

## Al-Hilal: A Reflection of the Politics of Bengal Muslims (1912-1915)

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### ABSTRACT

The year 1912 was a path-breaking year in Urdu journalism and as well as for the Bengal Politics also. Since the establishment of Colonial rule, Bengal played a significant role in national politics. Half of its total population was Muslims who were far-behind in the race of getting education or fetching job in compare to their Hindu brothers that led them to form a communal organization named Muslim League in 1906 that differentiate the whole population into two parts. In this critical scenario, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad emerged as a messiah for his community and raised his slogan against all this odds through his weekly journal, 'Al-Hilal' (1912-15). This journal carried the Azad's view and reflected the onset situation of Bengal Muslims. Through the pages of *Al-Hilal*, Azad wanted to create a political consciousness among his community and had to establish a political dialogue within the members of his community. From the very issue, Azad has drawn the attention of the Muslims towards the present political condition of Bengal which was roaming around *Muslim League* and *Aligarh Movement*.

The Bengal Presidency was one the largest colonial subdivision (presidency) of British India, with its seat in Calcutta, the capital of British held territories in South Asia until 1911. Bengal was the first presidency which was politically conquered by the British. The British started their campaign from Bengal. Even the Governor of Bengal was concurrently the Viceroy of India for many years. As a main province of British India, Bengal was benefitted a lot and exploited a lot from the colonial rule. It was the people of Bengal who at first acquired Western Education in compare to rest of India and took imperial service. But the whole population of Bengal did not get benefit from this opportunity, even majority of them left far behind. The 1872 Census of India formally revealed for the first time that nearly half of the total population in Bengal was Muslims, most of who inhabited in marshy, low-lying tracts of Eastern Bengal, now Bangladesh. In some districts such as Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra, Beukarganj, Naokhali and Chittagong more than 60 percent of the population were Muslims. Their demographic predominance was not, however, reflected in the socio-economic and political structure of the province. As a community, they formed a small proportion of the urban populace, most of them earning their livelihood as tenant farmers and agricultural laborers employed by Hindu Zamindars.<sup>i</sup>

This differentiation between two communities led to a great communal tension in Bengal. There were another factor to create communal tension in Bengal as cited by Mushirul Hasan, "In 1911, only 12.6% of the Muslim population in Bengal was literate in English. And in 1913, they held only 10.6% of jobs in the executive and judicial department. The imbalance between the relative position of the Hindus and the Muslims created the first stirring of communal consciousness in Bengal, enabling Muslim organization to make use of the sense of deprivation that gripped so many of their potential supporters and to conduct their mobilization along communitarian lines". It was further aggravated by the most controversial announcement of Lord Curzon, the viceroy of colonial India. On

July 1905, Lord Curzon announced the Partition of Bengal which effect from 16<sup>th</sup> August 1905 and separated the largely Muslim eastern areas from the largely Hindu western areas.<sup>iiiii</sup> As a result, a mass protest was broken out in Bengal named Swadeshi and Boycott Movement. Initially, this movement involved a significant and sincere Muslim participation but it was the British who alienated the Bengal Muslims from this agitation and gave them in wrong direction. They propagated that a new province with a Muslim majority would provide more jobs and opportunities for the Muslims. As a result, a large section of upper and middle class group of that community detached themselves from this movement.<sup>iv</sup> While most of the upper class Muslims still attached with anti-partition movement like Ghaznavi, Rasul Din Mohomed, Abdul Gafur and Liakat Hussain.<sup>v</sup> This detachment from anti-partition movement led to the birth of Muslim League on October 1906 at Dacca under the leadership of Nawab Salimullah.<sup>vi</sup> After that many communal riots took place in East Bengal against Hindu Zamindars and mahajans by the Mohammadan of the lower class.<sup>vii</sup> Even Maulvis through a communal leaflet *Nawab Sahebar Subichar* are said to have spread rumors that the British were handing over the charge to Nawab Salimullah of Dacca to have conquer Assam, Sylhet, Chittagong and painted the image of Nawab as the 'messiah' of Muslim Community.<sup>viii</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Calcutta was "Imperial Capital of India". It is also called "The City of Palaces" and the "City of Joy". But the condition of Calcutta was not very much different from the rest of Bengal. By the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the population of Calcutta was largely of migrant origin; nearly 50% of the total population came from areas beyond Bengal. Calcutta became a cultural and linguistic Microcosm of India: a polyglot city where Bengali was hard- pushed to hold his own.<sup>ix</sup> As Suranjan Das cited that only 15.3% of the Muslims in 1911 at Calcutta was literate as against 32% of the Hindus. English education was the primary requirement for public appointment in which Muslims were lag behind. Consequently, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was only one Muslim to

every seven Hindus in government jobs and professed occupation.<sup>x</sup> Generally, the Muslim masses in Calcutta metropolis earned their living as day-laborers, butchers, carpenters, casters, coachmen, stable-boys, tailors, boatmen, lascars, book-binders and petty traders.<sup>xi</sup> Even the migrant community of Calcutta was generally employed as unskilled labor in jute mills and constituted a highly volatile social group.<sup>xii</sup>

It was basically the Non-Bengali Muslim who formed a different group among the Muslims. Here the Muslims were both of higher class those belonging to the new formed laborers in the new- industrial zones of Calcutta. It was the politics of Partition-1905 which made a group of Muslims think about their role in the new uprising. On the other hand, it was the birth of the Muslim League in Dhaka in 1906 which boosted the idea of loyalist policy among a section of educated and well to do Muslims in East Bengal but a major group of Muslims both in the cities and in the rural area remained completely ignorant about the political future about the Muslims. As Safoora Razeq wrote that the year 1911 was undoubtedly of great significance in the history of Muslim politicization and gave the Muslim politics a new direction. A report by the police commissioner in Bengal, reports that the feeling among Mohammadans were not the same throughout the province. There were differences in the attitude of the Mohammadans in the Mufussil area and from those in Calcutta, again between the educated community and the mass of the agricultural population.<sup>xiii</sup>

As Gail Minault rightly observed that loyalty to the British rule was the prime policy of Aligarh movement which was also incorporated into the founding principle of the Muslim league in 1906. This policy was rewarded in the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 with the granting of separate electorate. But then, in response to nationalist agitation, the governments revoked the partition of Bengal in 1911 and shifted his capital from Calcutta to Delhi, eliminating the Muslim majority province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, thereby removing an important source of administrative posts and political influence for Muslims in Bengal. Thus, the leadership of the League learned that agitation, as well as loyalty, got result. Thereafter, loyalism and its exponent came increasingly under fire from a growing number of younger Muslims.<sup>xiv</sup> The Muslim political elite were in great shock after their defeat. In March 1912, the Calcutta meeting of the Muslim League passed a resolution expressing their regret at the annulment of partition and calling the move an "utter disregard of Muslim feeling".<sup>xv</sup>

The year 1912 was a very significant in the politics of Bengal. Among the Muslims in Bengal, one man was emerged as a spokesman for this new-current of anti-British feeling that was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, later became the President of Indian National Congress for six consecutive years (1940-1946) and the first Education Minister of independent India. He was the son of Maulana Khairuddin who came to Calcutta with his family from Mecca in 1898 when Maulana Azad was just ten years old.<sup>xvi</sup> Calcutta was the place where Maulana Azad's ideology was molded. Due to belonging pir-murid family, he did not get any formal education but very well versed in Arabic, Persian and Urdu which made him popular in the field of

journalism. He was brought up in such an environment where he did not have a free opinion and freedom. But in spite of all bondages, he was doing his work and one day, he successfully came out all the restrictions which were imposed by his father. As Maulana Azad claimed that he could not understand the power that helped him to break the claim of family custom and tradition.<sup>xvii</sup> And make him the first Muslim in Bengal who raised his voice against colonialism and imperialism through his most influential journal, *Al-Hilal*.

The year 1912 opened a new chapter in Urdu journalism when Maulana Azad issued his weekly journal, *Al-Hilal* ( literary means Crescent) on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1912 from Calcutta, a royal size, twenty four pages, two column paper, sub-titled, '*Ek Haftawar Mussawir Risala*'.<sup>xviii</sup> It showcased Azad's artistic style and his command over language. It became very much popular due to the special interest of the editor and photographs also added to its appeal within a very short time. It was not only popular among the Muslims in Bengal but its popularity reached beyond the Bengal frontier and was read out all over the country. Starting with the circulation of 2000, within first three months, all the old issues had to be reprinted to meet the demands for new subscribers for complete sets. Ultimately the circulation had been reached up to 26,000 at the time of its closure.<sup>xix</sup> Ali Jafar Jerri in his article praises Maulana Azad's artistic language which captured the mind of Muslims and says that the people were gathered to hear every issue of *Al-Hilal* and willingly turned their on the every word of Azad. According to Qazi Aadil Abbasi, eminent scholar of Islamic learning, "*Al-Hilal* went to every educational institution and was learned by everyone".<sup>xx</sup> It was the charismatic appeal of Azad which made his journal popular among the masses.

*Al-Hilal* was the main carrier of Azad's point regarding politics, religion and education. Through his journal, Azad highlighted many political issues like the wrong guidance of Muslim League to Muslims community in Bengal, exploitation of colonial rule and aloofness of the Muslims in freedom movement. Through the pages of *Al-Hilal*, Azad wanted to create a political consciousness among his community and had to establish a political dialogue with the member of his community and to remind their duties towards Islam. He emphasized those political issues which were neglected by his contemporary.

From its first issue, Azad begun his work towards his mission but did not discuss the aims and objective to start this journal. On the very later issue, it was cleared by Azad when one of the subscribers of *Al-Hilal* in letter to the editor asked him what kind of political education he wanted to give his community.<sup>xxi</sup> He published his article, '*Al-Hilal Ke Maqasid aur Political Taleem*' in the issue of 8<sup>th</sup> September 1912 which is the reflection of Azad's political concept and ideas.<sup>xxii</sup> Firstly, Azad was grateful to his esteemed friend who brought this matter to the front and compelled Azad to write on these crucial matters. Before answering the Question, Azad raised few points from the letter which deserve special mention like '*Political debate should be separated from religious education*' and '*Among the existing political parties of India, which does Al-Hilal support*'. At first Azad states, "*I believe that you have*

questioned the very foundation on which I want to build the structure of *Al-Hilal*.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

Answering the reader's question, he states that religion cannot be separated from politics. If we do so, what would remain in the Universe? Azad forcefully said that Muslims has learnt their politics from religion. Even he admits that his own ideas also derive from religion and it was the product of religion. He believes that an idea derived from any other sources except religion is regarded as kufr (sacrilege) that included politics also. Azad emphasizes, “*We could have derived everything from Quran, the book which enable us to teach everything to the world*”. He again stated that Islam has brought a comprehensive and perfect system for mankind and there is not a single sphere of human activity for which it does not provide guidance. Whether it is the ethical, educational, political, economics, religion or spiritual life of Muslims, whether it is the life of the ruler or ruled, it provide the most perfect system for all.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

The basic concept of this article is Azad's total dependence on the Quran and looking at the entire world through the reflection of Quran. He wants the same thing would be done by his community. He states that there is no truth in the world except the words of the Quran and it is the voice of Allah. The one who gives his hand to Allah need no human guide.<sup>xxv</sup> In the same article, Azad laments that all the miseries in the life of Muslims are due to their negligence and it is the fact that they have turned down from their divine sources of guidance and thought that they needed to look upon it only in regarding to religious rituals like ‘Roza’ and ‘Namaz’. They did not realize its importance in political, educational and cultural sphere. They turned away from Quran and did not follow its teaching. So, whatever direction they have been taken, they were misled and fell into the depth of darkness.<sup>xxvi</sup> The real purpose of *Al-Hilal* is no more than to invite the Muslims of Bengal to follow the words of Quran in their action and an act, according to the precedent set by the Prophet Mohammed.

The mission of *Al-Hilal* was not only to arouse the Muslims of Bengal but the arouse of Indian Muslims also and to follow the teaching of Islam which advocates revolt against exploitation and to emphasis the teaching of *Amr bi'l Ma'aruf Wa'l Nahya Anal Munkar* ( Enjoining good and forbidding the evil). Azad writes a lengthy article on this topic which appeared on 11<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August 1912, in the consecutive issues of *al-Hilal*, this Quranic phrase featured prominently in the Fatiha editorials which Azad regarded as key to understand the masage of *Al-Hilal*. According to Azad, “Islam established a certain principle and among them, *Amr bi'l Ma'aruf Wa'l Nahya Anal Munkar*, is very significant and to follow its responsibility are incumbent upon all Muslims”.<sup>xxvii</sup> By using this article, Azad emphasizes that there is no limitation for doing good and forbidden the evil but they are free to enjoin good and to forbid evil in all circumstances. In fact, Azad wants to convey that Allah has appointed Muslims for this work, following ‘enjoining the good and forbidden the evil’ and ordered them to establish ‘adl’ which means moderation like to maintain a balance between their act, views and justice.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

From the very issue, Azad has drawn the attention of the Muslims towards the present political condition of Bengal which was roaming around ‘Muslim League’ and ‘Aligarh Movement’ which influenced the leaders of Muslim League to get loyal towards colonial rule and posted against their own countrymen. He accused the leadership of Sir Sayeed Ahmed and Muslim League to divert the attention of their community into the secondary issues like education rather than to divert them in the primary issues like politics. On his article about Aligarh entitled, ‘Muslim University’ which was published on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1912 issue, Azad writes that it was very much surprising to see an enthusiasm among the Muslims for the establishment of Muslim University and their aloofness from the present political scenario.<sup>xxix</sup> Azad states that the present political condition demanded the Muslims participation in the freedom struggle but they alienated themselves from it. He feels sad to see his community and claims that critical condition was equally thrown up both the Hindus and Muslims. Hindus accepts this challenge because of their leaders but among the Muslims no real leadership has been found.<sup>xxx</sup> As Azad comments, “*Our so-called leaders always threw a toy in our lap which diverted us to an extent that we never found time for the real work. First, we spent forty years pursuing ‘Higher Education’ when that wore off and we became restless, they created the fantasy of Muslim League*.”<sup>xxxi</sup>

On the same issue, Azad attacked on the Muslim League and its leadership which was under the control of a few rich Muslims who channelized the whole energy of his community into wrong direction. He expresses disappointment to see the announced political conference under the auspices of the council of the ‘All-India Muslim League’ has been changed into special meeting of the council only. Azad called for an open conference including the entire Muslim community. He condemns the leadership of League and scorns that in spite of being joining the freedom movement, they were satisfied by the false favor from the British.”<sup>xxxii</sup>

On the later issue of 18<sup>th</sup> December 1912, Azad blames Muslims for their detachment with the activities of freedom and praises the activities of their Hindu compatriots in an article like, ‘*Al Jihad Fi Sabil al Hurriyat*’ and writes, “*The Hindus rose in revolt and dedicated all their energies to the crusades against oppression. Precisely at that time, the Muslims that only broke their own hands but set out to cripple anyone who was possessed of sound of limbs. At that time, when the Hindus were lighting the torch of the country's independence, Muslims were contently sitting around the corpse of education and getting government jobs*.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In the same article, Azad reminds his community and says that the time has come for the service of the Muslims to their country. He opines that for the Hindus, the struggle for the independence of the country is a part of their patriotism but for the Muslims, it is a religious duty and a part of the crusade for Allah. So, Azad advises the Muslims that they have to follow the path of Jihad (holy war) to attain freedom. He insists that Jihad was the fundamental duty of Muslims like enjoying good. So, his invitation to engage in this Jihad was open to all Muslims. Azad defines Jihad in a very careful manner and says that every effort for truth and justice was Jihad and every

attempt to break the shackles of oppression and bondage was also called Jihad.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Through this article, Azad wants to create such an environment where the Muslims, basically those who were living in Bengal, came out of their sleep and took part in the real politics of Bengal for the sake of their religion.

For emphasizing his views, Azad gets the reference to the issues of Middle East countries and the activities of their leaders against imperialism and colonial rule. The first issue of *Al-Hilal* contains articles on the '*Heroes of Tripoli*', Abdul Qadir Al Jezairi and Usman Mujahid Javed Bak. He presents the atmosphere of the Battleground of Tripoli in his journal, so that, the Muslims could adopt the same action into their acts in Bengal. He constantly publishes the letters from Egypt and messages of Tripoli. On the front cover, he gives an impressive photograph of Rashid Raza, scholar and great reformer of Islam. Inside the journal Azad imprints the photographs of Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, whose policy and principle had influenced Azad to the large extent, along with the photographs of Sheikh Mohammed Abduh, another great reformer of Islam. Other photographs included one of Sheikh Sulaiman Hurani with a group of Arab Mujahideen and the Turkish freedom fighter on Usmani camp at Azizia.<sup>xxxv</sup> The visual representation of the heroes of Islamic countries aimed at revitalizing to his community and influenced them to follow their footsteps.

On the later issues, Azad started a column named, '*Aalam Islami*' (Islamic World) in which all the problems related to wars, peace treaty and resignation of designated officer had been discussed vividly. When the First World War was begun in 1914, Azad has drawn the attention of the people towards the pathetic condition of Balkan, Turkey and Constantinople and those problems which had been emerged from Eastern Question. We have seen regularly the views from battlefield and observed Azad's resentment towards victimize people. He did not only show the exploitation of an aggressors but he proudly shows the activities of brave Turks who defend their community against European aggressions. Photographs of the leaders appeared in all the issues, giving details with visual effect of battlefield. He constantly published the vivid details of Turkish soldiers, war camps, scene of religious persecution, weekly reports of war, including letters from the field, correspondence, reports and messages.<sup>xxxvi</sup> He was very glad to state that all of them centered round as a common entity for Osmani Khilafat and fighting for it with imperialism. Azad wants to create the same situation in his land.

In the three consecutive issues of *Al-Hilal*, as maintaining Islamic pride, Azad wrote a lengthy article on Rashid Raza. The article, '*Al Muslahul Azeem Wal Murshidul Hakeem Syed Rashid Raza*' (The Great Reformer and The Wise Guide, Rashid Raza) is an account of his visit to India and his Islamic mission.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In the Second issue, Azad refers the reform movement in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century throughout the Islamic world which appeared as a one man, 'Jamaluddin Afghani', the greatest man in the last days of Islam. He then continues with a reformer, 'Abduh' and describes his life and work, praising his devotion to Islamic learning and dictating his dissatisfaction with both Ulemas and the European influence. Then Azad introduced Rashid Raza as a successor of Abduh and his party of reform. He started his weekly journal, *Al-Manar*

in 1897 and from that time, he shown himself to be a great reformer. Azad argued that an autocratic ruler harassed and imprisoned his father and two brothers also and his father was died during imprisonment but he never stopped. Similar kind of hostility, he had experienced in Egypt from the Ulemas, especially from the teachers of Al-Azhar, whom he attacked for misleading the people. Azad comments that al-Azhar leaders are like the maulvis of India, except that the later are poor and former are rich and powerful. Azad says that he wanted to start another Darul-Uloom, for abolishing the reform of al-Azhar.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

In the third issue, Azad praise fully described that despite belonging to a poor family; Rashid Raza bravely attacked on the Ulemas in *Al-Manar* and provoked the whole student of al-Azhar to go against them. It formulated a kind of opposition for him. Azad claims that he had a friend who was a student of al-Azhar at that time and also present at the Secret Committee meeting which plotted Rashid Raza's assassination. But when Azad first informed the great man, he showed no heed for such threat. Azad comments that he has among those heavenly souls who have dedicated their lives for the sake of truth, though walking about, count them as already dead and have no fear of the weapon of their enemies.<sup>xxxix</sup> To praise his bravery, Azad uses his pen to portray his life and activities and appeals to the Indian Muslims to follow the way of Rashid Raza against the British.

Azad did not left any issue to showcase in his journal which helped him to provoke the Muslims towards their duties. On the issue of 11<sup>th</sup> June 1913, Azad has drawn the attention of the masses on '*The Kanpur Mosque Incident*'. The local authorities in the city of Kanpur has scheme for widening a road, had encroached on a corner of the courtyard of the Machali Bazar Mosque. It became a major issue for the months in *Al-Hilal*. The city Muslims had started to protest against this verdict, '*do not use this land for another purpose*'. And Azad understands the significance of this crucial moment and wants to use this enthusiasm on the right direction. He advised the people to come and protect their 'deen'. For doing his work, he had chosen 'Id-Gaah' (site pray on the eve of festive occasion) where he raised his voice of protest against this issue. He also invited Ulemas to come and take this issue on their hands. Azad advises that for a day, as a form of protest, all Muslims should be closed their shops for the sake of Islam.<sup>xl</sup>

But government did not paid any heed to the sentiment of the Muslims and broken one part of the Mosque that created agitation against the Municipality in Kanpur resulted in police firing which killed lots of people. Gradually thousands of Muslims lost their lives, most of the people imprisoned and put on trial. Azad criticized this objectionable act in his series of article. In one article named, '*The site of Martyrdom: The painful sight of Edirne in Kanpur*', in which Azad vividly compare the destruction of Kanpur with Edirne. Here Azad says that the fall of the Turkish town of Edirne in the Balkan war had created the hostile feeling against Christianity. Now India same incident have been taken place which created same feeling among the Muslims against the British.<sup>xli</sup>

A profound scholar of Islamic literature, Azad understands the influence of the Ulemas on the Muslims society. So, he



wanted to inject the true spirit of Islam among the Ulemas so that they could regenerate the Muslim society. On the issue of 23th April 1913, Azad announced the formation of '*Hizbullah*' (Party of God).<sup>xiii</sup> On the later issues, Azad appeals to his community and invites them to be a part of it. Azad poses a question in bold type: '**MAN ANSARI'ALA ALLAH**' (Who are my helpers on the way to God) and ads in Urdu, '*Is there anyone therefore ready to go with me?*' Azad invites readers to send postcards so that he can prepare a list of Mujahdin-e-haqq (warriors of truth) and Jam Nurain —e- Millat (those ready to give their lives for the people).<sup>xiii</sup> In the same issue he announced that within a week about eight hundred volunteers had already sent their names and addresses.<sup>xiv</sup> Azad remained silent for about a month.

After long month of silence, on the issue of 20 July 1914, Al-Hilal contained a news items concerning the work of Hezbollah. One of his father's disciples donated the land outside the Calcutta where foundation stone was laid as a head-quarter. The building plan envisaged three structures: first of which would be lecture hall for Darul-Irshad (training centre for Hezbollah's leaders) and Azad's personal library was also to be housed in this library, another was to be mosque and living quarters for several hundred students at one time.<sup>xiv</sup> But Azad's had never been fulfilled, so on the further issues, we do not see any activities of Hizbullah.

Maulana Azad established Darul-Irshad on July in 1914 at Calcutta for giving the true teaching of Quran to the Muslims in Bengal, so that, they could adapt their own direction towards right way. But its actual work could not start before 1915. The work of Darul-Irshad had begun with daily Quranic lessons at the rented house in Calcutta. The lecture hall had been erected but it could not be used until another portion of the building could not be constructed.<sup>xvi</sup> When the first number of Al-Balagh (in place of Al-Hilal) came out in 12 November 1915, it announced that other subjects would soon offer and Azad also would give his time for teaching. But because of his engagement to Al-Balagh, Azad put the responsibility upon Sulaiman Nadwi to see that the teaching was continued, based on the Koran and Prophetic tradition.<sup>xvii</sup> Instead of all his endeavors, when Azad left Calcutta for Ranchi, all his activities including Al-Balagh, Hezbollah and Darul-Irshad came to an end.

In his journal, Azad did not only talk about the heroes of Islamic countries but he also highlighted the activities of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, later known as Mahatma

Gandhi, at the same time, he was struggling against the oppression of colonial rule in South Africa to protect those Indians who were staying there.<sup>xviii</sup> Even he was suffering from imprisonment for his work on the behalf of Indians Azad was the first to draw the attention of Muslims to Gandhiji's campaign. On the issue of 26<sup>th</sup> November 1913, to praise Gandhiji, Azad claimed, "because of Gandhi, fire burns in the heart of all Indians in South Africa".<sup>xix</sup> The next issue of Al-Hilal also carries the picture of Gandhiji on the front page.<sup>1</sup>

Azad did not leave far behind to touch the burning issues of the politics in Bengal which was the issue of Hindu- Muslim unity. Although he did not talk about on this issue from the earlier period but on the later period, he became very serious on this topic. On the death of 'Babu Ganga Prasad Varma' who was an editor of 'Hindustan' which was published from Lucknow for thirty years. Azad was very much impressed by the work of Ganga Prasad and ranked him among '*the great man of India*'. Azad comments on his thought of Hindu- Muslim unity and writes, "he never adopted the lamentable attitude of aggressive communalism which some Hindus and Muslims leaders adopt. He always dislikes those Hindu journals of Punjab whose policy could never go together the idea of a united India. He repeatedly told me personally that there is no enemy of the country greater than such people and such journal, whether they are Muslims or Hindus".<sup>ii</sup> Azad thanked him to encourage for the implementation of this plan on the Province of Bengal. Azad felt that the time has come to take practical action by the both community together.<sup>iii</sup>

On the later publication, he wants to liberate Muslims from a pathological fear of Hindus and advises them to follow the joint action with their Hindu contemporaries. There are sufficient references in the pages of Al-Hilal to Hindu-Muslim co-operation to prove that this was the stage where he wants Muslim political action to take. In December 1913 issue, he uses the congress meeting in Karachi as an occasion for their past aloofness from congress and to praise the politics of that organization. The accepted political policy of the Muslims Community is outdated as he said, and the time has passed when the term 'Congress' could be used as a term of abuse among Muslims. Azad appeals to his community that the time has come to forget their rivalries and came to together for the sake of their country.<sup>iiii</sup> From the pages of Al-Hilal, Maulana Azad started his work and was doing till his last breath. He never stopped his work when he was exile at Ranchi. Throughout his life, he worked hard for Hindu-Muslim unity and he deserve to be called '*the prophet of Hindu-Muslim unity*'.

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