



## PROFESSOR BARKATULLAH: A BIOGRAPHY

Barkatullah Bhopali was an epitome of sincerity and dedication towards one's nation. He was a fiery journalist, a brilliant orator, an erudite Islamic scholar, a nationalist to the core, an author of several books, a polyglot who knew more than seven languages and Prime Minister of India's "government-in-exile". Barkatullah fought from outside India, with fiery speeches and revolutionary writings in leading newspaper for the independence of India. Even in the face of adversity and discouragement, Barkatullah rose to a position of pre-eminence in more than one sphere of life by sheer force of merit and hard work. With a view to perpetuate the name of learned scholar and the revolutionary son of the soil, amongst the youth and future generations, Bhopal University was rechristened as Barkatullah University in 1988, after him.

Barkatullah was born on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1854 at Itwara Mohalla, Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, India. He was educated from primary to college level at Bhopal. Later, he went to Bombay and London for his higher education. He was a meritorious scholar, born of parent in rather indifferent circumstances. He had nothing but his own brilliance and firmness of purpose to help him at school and colleges.

In 1895, he was invited by the British convert Abdullah Quilliam to work at the Muslim Institute in Liverpool. He subsequently taught at the Oriental college of University of Liverpool. He later distanced himself from the Muslim Institute over its style of functioning. While in England, he came into contact with Indian revolutionaries at India House. In response to the British Prime Minister Gladstone's racist comments about India, he launched a flurry of articles and speeches criticizing the policies. As a result, his activities were severely restricted. He left for New York in 1899 at the insistence of Muslim Scholar and activist Muhammad Alexander Russell Webb. While in America, he kept in touch with fellow revolutionaries in India and had a scholarly exchange with the poet and nationalist leader Maulana Hazrat Mohani. In these letters he stresses on the need for Hindu-Muslim unity in the freedom struggle. He became a founder member of the Gadar Party started by the Indian in San Francisco. Barkatullah reached Japan in 1909 and was appointed a Professor of oriental languages at the University of Tokyo. He brought out a journal; "The Islamic Fraternity" later on a newspaper by the name of EI Islam which was banned in British India. As a result of his activities his appointment at the University was terminated in 1914. This, however, did not unnerve Prof. Barkatullah. He treated the world as his playground and moved his activities elsewhere. He accompanied the Turko-German Mission to Kabul in 1915 and joined Ubaidullah Sindhi and Raja Mahendra Pratap to form the Provincial government of India. He served as the Prime Minister-in-exile. In 1919 he met Lenin and sought his help in India's struggle for freedom. Throughout the early 1920s he travelled widely in Germany, France, and Russia organizing the expatriate Indian communities on the revolutionary path.

Maulana Barkatullah passed away on his way to San Francisco on September 20, 1927 and was buried in the Old City Cemetery of Sacramento. He did not live to see India free but his contribution did bring freedom much nearer.