

The Ideals of Islam in Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's Thoughts and Political Practices: An Appraisal

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ABSTRACT

The article attempts to explore and describe the ideals of Islam as perceived and practised by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) at various stages of his life. Starting from religious conservatism received from his family, Maulana Azad moved towards rationalism at first and then to Pan-Islamism before finally committing to humanism. In this process of intellectual progression, his perception of Islam and its ideals changed as his social and political interactions changed over time. These changing contours of Maulana Azad's thoughts found manifestation in the political practices he carried out from various platforms. Islam served as a great source of legitimation in his political practices. Inspiration for Islamic revivalism drew him into political activities aimed at serving the Muslim cause and fighting British imperialism. Maulana Azad's sentiments and aspirations for Islam and Muslims echoed loudly during the Khilafat Movement which brought him closer to communal harmony and also resulted in his lasting association with the Indian National Congress. Whatever the platform he utilised, for Maulana Azad Muslim uplift remained a constant and prime concern in politics which he, ultimately, came to believe could be achieved by Hindu-Muslim unity as a single force against the British colonial power.

Key Words: *Islam, Pan-Islamism, Rationalism, Khilafat, Hijrat-ka-fatwa, Qaul-i-Faisal.*

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Introduction

Ghulam Mohiuddin Ahmad commonly known as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was born in 1888.¹ The precise birth date is uncertain. Humayun Kabir says that Azad's seventieth birthday fell in November 1958.² The Government of India, for reasons still unknown, fixed November 11, as Azad's birth date.³ According to Ghulam Rasul Mihr, Azad was born on August 17 or 18, 1888.⁴ Malik Ram regards August 22, 1888, as his birth date.⁵ However, Azad mentions in *Tazkira* the years of birth as 1888 A. D, Zul-Hajj 1305 A. H but does not provide an exact birth date.⁶

Maulana Azad was named Ahmad after Muhammad (S.A.W.), the great Prophet of Islam.⁷ He earned the title Maulana among the public for his deep religious attachment. He espoused Azad or "Free" as his pseudonym, indicating his independent inquisition and aversion to inherited traditional doctrine. His father Maulana Khairuddin (1831-1908), a reputed Arabic man of letters and a *Sufi* of *Qadriyah* school,⁸ called him by the historic name of "*Firuz Bakht*" (of Victorious Fortune) and took out a chronogram of the year of his birth from the following hemistich; "Of young luck and young fortune, may he remain young."⁹

Azad belonged to a respectable family which acquired nobility overages for an obligation to the excellencies of devotion and excellence of erudition. He narrates the reputation and the religious and literary accomplishments of his family in *Tazkira* in these words; "In my family, three interconnected families were joined and all three families are the renowned and scholarly families of India and Hejaz."¹⁰ Among the ancestors, Maulana Azad took pride in the accomplishments of his mother's maternal uncle Shaikh Muhammad bin Zahir Watri, the *Mufti* of Madina, his paternal grandfather Maulana Muhammad Hadi, a prominent

¹ Mushirul Hassan, ed. *Islam and Indian Nationalism: Reflections on Abul Kalam Azad* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1992), 143.

² Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom: The Complete Version* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1988), xii.

³ V. N. Datta, *Maulana Azad* (New Delhi: Vanguard Books, 1990), 7.

⁴ Ghulam Rasul Mehr to Riaz-ur-Rehman Sherwani, 29. Jan., 1963 in *Jamia*, Feb., 1988, No.2, vol. 85, 36, cited in Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 7.

⁵ Malik Ram in *Ajkal, Maulana Azad Number*, November 1988, 38, cited in Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 7.

⁶ Abul Kalam Azad, *Tazkira*, ed. Fazal-ed-din Ahmad (Calcutta: Albalagh Press, 1919), 310.

⁷ A. B. Rajput, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Lion Press, 1957), 15.

⁸ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 4.

⁹ Azad, *Tazkira*, ed. Fazal-ud-din Ahmad, 310.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

intellectual of Delhi, and his father's maternal grandfather Maulana Munawwar-ud-din, a great educator and last *Rukan-ul-Mudassareen* of the Mughal Empire in India.¹

Azad commenced his schooling in Mecca, where his parents resided who later migrated to India and settled in Calcutta. His father was his first tutor but could not finish the entire course owing to the heavy workload and his failing health. Maulana Azad mastered Arabic, Urdu, and Persian languages initially and later took some lessons to learn Turkish and English languages.² He completed the highly specialized *Dars-e-Nizami* and also undertook the study of the *Quran*, *Hadith*, *Tafsir*, *Fiqh*, and Islamic religious literature.³ After completing *Dars-e-Nizami*, as a requirement, he taught higher philosophy, mathematics, and logic to the batch of students which numbered fifteen.⁴

Maulana Azad started his career as a journalist. He edited and co-edited several journals which included *Nairang-i-Alam* (1899)⁵, *Al-Misbah Misbah* (1901)⁶, *Lisan-ul-Sidq* (1903)⁷, *Al-Nadwa* (1905)⁸, *Al-Wakil* (1907)⁹, *Dar-us-Saltant* (1907)¹⁰, *Al-Hilal* (1912; 1927)¹¹, *Al-Balagh* (1915).¹² These journals offered debates on the literary, religious, and political issues surrounding the Muslims of India and the world with the common aim of diffusing modern ideas and Muslim revival on the lines as defined by the *Quran*.

Maulana Azad also composed many works which include the three so-called autobiographical accounts. The first, *Tazkira* is lyrical work dealing mostly with his ancestor and belatedly with his own life. The second, *Azad ki Kahani khud Azad ki Zubani* was purportedly uttered by Azad to his partisan, Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, when both were confined in the early 1920s, but it was published after Azad's death.¹³ The third is *India Wins Freedom* which is an account of his political career in later life,

¹ Ibid., 25-26

² Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 9.

³ Ibid., 10.

⁴ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 3.

⁵ Rajput, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, 30.

⁶ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 43.

⁷ Mushirul Hassan, ed. *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 143.

⁸ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 39.

⁹ Rajput, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, 32.

¹⁰ Abdullah Butt, ed., *Aspects of Abul Kalam Azad: Essays on His Literary, Political and Religious Activities* (Karachi: Idra-e-Tasneef-o-Tahqeeq, n.d.), ii.

¹¹ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 53.

¹² Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 54.

¹³ Mushirul Hassan, ed. *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 18.

as told to his private secretary, Humayun Kabir, and rendered in English by the latter.¹

Maulana Azad furthermore penned *Sirat Imam Hanbal*, lives of *Shah Waliullah*, *Shaykh Mujaddid al-f-i-Thani*, and *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, which is an unfinished translation and exegesis on the *Quran*. It is a work of great scholastic worth through which he sought certain kinds of modernization and reformation within the terms of his belief.² Another important work by Maulana Azad is a treatise titled as *Masala-e-Khilafat wa Jazirat-al-Arab*, which provides an insight into the function of *Khilafat*, its significance for the Muslims, and the responsibility incumbent upon them for the adherence and protection of the institution of *Khilafat*.

Maulana Azad also used politics as a vehicle to spread his words on these ideals. At first in politics, he remained away to seek passionate political affiliation with any organization and remained active against the colonial political forces. Afterwards, he dedicated himself to the uplift of Muslims not only in India but across the world as envisioned by Islam. For his political pursuits, he ultimately confirmed his commitments to the Indian National Congress due to its nationalist political programme. He believed that it was a nationalist party that opposed communal divide and ensured the accomplishment of his ideological scheme. He steadily strengthened his association with the Indian National Congress which eventually proved to be an unbreakable alliance in his political journey.

1. Islam and the Changing Contours of Maulana Azad's Thought

The ideological path and political practices followed by Maulana Azad seem to be determined by various intellectual encounters and political developments he experienced in his life. The varying ideological and political standpoints which he propagated at various points of time grew under widely ranging influences. These influences reinforced the birth and growth of thought and synthesis of thoughts for Muslim rejuvenation in social, religious, and political spheres. It is, therefore, important to look into the changing viewpoints in Maulana Azad's thoughts to better understand his ideas in politics because he translated those thoughts into actions to achieve his political goals.

(i) Conservatism of Family

Maulana Azad passed through various phases ranging widely from conventional beliefs to the progressive standpoint. During the initial years, he was inspired by his father who delivered religious education and also wished him to become a *pir*. The rigorously imparted traditional Islamic education to Maulana Azad favoured indisputable obedience and left little

¹ Mushirul Hassan, ed. *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 18.

² *Ibid*, 133.

room for examination and rational deduction. This shortcoming was strongly felt by him for it could not reinforce the intellectual expansion he sought. It, hence, aroused restlessness rather than contentment and convinced him for exploring other avenues.

(ii) Rationalism of Sayyid Ahmad Khan

Gradually Maulana Azad started to come out of the religious dogmatism of his family and began to read the writings of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, a 19th-century Muslim reformist. It worked in multiple ways. On the one hand, it carved out his religious ideals while on the other it stimulated his thinking over social stagnation and political development of the Muslims. However, it immediately resulted in Maulana Azad's inclination towards rationalism as promoted by the religious writings of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. Sayyid Ahmad Khan brought the *Quran* to rational interpretation and also opposed all that was against logic. The rational features of his religious philosophy were appreciated by Maulana Azad and he described Sayyid Ahmad Khan as *Mujtahid-e-mutlaq* (the absolute interpreter).¹

Maulana Azad greatly admired Sayyid Ahmad Khan for negating the use of the traditional mode of interpretation and appreciating the use of rational analysis in the religious sphere. This new way of thinking initially provided satisfaction to Maulana Azad but it eventually proved temporary. The deeper investigation of rationalism by Sayyid Ahmad Khan failed to answer the teasing queries as the presence of God, eternity of the soul, celestial revelation, and prophethood.² The adherence to rationalism gradually transformed into scepticism and ultimately to the rejection of basic tenets of faith. Maulana Azad gave up *namaz*.³ He points out the disturbance of this religious conflict in these words, "The result of all the involvement in scholastic theology, in criticism of basic dogma and the study of rival schools of thought all this produced a new restlessness. The intervening peace derived by following Sayyid Ahmad Khan's direction was only the delusion of mind. Underneath, I never found peace."⁴

This period of mental anguish for Maulana Azad lasted for about nine years⁵ and ended in complete allegiance to God. Maulana Azad wrote that after about nine years all qualms vanished, all dissatisfactions

¹ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 19.

² Ahluwalia, *Muslims and India's Freedom Movement*, 13.

³ Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, ed. *Azad Ki Kahani Azad ki Zubani* (Calcutta: Albalagh Press, 1959), 393.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁵ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 22.

eliminated and he discovered the cert of conviction and harmony he had been in quest of.¹

With time Maulana Azad plunged himself into literary and journalistic work and this distracted him to a certain extent from the agitations of religious conflict which were disturbing him. The striking religious influence was a blessing in disguise as it broke the chain of religious orthodoxy inflicted under domineering parental guidance and reaffirmed the faith after revisiting the basics of the belief system. However, due to the writings of Sayyid Ahmad Khan like *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq*, a literary journal for social reforms of the Muslims, Maulana Azad was convinced of the need for social development of the Muslim community. He became conscious that modern education was vital for emancipating Muslim society from the restraints of narrow-mindedness and obsolete customs.

Maulana Azad also developed his early political thoughts under the influence of Sayyid Ahmad Khan but they were on different lines. While Sayyid Ahmad Khan favoured British loyalism and asserted that Muslims of India should remain aloof from participation in politics, Maulana Azad realized that approach had become redundant. Whereas Sayyid Ahmad Khan was content with Muslim regeneration in the sphere of education, society, and religion, Maulana Azad advocated Muslim revivalism in politics as well. It was this consideration that grew stronger under the increasing contacts between Maulana Azad and Shibli Nomani.

(iii) Anti-Colonial Stance of Shibli Nomani

Maulana Azad met Shibli Nomani (1857-1914), the initiator of *Nadwat-ul-Ulama* (a theological academy at Lucknow), in 1905.² Though, both were exchanging letters since the early years of the 20th century.³ When contacts were established, Maulana Azad was about sixteen years of age while Shibli was forty-eight. This age difference was a mere distinction and their association soon ripened into a great literary friendship. Maulana Azad cherished his companionship and time spent with Shibli as “delightful moments” and “beneficial companionship”. He acknowledged the scholarly contribution by Shibli by recounting that he had never experienced anyone equals to Shibli’s passion for knowledge and his scholarly stature anywhere in the world.⁴

Shibli Nomani differed with the political programme of the Aligarh movement and urged Muslim participation in politics. Maulana Azad also

¹ Malihabadi, ed. *Azad Ki Kahani*, 400.

² Mushirul Hassan, ed. *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 20.

³ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 39.

⁴ Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, *Zikr-e-Azad: Maula Azad ki Rifaqat men Artis Sal* (Calcutta:Daftar-i-Azad Hind, 1960), 293-294, as quoted in Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 40.

developed the same thinking and found Muslim politics on the low ebb. Thus, he denounced Sayyid's strategy of collaboration with the imperial rulers and urged the Muslims to identify themselves with politics and oppose the forces of British imperialism. He considered it indispensable for the dignified survival of Muslims to be active in politics. Maulana Azad and Shibli also held parallel views on reform of the *ulema* and desired to rehabilitate the right essence of Islam by diffusing novel notions amongst them. Shibli was concerned to reform Muslims according to modern times which likewise grew into an article of faith in Maulana Azad's life.¹

The literary taste cultivated in Maulana Azad during his friendship with Shibli also brought him close to journalism. Maulana Azad became part of the editorial board of *Al-Nadwa*, a journal of *Nadwat-ul-Ulama*, on Shibli's invite and also contributed many articles to the journal. On the recommendation of Shibli, Maulana Azad's *Lisan-ul-Sidq* became a literary organ of *Anjuman-e-Tarraqi-e-Urdu* (society for Advancement of Urdu).² He like Shibli also used Urdu as a medium for his scholarly contributions. It was also during the period of this companionship that Maulana Azad started to carve out thoughts on Pan-Islamism. Shibli was Pan-Islamist and Maulana Azad also adopted the same attitude.

(iv) **Pan-Islamism of Jamal-ud-din Al-Afghani**

Maulana Azad gradually shifted his point of focus towards Muslim backwardness in the field of politics. The Muslims lay behind in the political growth not only in India but the Muslims in other parts of the world were also under colonial rule. This problem of Muslim subjugation direly needed their emancipation from foreign dominance. Shaikh Jamal-ud-din Al-Afghani (1839-1897), a Pan-Islamist reformer, was determined to take up the issue of Muslim political subservientness from religious grounds and also to free the Muslim land from Western domination. He considered and emphasized that Pan-Islamism was the most effective weapon to subdue Western domination.

Maulana Azad came across the message of Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism that the demise of the Muslim empire and the emergence of Western imperialism demanded new forms of solidarity that would combat foreign domination at home without eroding existing bonds between Muslims across frontiers.³ The aspiration of Pan-Islamism had a profound effect on Azad. He read a great deal of literature on Pan-Islamism produced by Shaikh Muhammad Abduh, al-Afghani's close associate, and

¹ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 41.

² *Ibid.*, 39.

³ Mushirul Hassan, ed. *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 61.

al-Rida, the Syrian Islamic scholar. These writings inspired him to take up the task of Muslim uplift by inculcating in them the true spirits of Islam. He used literary and political mediums to awaken the Muslims to the responsibility of turning into true followers of Islam and liberating themselves from foreign rule. During the *Khilafat* Movement, he penned numerous articles and remained vocal to aware the Muslims of Pan-Islamism by demanding the continued existence of *Khilafat*. The files of *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* demonstrated his belief that once the Muslim community was reconstituted on the models of Islam there was no reason for Muslims to suffer the degrading political servitude any longer.

(v) **Humanism of Gandhi**

Maulana Azad adopted humanism as espoused by Gandhi (1869-1948), an advocate of *ahimsa* and *stiyagraha* and also an Indian nationalist. During the *Khilafat* agitation after the release of Maulana Azad from Ranchi internment his association with Gandhi started. Maulana Azad found himself comfortable with Gandhi's humanism. It resulted in an unbreakable association with the cause of humanism and the Indian National Congress. During the *Khilafat* agitation when Maulana Azad asserted Islamic ascendancy by stressing the retention of the institution of *Khilafat*, Gandhi launched the Non-cooperation Movement. The keen interest of Gandhi over the religious matter of Muslims attracted Maulana Azad towards the humanism of Gandhi. He was persuaded by the conduct of Gandhi who tried to foster communal harmony. Maulana Azad also started to highlight the philosophical reflections of Islam to promote tolerance and harmony between Hindus and Muslims.

It was due to the growing association between Maulana Azad and Gandhi that the national identity began to dominate on Maulana Azad and he started to seek inclination towards nationalist ideals as envisioned by Gandhi. Gandhi stressed non-violence and Maulana Azad declared his preference for Hindu-Muslim cooperation. For Gandhi non-violence had evolved as a technique with time, for Maulana Azad it became an end in itself.¹ Maulana Azad envisaged Hindu-Muslim relations on humanistic grounds and regarded it justifiable and permissible according to Islam. He believed that race, colour, language, or territory were confined and artificial perceptions which were contrary to the broad scope and noble spirit of Islam.² Due to this belief, he not only made a political alliance with the Indian National Congress but also motivated the Muslims to join the organization to show aversion to communal divide. The anti-communal

¹ Ibid., 112-113.

² *Al-Hilal* "Sani" quoted in J. C. Johari, ed. *Voices of Non-Violent and Truthful Nationalism*, Voices of Indian Freedom Movement vol. IV.I (New Delhi: Akashdeep Publishing House, 1993), 335-337.

sentiments and attitude of Maulana Azad ultimately achieved firm existence and strongly manifested itself in his opposition to the inception of Pakistan, which, to him, symbolized communal divide.

2. Islam and Political Practices of Maulana Azad

Maulana Azad commenced his political activities as a revolutionary. After the partition of Bengal in 1905, he encountered a staunch extremist Shyam Sunder Chakravarty and met other revolutionaries including Aurobindo Ghose, and joined one of the revolutionary groups.¹ He observed that all radical activities were confined to Bengal, therefore, he persuaded the revolutionaries to extend their sphere of influence to other parts of India. Consequently, various covert revolutionary societies were established in several significant towns of northern India and Bombay.² Gradually as Maulana Azad began to incline towards Pan-Islamism, Islamic revivalism in India became a matter of concern for him in politics. For this purpose, he thought of establishing an organisation named *Hizbullah* (Party of God) to lead the Muslims to live their lives according to the teachings of Islam. In 1915, he founded Dar-ul-Irshad, the teaching centre for *Hizbullah* teachers, to teach the Muslims the *Quran* and its interpretation. Nevertheless, because of the scarcity of funds and deficiency of appropriate administration, this programme was unable to become a success. Maulana Azad also propagated the cause of *Jihad* in liquidating an imperialist power. He revolutionized the minds of the students who were going to Turkey for *Jihad* . Intelligence reports of the time show Maulana Azad's contact with Obeidullah Sindhi and Maulana Mahmudul Hassan.³ He was also suspected as an active member of Silk Letter Conspiracy and was, therefore, expelled from Bengal and was permitted to stay in Ranchi on the condition to abstain from politics. He was released from Ranchi on December 27, 1919. It was the time when India was witnessing an important episode in its political history which was the *Khilafat* Movement.

The *Khilafat* Movement in India was launched after First World War to safeguard the institution of *Khalifat* and to protect the Holy Places of the Muslims in Turkey. After his release from Ranchi, Maulana Azad arrived in Calcutta on January 13, 1920. He was warmly welcomed and taken in procession to the Nakhuda Mosque by his followers where he spoke on the *Khilafat* problem. He believed petitions to the Government would not get the Muslims anywhere and felt that non-cooperation was

¹ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 5.

² Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 6.

³ Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 105.

worth trying.¹ Since the Ottoman Sultan was the *Khalifa* and *Imam* of the Muslims around the world, Maulana Azad considered it obligatory for all the Muslims to support him and to oppose the one who would raise arms against him. Maulana Azad left Calcutta soon thereafter for Delhi where the Khilafat deputation was gathering to meet the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford on the *Khilafat* issue. On January 19, 1920, the deputation consisting of 35 delegates met the Viceroy under the leadership of Dr. Ansari. The significant members included Ali Brothers, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr Ansari, Abdul Bari, Seth Chotani, Abul Kalam Azad, Hasrat Mohani, and Gandhi.² The deputation requested that the caliph's temporal supremacy remain intact.³ On February 28-29, 1920, Maulana Azad presided over the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference held in Calcutta and made a presidential address that determined the ideological bearings of the *Khilafat* Movement.⁴ It focused on three issues: the *Khilafat*, Non-Cooperation, and Hindu Muslim relations.⁵ In the presidential address titled *Masala-e-Khilafat wa Jazirat-u-Arab*, Maulana Azad gave a detailed analysis of the institution of *Khilafat*, the challenges then facing it, and the action incumbent upon Indian Muslims, from the arguments drawn from the *Quran* and *hadith*.⁶ He also called upon the Muslims to defend *Khilafat* through *jihad*.⁷

As a protest against the British power curtailing the religious rights of the Indian Muslims, Maulana Azad believed that the *Khilafat* problem required immediate action in the form of *jihad* and *hijrat*. He held a view that “the *hijrat* was a sacrifice of inferior gains for a nobler objective.”⁸ In this regard, he issued a pamphlet titled *Hijrat ka-fatwa* (verdict in favour of migration) for stepping up an exodus.⁹ In a *fatwa* for *hijrat*, Maulana Azad declared:

¹ Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 86.

² P. C. Bamford, *Histories of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movement* (1925; repr., Delhi: Government of India Press, 1974), 148.

³ Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, 86.

⁴ S. A. I. Tirmizi, *Maulana Azad: A Pragmatic Statesman; A Documentary Study, 1923-42* (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1991), 9.

⁵ M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 141.

⁶ Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, 93.

⁷ Zarina Salamat, *The Punjab in 1920s: A Case Study of Muslims* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1997), 70.

⁸ M. Naeem Quershi, “The ‘Ulama’ of British India and the Hijrat of 1920,” *Modern Asian Studies* 13, no. 1 (1979): 43.

⁹ Yudian Wahyudi, *Islam and Nationalism: A Political Adventure of Maulana Abul Kalam Kalam Azad (1905-1947)* (Calcutta: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, 2007), 18.

After examining all the reasons embodied in the *shari'at*, contemporary events, interests of the Muslims, and the expedient counsels, I feel completely satisfied in my perception that for the Muslims there was no *shari'* alternative but to go on *hijrat*. For all those Muslims who would like to fulfil their biggest Islamic obligation in India today, it is imperative that they should embark on *hijrat*; and those who are unable to do so immediately should help and assist the worthy *muhajirin* in such a way of they were themselves on *hijrat*. That is to say the factual *shari'* matter facing [the Muslims] now is *hijrat*. There is nothing else besides this. Before the war *hijrat* from India was commendable; now in accordance with the spirit of the *shari'at* it has become mandatory.

However, if there is presumption about those whose stay in India, as compared to their *hijrat* was more desirable for carrying on the struggle [for the caliphate] or for proclaiming and commemorating the true *kalima* or those who have acceptable reasons for not doing *hijrat* or there is delay due to genuine logistical problems experienced in large-scale population transfer, such people can undoubtedly stay. [But] they should devote all their energies to the compliance of [the dictates of] the *shari'at*. They should live their lives by acquiring the mien of an organised society. And so far as their determination and conduct is concerned [they] should not be devoid of [a continued] enthusiasm and ardour for *hijrat*. Under the present circumstances, the creation of such a [Muslim] party will be the real achievement.

It should, however, be understood that the form in which [the question of] *hijrat* is facing India today does not mean that everyone should decide on ones own and embark on the venture individually and haphazardly. All actions with regard to *hijrat* should be undertaken collectively in an organised manner. It is to be decided by the party chief as to who should emigrate forthwith and whose presence is required for useful service within the country. Moreover, to which place and under what circumstances *hijrat* should be undertaken so that it might be fruitful and auspicious. Not every one can decide about these for oneself.¹

In his *fatwa*, Maulana Azad exhorted the Muslims to undertake *hijrat* as a mandatory step. He declared:

When the order for *hijrat* is given to a seeker it would become mandatory to migrate. The model of *hijrat* that the Prophetic tradition has left us lays down that the *bai'at* is more important than the act of *hijrat*

¹ The *fatwa* was published by the *Ahl-i-Hadis* (Amritsar) of Abu Turan 'Abd al-Haq, in its issue of 30 July 1920. This English translation is provided by M. Naeem Qureshi in *Pan-Islamism in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 188-89.

itself. With *bai'at*, *hijrat* should not be undertaken. Therefore, it is essential that whoever performs *hijrat* must undertake *bai'at*.

Due to various reasons . . . it is evident that not everyone can migrate from India all at once, nor is that required by the *shari'at*. The process of *hijrat* will go on and [at the same time] a Muslim community will continue to exist in India. Those who remain in India and so long as they are here they are required by the *shari'at* not to have any kind of ties of goodwill or friendship or collaboration with the assailants of Islam. Whoever does that he will be counted, in the clear meaning of the Qur'anic injunctions, an enemy of Islam.¹

Maulana Azad advised the Muslims "seeking righteousness" by him or from Abdul Qadir of Kasur and his son Mohy-ud-din, Daud Ghaznawi of Amritsar and Abdur Razzaq of Malihabad, his chief associates in the *hijrat* movement.² He admitted that the entire Muslim population of India could not migrate; therefore he suggested the non-migrants bring pressure on the Government through non-cooperation. To shore up support for the *Khilafat*, on 12 May 1920, the Central *Khilafat* Committee constituted a sub-committee comprising of Chotani, Shaikat Ali, A. H. S. Khatri, Muhammad Ali of Dharair, and Maulana Azad to draft a scheme for the plan of action for non-cooperation programme.³ The non-cooperation programme advocated renouncing titles, resign from government services, and stop paying taxes. Maulana Azad was among the signatories to the famous *fatwa* signed by almost 500 leading *Ulema* and *Muftis* on non-cooperation making it a religious obligation.⁴ Maulana Azad strongly pleaded for *Tark-i-Mawalat* (non-cooperation) with the Government in the light of the *Quranic* injunctions until the Muslims' grievances were redressed.⁵ He criticised the Muslims who stood by the Government and continued to support and cooperate with it. Concluding from the Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) instructions to boycott those who had not joined the Tabuk expedition, he stated that non-cooperation should be practiced against those Muslims also who were damaging the interests of the Muslim *ummah* by not joining in the fight against its enemies.⁶

¹ Qureshi, *Pan-Islamism*, 188-89.

² *Ibid.*, 189.

³ Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 311.

⁴ Mushirul Hassan, "Religion and Politics: The Ulema and Khilafat Movement," *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 20 (May 16, 1981): 908.

⁵ Zakir Hussain, *Abul Kalam Azad between Dreams and Realities* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1990), 63.

⁶ Safia Amir, *Muslim Nationhood in India: Perceptions of Seven Eminent Thinkers* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, 2000), 144.

Maulana Azad acted as the “chief theoretician” and “ideologue” of the *Khilafat* Movement in India. For him, the *Khilafat* Movement was fundamental for society and survival.¹ Maulana Azad was arrested on December 10, 1921, based on speeches delivered at Mirzapur Park in Calcutta on July 1 and 15, 1921². He was penalised a year's severe punishment on February 9, 1922, under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Court.³ However, before his conviction, Maulana Azad made a statement before the court, generally known as *Qaul-i-Faisal* (Final Verdict), in which he spoke at length about the non-cooperation with the Government. He articulated the reason for his support for non-cooperation as to him Non-cooperation is the consequence of sheer dissatisfaction and a result of the Government's failure to dispense justice and benevolence, consequently, the individual is forced by the conditions to seek “no other alternative except change”.⁴

He also said that “However attractive be the euphemisms invented for ‘subjugation’ and ‘slavery’, still, slavery is slavery, and it is opposed to the will and the canon of God.”⁵ On the question of *Khilafat*, he expressed his views that “the sovereignty of the Prophet of Islam and the Khalifa was a perfected conception of democratic equality, and it only could take shape with the whole nation's free will, unity, suffrage and election.”⁶

After his release in January 1923, Maulana Azad vehemently propagated for collaboration with non-Muslims and associated himself with the Indian National Congress. He repudiated the idea of Hindu *Sangathan* or Muslim *Sangathan* (organization) and professed that the Congress was the *Sangathan* required.⁷ He held the view that the spirit of Islam is human brotherhood beyond the self-constructed identities of race, country, nation, colour, language. He believed that the call for Islam was a call for humanism, against all prejudices.⁸ At a Unity Conference held on September 26, 1924, for promoting communal harmony, he declared that slaughtering a cow even for sacrifice was not a fundamental component of Islam and that the Muslims were waning the practise of beef-eating for

¹ Ali Ashraf, “Khilafat Movement: A Factor in Muslim Separatism,” in Mushirul Hassan, ed. *Communal and Pan Islamic Trends in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985), 82.

² Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 121.

³ Ibid.

⁴ A. B. Rajput, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* (Lahore, Lion Press, 1946), 83-84.

⁵ Mahadev Desai, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: The President of the Indian National Congress; A Biographical Memoir* (Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwala & Co. Ltd., 1946), 51.

⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁷ Abul Kalam Azad, *Khutbat-e-Azad*, Malik Ram, ed. (New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1981), 207-8, quoted in Datta, *Maulana Azad*, 129.

⁸ Johari, ed. *Voices of Non Violent and Truthful Nationalism*, 337.

encouraging communal harmony.¹ He also initiated a resolution that discouraged taking law in one's hands under any circumstances and laid stress on resolving disputes through either private arbitration or by a court of law.²

Maulana Azad's association with Congress shaped his inclination towards communal harmony and his aversion to communal politics. Gradually he adopted a mode of thought in which political principles were derived from the specificity of India's own distinctive social history and the requirements of secular nationhood, rather than the search for a religious form of legitimation.³ From the platform of the Congress party, he championed composite nationalism for the Muslims in India in opposition to Muslim nationalism propagated by the Muslim League. He contended the idea of Muslim separatism and in its place favoured composite nationalism with a belief that due to long social and cultural interaction Hindus and Muslims had evolved into a common nation and, therefore, the unity of India was real and "indivisible". He emphasized that the communal differences should not be allowed to interfere with the struggle for freedom, which was the foremost task and attainable only through united nationalism.⁴ In a historic presidential address of the Congress held at Ramgarh (Bihar) during March 1940, he described the history of India as a process of mutualism as a result of which the Muslims and Hindus had become more alike than the Muslims and Hindus of past centuries. He pointed out that for the Muslims in India needs of the hour were, in fact, secular democracy, progressive economy, decentralised administration, and a genuinely federalist constitution.⁵

Maulana Azad appealed to the Muslims to struggle for freedom on the lines suggested by Congress. He was discontented with the idea of partition which sought its manifestation at various political and constitutional junctures. The inclination for the acceptance of Cripps proposals (1942) and keenness for the approval of the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) expressed Maulana Azad's aversion to communalism and partition of India. He strongly objected to the idea of partition by calling it "a symbol of defeatism"⁶ which represented India could not hold its

¹ R. Subramania Iyer, ed. *The Role of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in Indian Politics* (Hyderabad: Abul Kalam Azad Oriental Research Institute Publication, 1968), 37.

² Desai, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, 62.

³ Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (New York: Verso, 2000), 65.

⁴ Amir, *Muslim Nationhood in India*, 165.

⁵ Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present*, 65.

⁶ P. N. Chopra, ed. *Maulana Azad: Selected Speeches & Statements, 1940-47* (New Delhi: Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 1990), 132.

territorial unity upon the British withdrawal. For him, the division of India was also a question of national identity. He indicated that "it seems a sure sign of cowardice to give up what was my patrimony and content with a mere fragment of it".¹ He held a view that the persistent assertion of the right of self-determination for Muslims and the idea for a separate land was merely an outcome of their doubts and suspicions, which would evaporate when India would gain independence. He maintained that independent India with a federation composed of fully autonomous units, with a weak centre granting complete sovereignty to provinces, would eliminate Muslim fear of Hindu domination.² Therefore to him, if demand for partition was an outcome of communal tangle then it was an insubstantial demand since communal resentment was only a temporary period that would disappear when India will be independent.³

Conclusion

The ideals of Islam played an important role in shaping Maulana Azad's thoughts as he passed through various phases of his life. Starting from religious conservatism and eventually settling for humanism, Islam remained a significant element in Maulana Azad's journey of evolution of thought. For him, Muslim uplift became an important task to undertake and for this purpose, he chose politics as a medium to effectively translate his aspirations for Muslim revivalism into reality. During the *Khilafat* agitation, he voiced this aspiration for Muslims and struggled to safeguard their interests concerning the institution of *Khilafat*. Later, he developed a firm conviction for communal harmony as compatible with the spirit of Islam. His conviction in communal harmony became such a fundamental concern that he stood in opposition to the partition of India for he believed it symbolised communalism and also sacrificed the interests of the Muslims in India at large.

¹ Ibid., 133.

² Ravindra Kumar, ed. *The Selected Works of Abul Kalam Azad*, vol.II, 1943-46, no.92 (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1991), 162-63.

³ Ibid.