grant freedom as well as demand it. We believe God’s will is that the nations be left free to rule over themselves.”

One can see from the above that Azad had demanded the Muslims to struggle constantly for the complete independence of the country and fearlessly
try for parliamentary democracy. The history tells that though the Moderates had accepted the resolution of the ‘Swaraj’ under the pressure of the extremists in the Calcutta session (1906) of the Congress, but they did not strongly demand the Swaraj for the country till 1920, rather they believed that the Indians were unfit for that demand. Azad had mocked over that idea in the previous issues. At the same time the people could not be taught in the cult of bombs and daggers through the journal. His object was to prepare people mentally for the just and right cause through legitimate means without fear of the Government. They were free to join any group. He advised them to think independently and to work for the National liberation and parliamentary democracy.

In the later phase of the politics of the Muslim League some excerpts from the above article were very much propagated to show inconsistency in the philosophy of Azad. The writers of vested interest broke some phrases and sentences from their context and proved that Azad was pro-Government and anti Hindu. He admired the Government for maintaining peace in the country and advised the Muslims not to bow before the Hindus for Islam does, not teach them to bow before anybody. They forgot that while producing such excerpts from his writings the critics themselves were saying inconsistent things. To bow before the Hindus was a sin, Did it not mean that to bow before a foreign Government was also a sin? It needs not specify here the difference between willful conscious co-operation and blind submission. It is understood that some authorities were also interested in propagating contradictions in
Azad’s writings. Since Azad was the only Muslim theoretician who devoted himself for the cause of independent and united India. After the partition of the country similar literature has been produced in abundance in Pakistan to contradict Azad’s philosophy of united nationalism. But more tragic is that the same error was and is still being repeated by some Indian writers, though they believed him a sincere champion of the Indian nationalism. They have borrowed the matter from their Pakistani contemporaries and are led to wrong inferences without looking into his original writings.

In the same article Azad called upon the Muslim League to adopt the same policy if it really wished to guide the Muslims politically. The same advice he gave to Muslims with regard to the leaders of Muslim league, i.e. not to follow them blindly. The same he repeated in the Presidential address of 1923 and 1940 that he did not wish the Muslims join the congress blindly; they should do it with full consciousness and free choice. This was the democratic way of convincing the people. Moreover, while joining such struggles people must be well aware of their consequences and implications. If they undergo hardships with their free will they shall remain firm but if the decision is forcibly imposed on them, they can not be expected to remain true to it.

**No separation of religion from politics**

The question arises as to why Azad preferred not to separate religion from the politics and why he made the religion the central point of all his teaching? The simple answer is that he had interpreted religion in the widest possible range and it was based on reason. Nothing which was irrational could
be claimed to be religious, right and just. Secondly the Indian way of life is religious. Both, the Hindus and the Muslims get inspiration from religion only. They can be easily convinced in terms of religion than in any other term. Azad has given the reason. ‘For all religious communities in general, but for Muslims in particular, there was only one source of inspiration.’ Azad knew it well. He called it ‘the only lamp which enlightened the whole house. Whether it was ethics or politics, arts or science, civilization or culture all were getting light from this lamp only.’

There is one thing more which should not be over looked. The Muslim league that gave the slogan of protection of Islam and the separate Islamic state had no religious philosophical base. None of the leaders of the League including Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah could surpass the religious knowledge of Azad. Whatever he said was quite authentic not only for the Indian Muslims but also for the Muslims abroad. That is why when the League leaders miserably failed to compete him on the theoretical field they relied on cheap politics and propaganda. They called him the “Show Boy” of the congress. This was the pitiable acknowledgement of their failure. Azad had natural dispositions for religion. But he gave it a new interpretation. It was not a traditionalist to prove. The first struggle of his life was his own mental and intellectual emancipation. He did not accept any idea, tradition or conviction unless he himself tried and found it sound. Azad believed in the concept of composite nation. He was proud of his being Muslim as he was proud of his being Indian. This he repeated again and again. The same thing he demanded
of the Muslims and wished them join the congress without losing their separate entity. But at the same time they should not be merely dependent on the congress for their safety and security. He demanded of them self reliance and self dependence. They should look to nobody else for help. The same he said in his presidential address of Ramgarh session 1940. It was the last phase according to the writers who divide his life and ideology into many phases. Azad emphasized it several times that he was saying the same thing which he had proclaimed in 1912. He never asked Muslims to bow to the British in the earlier period nor did he ask them to bow to the Hindus in the later period. His ideology evolved continuously and persistently. There are only evolutionary landmarks. They are not contradictory and consistent. In the Al-Hilal dated December 18, 1912, there appeared an article written by Azad with the heading ‘Struggle for Liberty’ (‘Al-Jihad–fi–sabil–ur–Hurriyat’) whereby Azad prophesied that the Independence of India was a certainty; and imagining beforehand the role of Indian Muslims, he wrote a paragraph captioned ‘A special chapter of the Indian history’. Addressing the Muslims, he writes, “If you expect that in the history of India there should be a chapter in your honour and greatness, be quiet and let me read it for you.”

“No doubt, there will be a chapter on you but do you know what will be there in? It will say – India proceeded on the path of national progress and emancipation, Hindus held their heads in their hands but Muslims went away and took shelter in the caves. The former called on the latter but they locked up their mouths and tongues.” The motherland was aggrieved of unjust laws.
Hindus initiated struggle (Jihad) but this community of warriors (Mujahidin) not only remained inactive but madly exclaimed ‘all the freedom fighters are rebels.’ In the same article, he further writes under the sub heading ‘The National deeds of the Muslims’, “The future historian and the chronicler of the Indian events will further write: ‘at last every thing was over.’ No country could remain slave in the twentieth century and it did not. The British Government was a constitutional Government. It was not the terrible rule of Chanez khan. Therefore, the country achieved her independence. England performed her duty. But the world should not forget that all this happened because of the sacrifices of the people who were non Muslims. Those who were Muslims, they served slavery not liberty; they did not hold their heads high with self respect; they bowed humbly. The emancipation of India was really an act of honour and greatness but there was no part of Muslims in that honour. If the old laws of the land were amended new and useful laws were enacted people were relieved of heavy taxes and custom duties, education was made free and compulsory defence budget reduced and the country achieved self Government, it was all due to respectable Hindus because they initiated political struggle and took it to the summit but Muslims held it as a sin and avoided. And even when they anyhow started, the devil whispered in their ear to bow to the Government; weeping and begging. And what did they beg? They begged not ‘asharfi’ nor silver nor gold but a rusty piece of copper or a few bits of dry bread.”

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In the same article published in the Al-Hilal dated December 18, 1912, Azad attacked the pro-Government policy of the Muslim League. He says: “By whose orders they had gone to take shelter in the caves now by the order of the same authorities only they have come out so that they should worship them (Government) in the temples. No doubt, the last part of the drama was played after Simla Deputation and it was called ‘League’ but if you make an ice factory and call it fire place will the slab of ice turn into burning charcoal? If you take a mechanical toy and push it so that it claps with its two hands will the show prove that it is a human child? Answer me, why are you silent? Perhaps no other nation in the world has committed the obvious humiliation of politics as you have done for six years you are worshippers of silver and gold your existence is an evident insolence on politics and your actions are black stains on its forehead. You have built a slavery house and call it the holy place of politics. You bowed your heads to worship bureaucracy and pretended that you were raising your heads high with self respect; you jumped into the swamp to ruin yourself and told the nation that you were running across the fields. You were strayed and that was not enough for you, you tried to lead astray the whole nation.”

No blind following of the leaders

Azad was opposed to blind following of whomsoever it may be. He advocated complete independent thinking for the people. In 1913 when the League was changing its policy and was coming closer to the congress, Syed Ameer Ali claimed the right of the London Branch of the League to say the
final word on the policy matters of the organisation. Commenting on his claim Azad warned people: “Remember it is a question of liberty or slavery. Till there is the yoke of blind following, till the minds are for servitude not for thinking and interpreting (Ijtehad) till the members of the nation do not utilize their own minds but give its reins in the hands of few people, and till the wealth, knowledge, honours, high posts, position in the Government, age and orthodoxy are worshipped, and the participation of the big people is the criterion of truth and reality and till the truth and reality is not decided on the merits, people shall remain enchained to persons and not to truth. But if it is true that the temple of personal worship has collapsed and if the nation wills to prove its life by its own existence and not by folding hands before Zed and Omer, the ultimate moment has come to demonstrate its support to the principles of truth. Freedom and principles are more precious than thousands of Syed Ameer Ail’s. How long will the political policy of unfortunate Muslims run after Sir Agha Khan or Syed Ameer Ali? He asked.

In the year 1913 some changes were appearing in the policy of the League. Azad congratulated the league and the congress both on the occasion and wrote: ‘One period of the Muslim politics that was called the established Muslim national policy’ has gone. Now the monster of that policy is dead, and if God wills so, it shall never revive. That period has gone when the Muslims used to tremble at the thought of joining the congress lest the Aligarh Biradri would excommunicate them in the dictionary of the political terms it was an abuse for any Muslim to call him congressite. Now, it is not important, whether
Muslims join the congress or not but it has proved that the only single party of the country which has been true to its action has won over their obstinacy through its perseverance and endurance.\textsuperscript{13} He further wrote: ‘Though some people are still there who are still enchained to the past blunder and are not ashamed of telling Muslim the disadvantages of their joining the congress, I am sure, all such disgraceful attempts would essentially shatter before the pressure of time. Since truth has appeared, the falsehood has to give way to it.’\textsuperscript{14}

How happy was Azad on the occasion can be seen through the pages of the Al-Hilal. He condemned those who were responsible for the policy of aloofness. He attributed them ‘the party of devils which would be ultimately at loss.’\textsuperscript{15}

**Azad and Sir Syed**

In reply to an address of the deputation, His Excellency the Viceroy mentioned the policy of Sir Syed. Azad resented and commented: ‘we are happy that his Excellency mentioned a great man of India in pleasant words but if he mean it the political policy of Sir Syed, we regret to say that our noble Viceroy expects us a thing which has long passed away. The Muslim had no political policy as such and even if it was, thanks God it has died away and would never revive.’\textsuperscript{16}

Azad’s attraction towards Sir Syed Ahmed khan was more rational than political. The educational policies of Sir Syed and his emphasis on the need of education among Muslims were never over–ruled by Azad. Azad has admitted
that he was greatly impressed by his views on modern Education. Under Sir Syed’s influence he realised that a man could not be truly educated in the modern world unless he studied modern science, Philosophy and Literature.\textsuperscript{17} Azad got incentive from him to learn English and modern sciences. At another occasion Azad said, “It is true that I regarded the political lead of Sir Syed Ahmed as a grave blunder but at the same time I had the highest admiration for the educational and other reforms which he carried out.”\textsuperscript{18} He regarded Sir Syed one of the greatest Indians of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. But the social, cultural and the educational achievements of Sir Syed Ahmed could not blind Azad to the wrong lead he had given to the Indian Muslims in the political field.

\textbf{Hindu-Muslim Unity or National Integration}

Azad was one of the ardent supporters of the Hindu-Muslim unity and national integration. He tried his best to promote the communal harmony in India. He wrote and spoke a lot on the subject. He demanded all the force in the country be united against the imperialism forgetting their differences. Only united action could win freedom for India. If there were any differences between the two communities they could be solved by reasoning and deliberations a democratic way. His whole philosophy of unity of religion, God and mankind stood in support of national solidarity and integration. Again and again he appeals that the Hindus and the Muslims should be completely united. He said: “sometimes I cannot remain without laughing, when I ponder over the problem, that how strange it is that both the communities are afraid of each
other. They have no confidence on themselves. Muslims think that Hindus are three times more in number, they will crush the Muslim if they are free. Hindus think that if Englishman leave India there will be aggression from north.”  

but Azad was sure that there will be a real unity between Hindus and Muslim. He did not see any religious hindrance in this unity. Islam, he said, stands for unity and equality. “That is why I insist more on Muslims that they should come forward and should not wait for other party to proceed first.” Azad has suggested that an association for Hindu-Muslim unity be organized in the centre which should promote the cause of unity and publish more literature for this purpose. he also pointed out that we should not forget the importance of provincial and territorial unity on the country. Provincialism was raising its head and instead of ‘my country’ people used to say ‘my Bengal, etc.’ he had warned that this would create problems for Indian nationality in future. To him the basic problem of India was to get complete independence from British domination and that was not possible without complete unity.

Azad was not only a man of thought, he was also a man of action. Though by nature he was shy and hesitated to be involved in the politics, he had realised that the nation had demanded him to perform his duty well. In 1911, in the very beginning of his public life he had determined a ‘religion of action’ for himself. No individual nor a nation could achieve anything without putting themselves at the alter of the struggle. Law of nature is that every individual and every nation reaps the fruits of its own toil.
In the Tarjuman-ul-Quran Azad pointed out that the first impact of life of servitude is that the spirit of courage and determination withers away. People get content with the wretched peace of slavery and avoid hard life of struggle. The meagre facilities they get by the foreign rulers seem precious to them. They do not want to depart from them even for the sake of larger happiness of free life. Consequently when a true leader is born and struggle for their emancipation they are aggrieved because the struggle of the leader put them into trouble which they had been avoiding for a long time. They oppose the leader in order to get meagre reward from the tyrant. Since they are deprived of active life they do not know what the price of liberty is? The nations which are not disheartened of the adverse circumstances, and believe in the providential helps come out boldly to face the hardship and the hindrances. It deserves to succeed the rule.

Confidence is the soul of every action and movement. The movements which starts from confidence of success, they always win in the end. Since confidence encourages and pushes them, towards their goal. It prepared people to make every sacrifices to achieve end. Azad himself had that confidence. As back as in 1912 he had declared the emancipation of India is certain. He never doubted this even for a moment. Azad called disappointment ‘message of death’. He warned the people against quick presumptions. They should hold dispassionate deliberation about the causes and effect of every fact and should not get bewildered so soon. Commenting on the fall of Adrinopole he wrote on April 9, 1913 in his journal ‘Al-Hilal’: ‘No other thing is as fatal for humanity
as disappointment. All success depends on hope. This power of man can harness the nature. When the strength dwindles and adversity reigns; none is to encourage and toil does not bear fruit; the angel of hope comes smilingly, spreads its feather and revive the spirit of courage, power and strength.\textsuperscript{24}

He goes on explaining that success is the result of struggle and the struggle require hope. Till hope is there, man cannot be defeated by monstrous trouble and fatality. Hope is as essential for mortality and life as blood circulation for body.

A great sign of the life of the nations is that they are eternal dwellings of hope and howsoever the adversity crowds the sacred bird of hope does not leave its place. They pressure the world as laboratory and hope carves out their future.\textsuperscript{25} He never doubted it even for a moment. He demanded the same confidence from the rest of the people. It is confidence which makes people active, and energetic.

Azad was an idealist thinker. His idealism was based on religion, morality, purification of character, and determination. Social reforms, establishment of ethical values and performance of religious duties were inevitable for him for achieving success. Addressing a session of ‘Jamiat-ul-Ulemai Hind’ on November 18, 1921, Azad pointed out that God has blessed man with two facilities. Mind which determines and the limbs which implement the idea. Hence for the success of every human action two things are naturally essential. Right thinking and its right implementation. No human
action exists without these two conditions. It is called with various names, e.g., determination, planning, concept and belief, etc., meaning the same reality which comes into existence before any action and is in accordance with the principals of causes and effects. Unless and until thinking is correct action cannot be correct.

Though Azad loudly demanded national liberty and claimed for individual freedoms, he is an idealist in determining the relation of individual with the society. Like any idealist philosopher, Azad subordinates the interest of the individual to the interest of the society. He demands complete sacrifice from the individual for the larger good. He should merge his individuality in the society and should become a mere cog in the machine. But we should not forget that Azad evolved his philosophy in a very critical time when the survival of the nation was the basic problem before India. Unless the society was perfectly organized it could not fight out the foreign domination. Naturally the organic concept of society emerges with perfect unity and single command.

If the individual is interested in the national welfare he should forget his individuality and be completely merged in the society. Naturally it will be a great sacrifice. He will have to obey the collective decisions, right or wrong, correct or incorrect. In such an organization the individuality of a person is difficult to be retained. He cannot go against the collective decisions nor can disobey them. No doubt, this would be a strong organization in which the individual would be like a soldier under military discipline.
What Azad proposed was a strict political organization under the command of one leader. If every individual would be freed to become the self-designed leader the nation would have been divided into many columns. It was the sign of disintegrator. That was what Azad wanted to avoid.

Ordinarily, such a political concept undermines the individual liberty. But when we think of an individual in a society, we cannot think of an individual cut off from society. Here the individual becomes an integral part of the society. The society is a collection of individuals where every individual has his own share. So when the society takes a decision it is a collective decision. Naturally all the individuals have a collective share in the collective decision. Thus the collective decision is arrived at by consensus. This entire process, as such, becomes thoroughly democratic.

**Anti-imperialism**

Azad was bitterly opposed to the imperialistic rule. He repeated it times and again that man is not to be enslaved by man. Right of self-determination was the natural right of every individual. They should have a right to decide their laws and to control their own administration. The statement given by Azad in court of law explains how the imperialist forces exploit the natives and how the natives react.

However, one thing cannot be denied here, that Azad was not a successful political leader. Active politics was not his field. He knew little about the politics. He did not know mass psychology. While the other leaders
knew people and their psychology well, they could give them slogans of their choice and could talk in their terms; they could mould themselves according to the demand of the masses, Azad was unable to do that. Since the beginning to the end, he remained true to his own principles and on ideology. He could not mould himself nor could he talk to them in their language. He was convinced that he had attained ultimate truth and that was unchangeable. He demanded sincere and active response from the people. He was not pleased with mere show or talks. He was a man of intelligentsia and not a man of masses. That is why his appeal of nationalism in the name of religion was easily superseded by the shallow slogan of ‘two nation theory’. He could please neither Hindus nor Muslims. And as a leader he failed to take the nation to the pre-determined destination. He was lost in the way. As a theoretician and philosopher he can never be forgotten or suppressed even by those who defeated him in the active politics. His philosophy has a lot to ponder over by the Hindus and Muslim both in India as well as in Pakistan. The advices tendered by him are still relevant in the present context of India and Pakistan. Even in the partition of the country could not eradicate the communal differences. The events that occurred on the sub-continent till today, have proved that we have committed the mightiest error by not overcoming our petty differences which are still troubling us. The way we sought was not sound and healthy. Let us try the other way also which was suggested by Azad and Gandhi.

In his nationalist and patriotic views, Azad may be compared with Mazzini and Garibaldi. Dr. Syed Abdullah while distinguishing Azad from
Hugo, Rousseau, Shelly, and Byron draws a line of his similarity with Rousseau. Rousseau’s views on liberty and nature, self realization and egoism find an echo in the writings of Azad. But Azad is predominantly religious in his thought which brings him nearer to the spiritual thinkers of medieval Europe particularly Thomas Aquinas. Azad and Aquinas have an unflinching faith in the existence of God. They believe that it is ultimately love which conquers the world. They have a positive approach which is poles apart from the generally negative approach of the Greeks.

Thus we see that Azad cannot be placed into any particular category of western thinkers. He is a type by himself. In him we find a congenial synthesis of the thought of his ancestral inheritance and the modern thought he acquired.

**Journalism**

There is much controversy about the ideological evolution of Azad. Most of the writers have divided the views of Azad in different contradictory phases. Such distinction was made by the Muslim communalists who were the political opponents of Azad. They had started a propaganda against Azad by saying that previously he was a strict Muslim thinker and was pure in his thinking, but later on under the spell of Mahatma Gandhi and other Hindu leaders of Congress he strayed from his ‘right path’. Still today he is condemned by several Pakistani authors who believe in the ‘two-nation theory’. Chaudhry Habib Ahmed is one of them. In the ‘Tahrik-e-Pakistan and the Nationalist Ulemas’ he has tried to produce various excerpts from the Al-Hilal and the later writings and Speeches of Azad to prove contradictory
changes in Azad’s ideology. It is interesting to note that all such excerpts are produced after breaking from their context. In this effort too the author has miserably failed to produce the desired impact on the readers. Some present Indian writers, e.g., Mr. S. A. Ansari and Dr. Moin Shakir have also tried to toe the above line of thinking. The former has said in his article, ‘Maulana Azad’s Concept of National Integration’ in the ‘Secular Democracy’ of March 1970 that “Azad started his political career as a religious leader (Alim). His early career (1906-1920) was governed by his religious teachings. His nationalism was uncompromisingly Islamic implying non-co-operation with non-Muslims including the British.”26 He further said that “In the post 1920 period Azad ceased to be a Muslim nationalists. He accepted the fundamental principles of Arab and Turkish (secular and territorial) nationalism and vigorously applied them to the political situation in India.”27 Mr. Ansari, in his assertion of the post 1920 period of Azad’s thought, has quoted Nehru also. But when we go through the relevant pages of Nehru’s ‘Discovery of India’ we find that Ansari’s assertions are unfounded. What Nehru writes about the secular and territorial nationalism of Azad dates back to 1912. But Ansari holds it as post 1920 period. For Ansari, Azad was uncompromisingly Islamic in 1912, but for Nehru he was secular in 1912.

It is, therefore, my contention that Ansari had some misgivings about Nehru’s assessment of Azad. Nehru in clear words said, “The wars in which Turkey became involved aroused his intense interest and sympathy, and yet his approach was different from that of the older Muslim leaders. He had a wider
and more rationalist outlook which kept him away from the feudal and narrowly religious and separatist approach of these older leaders, and inevitably made him an Indian nationalist. He had himself seen nationalism growing in Turkey and the other Islamic countries and he applied that knowledge to India and Saw in the Indian national movement a similar development.”

Dr. Mohammed Ashraf, author of ‘Hindustani Muslim Siyasat’ is also of the same view that before 1920 Azad was a revivalist and it was only after 1920 that Azad supported secular views. However, the author is of the opinion that it is not important that Azad popularised the beliefs of ‘unity of Islam’ or ‘Ottoman Khilafat’ but in the veil of religious views he spreaded anti-imperialistic views among the Muslim-religious-Ulemas, which ultimately resulted in the revolutionary movements of Khilafat and Swaraj.

**Early Writings**

To study’ the ideological evolution of Azad we should remember that he had started writing prose and poetry both at a very tender age of about ten, and all these writings, are preserved in the pages of magazines and journals. Being a genius, Azad could promote well informed articles even at that age. That is why they got place in the best journals of the day. Since his early childhood Azad was very active and very fond of social activities as he held them as essential elements of life. He would write articles, edit papers and journals, address the people, form associations and establish libraries and reading rooms.
All these activities he carried on in his childhood in Calcutta. Mr. Suleman Hindi has enumerated about 39 articles and books by Azad from 1899, when he was only ten years of age to 1910, when he reached twenty two. All those articles published in magazines were scholastic and full of knowledge. Some of them were free translations and some were edited from books or articles of high knowledge and were published separately in the form of books. The first article written by Azad was titled “Harms of intolerance.”

In his very childhood, Azad had realised that he had been endowed with extra-ordinary intellect and had an instinct to speak and deliver long speeches. He could address 50 — 60 people without any nervousness. When he was eleven he thought of trying poetry and the fondness increased so much that he started publication of a monthly collection of poems called ‘Nerange-e-Alam’. It was published in 1899 und continued for eight months only. He also attended poetic gatherings but this continued for a few days. Simultaneously he wrote many articles in ‘Makhzan and Ehsan-ul-Akhbar.’ Due to his vast study of foreign papers and books especially of Arabic literature, he became well-versed in the problems of the Islamic world. His articles were packed with extra-ordinary information about Islamic world and were read with interest by Muslims. These articles though not of political importance were indicating future growth of the writer, and were appreciated by the popular opinion. Azad was encouraged and he made up his mind to publish a literary journal of his own. The first issue of his first venture the
‘Lassan-u-Sidq’ was published from Calcutta on November 20, 1903. However, the journal was pure literary journal and discussed mostly the literary and social problems of the day. Azad had given four objects for its publication in the first issue of the journals

1. To do social reform.

2. To enlarge the scope of the Urdu Literature.

3. To create scholarly taste in the people.

4. To produce critical reviews of Urdu books.

Azad discussed these objectives in details and stressed the need of social and educational work among the people. The journal was edited so masterly and efficiently that the readers could not make out that the editor was merely a boy of fifteen years. They thought that an adult person with high scholarly knowledge was editing it. Soon the journal became popular among the literary Muslims. People wished to see the editor and they invited him to Lahore to address a meeting of Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam in 1904. But when Azad introduced himself they could not believe that he was the editor of the ‘Lassan-u-sidq’. Some one asked him why his father had sent him and did not come himself taking him to be the Son of Azad.

Through his journal Azad pointed out various social evils in Muslim society and asked them to get rid of them. He held that the Ulemas, i.e., the Muslim-scholars were responsible for the orthodox traditions, customs and
superstitions which had taken root in the society. The Ulemas neglected these evils, because they were in their economic interest. Their vested interest prohibited them to declare the truth. Azad deplored that one of the causes of poverty in India was extravagance on rituals. Some people had thought that the spread of education will do away with this orthodoxy. But Azad viewed that the orthodoxy was an impediment to education. He opined that the people did not adopt new education because they preferred traditional one. They felt themselves unable to break the age old tradition, which were so sentimentally attached with their forefathers. Any attempt to reform would bring resistance from them. They hated reforms, and would not like to hear the simple truth. This is why they put obstacles in the path of smooth reforms. Azad thought that such resistance was a historical routine and one should not care for it.

In literature Azad preferred free review and just criticism. Even in biographies Azad thought that just criticism was essential. Only admirations and praises of the person was not sufficient. He appreciated the criticism of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan by Altaf Husen Hali in the Hayat-e-Javed and justified it.

After Lassan-u-Sidq Azad had an opportunity to edit ‘Al-Nadva’ for about seven or eight months. Maulana Shibli was editing it, and he associated Azad also. Azad had an opportunity to study the views of Shibli from close corners. He also edited ‘Wakil’ for a few days. He used to write very lengthy articles in the paper. Another paper published under his editorship was ‘Darul-Saltanat’, It was one of the oldest papers of Urdu.
During this period, when some important political changes were taking place in Bengal, Azad was inclined to take interest in political problems of India. He felt great Change in his views which led him later towards the policy he adopted in the Al-Hilial. As Sheikh Ghulam Mohammed the proprietor of ‘Wakil’ could not agree with his views, Azad resigned from the editorship of the ‘Wakil’.

After resigning from ‘Wakil’ he left for a tour of west Asia.

This period of Azad was the period of pure social and literary writings and is not very important from political point of view. This may be considered just preparatory period of a scholar-student who had to play an important role in the times to come. Azad’s formative period continued upto 1905. This was the year of beginning of hectic political activities in Bengal. The partition vigorously accelerated the extremist movement in his home province. He observed the movement with keen interest. The environment offered him vivid and contradictory scenes. As Mahadev Desai has observed: “In 1908, when Maulana was only twenty, his mind began to undergo rapid changes. One of these big changes was due to the political state of affairs in India. His homeland was Bengal which was then seething with discontent and full of a political awakening. He noticed that India was presenting to the world two kinds of contradictory pictures, at one and the same time. On the one hand then were Hindus, whose minds were fired with a new patriotism and dreams of freedom and no repression by Government could stifle them. They were unflinchingly-sacrificing their youthful lives on the altar of patriotism. On the other hand,
were the Muslims, who had set their face against all political struggle and had become willing tools in the hands of Government determined to crush the national movement.” 38 Hot on the horn came the tour of the Middle East countries by Azad, which offered quite a different picture to him. The Muslims of these countries were offering hard resistance to the European Imperialism. The national movements were on the high pitch there. When Azad met different political leaders of the Middle East they ‘expressed their surprise that Indian Muslims were either Indifferent to or against nationalist demands. They were of the view that Indian Muslims should have led the national struggle for freedom, and could not understand why Indian Mussalmans were camp followers of the British.’ 39 Azad felt more convinced than ever that Indian mussalman must co-operate in the political liberation of the country and that the steps must be taken to ensure that they were no more exploited by the British Government. He felt necessary to create a new movement among Indian Muslims and there on the foreign soil. He decided that when he returned to Indian he would take up political work with greater earnestness. 40

By the age of twenty four he had completed his mental voyage and was satisfied with the conclusions he had reached. In the pages of ‘Ghubar-e-Khatir’ he has acknowledged that at the age of twenty four when people generally begin the journey of their youth he had crossed the thorny forests and was picking up the thorns from the soles of his feet. 41
When he came back to India he found the political situation in Bengal still worse. Its walls and streets were echoing with national anthem and new slogans. ‘Bengal was ready to hurl defiance at those in authority.’\(^{42}\) Azad could not be at rest without joining the movement actively. He met the anarchists of Bengal, only to know to his surprise that they did not rely on Muslims.

“In those days”, Azad writes, “the revolutionary groups were recruited exclusively from the Hindu middle classes. In fact all the revolutionary groups were then actively anti-Muslim. They saw that the British government was using the Muslims against India’s political struggle and the Muslims were playing the government’s game.”\(^{43}\) The revolutionaries naturally felt that “the Muslims were an obstacle to the attainment of Indian freedom and must, like other obstacles, be removed.”\(^{44}\)

One more factor responsible for this non – reliance on the Muslims was that the government realizing the anarchist tendency among the Hindus of Bengal thought ‘that, no Hindu officer could be fully trusted in dealing with these revolutionary activities. They, therefore, imported a number of Muslim officers from the U.P. for the manning of the intelligence branch of the police. The result was that the Hindus of Bengal began to feel that Muslims as such were against political freedom and against the Hindu community.”\(^{45}\)

When Azad met the revolutionaries, he argued with them that they were mistaken in thinking that Muslims as a community were their enemies. He told them that they should not generalize from the experience of a few Muslim
officers in Bengal. He gave illustrations from Egypt, Iran and Turkey where the Muslims were engaged in similar activities against the British government to achieve their freedom. The Muslim of India too would join the political struggle if they worked among them and tried to win over them as their friends. He also pointed out that the revolution could face more difficulties due to the active hostility and indifference of Muslims. “The struggle for political liberty would become much more difficult. They must, therefore make every effort to win the support and friendship of the community.”

The anarchists could not be convinced at first about the correctness of his diagnosis. But in course of time some of them came around to his point of view. During this period Azad had also started working among the Muslims and found that there was a group of young men ready to take up the political task. But it seems that perhaps Azad could not convince his Hindu revolutionaries and anarchist brothers about the integrity of new Muslim comers. The anarchists must have naturally been over cautious because of government’s watch on them. That is why Azad planned to prepare a revolutionary group among the Muslims.

Azad chalked out a plan to from a revolutionary party of Indian Muslims on the model of Bengal revolutionaries who had rocked the province and also the foundation of the British government in Indian. In order to explain its aims and objects he wrote a lengthy article which was serialised in the issues of the Al–Hilal No.25 of Vol.2, dated 25th June 1913 and Nos.1, 2, 5, 13 of Vol.2,
from July to September, 1913. later on, in 1921 the article was published by Munshi Mushtaq Ahmed, Nazim, Qomi Dar-ul–ishaat, Meerut, and was titled ‘Hezbollah’. The party was meant to do the reformatory work among the Muslims and to prepare and awaken them for the expected revolution. Why did Azad ask the Muslims only to organize themselves in one revolutionary party, and left other communities out? The answer is obvious. There were revolutionary and terrorist groups of Hindus who were already in the field. Now the only thing was to bring Muslims also upto that point to accompany them. That is why Azad tried to organise a parallel body of Muslims to strengthen the hands of the nationalists. Unfortunately the later writers have misrepresented the fact and neglected all that he had simultaneously said in the Al-Hilal. The critics have concluded that Azad did not want Muslims join non-Muslim organizations. They should form a party of their own with the battle cry of Jehad ‘to exterminate the non-believers by resorting to force’. 48

The spirit of the article is described in brief. Nowhere in the article there is any mention of extermination of non-believers by believers by any method whatsoever. This was mere propaganda by the political opponents of Azad to degrade him in the eyes of Hindus and Muslims both, and to create differences among them. They wanted to show that previously he was communalist and reactionary and later on he returned to secularism and nationalism under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and other Hindu leaders. Unfortunately the later Indian scholars have fallen prey to their nefarious propaganda. The author of the ‘Khilafat to Partition’ Dr. Moin Shakir has written that “Quran commands
the friends of God to resort to force for exterminating the non-believers. Thus Azad concluded that the politics of India needed a drastic overhauling. The prescription suggested by him was that the friends of god should organize themselves into one party, the party of god. Their success is certain as it is ordained by god.”49 The last line in the above quotation is that of Maulana Azad. In fact this line should not have been added to the entire para by Dr. Shakir. Whatever Dr. Shakir meant to say by the previous lines is entirely different from what Azad meant to say by the last line. It is therefore unjust to attribute to Azad what he in fact opposed. It is a case of quoting Azad out of context. After going through these lines one comes to the conclusion that Azad might have produced this view in the article under reference. But this is not so. It is another article which was written on the fall of Adrionople. Adrionople had belonged to Turks before it fell to Greeks. Again it was recaptured by them. Azad expressed his happiness in a very beautiful piece of literature and concluded that there were some well established laws of nature for rise and fall of nations. Those nations who act according to these laws are sure of success and those who overlook them are bound to be doomed. Nowhere Azad divided the people as believers and non-believers, nor he advised them to use force to exterminate the non-believers. Even the idea of extermination of non-believers is wholly and completely un-Quranic. One wonders how the learned author has applied it to the philosophy of Azad! The second misunderstanding which is created by the above statement is that when Azad attempted to form a party and named it as the Party of god, it was essentially to be a reactionary body that
aimed the extermination of the non-believers by use of force. The inference is very tragic. As it has been said above the revolutionary party of Hindus was already in the field. It was only the Muslim community that was either away from the politics or its politics was being regulated by the Government. Hindu revolutionaries were not confident of their integrity. Hence, they could not allow Muslims to join their organizations. There was a need to bring Muslims also to the same level of consciousness which Hindus had achieved. The Muslim League, a separate organization of Muslims, was also in the field but since its very inception Azad did not like its separatist and anti-Congress trend. Therefore, Azad tried to organize Muslims. But the way it was foiled by other ulemas (Muslim scholars) shows that the policy was not appreciable to them. Had it been reactionary and communal, it could have certainly gathered momentum and would surely have been patronized by the Government. But such was not the case.

The objects of ‘Party of God’ were discussed under the heading “The Pain and the Prescription”. The article was serialised in the issues of the Al-Hilal referred above. The gist of the article is given below.

Introducing the subject, the author pointed out that there were all indications of change in the season. Change was obvious. People must respond to it. The restlessness was indicative of that change. The Islamic world was at the last stage of its revolution. People seemed willing to set off. But the question was that of destination and object.
Then Azad discussed various alternatives before the Muslims and rejected them one by one. He said that collection of money would not solve their problem nor only the service of ‘Kaaba’ was the goal of the Muslims. He viewed that they needed the seed of reform and action.\textsuperscript{52} Which would bear the fruit of their object. They were also in want of a movement of truth and righteousness which would make Muslims true Muslims,\textsuperscript{53} and for that purpose there should be a party which should be true to their words and deeds.\textsuperscript{54} The goal of Muslims was not to serve Kaaba but to serve the world.\textsuperscript{55} Azad viewed that the ills of world had always been the same and theoretically they should undergo the same treatment. He produced many examples from the history of religions to show how every time religion revolutionised the society and provided them relief, and still it could do the same.\textsuperscript{56} But every time in the history of the reforms of the world, he observed, there was formed a party for achieving the object. If there was no party to implement the teachings they were useless.\textsuperscript{57}

Azad had realised and pointed it to the people that it was not easy to change the world. If they wished to change a window in the house they had to do a lot even for such a little work. Those who wished to bring a change upon the big territories on the surface of the globe and wanted to make change in the thinking and action of the large populations, they should realize how difficult their object was. Even the materialistic changes in the world had occurred after havoc blood-shed and resulted in the change of the big empires. Even the
smallest of them was made after pondering over the scheme for decades and sacrificing thousands of lives. Thousands of children became orphans and women widow then the smallest national revolution was completed. When these materialistic revolutions demanded so may sacrifices what should then those revolutions demand which aim to change the spirits and hearts? He asked.  

The above introduction followed the analysis of the situation of his day. “To-day the world has gone dark. It demands light. It has slept again into the same deep slumber from which it was awakened again and again. It has forgotten its object and its old disease has lapsed again. Millions of people are victims of communal and racial prejudices. There is no other bigger crime than to be weak for any country and nation. The strong nations have presumed that the whole world of God is for them and issue death warrants for millions of peoples like a judge. The more the words of truth and justice are repeated the more they are overlooked in practice. The equality of mankind and the peace of the world is being destroyed by the use of force. The Muslims have been assigned this duty by God to give relief to the mankind and He has made them His party. The Muslims have lost their mission and have become the party of devils. They should reform themselves not for their own sake but for others.”

Azad called upon them to come ahead. To achieve the object it was essential that some sincere persons should sacrifice themselves in the name of God. It was not necessary that they be in large numbers because it was not
number, but truth which counted more; nor was it necessary that they should be big people. The people from lower class could also join if they had the unbeatable courage, determination and belief and did not care for their lives. 61

Azad concluded that these were the conditions of work and even if people would not accompany him he had determined to set off alone towards the object and though he was aware of the difficulties of the path, they inspired him more to go ahead. 62

It is evident from the history that inspite of chorus of condemnation from his opponents and being left alone he did not leave his path. He continued with his mission. He rose above his own self and always said and did what he had thought true and just. But this was not the whole theme of the Al-Hilal. What was it?

The ‘Al-Hilal’

The first issue of the ‘Al-Hilal’ was launched on July 13, 1912. It continued upto November 1914, when the press was confiscated by the Government of Bengal. In November 1915 a second journal called ‘Al-Balagh’ was started by him. It Continued upto March 1916, when Azad was expelled from Bengal and was interned at Ranchi. In June 1927 again he revived the ‘Al-Hilal’ which continued for a short period upto December 1927.

The Al-Balagh which was the second name of the Al-Hilal adopted the same policy of free thinking and free expression resulting in the internment of its editor.
In 1927 when the journal was launched for the third time, it revived the same spirit.

**Time of the ‘Al-Hilal’**

1912 marks the year of publication of Al-Hilal and the attack of Tripoli by Italy. The imperialist tendencies were no more secret for the world by that time. The attack worked like a wild fire in the minds of the Muslims of the world. The European imperialist forces were making further plans to split North Africa in more pieces and snatching it from their original inhabitants. No doubt, it made all the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist people angry in general and Muslims in particular. They came forward in defence of Tripoli against Italian imperialism. The Turks and Arabs resented the aggression of Italy which was a permanent danger to their homeland. They took it as new crusade against them. The European imperialists also gave it a communal colour by interpreting the victory of Tripoli as the victory of Christianity over Islam. Naturally the whole Islamic world rose up in defence of Tripoli. The imperialists adopted a new strategy of dividing the defence forces by opening a new front by manipulating the Balkan States to revolt against Turkey. The revolt too was manipulated in the name of religion and was aided by the big European powers. Turkey had to fight the battle of her life and death. This was not the first time when Turkey was victimised by the European powers in the name of religion. Every student of history knows that the Eastern problem was primarily a political and economic problem which was given colour of religion by the European diplomats to create general apathy among the non-Muslim
world towards Turkey. Azad as a journalist and as a Muslim could not overlook the burning problem of the day. He gave a call to the Muslims to help the people of Turkey against imperialist aggression. His pan-Islamism and anti-imperialism was simultaneous. To say that first he was a reactionary and pan-Islamist and later on converted to progressive views is a misrepresentation of the truth. Even his pan-Islamism was positively progressive and anti-imperialist. He understood the political problem of Turkey and Islamic would in its true perspective. That is why when the institution of Khilafat was abolished in Turkey Azad did not utter a single word of protest while other Muslim philosophers and leaders made a hue and cry over it. Azad justified the abolition 63 though he was the person who has spoken most in defence of Khilafat against British imperialism. He was not a worshipper of the institutions, nor had he defended it merely on mythical grounds.

The policy of the ‘Al-Hilal’

Since the first day of its inception, Al-Hilal hit hard at the British rule in India. The publication of the weekly was greatly hailed by Indian Muslims. It was considered ‘something unique in the history’ of Urdu journalism and soon the ‘Al-Hilal’ became the focus where the resurgent spirit of Indian Muslims found its finest expression. 64 Azad had decided to rouse people to action. He had realised that it was the proper time when the mighty energies could be better utilized and imbibed if they are given a call for the high and noble ideal of liberation of mankind. He called upon the first man who had resolved to
serve. There were lot of tasks to do. The age was the age of war and they were surrounded by the enemies. There was no want of field for action. What they lacked actually were patriots and fighters. Azad was of the opinion that the Muslims of India should renounce their policy of pleasing the British Government. Instead he demanded of them the mental and intellectual emancipation so that they could exercise their own discretion in favour of national freedom. He exclaimed: “It is in the indolence of individuals that the souls of nations sleep.”

As Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru has observed, ‘the year 1912 was notable also in the development of the Moslem mind in India because of the appearance of two new weeklies, the Al-Hilal in Urdu and the Comrade in English’. He further writes, ‘Azad spoke in a new language to them in his weekly Al-Hilal. It was not only a new language in thought and approach, even its texture was different, for Azad’s style was tense and virile, though sometimes little difficult because of its Persian background’. The conservative orthodoxy was his main target of attack. ‘Abul Kalam Azad attacked this stronghold of conservatism and anti-nationalism not directly but by spreading ideas which undermined the Aligarh tradition. This very youthful erite and journalist caused a sensation in Moslem intellectual circles and, though the eiders frowned upon him, his words created a ferment in the minds of the younger generation. The ferment had already started because of events in Turkey, Egypt and Iran, as well as the development of the Indian nationalist movement. Azad gave a definite trend to
it by pointing out that there was no conflict between Islam and sympathy for Islamic countries and Indian nationalism.68

He attacked the fortress of anti-nationalist orthodoxy, preaching such view which shattered the roots of Aligarh-Traditions.69

Azad discussed various important religious, national and international problems on the pages of Al-Hilal. Form Balkan Wars to the problem of freedom of press, every important national and international issue was discussed with full details and information for the guidance of the people. Problems regarding philosophy of life, morality and religion used to get place on its pages, Al-Hilal was an organ through which Azad tried to liberate people mentally and intellectually. Al-Hilal added ‘something unique in the history of Urdu language and literature. Rarely has there been such a combination of wit and poetry, of biting sarcasm and lofty idealism. But what captured the imagination of young men was not only poetic grace or literary excellence but the formulation and statement of a new faith. Al-Hilal soon became the focus where the resurgent spirit of Indian Muslims found its finest expression.70

Syed Abdul Latif has observed that ‘Al-Hilal, brought to the Muslims of India a new vision in the fields both of religion and of politics.’71 Al-Hilal counseled Muslims to trust on their faith instead of number and invited them to join Hindus fearlessly. This resulted in the united movement of Khilafat and non-co-operation.
Syed Mahmud has remarked that from the time Azad started Al-Hilal, ‘one supreme idea functioned in his mind rendering every activity of his subservient to it, and that was the freedom of his country to be achieved through Hindu-Muslim unity.’ Syed A. Latif also observed the same that Al-Hilal had two definite objectives before it – one to fight obscurantism in the life of the Indian Muslims; the other was to fight British Imperialism in India. Azad’s journalism was compared with the French journalism where the news have secondary importance and the comments on them first. Azad had explained the Muslims that ‘unless in thought, word and deed’ they lived the message of communal harmony and peace, true unity would not come.

Azad himself pointed out in the very first issue of the Al-Hilal that the inception of the journal was with certain objects and not merely to add to the number of journals in the country. The journal was not an end in itself rather it was the commencement of the journey of well thought over views so that the objects might be expedited. To make a journal an end in itself is a contempt of the God-given gifts of heart and mind. Some greater objects were lying behind it which were to be realised gradually. He also declared that the objects were such which could bring sufferings and miseries to him. He asked: ‘Why was it necessary that life should be led in peace and luxury? Was there any guarantee that life would not have to face the troubles and miseries? The swimmers go across the river through the water but those who are afraid of river can’t get peace even in the boat. He prayed to God that if he was really on the true path
and had the warmth of sincerity, god might grant him an opportunity to see the results of his efforts but if he had any business motive to earn more profits in the name of nation or community God may end his life before he could reach success. For green and fruit-bearing tress of the garden are protected while the dry trees of forest are burnt. The heart which is deprived of truth and sincerity should not survive to get success.\textsuperscript{77}

The tempo of the Al-Hilal may be estimated from the excerpts given below. It was a call for complete self-sacrifice.

\textquote{There comes in the history of nations a time when desire to live becomes a sin than to live on. At such a time, the number of those behind high walls and iron bars increases and the trade of the ironmonger splendidly thrives. Ropes hang on branches of trees and wooden planks are aloft for the sons of Adam to walk on to their doom. Such a day comes only to usher in another day, when the seed sown by executions puts forth the fruit of a living and abiding life.}\textsuperscript{78}

Giving a call to the patriots he said:

\textquote{My resolve is not to seek a task, but to seek first man to do it. In this world, there never was any lack of tasks. But there has always been a dearth of men to undertake them. The present age is a age of wars. All around us are hosts of enemies, and there is not a single corner where armours do not ring. So, there is no lack of fields for action. Those who possess the spirit of a soldier and the courage of a hero must come out to face life as they find it and}
face its trials. I assert once again that there is no lack of tasks. What we really lack among us are patriots and fighters.”

Commenting on the invincibility of Truth he wrote:

“The oppression of truth is not a new thing. It had to undergo such terrible times of trials and troubles when it could get no shelter on the earth of God but a few hearts. Inspite of all these efforts to make it vanish, truth remained truth and false false.”

Azad’s approach was historical. From the ancient history as well as the current events of his time he utilised material for achieving his object and expressed his own ideology through them. He held, if the nation is in slumber, but it has not forgotten the dreams of liberty and self-rule, a mildest voice is sufficient to awaken it. If the earth is not barron the seed will not be destroyed.

Azad was of the opinion that involvement in war and bloodshed takes nations to moral and material destructions. He viewed:

Nations do not get honour by shedding more and more blood and enslaving the large numbers of human beings. Had it been so, the dens of the beasts would have been more sacred than the holy places of the human beings. The superiority and sanctity of the human race is in its ethical values and divine characteristics. Few moments of nobility are much better than thousand years of brutality. He narrated the stories and events from the battle field of Tripoli
and provided his readers with moral courage by showing that how two hundred Algerians could resist two thousand well trained European troops and could defeat them. This he described as dashing of a glass against a mountain.84

He did not explain his views directly in first one-two issues. For, he knew that for most of the people it would be bitter and for other it was tasteless. The fire which was smouldering for years might be flared up and could endanger many costly coats and holy turbans.85

The third issue of the Al-Hilal throws light on the trend Azad was going to adopt. He told the readers that the way he was going to adopt was not safe and secure. It was dangerous and full of thorns. Neither was it paying in any respect. In reply to a letter and some contribution in terms of money by a ruler of a princely state who was great admirer of Al-Hilal, Azad explained that his object was not to earn profits but he was eagerly waiting for losses and troubles; not admirations but hatred and abuses; not the flowers of luxury but the thorns of miseries and sorrows; not to sacrifice the worldly riches but to sacrifice himself.86 One can see from his life how was he correct in his estimate of the things. He obtained, in fact, thorns and abuses in return. It was not because he had desired them but he knew the consequences of his efforts and struggle would be the same.

**Freedom of Press**

He preserved his freedom at all cost and guarded his integrity against all encroachments. Returning the money of the above said ruler he wrote:
‘Moreover, it is not known for what his handsome amount has been sent. If you want to buy my person, it is much more than my value, because in my opinion one basket of grass has more value than my person. May be that this much of money would be required to but the feudal lords who are born with silver spoons. So much money is sufficient to purchase the whole class of people like us the mud-dwellers and the saints. But if you want to buy my freedom of thought and my conscience, I humbly pray that neither these please of gold nor all the wealth of your estate together with the ‘Koh-i-Noor’ and the ‘Takht-e-Taos’ are adequate to do that.’ Azad regarded that any money more than the actual price of the paper from any person or organization accepted by the journalists is a black spot on the profession of journalism. He considered journalism a noble duty towards humanity which educates masses for the things worth doing and prohibits them from doing ignoble things. Hence the pen of journalists should be free from all sorts of pressures. The gold and silver is fatal for it. He sarcastically suggested that those journalists who accept the generous gifts from the rich people in the name of donations and contributions for their honesty and conscience should better adopt the profession of begging and call at the doors of the feudal lords.

Azad was preparing ground for throwing seeds. By the time when he explained his objects in the 9th issue of the journal the policy of the paper had definitely adopted a specific line. The partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911 in the Delhi Durbar. The separatists had suffered a great setback. Azad thought that this setback received by the separatists would open their eyes and they
would be no more misled by government’s policy of divide and rule and would realize better what should do in the given circumstances. Azad had no good opinion about the Muslim league from the very beginning. His criticism of the league was extremely bitter and scathing. In reply to a letter from Rampur in which he was asked to comment on the articles written by certain Mohd. Yusuf in favour of the Constitution of the League Azad wrote thus:

‘We have seen the article written by somebody named Mohd. Yusuf in an Urdu paper. Perhaps he works in the office of the League for some rupees. We do not consider him worth addressing because what that poor man is writing is actually the salt of the League which instead of being white powder has taken the form of liquid ink. We too are thinking to write comprehensive and exhaustive series of articles on the topic which is one of the objects of our expedition. Thank God, we are among those few people who, when the League was dominating the politics were jeering at its childish activities. The present secretary of the League must not have forgotten the talk we had with him many years ago in the house of Maulvi Mohammed Ishaque Saheb at Allahabad.’

Azad also made it clear that it was not the annulment of the partition of Bengal which affected his views but since the very first day of the foundation of the League he held the same view. Azad was sure that he had held the right view and that it was due to divine guidance. For God saves some of His men from deviation. In the eighth issue of the journal Azad discussed at length the
political policy of the Indian Muslims and was more specific about the remedies he suggested.

A letter was published in the pioneer from one Mr. Hamid Ali Khan in which the British rule in India was admired. It was said that those who had even a little common sense would never believe that we (Indians) were able to run the administration of our country. It also advised the people to be faithful to the Government only and asked them to make efforts to popularize the Government. Azad while commenting on the above letter wrote, “We too say that Muslims should avoid treachery; not merely to please the Government but because it is the command of God. However, in our belief the Government which is not lawful and not based on parliamentary democracy is declared by Islam as the worst human crime and a sin. Being the follower of Quran, the first religious duty of the Indian Muslims is to demand parliamentary form of democracy for the country and should not sit peacefully till they get the demand conceded. As far as the question of inability of the people to run their own administration is concerned, we have been listening to the argument for the last forty years with blind eyes and serving under the (British) yoke like blind oxen. Now Mr. Hamid Ali Khan and like minded friends should spare us from such advices. If this remains the political philosophy of Muslims they would remain eternally inefficient for the purpose. They would ever be decorating their chests with these medals of slavery. It is a wonder, the event of December 12 too proved ineffective to open the eyes of worshippers of slavery. No doubt God has sealed their hearts, their eyes and their ears.
These are the people who have bargained the wrong path at the cost of the right one. They will never be benefited by this bargain.  

Azad desired keenly that his community too should participate in the political struggle wholeheartedly and should not jeer at those who were working for the national emancipation. He warned that their policy of appeasing the Government caused them insulting behavior from it. The community which had been wholly dependent on the mercy of the Government, refused to be independent, considered the political struggle as a crime and treason, remained quite inactive, laughed and jeered at those who were struggling, could not get any honour in the eyes of the Government. He considered the Act of Annulment as an obligation of the Government on the Muslims. It had given them an opportunity to understand their mistakes.  

The Tarjuman-ul-Quran

The most authentic source-book for the purpose of studying his views on religion is his monumental ‘Tarjuman-ul-Quran’ – translation and commentary on the Quran. It is prefaced with an exhaustive introduction explaining its approach to religion. Two of the three parts of the book were written by Azad during his internment in Ranchi but during a search by the Dy. Commissioner all the papers were confiscated and sent to the Government. These papers were not returned even after his release from internment. After great efforts Azad could get them back half burnt and half torn. ‘He was told that there had been a
fire, and was also asked to thank his stars that at least part of them was rescued.⁹⁷

The Trajuman-ul-Quran, especially its introduction is considered one of the most significant pieces of religious literature of the Indian Muslims produced during the last two hundred years. It contains the essence of the concepts of Maulana Azad’s views about the religion in general and regarding Islam in particular.⁹⁸ Maulana Azad himself had attached the greatest importance to this masterpiece of his.

Mohammed Yunus Khalid writes that in the second volume of the Tarjuman-ul-Quran, the fact is well established especially in the explanation of Sura Yusuf and Sura Kahaf, and research of Zul-Qurnen, that Azad is not only an interpreter of Quran but also an expert in archaeology and a great research scholar and historian.⁹⁹

Azad did not like to make religious-propagation a profession. With the political declination of any religious community the religious leaders of that community make it a profession and earn money by teaching religion. They are devoid of the true spirit of religion. Thus, religion too becomes a business community. Azad wondered that the religious group which was a means of reformation and guidance had itself become a source of all sorts of misguidance, rigidity and conservatism. No other group had ever harmed the religion more than its religious leaders. In the way of world peace and maintenance of truth and righteousness, this pessimistic, disgraceful and obstinate class of dogmatists has always been a divine curse. The same sort of
people have caused rift and splits from the very beginning of the history of Islam. Whenever any voice of truth and righteousness was raised the devil was successful in victimising the Ulema first.\textsuperscript{100} Azad emphasized more the spirit than the rituals of religion. Religion requires very cautious and realistic teaching. But contrary to it a few people have made it a profession of theirs and exploit the people for their vested interests. He found that it was comparatively more popular and more profitable business which has no risk.\textsuperscript{101} Azad has produced several illustrations in support of his argument. He was aggrieved of the orthodoxy and ultra-modernism both. Referring to the orthodox Ulema in his book “Tazkira” Azad pointed out that ignorance, prejudices and selfishness have taken the form of religion for them. For the modernists and ultraliberals, absence of restraints, and denial of God has become the fundamental of novelty and reason. Our schools are empty of knowledge, our mosques are free from sincerity and even our bars are deprived of unhypocratic drunkards. None is true in his behavior. Hypocrisy is ruling the whole society. Obviously the seekers of truth find no room for them and have to carve their own new way. Azad believed that no religion on earth has taught man to worship man. The oldest thing revealed to man is the teaching of truth and God-worship alone, but their followers deviated from the path they perverted it. Such perversion damaged the religion most. The significance of virtuous deeds is minimised and the whole basis of religion rests on superstitious thinking and beliefs. A few misled persons mislead the whole mankind. The spiritual leaders themselves are entangled in petty dissensions with each other. They are never
unanimous on any single aspect of truth. Azad attacked such hypocrites violently who he said are more poisonous than snakes and scorpions and more greedy than dogs. They do not possess the knowledge of truth which eliminates conflicts and clashes of the people and unites them but their knowledge is the knowledge of differenced and dissensions. Their selfish motives added fuel to the fire and made the things still worse. Azad felt surprise that the dacoits, robbers, gamblers and those who are slaves of immoral practices are united but those who claim to be the most virtuous and pious are not united even within the premises of mosque or monastery. They are beasts in their behavior. In one respect the bars are better places where we can hear affectionate talks and loving songs than the mosques that present the worst scenes of quarrels. No man of reason and understanding can ever believe it to be religion. Azad could not remain silent. He proclaimed through the Al-Hilal. ‘Silence and abstinence is tantamount to sin and infidelity. For we are heading towards our consequences. Future is going to be a time of trial.’
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