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Maulana Azad's vision of modern India

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Abstract

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a multi-dimensional personality, bloomed into a valiant freedom fighter; an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity is one of the pioneer nation builders of modern India. He is remembered in the history of India not only for the role he played in the freedom struggle of the country, but also as the first Education Minister of independent India. He made exemplary contributions in nation-building leaving his indelible imprints in the field of education. He believed that materialization of India as a developed nation is possible only through union, solidarity and communal harmony. Maulana Azad is undoubtedly one of the architects of modern secular India who occupies a special place in the Indian History. Being a creative thinker acquainted with both traditional and modern education, Maulana Azad laid an undying impact on the educational aspects of modern India. This paper is an attempt to explore the vision and thought of Azad which were inevitable in laying down the foundation of modern India. This paper is an attempt to recall Azad's intellectual and political contribution to modern India to the younger generation of India.

Keywords: Moulana Azad, modern India, secularism, nationalism, education -system

Maulana Azad's vision of modern India

Introduction

Moulana Azad occupies a distinctive position in the history of our Freedom Movement. An erudite person, Maulana Azad was one of the few Philosopher- Statesmen our nation has been gifted with. He was most assuredly an outstanding scholar, a great journalist, a matchless orator but which equal ease he was also a great statesman who played a significant role in every crisis which India faced in its struggle to make our country free and independent. During the Freedom Movement and in the years immediately following independence, he was closely associated with crucial decision making in the country. Moulana Azad was a man with a mission. His greatest mission in life, perhaps, was Hindu-Muslim unity and the unity and integrity of the country. He detested partition of the country. His mission was for national integration and unity of the country. Azad was passionately patriotic and had strong empathies for anti-colonial politics since his teenage. In the wake of the Khilafat, Noncooperation Movement, he joined the Indian National Congress and presided over its special session of 1923. He remained with Gandhi and Nehru even as their constituency of support amongst the Indian Muslims dwindled over the years. After Independence, he committed himself to project of building a secular, pluralist and progressive nation-state and was instrumental in founding academic and cultural institutions such as the

Indian Institute of Technology, Sahitya Akademi, Sangeet Natak Akademi, University Grants Commission and many more institutions and organizations. Maulana Azad's ideals have made significant contribution to India becoming a sovereign, secular and democratic republic. He remained steadfast on his opinion about religion, nationalism and freedom. He said: "partition is a tragedy for India. We must not however, forget that the nation is one and its cultural life is and will remain one politically". The aim of this paper is to investigate the contribution made by Maulana Azad in nation building. It also discusses the significance and relevance of his thoughts and ideas in the modern age.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was born on November 11, 1888 in Mecca, the birth place of Islam. He belonged to an orthodox Muslim family. The original name of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was Abul Kalam Ghulam Muhiyuddin. His ancestors came to India from Afghanistan. His mother was an Arab and his father Maulana Khairuddin was a Bengali Muslim of Afghan origin. Maulana Khairuddin shifted to Mecca in 1857. He returned to India in 1890 and started living in Calcutta. His mother died when he was only 11 years old. At the age of fourteen, he married to young Zuleikha Begum. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad received the traditional Islamic education at home. After that he was taught Arabic, Persian, philosophy, Geometry, mathematics and algebra by some great teachers. He also acquired huge knowledge in English, history, politics and general science. In 1923, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad became the President of the special session of the Indian National Congress. In 1930, he participated in Mahatma Gandhi movement Salt Satyagraha. In his presidential speech he clearly stated that ignoring the idea of religious separatism is very important. His speech thus still stands as the insignia of communal harmony. He held this post till the year 1946. He wanted unified nation and opposed the partition as well as Jinnah's Two-Nation Theory. After independence Maulana Abul Kalam Azad became the first education Minister of India. He was the member of Constituent Assembly which was responsible for drafting the constitution of India. Maulana Azad wanted to spread education among the common people of the country. In 1956 he was selected as the President of the UNESCO General Conference in Delhi. On February 22, 1958, he passed away. His birthday, November 11, is celebrated as National Education Day in India. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour Bharat Ratna in 1992.

Maulana Azad: The architecture of modern education in India

Maulana Azad was many ways an astonishing person. His knowledge was very vast. He was a great reformer of the 20th century. He was one of the architects of modern India. Maulana Azad was appointed as India's first Minister of Education. Under Moulana Azad's tenure, a number of measures were undertaken to promote primary and secondary education, scientific education, establishment of universities and promotion of avenues of research and higher studies. As a Minister of Education, Maulana Azad made unique contribution and stressed on the necessity of laying down policies and programmes for the speedy and all round, as well as inclusive development of the educational facilities in the country. When he addressed the meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education in January, 1949 he spoke of the approach of the National Government towards education. He stated that the first and foremost task of the National Government is the provision of free and compulsory basic education for all. Maulana Azad believed that a good school is a national asset of the highest value at any place or at any time. Schools are the laboratories which produce the future citizens of a Nation. It is also important to bear in mind that the primary social agenda of education is the development of our human resources in the right direction. He strongly felt that we in India are even oblivious of the fact that education is of paramount importance for the nation's overall development.

a. Azad's views on education for all: Maulana Azad was the foremost advocate for the free basic education to India's citizens. While addressing one of the meets during his early days after observing the post of Education Minister of India he had exhorted the policy makers to never forget that it was the birth right of every Individual to receive at least the basic education without which he could not fully discharge his duties as a citizen. Maulana Azad wanted to see fast rising India on the status of literacy of its citizens and the expansion of higher education to the greater heights.

b. Azad's views on child education: Maulana Azad took special interest in primary education. As the Minister of Education Maulana Azad considered basic education for the future welfare of the people as of prime importance and he emphasized on the importance of the speedy progress of adult education. As the Minister of Education of free India, Maulana created a nation-wide system of basic education for all children of school going age. He also believed that the

medium of instruction in schools should be in the mother tongue. Maulana Azad reemphasized the fivefold programme for the expansion of education in the country. The provision of basic education on a universal free and compulsory basis for all the school going children .

c. Azad's views on free education: The Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six upto fourteen years as a fundamental right. Maulana Azad strongly advocated of free basic education to all its citizens. He also convinced the Constituent Assembly that it should be the responsibility of the State to provide free and compulsory education to all its citizens.

d. Azad's views on adult education: He was very much pained at the then prevailing situation of India's education system and adult education. Despite the huge financial crisis India was facing, he had allocated considerable budget to education sector. His target was to raise the expenditure on education till 10% for promoting the adult education. Therefore, he wanted that the scope of adult education should also include provision for social education. ♣ The provision of adult education in order to wipe out the colossal illiteracy of the masses. ♣ The improvement and expansion of technical education in order to solve the manpower for industrial and technical development ♣ The reorganization and improvement of university education from a national point of view.

e. Azad's views on girl education: Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women. Maulana Azad saw that the girl education can bring a drastic change in the society. He was of the opinion that educated girls can play an important role in the development of the country. Education of girls was of prime concern for him. Maulana observed that without an educated electorate, democracy cannot perform the functions expected of it. He believed that education alone can bring about democratic consolidation, social cohesiveness and sustained growth. Our education system and development and should not allow any section to lag behind of special importance is women s education, as they constitute nearly fifty per cent of our population. The full participation of women in the various spheres of society is a very important step for the empowerment of women in our society.

f. Azad's views on higher education: Maulana Azad had special attention on higher education and he wanted to take note of the learning and best practices of other countries. He always wanted that concentrated focus should be given on research in education to make it more creative. For this purpose he had also set up Central Institute of Education. The UGC which was founded under the guidance of Maulana Azad with the aim to the development of university education in India has recently given an ambiguous notice for the discontinuation of the fellowships to the non NET research scholars. Students are up in arms against this decision of the UGC. To his credit goes the foundations of Indian Institute of Technology, University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), Sahitya Academy and Centre for Science and Industrial Research (CSIR). Gandhi described Maulana Azad as the Emperor of learning.

Azad's views on modern education

Education is a dynamic process in any society. Education develops the human struggle for survival and enlightenment. Modern education refers to the general social process by which human beings acquire the knowledge and skills needed to function in their culture. The contribution made by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in nation building could not be overlooked. He was appointed as India's first Minister for Education and inducted in the Constituent Assembly to draft India's constitution. Maulana said addressing the inaugural session of IIT Kharagpur and emphasizing on these words, "Institutes must provide instruction of the highest standard, under the supervision of recognized authorities in their respective fields and that only men of the highest quality should be in charge of the different departments. Education is essentially about rational enquiry and for a highly pluralistic societies, it has to be developed as a harmonizing force rather than as an instrument to promote divisiveness and disunity among the people. A progressive education will greatly address our major social evils and will help in strengthening the secular and liberal fabric of our country, remaining sensitive to the specific cultural identities, and the plural nature of our society, the democratic ethos of our people and to the need for positive dialogue between cultures. Democratic India presents a contrasting picture of affluence and deprivation and different centuries co-exist in India. A progressive education will greatly address our major social evils and will help in strengthening the secular and liberal fabric of our country, remaining sensitive to the specific cultural

identities, and the plural nature of our society, the democratic ethos of our people and to the need for positive dialogue between cultures. Azad was passionately committed to education, culture and scientific and technical progress.

Conclusion

Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad was a leading figure in India's struggle for freedom, apart from being a noted writer, poet and journalist. He edited Urdu weekly newspapers, named Al-Hilal. It was consequently banned following which he started a new journal Al-Balagh. He published many works, criticizing the British rule and advocating self-rule for India. It was as a leader of the Khilafat Movement that he became close to Mahatma Gandhi. He was elected Congress President for the second time and presided over several annual sessions. He led all negotiations, with the British government, during the crucial phase of transfer of power. He became the youngest President of the Indian National Congress. He always supported the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and staunchly opposed the demand for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan. He served in the Constituent Assembly, formed to draft India's Constitution. After India's independence, he served as the first Minister of education. He was honoured with 'Bharat Ratna' posthumously. Azad's ideals have made significant contribution to India becoming a sovereign, secular and democratic republic. Maulana Azad will be remembered for his spiritual intellect and political achievements as also for the sacrifices he made for the country, particularly in an extremely adverse pre-partition situation, He will be remembered for his educational contribution to the country and as a symbol and practical example of India really being a secular country. Azad's intellectual and political contribution to modern India needs to recall again and again to the younger generation of India. His life and works call for re-visiting and re-evaluation.

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