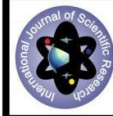




Publications

Contribution of Al-Hilal in India's Independence movement



Mass Communication

KEYWORDS : Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Al-Hilal, Al-Balagh, Urdu Journalism, Independence movement.

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ABSTRACT

Journalism has always been a ray of light for the people living in the darkness of unawareness. Journalism for a change is not confined to a cast, creed, religion or language; it can easily say there is something for everyone. Urdu language being one very important and probably most influential in its own way. The contribution of Urdu Journalism in freedom struggle is well marked with the fieriest slogan of our Freedom Struggle "Inquilab Zinadabad", unparalleled in the history of any other languages. Maulana Azad's Al-Hilal was powerful instrument to launch a campaign against the colonial and to dislodge the Muslims from the English camp. This weekly journal was played very significant and unpatrolled role for unity amongst Hindus and Muslims for the India's Independence. The dedicated services and tremendous sacrifices made for the national cause by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and his media Al-Hilal and Al-Balagh will always remain a source of inspiration to the younger generation of post-independence India.

Introduction:

When the erstwhile mighty and powerful Mogul empire of India fell apart, lost its control over different parts of the sub continent and shrank into a puppet state virtually confined within the boundaries of the Red fort in Delhi, the British colonialists, who eyed India for a long time, and lurked for a suitable chance to consolidate its position in the subcontinent, grabbed this chance and seized the power in 1857 declaring India as its greatest colony in the world. After the Revolt of 1857, the British had patronaged and applied the most unscrupulous policy to divide the Indians in different castes and classes. The British used one class or caste against the other. The Muslims were made to fight with the Hindus and the high caste Hindus were excited against the low caste Hindus. Thus, there was deterioration in the whole country. With the failure of the Great rebellion, the era of British territorial conquest came to an end and a new era of systematic economic loot and plunder by the British was inaugurated. The English people ruthlessly exploited Indian economy without any fear.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's Al-Hilal (the Crescent) was a very famous and popular Urdu Journal in the first decade 20th century, which came out from Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1st of June, 1912. Maulana Azad described in his autobiography, about the aims, objectives and the characteristic of Al-Hilal:

"There were a number of dailies, weeklies and monthlies published in Urdu from the Punjab and U.P but their standard in not high. Their get up and printing were as poor as their contents. They produced by the lithographic process and could not, therefore, embody any feature of modern Journalism. Nor were they able to print half tone picture. I decided my journal should be attractive in get up and powerful in appeal it must be set up in type and reproduced by the lithographic process. Accordingly I established the Al-Hilal press and the first number of the journal Al-Hilal was published in June 1912"

Al-Hilal marked a turning point in the history of Urdu Journalism. It achieved unprecedented popularity within a short time. "The Public" wrote:

"Azad, were attracted not only by the superior printing and production of the paper but even more by the new note of nationalism preached by it"

Maulana Azad was thrown on the stage at the time when the colonialists were at the zenith of their power. The British boasted the sun never set over their empire. His active life spanned over an era which herald the end of this western domination, and witnessed a new phase of free societies in the third world. Maulana Azad played a key role in bringing about this

great change. His Media, Al-Hilal was a powerful instrument to launch a campaign against the colonialists and to dislodge the Muslim from English camp.

Al-Hilal, made its influence felt within a few weeks of its birth. Within six months its circulation had reached the figure of eleven thousand- a considerable figure if we remember that the annual subscription was Rs. 12 and bulks of its reader were Musalmans.

Al-Hilal, created a revolutionary stir among the masses. The demand for it was so great that within the first three month all the old issue had to be reprinted as every new subscriber wanted the entire set. Within two years Al-Hilal reached a circulation of 26,000 copies a week, a figure which was till then unheard of in Urdu Journalism. The government was rattled by the popularity of the journal and demanded a security of Rs. 2,000 under the press act from the publisher

This deposit was forfeited and a fresh deposit of Rs. 10,000 was demanded within a few months. This was also forfeited after sometime and the Al-Hilal press was confiscated in 1915.

Jawaharlal Lal Nehru wrote:

"Abul Kalam Azad spoke in a new language to Muslim 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 a little difficult because of its Persian background. He used new phrases for new ideas and was a definite influence in giving shape to the Urdu language as it is today. The older conservative leaders among the Muslims did not react favorably to all this and criticized Azad's opinion and approach. Yet not even the most learned of them could easily match Azad in debate and argument even on the basis of scripture and old tradition, for Azad's knowledge of these happened to be greater than theirs. He was a strange mixture of medieval scholasticism, 18th century rationalism and the modern outlook..... This very youthful writer and journalist caused a sensation in Muslim intellectual circles and though the elders frowned upon him, his word created ferment in the minds of the younger generation"

Maulana Azad was so bitter against the colonialists that he wrote:

"Oh, Europeans! How long are you going to pollute God's blessed land with your dirty hands! How long would oppression subdue justice! How would darkness overpower light; Your bloody hands hanged hundreds in Tabriz; made the sand of Tripoli red with blood; and left countless dead in Morocco"

Al-Hilal, had achieved during the war a circulation of twenty five thousand copies and it was being read in all parts of India.

Maulana's old connection with the revolutionary party in Bengal had already attracted the attention of the Criminal Intelligence Department, and Sir Charles Cleveland, its head had always been on the lookout for material calculated to implicate him. As early as November 1914, the Maulana knew that the fate of his paper and along with it his own was hanging in the balance. For, at the instance of Sir James Meston, Governor of the United Provinces, the Pioneer of Allahabad had published in November an editorial entitled "Pro-Germanism in Calcutta", in which it charged the Maulana with pro-German tendencies. It is a long article and throws a flood of light on the close attention with which the paper was being watched. This how the paper is introduced to the reader:

"Al-Hilal is a weekly illustrated newspaper published in the Urdu language in Calcutta, and is edited by a Dehli Musalman named Abul Kalam. It has a large circulation among Musalman in these provinces, and probably in other parts of India. Ever since the war broke out, its attitude has been so strikingly pro-German that it must be a matter of amazement to all who read the paper that the Government has managed to tolerate its writings. Possibly this may be accounted for by the fact that the paper attracts little or no attention in Calcutta itself owing to its being published in Urdu, and there can be little doubt that this was one of the main causes which led the editor to choose Calcutta as the place of publication. Another reason may be that style of the most mischievous articles is very allusive and full of veiled sneers and sarcasm and innuendoes, most of which either disappear or lose their effect when translated into English, and it is not likely that many European officials read the paper in the original"

It is quite clear that the purpose of Al-Hilal was the resurgence of Muslims. Deliberately this task was based on Quran and Sunnah. The intention was to remind the Quranic Lessons which had been forgotten by the Muslims and also to make these lessons his own guiding principles. He quoted profusely from the Quran which says:

"Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity"

Al-Hilal played a remarkable role in changing the mind of Muslims. Azad used this powerful medium to touch the conscience of the Muslims. He assumed the leadership of a very difficult sort of people. Of all the Indians Muslim were the most rigid folks. They attempted always to sail against the current. When the British were invincible, they made futile attempts to overpower them. They would become desperate and desolate but would not change their stand.

Azad preferred the immediate gains to long time benefits. The nation was wide-awake to win liberty and they had forgotten their own old lesson which Tipu Sultan had taught the life of a lion for a day was far better than the life of a jackal for a hundred years. When the Britishers, they regarded them worse than Satan, and when they liked the British they took be angels.

In short the services of Al-Hilal were memorable. It annulled the policy of loyalism. It advocated Hindu-Muslim unity. It brought the Muslim closer to the main stream of national struggle. When a few opposed this policy on the ground that Hindus were in majority and that in a democracy where majority rule would prevail, Muslims would be ruled by Hindu, Azad quoted the Quran:

"God forbids you not with regard to those who fight you not for (your) faith, no drive you out of your homes from dealing kindly and justly with them; for God loves those who are just. God only forbids you with regard to those who fight you for (your) faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in those circumstances) that do wrong"

The implications of these verses were clear. The Hindus and Muslims have lived together as brother for centuries. They belong to the same country, the same race, the same language and culture. The aliens, who had come from seven seas across who had enslaved the whole population, and had reduced the people to utter poverty and ignorance, had no right to deserve sympathy. Again it was strange how short was the Muslim memory when all that the English had done to them in 1857 and before 1857 was totally forgotten.

The very first issue of Al-Hilal stated very clearly that the Hindu-Muslim unity was the only way to solve the Indian problem. He quoted Quran to point out that it was permissible for Muslims to join Non-Muslims if it was beneficial to both.

Azad made it a mission of his life to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. He would invite the attention of all Muslims to know that spirit of the Quran, which was in favor of such a unity. It was Aligarh, which wanted to keep the Muslim politically away from Hindus. Azad vehemently opposed this policy. If Muslims wanted to lead a dignified life it was essential for them to cooperate with Hindus. This was the message of Al-Hilal to free the country from British clutches.

The only weapon the government had to deal with such excitable situations was to excite Hindu-Muslims riot over sensitive issues. The first riot took place at Ajodhya. The government passed order prohibiting cow-slaughter to please the Hindus. Al-Hilal started blasting the policy of government; even Shibli Nomani contributed fiery articles and poems to Al-Hilal.

In short his moral fibre within promoted his keen intellect to bring his people to national path and right conduct. Political awakening and social change were his two main objects. He wielded a powerful pen and an effective tongue, both of which were well used to win his objectives. Whatever he wrote or said carried lofty thoughts. He would say all history is nothing but unfolding the drama of human freedom, political freedom, social freedom, cultural freedom, freedom from want, hunger, ignorance and superstition. Reality of life was nothing but service and sacrifices. Some of his sayings and writing would touch and stir the heart. British Colonialism had treated the Muslim in such a manner that we could as well feed the scorpion on our palm, and make peace with snakes, but it is impossible to make any compromise with the English.

Al-Hilal had other purpose than mere technical improvement of Urdu Journalism. Lava was bubbling in his mind at the condition of Islamic world. The colonials had gone on imposing uninterruptedly their political will on the Muslim world

Here I conclude by saying, words seem inadequate, expression fail to explain the beauty and charisma of THE URDU LANGUAGE., this is the language which added charm to poetry, meaning to prose and indeed LIFE to the great freedom struggle of India. It might have passed the zenith of its splendour but even today we doubtlessly remain indebted to this language in different way.

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Freedom Struggle of 1857 And Role of Delhi Urdu Akhbar

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ABSTRACT

The British rule in India had created chaos and unrest among the Indian people, which led them to revolt against the British government, culminating in the war of independence of 1857. Though this war of independence was a total failure and Indians could not resist this powerful tyrant rule. Urdu journalism was one of those means which played an outstanding role in infusing the spirit of freedom among the people and making their opinion against the suppressive government. Delhi Urdu Akhbar was one of them whose role was very significant and matchless.

KEYWORDS : freedom Struggle, War of Independence, Urdu Journalism, Delhi Urdu Akhbar.

Introduction:

At the height of the Rebellion, in June 1857, the Governor-General Lord Canning is reported to have said that the 'native press', sedulously, cleverly artfully and craftily spreading seditious sentiments among the Indian people. This reminds us that the Rebels were able to use the printed word to serve their cause. The four months that Delhi remained in the hands of the rebels (May-September 1857) saw the city served by three weekly newspapers, of which perhaps the major one, to judge by its detailed reporting and commentaries, was the Delhi Urdu Akhbar.

The 1857 war stands out as the first most aggressive opposition by the Indians to the world's largest colonial power, the British. The aim was simply to uproot the exploitative colonial regime of the British and regain country's lost power and prestige.

Contribution of DUA :

The weekly "Dehli Urdu Akhbar" has honour to be the first news paper of North India and 3rd of Urdu in All India. It was started in the year 1837 A.D. "Dehli Urdu Akhbar" was the 1st Urdu newspaper of North India and 2nd of All India level. It was a weekly printed on four pages of 20 X 30 in size, issued every Saturday.

Through its news, the paper started instigating its readers against British rule, and when the torch-bearers of the freedom movement stormed Delhi on May 11, 1857, it devoted the entire front page to highlight their gallantry. Delhi Urdu Akhbar had given up its usual restraint and showed little sympathy for the victims of the rebels' violence. The issue of May 17, 1857 carried a detailed first hand report of the unprecedented violence in Delhi. It was the first example of "Spot Reporting" in Urdu journalism.

The report written in first person says: "The present scribe too came out of his house to see things for himself, inspired as he was by a regard for the glory of his faith and hearing the sound of gunfire. I was confronted by a strange sight: people were running from Kashmiri Gate side into the market. Personal safety was no doubt in danger, but dearer to me than my personal safety was the desire to see unusual sights and the other equally strong desire to give a faithful eye-witnessed account of events to my readers. As I moved forward, I heard gunshots...a little ahead of me. Soon, I saw the Sahib Bahadur running for his life, sword in hand and a native following him with gun close at heel. In the rear was a crowd of common people, some with sticks in their hands, others with bamboos, chasing the beleaguered Englishmen at hot speed. They hunted down from Zeenat Bara towards the canal."

The text of the paper that contained the news of revolt began with the verses of Holy Quran, the editor declared:

"The mighty rulers whose strength, rule and administration, could not even imagine of the downfall, it did happen in the blink of an eye ... Most of the people still think whether this all has happened or they are still in a state of dream"

When the Revolt of 1857 A.D. brought in its wake a brief period of Independence, The Delhi Urdu Akhbar got a fresh youthfulness. A

rhetorical and dramatic style emerged in the presentation of news in it, which in the journalistic language of today is known as 'feature'. While reading such items of news it appears that we are sitting in some corner of this bride of cities and watching with our own eyes this horrible game of blood and fire which certainly brought about a sense of relief in the collective life of Delhi for a few months. But if on the one hand this period was a harbinger of freedom, on the other it also brought its train the oppression of the people of Delhi at the hands of Tilangs. Delhi people themselves ushered in an area of loot. The situation became so serious that Bahadur Shah Zafar had to issue the following Farmans against it which was published in Urdu Akhbar dated May, 21-24, 1857 A.D.:

"Often swordsmen and musclemen oppress and trouble the people of the city and the royal servants. Before this, the Europeans used to issue whatever orders they wanted and our dear subjects were always worried and troubled. Now you trouble them and loot them. If this is your condition then having no regard for wealth or property in these last days of ours, we shall go in the direction of Khawaja Saheb along with all the loyal subjects or move to the Kaba of Allah so that the remaining years of our dear life are spent in the contemplation of Allah."

At Agra merely on the basis of favouritism an English officer dismissed a native employee of 25 years, standing and appointed his own man on the plea that the local people do not have the capacity to do the work. Delhi Urdu Akhbar wrote in its issue dated 28th June 1840 A.D.:

"Indian officials have been unnecessarily given a bad name. if they get a reasonable salary like their English counterparts and their pension and reinstatement is done by higher authorities and not by inexperienced and young collectors, Magistrate and deputy collectors, the qualities that the English officials are supposed to have will surely be found in Indians"

The tone is rather bitter in its comments on the increasing incidents of robberies. Blaming Thanedar harassing the public, it wrote:

"Things have come to such a pass that money is extorted from people and their neighbours through threats and now people are even afraid of complaining against theft and the officials are doing nothing"

In the subsequent text the editor gave an objective eyewitness account of the events that took place on 11th May 1857 in Delhi. The paper continued to publish the contents that reflected different dimensions of the revolt; these contents were filled with anti-English sentiments. In the subsequent editions the paper kept on providing the details of the events, especially the edition of 17th May-1857. Ataque Siddique has reproduced the full text of that paper. The Delhi Urdu Akhbar covered the news of uprising extensively. The news of Kol, Buland Shahar, Kanpur, Lucknow, Agra, Jhajhra, Sikandra, Ghaziabad, Ballabgarh, Meerut and Delhi had got special coverage.

KOL: "It has been heard that four companies of Kol appeared before the king after disgracing the English, killing every Englishman they came across and allowed the people to loot the treasury and the public looted it thoroughly and everyone grabbed what he would catch hold of."

LUCKNOW:-"It is reported that in Lucknow Englishmen suffered the way they fared here. It is also rumoured that the brother of the deposed king, who was known to be mad, has occupied the throne and the state is being ruled in his name but it is known what the disposition of the king of dancers and the friend of music is and where is the ruler."

KANPUR:-"It has been reported that the condition of Kanpur is similar to that of other places. Whenever English is found, he is killed".

AGRA:-The **Dehli Urdu Akhbar** described the achievements of freedom fighters of Agra as:

"Now a days the rumour has spread everywhere that Mr. Bija Bai has taken over the charge of Agra. Some people believe that Britishers themselves have handed over charge to him saying that it is not possible for them to control the situation in Agra".

MEERUT:-"It is said that the situation there in Meerut is completely different. Anyhow the result is same as the Britishers and White people are still there. Some soldiers who came from Bareilly are camped near the Black river, ready for war. But they are waiting for help, if some help come from there they may prove themselves as the Quran say: "كفتمهم عليهم ربههم به نبيهم مسواها" (So their Lord crushed them for their sin and levelled them). But it is not known why the help did not come yet from there. Allah's anger will definitely fall on Britishers. They will die their own death without killing them. But it is world of reasons as the system is being run in this way"

GHAZIABAD:-"It is said that the Gujjars have occupied Ghaziabad with the help of two cannons and looted and destroyed it. Gujjars is strange kind of community. They signed the agreement not to create any disturbances and handed over the administrative arrangements to Tahsildar"

DEHLI CITY PROPER:-

"The public feels greatly harassed and troubled because of the prevalent loot. The city people themselves as well as outsiders are indulging in loot and the authority of the police posts is less than one – tenth of what it was earlier. In short every respectable and rich person is facing great difficulties these days"

Dehli Urdu Akhbar published many articles and speeches which provoked the freedom fighters and encouraged them. Some extracts of a speech is given below:

"Your this Battle will also be remembered in the history, how bravely you crushed the pride and arrogance of such ambitious and

arrogant kingdom and mixed their radical Shaddadi pride and Pharaonic vanity with dust, and kept the Empire of India from Britishers which was desired by many great kings. You saved the country from their control and its people from the unexpected disaster".

In such a situation only a courageous journalist speaks the truth, for when Goondas become respectable and chaos is prevailing, common people cover their heads and sit down in a corner to save their lives and honour. These were the few glimpses of brave and bold efforts of **Dehli Urdu Akhbar**, otherwise it is true that this was the only news paper of India which kindles the hopes of Jihad in the hearts of Indians and gave the message that Hindu-Muslim unitedly can drive away the Britishers.

And then the land covered by dark clouds, Dehli became like-widowed lady. **Dehli Urdu Akhbar** was closed. Its proprietor, **Muhammad Baqar** was shot dead in connection with the murder of Taylor, the principal of Delhi collage. However all available records as well as the oral evidence of men in the know of things show that the **Maulvi Baqar** was innocent. He even gave sanctuary to Taylor, but after he escaped from the Baqar's House, he was killed by a move. but he became immortal since he was the first Journalist to have obtained glory of martyr. **Maulvi Mohammad Baqar** had to pay very heavy price of his courage, his son veteran Urdu writer and poet **Maulana Mohammad Hussain Azad** and his family suffered a lot, their property was confiscated and was forced to leave Delhi.

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