



Relevance of Maulana Azad

Dear Reader,

We have been organizing Azad Day Celebrations every year with a view to propagate the ideas of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a frontline freedom movement leader. This issue of Al Kalam, the University magazine, is a Special Edition focusing on the personality of the great leader. The response from within the University to write on Maulana Azad and to get it published in Al Kalam is growing. Going through the contributions included in this number, I feel the day is not far when our targeted readers would wait for the next Special Edition. What is the need to spread the ideas of Maulana Azad far and wide? Why do we believe that Maulana Azad's 'idea of India' is ever-relevant and worth emulating?

The answers are simple yet complex. The targeted audience of Maulana was of course, the people of Indian. His special attention was, however, upon the Muslims, whom he found torn between the tradition and the demand of the time to change. He found that they were finding it difficult to comprehend the present and grasp the call of future. He was, no doubt, ahead of his times and hence facing great difficulty in making people of his faith to appreciate what lied ahead of them.

Unfortunately, some of the problems and dilemmas that the nation faced in Maulana's times have not vanished altogether. In fact many of those issues have gained force owing to various socio-political, economic and technological changes over the last 70 years. Therefore, it is only apt that we once again study and understand Maulana Azad's celebration of the nation's diversity while at the same time taking pride in his unique identity with it.

One can safely argue that Maulana was one of the tallest example and proponent of the more than 1000 year-old shared culture that we call India today, not in the physical sense of a

nation-state, but in the spiritual sense of an organic nation. Maulana's tolerance for other religions, beliefs, and points of view did not stem out of any political expediency, but from a deep understanding of India's history and syncretic culture, which was nurtured over centuries by extraordinary men and women, as well as by common masses. Maulana was a torch bearer of this shared way of life till his last breath. He held on to it when the tallest around him found their feet shaking. This is the greatness of Maulana Azad. This is what makes him relevant not only today, but for ages to come.

It is MANUU's good fortune to have inherited the name of such a great personality. At the same time it is a great responsibility. Like Maulana Azad, MANUU must show the way where no other is willing to tread. It must lead those towards a better future who are standing on the crossroads for decades now, not knowing which way to proceed. It is easier said than done though. Before taking on this onerous, but unavoidable job, we must first shake ourselves out of inertia. Again like Maulana Azad, our pain and responsibility is of unique nature. While moving forward we must keep in view the mandate that has been given to us by that representative of the will of the people, that is, the Parliament of India.

As all of us know, Maulana was a multi-faceted personality. It will not be an exaggeration to call him a walking and breathing institution. He was so well-versed in each of his passions that it will take numerous serious scholarly endeavours to get a grasp of even a fraction of his persona. Going by the beginning we have made, I'm sure many more dimensions of Maulana Azad's life and thought will come out in the future editions of Al Kalam. It is a small, but significant, beginning of the journey that is MANUU's destiny.





Dr. Javed Nadeem Nadvi

A Legend - Incredibly Charismatic

Al-Hilal Urdu weekly from Calcutta took off with a distinct style and expression, elocution and articulation in 1912. It was replete with highly charged emotions and an exceptional power of composition. Behind this publication, there was a young mind in the 24th spring of his age. The world called him Maulana Azad.

Maulana Abdul Razaq Maleehabadi was a regular companion of Azad. He often joined him on his journeys. Perhaps no one else enjoyed this closeness and privilege with Azad. Maleehabadi, in his book *Azad ki Kahani*, writes "In respect of *Al-Hilal*, all of a sudden, a strong earthquake gave a jolt to the deep slumber; we forgot to rub our eyes and stood up at once."

Using the power of his pen Azad tried to awaken India and make the people gather courage to fight against the policies of exploitation and subjugation. He writes in *Al-Hilal*, "A time comes in the history of nations and states when the desire for life becomes a crime for the mankind. The manufacturing of blacksmith is demanded more than the desire for a life. It is a time when ropes are made with the branches of trees and gallows of wood are prepared so that the sons of Adam are brought to be hanged. Such time comes and passes off, under the natural law of people's revolution. Then every seed of devastation and destruction, which was sown in the earth, bears the fruit of an established and lasting life, with the start of a new season."

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad possessed a personality of octagonal diamond. Each aspect of his life seeks to be studied and researched. The result of such efforts would turn out to be a small library.

He is known as a scholar, a commentator of the Quran, a journalist, an orator, a leader, a theorist of the world

politics and culture, an ideologue and a philosopher of hitherto hidden approach to life, particularly of the Muslims. He admits, "There is not even a single bit of belief in my heart which has not been pierced by all the thorns of doubt. There is no creed of my spirit, which did not pass through the ordeals of refusal. I have swallowed poison and experienced the prescription of remedy, from all hospitals. When I was thirsty, my thirsts were not like others. When I got them quenched, my fountain of satisfaction was not available along the highway."

This was the reason that always kept him firm and resolute in his decision. Whatever merits and characteristics he attained were, in fact, derived from his rigorous study and experiences of life. He had seen and analysed both the sections of human society - the traditional as well as the modern. He proclaimed, "Along the way of knowledge and thought, nowadays, there is the division of old and modern. But in my view these divisions are quite invalid. Whatever is old I have got that in legacy and whatever is modern I have broken the way for that, myself. I refused from the very first day, to remain convinced, of whatever I received from my family, education and society. The restrictions of tradition could never erect a barrier, in any corner, and the curiosity for exploration, could never forsake me, in any field." (*Asar-e-Abul Kalam*)

This has been the reason Azad appears prominent in the galaxy of scholars, philosophers and freedom fighters. During his political career he faced swelling tides yet thanks to his determination and profound understanding, sailed bravely. The two-nation theory is a well-known issue. Historians believe that the manner in which he dealt with the situation, and maintained his stance, was extraordinary. Noted scholar of Islam, Maulana Abul



Hasan Ali Nadwi, recounts, "It was such a tough time, which could shatter the mountains, divert the course of rivers and change directions of the winds. Nevertheless the viewpoint held by Maulana Azad remained intact and unwavering. It was not an easy task, especially at a time when the nation was confronted with diverse ideologies and interpretations: conformists, progressives, socialists, nationalists so on and so forth. Each had his own dream and fascination, about a modern India." Maulana Azad thereby was given a tremendous task to convince the nation from the podium of the Congress. In the last presidential speech delivered by him at the Congress meeting at Ramgarh, he spoke:

"I am a Muslim. I feel proud to be a Muslim. I have inherited glorious traditions of Islam spread over a period of thirteen centuries. I would not allow losing even a minutest particle of it. The teachings of Islam, the history of Islam, Islamic sciences and arts and Islamic culture are the assets of my heritage. It is my duty to preserve them. In my capacity as a Muslim, I have a position in religious and cultural circles. I cannot tolerate anyone to interfere therein. Despite all these sentiments, I have yet another concept which is generated by the realities of my life. The spirit of Islam does not forbid me from it; rather it guides me in this direction. I do proudly believe that I am an Indian. I am a component of a united and undividable India. I am such a significant component of this united nation, without which the edifice of its greatness remains incomplete. I am an inevitable factor of its composition and structure. I can never resign from this claim."

This is the real portrait of Maulana Azad sketched in his own words. It has weight and depth of farsightedness. Thanks to this paramount perception he commanded profound respect. His commitment to the cause of freedom, his honesty and integrity vis-à-vis the nation, were equally applauded by the entire nation. In order to reaffirm his standpoint regarding national unity, he declared that if an angel descended from the heaven and addressed from the height of the Qutb Minar announcing that there were two options only at hand, either freedom of the country or the unity among the Hindus and the Muslims. "I will choose the unity among the Hindus and the Muslims." Maulana Azad never turned his back to the challenges of his time nor offered a justification to make a retreat. Rather he stood abreast of the swelling tides. There was a simple logic behind this: he held a high vision and a vibrant principle. He had bequeathed the brilliance from his magnificent culture.

His conscience and integrity gleam fairly through the radiant phrases of *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, which made him a great legend, and a torch bearer of the freedom struggle. Reciting his courage and commitment, I feel motivated to narrate a passage from his book *Qaul-e-Faisal*:

Of course! I have said that the present government is tyrant. If I do not say this, then what else should I say? I do not know, why am I expected, that I should not call something, with its real name? I refuse to call white something that is black. Of course! I have been saying that the government should stop injustice and violation of rights. If it does not desist, it should be wiped out. I do not know what else may be said, instead. This is such an old reality of human belief, that only oceans and mountains can be found equal to their age. If something is bad, it should either be rectified or wiped away. There is hardly a third option. I believe that every nation has a birth-right to live free. A man or a man-made bureaucracy has no right, to enslave a man who is the creation of God. Whatever the charming and attractive rhetoric is chosen for enslavement, nonetheless, that is enslavement and subjugationMr. Magistrate! This is an interesting and admonitory chapter of history for which both of us are equally engaged to compose. I am destined here to stand behind this bar and you have been favoured to occupy that chair of Magistrate. I accept that this chair is as important for this purpose, as this bar. Come on! Let us finish this business speedily which is going to become a commemorative event and a fiction". (Qaul-e-Faisal)

Mentioning the endurance and perseverance of Maulana Azad once highly respected scholar, Syed Sulaiman Nadvi remarked "I am recording these lines and an impression has cascaded me that whether I am giving the account of the life of Ibn-e-Taimiya and Ibn-e-Qaiyyim or Shamsul Ayimma Sarkhas and Umaiya ibn Abdul Aziz Andalusi." To conclude, I put forth what Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi recited on an occasion to define the stature of Maulana Azad:

"Hundreds of scholars discussed their views in this session. The discourse was finer than the slenderness of petals. Yet let me know about that insightful person, who simply sighted a thorn, and narrated the story of the garden."

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Maulana Abul Kalam Azad An Epitome of National Integrity

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, born in Mecca in 1888, was a rare combination of scholarship, statesmanship, refinement and culture. Azad stood as the great champion of Hindu-Muslim unity. He realized that the Muslims of India must join India's struggle for freedom. He took a firm stand against the politics of separatism. He recommended that the Constitution of India must be Federal. He was appointed the Education Minister in the interim Cabinet, an office he held till his death in 1958.

Azad has enjoyed an eminent position in the history of modern Indian political thought as a nationalist Muslim. He was a great cementing force between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Known as Mohiyuddin Ahmed during the early part of his life, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a prominent leader among the freedom fighters and an important figure among the modern Indian thinkers. He belonged to a conservative family of a famous Muslim Pir (spiritual guide) who enjoyed a huge following. Even as a child he was of an independent mind and critical temperament. Azad started contributing articles to Indian journals at the age of twelve. He broke barriers of age and his conservative background when at the tender age of fourteen he edited a weekly newspaper *Lissan us Sidque* which surprised even great scholars. By the age of sixteen Azad had completed his education and started teaching some students subjects like philosophy, mathematics and logic. Impressed by the writings of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Azad realized the need of western education for people steeped in theological tradition. He

himself learned English, read the Bible and a great part of classical and modern literature. Azad

realized at an early age that for him religious intolerance and dogmatism were incompatible. In order to reach out to larger audience, Azad started a newspaper, *Al Hilal*, in June 1912. Besides, he also established an organization Hezbollah or the Family of God. By this time the people of India, especially the Muslims, had begun to acknowledge him as a formidable leader. Through his powerful writings in *Al Hilal* Azad had stirred the Muslim mind. They began to see logic in his writings. Within six weeks the popularity of *Al Hilal* surged. Its circulation reached eleven thousand copies. The newspaper made Muslims conscious of their duty towards motherland and forced many leaders to join the national mainstream.

The Rowlett Act of 1919 and the Khilafat agitation brought Hindus and Muslims closer under the leadership of Gandhiji. Azad came to realize that Muslims and Hindus must learn to live and act as equal partners in the national interest. He asked the Muslims to see the reality of the situation. He said, "Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievements. Our language, our poetry, our culture, our art, our dress, our manner and customs and innumerable happenings of our daily life; everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour". He was of the view that the common nationality of Hindus and Muslims is the result of their joint life for over a thousand years.

Throughout the period of the freedom movement nothing could shake his firm faith in the need of Hindu-Muslim unity. He said, "As a Muslim, I for one am not prepared for a moment to give up my

right to treat the whole of India as my domain and to share in the shaping of its political and economic life. To me it seems a sure sign of cowardice to give up what is my patrimony and content myself with a mere fragment of it." Azad opposed the two-nation theory advanced by the Muslim League. He was against the partition of India till the last. Against Muslim League's contention of Muslims being a separate 'nation', the Maulana said in 1934: "In a future Constitution of India's representative, the Hindu or the Musalman will have to think of his position and interests not as a Hindu or a Musalman, but as a peasant, as a labour and so on." In 1947 when the Muslim League had its way and partition was agreed upon Azad felt miserable.

As a realist Maulana Azad knew that there was a genuine communal problem in India since a sizable section of Muslims feared the protection of their rights with Hindus being in an overwhelming majority. When the Khilafat agitation was over, some influential Muslim leaders like Mohammed Ali Jauhar deviated from

their original stand of Hindu-Muslim unity. A serious communal riot in 1929 confirmed Azad's fears. As a moving spirit behind the unity conference held at Calcutta, Azad got a resolution passed against people resorting to violence and taking the law in their own hands. At the same time he wanted to evolve permanent ground for solving the communal problem.

Maulana Azad remained president of the All India Congress for six long years from 1940 and guided the nation during the most difficult period of the struggle. Azad represented the best of Islamic culture. His deep learning and scholarship combined with intellectual resourcefulness made him a great leader.

In the words of Dr. Tara Chand, "Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a rare combination of a scholarship, statesman of the old world refinement and culture and modern ardor of freedom and progress. He spent a great part of his life in the struggle. He staked all in the service of the cause."

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Maulana Azad's Advocacy for Right to Elementary Education



Dr. Indrajeet Dutta

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is one of the topnotch leaders of the freedom struggle of India who contributed a great deal in the field of Education. It was due to Maulana Azad's scholarship and educational insight that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru appointed him the first Education Minister of Independent India. Maulana Azad was known in the academic circles as an outstanding Islamic scholar.

He was equally acclaimed among the peers as a person who was well versed with Western philosophy, history and politics. His vision on education was reflected time and again in his speeches made from various platforms after being appointed as Education Minister. He transformed his vision of education into reality by establishing many institutions in the fields of technology, liberal arts, culture and literature. One cannot deny the contribution Maulana Azad made towards making a national system of education based on the spiritual ethos of the country. During his tenure as Education Minister he not only gave importance to higher and technical education but also to school education, especially elementary education.

Somnath Chatterjee, former Lok Sabha Speaker, in his inaugural speech at NUEPA said: "Maulana Azad always emphasized on fivefold educational programmes (i) Universalization of primary education (ii) Secondary and higher education (iii) Social education in the form of adult education (iv) Scientific and technical education (v) Cultural and literary education."

The importance of secondary and higher education was reflected when as Education Minister Azad constituted two commissions: One,

the University Education Commission also called Radha-Krishnan Commission (1948) and two, the Secondary Education Commission which is also called Mudaliar Commission (1952). For scientific and technical education he established the IITs. For promotion of literature and culture in the country he established the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Sangeet Natak Academy etc. In the field of primary education too one cannot ignore his contribution. The Right to Education (RTE) Act, a fundamental right for children in the age group of 6-14 years, was a dream that Maulana Azad had seen when he was appointed to the 14-member team to draft the Indian constitution in 1946.

He advocated free and compulsory elementary education before and after Independence. Following excerpts from the history and his speeches will indicate how much he wanted that Right to Education (RTE) be given to people of India: The very first attempt he made for RTE after being appointed as Minister of Education was the setting up of Kher Committee (1948) to work out the ways and means of achieving the goals of free and compulsory education up to the age of fourteen years in lesser time and cost than what was indicated in Sargent Plan. Another committee which was looking after the fundamental rights placed free and compulsory education on clause 23 of the Fundamental Rights. It stated: "Every citizen is entitled as of.....right to free primary education and it shall be the duty of the State to provide ten years from the commencement of this constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years."

In 1948 Azad once again stressed that "a child should be instructed, in the early stage of his education, through the medium of the mother

tongue as has been accepted by the Government as its policy".

At the All India Educational Conference (1948) he reiterated:

"We must not for a moment forget, it is a birth right of every individual to receive at least the basic education without which he cannot fully discharge his duties as a citizen." In 1949 in a CABE meeting he echoed the importance of basic education. He stressed:

"The first and foremost task of the National Government is the provision of free and compulsory basic education for all." He reiterated this in March 1952:

"Universal compulsory basic education for all children of school age"

In one of his broadcasts in 1953, Azad said that primary education should be a fundamental right: "Every individual has a right to an education that will enable him to develop his faculties and live a full human life. Such education is the birth right of every citizen.

A state cannot claim to have discharged its duty till it has provided for every single individual the means to the acquisition of knowledge. Every individual unconditionally and without qualification is entitled to education up to this stage...Elementary education is more important because the edifice of national education is laid in early stages. If the foundation is weak or wrongly laid, the rest of the structure is weak or faulty."

From the above excerpts it can be clearly inferred



visited Vihnan Kala Bhavan,
Daurala with him seen Pattabhi Sitaramaya

that Azad's intentions to provide education to masses reflected time and again in his speeches. But at that point of time financial constraints were difficult to ignore; and that's why even after independence in his speeches he indicated that it is a matter of time before his wish could come true. That historic day finally came in the year 2009 when both houses of the Indian Parliament passed the bill of RTE, thus paying tributes to the first Education Minister of independent India.

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The Quran grants rights to women-Maulana Azad



Dr. Rafique Anwar

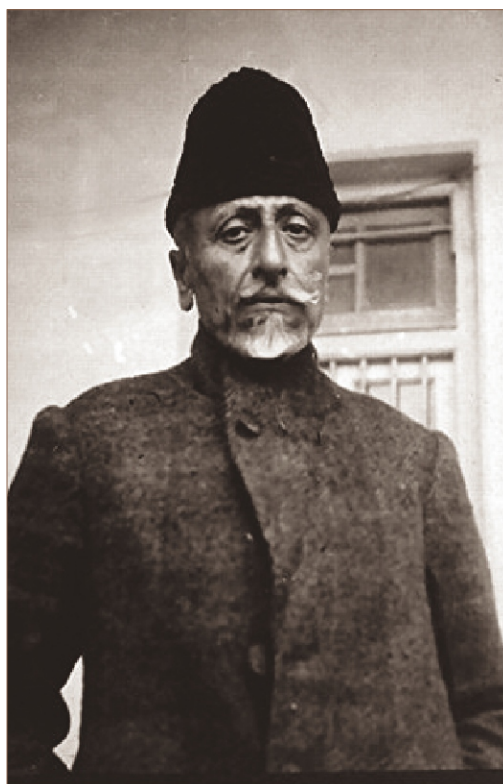
Maulana Abul Kalam Azad emphatically speaks on the rights of women, an issue considered to be modern today and describes it vis-à-vis the spirit of the Quran. He informs that the Holy Book of Muslims has repeatedly focussed on the rights of women that had been ignored.

The Quran disallows treating women as commercial objects, and empowers them with certain rights. The Holy Book has granted woman the right to 'testify' as witness at a time when they had no voice. It also establishes their right to inheritance.

Maulana reminds us of the fact that the Quran brings commands (statements) aimed at preventing people from getting stuck in the past; to move backwards; to eliminate injustice (unfairness) and; to encourage considering issues with an eye on future conditions. It does not say that we should not establish equality by increasing those rights and we should not move forward but should remain where we are without advancement and let woman remain as second class citizens[1]. On the issue of so-called right to have four wives vis-à-vis Quranic instruction Maulana's understanding says, while confining the

right of possessing numerous women up to four, the Quran warns that it is more beneficial to live with a single wife and this is set as a goal[2]. What actually it means is that these rights acknowledged for woman are not their ultimate rights and are not limited there. They form the basics for the system of rights that should be developed in proportion with the evolution of the society. If the woman who had no voice has been given the right to be a witness together with another woman, it does not mean that this condition will remain the same forever. In time, when we, as the members of the society come to appreciate the value of women; when we start noticing that she too is a servant of Allah like ourselves, that she has a place on earth as a human and a 'Caliph' (Khalifatullah), we should not hinder her from having equal rights with man. If a society recognizes the right to testify for a woman

together with a man, it will never contradict with the 'Spirit' of the Quran; and furthermore, this is more appropriate[3].



Even more progressive and modern in its understanding of the Quran is Maulana's view is that has determined the bottom limits with those commands to prevent going backwards, but it has never put a limit for progressive practices. It is therefore that there is no need for another book to come after the Quran, and in this respect, *Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.)* has been the last of all the *Nabis (Khatamun Nabiin)*, since he

has explained human rights without requiring any limitation for progress and because it is open for future advancement of understanding[4]. The Quran that reveals the system in terms of afterlife conditions and of knowing Allah, through *Risalah*, has improved, developed human (of both men and women) rights as much as possible within the existing conditions of that day, and determined them as the bottom limits without forbidding further advancement in due course of time, through 'Nubuwwah'[5].

Maulana's modernistic interpretation calls this basic principle as the 'Spirit of the Quran' that provides it (The Quran) with eternal validity without any necessity for another book to come, and it is the greatest revolution in the history of mankind[6]. Due to the inability in perceiving this Spirit of the Quran, looking at only the words of the Quran superficially and

commenting that 'that's all it has given to humankind, it does not give anything beyond these, but bring restrictions,' is the greatest blindness and darkness (oppression)[7]. It cannot be described other than as an ulterior motive to deviate from the reality by imposing a perspective as if 'Islam affirms slavery', while in fact the Quran regards deliverance of a slave as one of the greatest *Ibadah* (religious duty) and so aims at ending slavery in a society where it was common. It is an enormous injustice done to the universal Deen and it is a result of not understanding the 'Spirit' of the Quran to disapprove of it through assuming it as an assertive and coercive 'religious' understanding, while in actuality it does not condone using force in any point except putting an end to violations of human rights. In this regard Maulana exemplifies the known sign to the *RasulAllah* that 'you are not one to force them'[8].

[1] Abul Kalam Azad, Tarjumanul Quran, Sahitya Academy, vol. 3, pp.275-280

[2] Al-Quran, An-Nesha; Surah No. 4

[3] The Quran expresses the same spirit In the matter of Zakah. it's said that Zakah is a minimum right for people, it is besides considered exemplary to share what is in our possession as much as possible in terms of charity.

[4] Tazkera, Ed. Fazluddeen Ahmad, Al-Balagh Press, Kolkata 1919, First Edition, p. 197

[5] Rasul-i-Rahmat, Ed. Ghulam Rasul Mehr, Lahore 1970, First Edition, p. 185

[6] Tazkera, Ed. Fazluddeen Ahmad, Al-Balagh Press, Kolkata 1919, First Edition, p. 244

[7] Ifkaar-i-Azad, Ed. Muhammad Uthman, Lahore 1945

[8] Al-Quran; Al-Baqarah, 2: 256, 272

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Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a unique personality in Indian politics. He was emotionally and intellectually associated with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. He was Nehru's comrade in arms during the days of the freedom movement and was one of the closest confidante and adviser. The word Maulana is an honorific 'Our Master', and he adopted 'Azad' or 'Free' as his pen name. He was the architect of Indian Education System and the country celebrates his birthday as "National Education Day". Posthumously he was awarded India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna in 1992.

He was a poet, philosopher, writer, educationist, politician, architect of the Education System and an expert on Indian culture. He was an accomplished scholar in Arabic, Persian and Urdu and also had authority over English, Hindi and Bengali. Besides, he was a prolific debater. Dr. Syed Abid Hussain divided Maulana Azad's literary life into three periods, the first period started from the age of 12 years when he began writing articles which continued till 1912. The second period of his literary writing began then and continued till 1936. In this period he launched his famous journal *Al Hilal*, and wrote his autobiography *Tazkira and Tarumanul Quran*. The third period started from 1936 and continued till 1945 during which he wrote *Ghubar-e-Khatir*. It was at this stage that Maulana Azad's literary life ended.

As a journalist Maulana Azad remained associated with a large number of reputed journals/newspapers, like *Vakil*, *Zamindar*, *Muslim Gazette*, *Paisa Akhbar*, *Mashriq*, *Halel-al-Matin*, *Musalmaan*, *Al-Hakam*, *Al-Haque*, *Hamdard* and *Comrade*.

Maulana Azad became the first Education Minister of Independent India. He was the Minister of Education during 1947-52, and Minister of Education, Natural Resources and Scientific Research from 1952-58. He was not only a creative genius but well versed in the Western education system, especially in science and technology. His standing as an outstanding scholar of Oriental learning was demonstrated in moulding the education system of India soon after independence. It was he who established the University Grants Commission (UGC) which has now come up to play a significant role in the academic growth of the country. He also launched the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the three Academies--Sahitya Academy, Lalit Kala Academy and Sangeet Natak Academy to promote art, music and literature. He assisted Pandit Nehru in setting up the Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and a chain of Science Laboratories in the country. As the Minister for Education he insisted that both the Union and the States must share responsibility in promoting education. He appointed the University Education Commission in 1948 and Secondary Education Commission in 1952.

He was a rightful inheritor of all the literary, religious and liberal movements of the past. In the unfolding of his intellectual life we find the whole history of Islamic thought. He was one of the very few who were acquainted with the philosophies of India and had deep insight into the various religions of the world. In the words of Nehru, "He was great in many ways. He combined in himself the greatness of the past with the greatness of the present. He always reminded me of the great men of several hundred years ago about whom I have read in history, the great men of the Renaissance or in a later period the encyclopaedists who preceded the French Revolution, men of intellect and men of action. He remembered also of what might be called the great quality of olden days - the graciousness which we sadly seek in the world today. It was the strange and unique combination of the good qualities of the past, the graciousness, the deep learning and toleration and the urges of today which made Maulana Azad what he was."

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'For a thousand years
the Narcissus weeps...'

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the first education minister (15.08.47 to 22.02.1958 till death) of independent India. He stood for a learning society through liberal, modern and universal education combining the humanism of Indian arts and the rationalism of western sciences, a society where the strong are just and the weak secure; where the youth is disciplined and the women lead a life of dignity - a non-violent, non-exploiting social and economic order. Azad achieved a number of distinctions and established institutions of excellence to promote education and culture in our country. From the beginning after independence in 1947 when the Interim Government was formed he was included as Member for Education and Arts.

He established the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1956 by an Act of Parliament for disbursement of grants and maintenance of standards in Indian universities. He firmly believed with then Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru that "if the universities discharged their functions well, all will be well with the Nation." According to him the universities have not only academic functions; they have social responsibilities as well.

Among the new institutions he established were the three National Academies viz the Sangeet Natak Academy (1953), Sahitya Academy (1954) and Lalit Kala Academy (1954). During the same period he established many councils, like Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). For technical education, he established the All Indian Council for Technical Education (AICTE). Maulana felt that the cultural content in Indian Education was very low before independence and needs to be strengthened through our curriculum.

After independence as Chairman of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), an apex

body to recommend educational reforms to the Government at both the centre and state level including universities, he advocated, in particular, universal primary education, girls' education, vocational training, agricultural and technical education, free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 (now known as the Right to Education). He was a pioneer in the field of adult education in India.

He believed that primary education should be imparted in the mother-tongue. The world class technical institute like Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur was established in 1951 followed by a chain of IITs at Bombay, Madras (Chennai), Kanpur and Delhi. School of Planning and Architecture came into existence at Delhi in 1955. His greatest contribution, however, is that in spite of being an eminent scholar of Urdu, Persian and Arabic he always stood for the retention of English language for educational advantages for national and international needs.

Great personalities like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad are born rarely. He stood for the unity of India and its composite culture throughout his life. His opposition to the partition of the country has created a niche in the hearts of all patriotic Indians. There he stands with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his senior and Ashfaqullah his junior. In the words of Iqbal: *Hazaron saal Nargis apni benoori par roti hai, Bari Mushkil sey hota hai chaman mein deeda var paida.* (For a thousand years the Narcissus weeps for her blindness, with great difficulty is born in the garden a man with vision).

In recognition of his contribution to Indian Education system as the first education minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's Birthday (11th November) has been declared as National Education Day in our country.



Banwaree Lal Meen

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Azad, Rousseau and the innate goodness of Man

Dr. Talmeez Fatma Naqvi

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was principally impressed by the French philosopher *Rousseau* and was in agreement with him in the innate goodness of man. He appreciated the contribution of Rousseau in his paper *Al-Hilal*, wherein he looked upon Rousseau as one who revolutionized the entire intellectual and social life of his age.

Azad agreed with *Rousseau* in his advocacy of the child's necessity and ability to grasp the truth through his own insight. Azad never named but he advocated the theories of humanistic psychology which emphasize the basic goodness of human beings. Like *Rousseau*, humanist thinkers give more credit to the individual in controlling and determining his/her state of mental health, and take environmental influences into account. Humanistic psychology is a psychological perspective that emphasizes the study of the whole person. Humanistic psychologists believe that an individual's behaviour is connected to his inner feelings and self-image. They study human meanings, understandings, and experiences involved in growing, teaching, and learning and emphasize characteristics that are shared by all human beings such as love, grief, caring, and self-worth. Humanistic psychologists study how people are influenced by their self-perceptions and the personal meanings attached to their experiences.

They believe that an individual's behaviour is primarily determined by his perception of the world around him and individuals are not solely the product of their environment. Individuals are internally directed and motivated to fulfil their human potential. This approach emphasizes individuals' inherent drive towards self-actualization, the process of realizing and expressing one's own capabilities and creativity. The humanistic psychology perspective is summarized by five core principles or postulates

first articulated in an article written by James Bugental in 1964 and adapted by Tom Greening, psychologist and long-time editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.

The five basic principles of humanistic psychology are:

1. Human beings, as human, supersede the sum of their parts. They cannot be reduced to components.
2. Human beings have their existence in a uniquely human context, as well as in a cosmic ecology.
3. Human beings are aware and are aware of being aware - i.e., they are conscious. Human consciousness always includes an awareness of oneself in the context of other people.
4. Human beings have the ability to make choices and therefore have responsibility.
5. Human beings are intentional, aim at goals, are aware that they cause future events, and seek meaning, value, and creativity.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad never claimed to be a Humanistic Psychologist but it can be gleaned from his writings. Maulana Azad was a man of constant introspection and critical self-examination. Let's have a look at Azad's most important work, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*. It is interesting to see up to what point Azad's *Tafsir* (exegesis) of the Quran keeps its closeness to the text, while at the same time it is inspired by the Sufi perception of God through *Kashf* (personal revelation). Azad's faith in the essential unity of humanity and in the oneness of all religions stemmed essentially from the Sufi concept of "the unity of existence" (*wahdat-al-wujud*). Truth, for Azad, was one and the same everywhere. The mistake was to equate particular forms of Truth with Truth itself.

In Azad's own words: "The misfortune is that the world worships mere terms and not their inner meaning". Therefore, "though all may worship the same Truth, they will fight with each other on account of differences of the terms that they employ. If the veils of these externals and terms can be lifted so that Truth and Reality come before all unveiled, then, at once, all quarrels of this world will end, and all who quarrel will see that what all seek is one and the same".

As his Tarjuman-ul-Quran illustrates Azad demonstrates his firm beliefs in tolerance and dialogue. It is in this work that Azad's idea of religious pluralism is expressed powerfully by the concept of oneness of faiths (*Wahdat-i-Din*). For Azad, God as the "Cherisher" and "Nourisher" (*Rabb*) transcends all fragmentations and divisions of humanity in race, colour and religion. As a result, the path of universal God (*Rabb-ul-Alameen*) is "the right path" (*Sirat-al-Mustaqeem*), which belongs to no particular religion. In one of his celebrated works entitled *Ghobar-i-Khatir*, Azad drew a parallel between the Sufi concept of "unity of existence" and the idea of pantheism as formulated in the Upanishads. If, at root, all religions reflected the same message, then, for Azad, there was no room for Hindu as well as Muslim communalism.

Maulana Azad's Humanistic Psychologist like views may also be seen through his speeches, which he delivered immediately after independence. He argued that our Five Year Plans are not for the production of more material wealth and resources but the creation of a new mind and a new character for which right education is more important than the development of agriculture, industries, trade or other projects. According to Maulana, education must contribute to the individual realizing his immense potential. On one occasion, he stressed the importance of seven values which contribute to the making of man and his society in pursuit of excellence.

Those are truth, justice, enlightenment,

co-operation and unity, courtesy, chivalry and humility. Humanistic psychologists too are not primarily concerned with instinctual drives, responses to external stimuli, or past experiences. Rather, they consider conscious choices, responses to internal needs, and current circumstances to be important in shaping human behaviour.

Like a humanistic psychologist, Maulana Azad also advocates the ultimate goal of living is to attain personal growth and understanding. Through constant self-improvement and self-understanding can an individual ever be truly happy. The one key point about this view of psychology is that it promotes free will related to change. This ability of humans to change over time is also seen in Rousseau's argument, when he states that human nature can, and does, in fact change, and we can bring about this change ourselves. Similarly, Maulana Azad viewed, "every individual" as having "a right to an education that will enable him to develop his faculties and live a full human life. Such education is the birth right of every citizen. A state cannot claim to have discharged its duty till it has provided for every single individual means to the acquisition of knowledge and self-betterment."

Azad owed his political inspiration to his knowledge of Islam. But as a defender of shared common values, he believed that religions were the common heritage of all mankind. His increasing receptivity to the message of other faiths led him to the recognition of the humanist element in religion. This is why for him the outward forms of religion were useless without moral actions. From his point of view, religion was not supposed to dictate specific political actions, but to mould one's general principles in life. This is how Azad grew beyond the revivalism of *Al-Hilal* period to manifest the real relevance of spirituality, as a moral imperative, to politics.

The awareness of other religions also encouraged him to formulate the idea of a humanist coexistence of faiths. Azad's universal humanism

led him on to fiercely oppose both Muslim as well as Hindu communalism that saw no place for a genuinely religiously plural and democratic independent India. His plea for religious humanism, communal harmony, however, fell on deaf ears as India descended into a blood bath in 1947. But Azad's message is not dead. He was a man ahead of his time and his lessons of religious pluralism are yet to be learnt not only among the Muslims but also among followers of other religions.

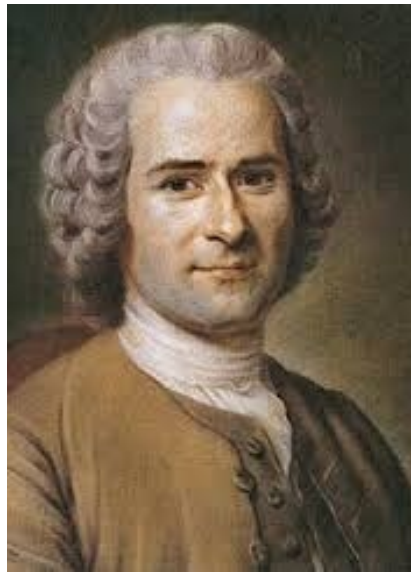
When Maulana talked about education he laid great stress upon character building. He asserted that education should help an individual in realizing his immense potential. The context of education, influence of home and religion, and the role of the teacher should be to build character. Maulana held the view that quest of truth is the principal aim of education, but one should not impose one's truth upon others through violence and dogmatism. It comes from openness to different points of view and through tolerance of belief other than one's own.

The concept of justice is another aim of education, which is related to appreciation of rights and performance of duties as necessary condition to the discipline of individual and the good society. Spread of enlightened views through right type of education is essential requirement for true civilization and equality of humans. Co-operation and unity must be learnt through togetherness and friendship thus laying the foundation for peace and harmony.

The practice of courtesy and chivalry is a grace of life and enriches its quality. The spirit of daring is the most valued asset of youth - society and school should give scope and encouragement to

the flowering of the spirit of pioneering and creativity. To Azad, the quality of humility chastens and sustains the spirit of man and striving of his mind.

In a nutshell, Azad's educational perspective although fundamentally Islamic in inspiration and framework, was marked with open-ended approach towards the new advances whether made in the West or in the East. He embraced what was scientific in the Western system, particularly the idea of freedom as the technique of education, and the all-embracing importance of primary education.



He welcomed French philosopher *Rousseau's* view of innate goodness of humans. His open minded appreciation of *Rousseau* in regards to the nature of humans and child's necessity and ability to grasp the truth through his own insight brought him closer to the theories of humanistic psychology which emphasize the basic goodness of human beings. Azad, Rousseau and humanist thinkers trust the individuals' ability in controlling and determining the state of their mental health,

and take environmental influences into account.

The humanist psychology promotes free will and relates it to change. The ability of humans to change over time is also seen in Rousseau's argument, when he states that human nature can, and does, in fact change, and we can bring about this change ourselves. One can easily read in-built dynamism in innate nature of human beings and, therefore, in the desired and expected role of education.

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A glint on Maulana Azad's vision on education

“Educationists should build the capacities of the spirit of enquiry, creativity, entrepreneurial and moral leadership among students and become their role model.” This is what Maulana Azad said on the role of a teacher. Azad's prime concern was to provide education to every child without any discrimination on the basis of cast and religion. As the first education minister after the independence of the country, he laid the foundation of a system that has served the nation well.

Maulana Azad created a nationwide system of basic education for all children of school going age. He also provided facilities for imparting technical skills. He had planned a fivefold programme for the expansion of education in the country:

- Universal compulsory basic education for all children of schooling age. "Social education for those who lacked in formal education.
- Measures to improve the quality of education and expansion of facilities for secondary and higher education.
- Technical and scientific education for all on a scale adequate to the nation's need.
- Measures for enrichment of cultural life by encouraging arts and providing facilities for excursion and other amenities
- Azad emphasized the importance of imparting knowledge, especially in the fields of history, geography and civics for the consolidation of national unity.



Zenab Fatma

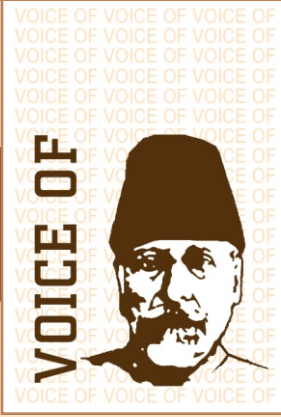
He advocated that cultural content of education and appreciation of the main tenets of all religions could elevate mind and enrich the spirit. For him, true secularism called for tolerance and sympathetic understanding of other beliefs and cultures.

He underscored the need for 'social education' by which he meant the inclusion of a lively sense of rights and duties of citizenship and production of an educated mind. It included understanding of social conditions of the country, health education, and economic improvement through arts, literature, poetry, music, dance, drama and crafts. Azad was inspired by the values of the freedom struggle. He was convinced that they should come in handy in nation building. He believed that education should be seen as a right of all citizens.

He pointed out at the need for women education. He believed that education for women was necessary not only for making them conscious of their rights but also for educating the younger generation.

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Maulana Azad declares formation of University Grants Commission

Following is the initial portion of the speech delivered by Maulana Azad at the first meeting of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, December 28, 1953

I am glad to welcome you to the first meeting of the University Grants Commission.

In accordance with one of the recommendations of the Central Advisory Board of Education, the Government of India decided in 1945 to set up a University Grants Committee. The functions of this Committee were confined to the three Central Universities and it was only an advisory body. There were several non-officials who were members but they acted on a part-time basis and there was only one whole-time officer who acted as Secretary for the Committee. With this limited personnel and the circumscribed powers, it was not surprising that the University Grants Committee was not able to make any effective contribution to the development of university education. In 1947, the Committee was re-constituted with somewhat enlarged membership but since the functions and the official assistance remained more or less the same, this Committee also did not prove effective.

In 1952, the Government of India therefore decided to set up a re-constituted University Grants Commission with a full-time Chairman and full-time Secretary and with enlarged membership. It was intended that this Commission should mainly look after the four Central Universities and be entrusted with the following functions:

1. To advise the Government on the allocation of grants-in-aid from public funds to the Central Universities;
2. To advise the Government on the allocation of grants-in-aid to other universities and institutions of higher learning whose case for such grants may be referred to the Commission by the Government; and
3. To advise the universities and other institutions of higher learning in respect of any question referred by the Government to the Commission.

After the passing of the Constitution, the Central Government was entrusted with an important responsibility in higher education in respect of the co-ordination of facilities and the maintenance of standards in the universities.

The Government considered various measures for the discharge of this responsibility and came to the conclusion that it could be best fulfilled by the establishment of a Council of University Education by an Act of Parliament. A draft Bill to set up a Council of University Education was accordingly prepared and circulated to the universities in order to secure the largest possible support and co-operation from them. The draft Bill was considered by the Inter-University Board which agreed with the objects of the Bill but felt that its provisions might not lead to the desired end.

Since the Government of India wanted to carry out the reforms with the greatest possible support and co-operation of the universities, it took note of these objections and convened, in April 1953, a conference of the State Education Ministers and Vice-Chancellors to consider the matter and suggest suitable measures for the purpose. This conference recommended unanimously that instead of setting up a separate body for the coordination of facilities and maintenance of standards, the Government should establish a University Grants Commission in terms of the University Education Commission's recommendations and allot to it the functions proposed to be delegated to the Council of University Education. The conference held that the University Grants Commission with enlarged powers and functions would be better able to co-ordinate the facilities and suggest proper measures of reform as it would be in constant touch with the various universities and be sensitive to their requirements and needs.

The Government accepted this recommendation as it itself felt that a properly constituted University Grants Commission with enlarged powers and functions could discharge these duties more effectively...

