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Topic- Study of Maulana Azad

**Online Class Materials**

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# Abul Kalam Azad

## Revolutionary and journalist

Azad developed political views considered radical for most Muslims of the time and became a full-fledged Indian nationalist. He fiercely criticised the British for racial discrimination and ignoring the needs of common people across India. He also criticised Muslim politicians for focusing on communal issues before the national interest and rejected the All India Muslim League's communal separatism. But his views changed considerably when he met ethnicist oriented Sunni revolutionary activists in Iraq and was influenced by their fervent anti-imperialism and nationalism. Against common Muslim opinion of the time, Azad opposed the partition of Bengal in 1905 and became increasingly active in revolutionary activities, to which he was introduced by the prominent Hindu revolutionaries Aurobindo Ghosh and Shyam Sundar Chakravarty. Azad initially evoked surprise from other revolutionaries, but Azad won their praise and confidence by working secretly to organise revolutionaries activities and meetings in Bengal, Bihar and Bombay (now called Mumbai).

Azad's education had been shaped for him to become a cleric, but his rebellious nature and affinity for politics turned him towards journalism.

Azad worked for Vakil, a newspaper from Amritsar. As per Allama Mashriqi's book titled Dahulbab, "In 1903, Maulvi Shibli Nomani sent Abul Kalam Azad to Qibla-au-Kaaba in Amritsar so that he could shape his [Azad] future. Therefore he [Azad] stayed with him [Khan Ata] for five years and was part of the editorial team of the Vakil newspaper.

He established an Urdu weekly newspaper in 1912 called Al-Hilal, and openly attacked British policies while exploring the challenges facing common people, but it was banned in 1914. Espousing the ideals of Indian nationalism, Azad's publications were aimed at encouraging young Muslims into fighting for independence and Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1913, he was founding member of the Anjuman-i-Ulama-i-Bangala, which would become the Jamiat Ulema-e-Bangala branch of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind in 1921. His work helped improve the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal, which had been soured

by the controversy surrounding the partition of Bengal and the issue of separate communal electorates.

With the onset of World War I, the British stiffened censorship and restrictions on political activity. Azad's Al-Hilal was consequently banned in 1914 under the Press Act. Azad started a new journal, the Al-Balagh, which increased its active support for nationalist causes and communal unity. In this period Azad also became active in his support for the Khilafat agitation to protect the position of the Sultan of Ottoman Turkey, who was considered the Caliph or Khalifa for Muslims worldwide. The Sultan had sided against the British in the war and the continuity of his rule came under serious threat, causing distress amongst Muslim conservatives. Azad saw an opportunity to energise Indian Muslims and achieve major political and social reform through the struggle. With his popularity increasing across India, the government outlawed Azad's second publication under the Defence of India Regulations Act and arrested him. The governments of the Bombay Presidency, United Provinces, Punjab and Delhi prohibited his entry into the provinces and Azad was moved to a jail in Ranchi, where he was incarcerated until 1 January 1920.

## Literary works

Azad wrote many books including India Wins Freedom, Ghubar-e-Khatir, Tazkirah, Tarjumanul Quran (Urdu تذکرہ ترجمان القرآن), etc.

Ghubar-e-Khatir

Main article: Ghubar-e-khatir

Ghubar-e-Khatir (Sallies of Mind), (Urdu: غُبَارِخَاتِر) is one of the most important works of Azad, written primarily during 1942 to 1946 when he was imprisoned in Ahmednagar Fort in Maharashtra by British Raj while he was in Bombay (now Mumbai) to preside over the meeting of All India Congress Working Committee.

The book is basically a collection of 24 letters he wrote addressing his close friend Maulana Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani. These letters were never sent to him because there was no permission for that during the imprisonment and after the release in 1946, he gave all these letters to his friend Ajmal Khan who let it published for the first time in 1946.

Although the book is a collection of letters but except one or two letters, all other letters are unique and most of the letters deal with complex issues such as existence of God, the origin of religions, the origin of music and its place in religion, etc.

The book is primarily an Urdu language book; however, there are over five hundred of couplets, mostly in Persian and Arabic languages. It is because, Maulana was born in a family where Arabic and Persian were used more frequently than Urdu. He was born in Mekkah, given formal education in Persian and Arabic languages but he was never taught Urdu.

It is often said that his book India wins Freedom is about his political life and Ghubar-e-Khatir deals with his social and spiritual life.