

## Maulana Azad An Educationist Par Excellence

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Maulana Azad, also known as “Mir-i-Karawan”- a leader of the mission fondly called by Pandit Nehru, was a man of enormous taste, remarkable person beyond any standards- a freedom fighter, a true patriot, diplomat, an orator, a valiant journalist, a prolific author and writer, a scholar, a visionary of scientific development, a true model of national integration, politician, far sighted administrator and statesman and above all an educationist par excellence. Azad's accomplishments as an architect of modern education has been widely acknowledged by eminent critics, writers, and politicians. It is said that he was an institution in himself. As a distinguished scholar and statesman he was imbued with the lofty ideas of freedom, nationalism, democracy and rationalism. From a historical perspective Azad's contribution in the field of education is not only remarkably massive but also expansive. Even after three decades of his death critics and educationists agree that he was the first to chalk out a plan for the National system of education which is absolutely the bed rock of the National Policy of Education (1986) and ultimately operational through the Programme of Action (1992). The attempt of this paper is to give us an insight of Maulana Azad as a first earnest minded investigator of the science of education. He is considered as an harbinger of the idea of universal humanism and a prophet of the new age. As a visionary, too, he had represented a fine blending of tradition and modernity.

Maulana Azad's accomplishments as an eminent man of education has already been acknowledged by eminent critics, writers and politicians. He is one of those rare personalities through whom the distinctions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be recognized and possibilities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century determined. He represented a glorious synthesis of cultures, civilization, thoughts and philosophies which have powerfully influenced India's history. He stood for a learning society based on liberal modern and universal education combining the best of the humanism of Indian Arts and the rationalism of western sciences. He indeed is a bridge between the old and the new. He always crusaded for a secular society and 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.

Born in Mecca on November 11, 1888, his father Moulana Khairuddin was a noted scholar himself. Azad had his formal education in Arabic, Persian and Urdu with theological orientation and then in philosophy, geometry, mathematics and algebra. He also learnt English, World History and Politics on his own. As a young man he composed poetry in Urdu and wrote articles on religion and philosophy. As early as ten years old Abdul Kalam as he was popularly called was well versed in Koran. At the age of seventeen he was a trained theologian recognized in the Islamic world. His studies further at Al Azhar the University of Cairo deepened his knowledge. Blessed and fortunate was he to have been born in a family of celebrated religious scholars. Moulana Sibli Naomani and Altaf Hussain Haoli, the two great Urdu critics influenced his early life. Thoroughly trained in Islamic learning with great intellectual abilities and eloquence of pen and speech Azad had remarkable openness to modern western knowledge though he strongly opposed the British rule in India. These educational ideas therefore drew inspiration from that source but he was equally appreciative and conversant with the modern heritage which cut across East West barriers and that was clearly reflected in his speeches, writings and actions. The relationship between the Muslim heritage and the Indian heritage could be found most distinctively pronounced in his presidential speech at Ramgarh session of the Indian National Congress. He said, 'as a Muslim I have a special identity within the field of religion and culture. But I have another equally deep realization. I am equally proud of the fact that I am an Indian, an essential part of the indivisible unity of Indian nationhood, a vital factor in its total make up without which this noble edifice will remain incomplete'. Mention may be made of Azad as a revolutionary journalist too. His journal 'Al Hilal' became extremely popular but the inevitable only happened when the British Government banned the journal and arrested him under the Defence of Indian Act and interned him at Ranchi jail where he suffered untold hardships but after getting released a true scholar as he was resumed his educational writings again. He was therefore a scholar in the real terms writes Nehru that he spoke in a new language. 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 Urdu language as it is today. We can therefore say Azad was a versatile genius. As far as his skill in debating was concerned Azad's knowledge happened to be greater than the learned older men of his generation.

A bird's eye view may be given about Azad as a political leader too. He had not actively participated in politics till the beginning of the twentieth century but it was only after the partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon which compelled him to enter into active politics. He criticized the British Raj and espoused the cause of Indian nationalism. He became a leader of the Khilafat Movement and came in close contact with Mahatma Gandhi, 'the father of the Nation' "Azad became an ardent admirer of Gandhi's ideas of non-violent civil disobedience and worked actively to organize non cooperation movement in protest against the 1919 Rowlatt Act. He actively promoted swadeshi products and became a devotee to the cause of Swaraj In 1923 he became the youngest person to serve as the president of the Indian National Congress. Since then he was a firm believer of unity and stood for the chords of cordiality between Hindus and Muslims and the composite culture of India. He stood for modern India with secular credentials, a cosmopolitan character and international outlook. His life as a political leader began by opposing the partition in 1905 and ended it by opposing the partition of India but had always been an active enthusiastic leader till the last breath of his life in 1958. His opposition to the partition of India has created a niche in the hearts of all patriotic Indians.

Mouland Azad held a position unique in several ways. He was emotionally and intellectually close to both Mahatma and Nehru. He was closely associated with the crucial decision making since the twenties. With the dawn of freedom he was the natural choice a great visionary, scholar, eminent educationist to be the first Education Minister of free India. His influence in the process of policy making was immense. He was Nehru's comrade in- arms during the days of freedom and was one of the close confidante and adviser in the cabinet. A man like Azad is rarely born. He was a prolific writer, orator but above all he will be remembered as an educationist par excellence. "Nehru He (Azad) 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 encyclopedists.. men of intellect and men of action. ... "

Azad was highly optimistic as well. Though saddened and embittered by the partition he refused to condemn anyone which was the characteristic of his personality. Instead as a lion-hearted forward looking leader he said 'what was not to have happened has happened.' 'We have now to think of the future.' In this spirit Azad threw himself as a leader of independent India. He had joined the interim government in January 1947 as the first Education Minister feeling that, in formulating educational policy, he could contribute to the future form of the country. Mauland Azad was an institution

in himself. As a distinguished scholar, great statesman, he was imbued with lofty ideas of nationalism, democracy, freedom and rationalism, As a student of history, Azad also believed that mankind is one race and that one should renounce the conception of a superior and inferior race and should live in peace. His contribution in the field of education is not only massive but also remarkable when viewed from historical perspective. Apart from being a dynamic and visionary educationist he realized the importance of education not only in terms of eradicating poverty, illiteracy and gender bias from the Indian scene, but also wanted to use education as an instrument or tool for social change and rapid growth of the country. Virtually he played a significant role in reshaping, restructuring and reorganizing the education system of our country. He is regarded as one of the post independent architects of modern Indian education system. K.G. Saiydain, one of his education secretaries said, "Maulana was first and last an educationist. The secret of his success as an educationist lay in the fact that he practiced in his life what he preached in his works. He had the qualities of character and intellect, which he wished to inculcate in the people of his country. His whole life bore a shining lamp of sincerity and truth truth which he loved and advocated with Socratic passion, truth which makes no compromise with expediency and no concessions to ill-informed criticism or opposition, however bitter it might be".

Maulana was a contemporary of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and was a prolific educationist. Like Gopal Krishna Gokhale he advocated in favour of a national system of education with free and compulsory primary education and simultaneously establishing modern institution of higher learning. He was the first to raise the issue of the National system of Education which is today the bedrock of the National Policy on Education 1986 and updated and operational through Programme of Action (POA) 1992. The concept implies that, upto a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed location or sex should have access to education of a comparable quality. All educational programs, he said, must be carried out in strict conformity with secular values and constitutional framework. The wealth of the nation, according to Maulana, was not in the country's banks but in primary schools Maulana was also a great votary of the concept of Neighborhood schools and the Common School system.

During his eleven years first as Minister of Education (1947-1952) and then as Minister of education, Natural Resources and Scientific Research (1952-58) he performed a number of services for Indian education. In order to reorient and reconstruct the education system in the context of a changed perspective, he began his task with a detailed enquiry into the malaise and limitations of the existing educational arrangement by appointing the University Education Commission (1948), Kher Committee

for Elementary Education (1948) and Secondary Education Commission (1952-53). University Education Commission also known as Radhakrishnan Commission recognized Professional and Agriculture education as a major national issue and the commission's recommendation deserves a special mention of establishing a Rural University and the National Council of Rural Education was thus formed in 1956 to study the specific questions of rural higher education. Progress and advancement Maulana realized could be achieved by making the education system more practical, pragmatic and amalgamating the practical needs of the society and industry. As a Chairman of the Central Board of Education, (CABE) an apex body to recommend to the government educational reforms both at the center and the states including universities, he advocated the establishment of UGC in 1956 by an Act of Parliament for disbursement of grants and maintenance of standards in Indian Universities. He firmly believed with 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. He was a pioneer in the field of adult education. The cornerstone of his education policy was his conviction that democracy cannot function without eradication of illiteracy. He realized that the introduction of adult franchise needed a national programme of mass education. He was of the view that citizens of a free and independent India had to be different from the colonial subjects of a foreign empire. So, he immediately set up a section of 'Social Education' in his ministry to conduct the program of mass education.

The Secondary Education Commission also known as Mudaliar Commission proposed a self contained and complete secondary education which proposed 5+3+4 (a total 12 year school education). Board of Secondary Education was also formed to oversee the functioning of secondary education. So we can say he was a pioneer in the field of education from primary to higher education.

For technical education the All India Council for Technical Education AICTE was also established and strengthened. AICTE would be reorganized to set up a chain of national laboratories throughout the country. The India Institute of Technology Kharagpur was established in 1951 followed by a chain of IIT's at Bombay, Madras, Kanpur and Delhi. School of Planning and Architecture also came into existence in 1955 at Delhi. While inaugurating the Kharagpur Institute of Technology in 1951 Azad said, "We must improve the facilities for higher technical education in the country so that we could ourselves meet most of our needs." He foresaw a great future in the IIT's for India. He said 'I have no doubt that the establishment of this institute will form a landmark in the progress of higher technological

education and research in the country”. The council for cultural Relation (ICCR) was also established in 1950 to promote education and culture in the country. Maulana created three National Academies the Sangeet Natak Academy (1953), the Sahitya Academy (1954) and Lalit Kala Academy (1954). He felt that the cultural content in Indian Education was very low during the British rule and needed to be strengthened through curriculum. The establishment of educational institutions provided him firm ground for the development of Indian educational system. He was also a strong believer of scientific and rational knowledge and therefore assisted Nehru in setting up the Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and other chains of science laboratories in the country. As an Education Minister he also insisted that both the Union and the states share the responsibility to promote education in the country.

\ As Education Minister, his speeches often contained numerous references to the importance of education. He felt that education was the “problem of problems for Asia,” and that “one of the surest ways of securing international peace is fundamental education for the peoples of the world”. He especially emphasized 'social education', by which he meant 'the inclusion of a lively sense of rights and duties of citizenship and the production of an educated mind in the masses in the absence of literary education'. This was to include understanding of social conditions of the country, health education, economic improvement through crafts, arts, literature, music, drama, dance, poetry and instruction in universal ethics, including tolerance and mutual appreciation. Azad was essentially concerned with the basic educational problem of shaping of hearts and minds of his fellow men and women. Repeatedly he affirmed in his speeches that the central purpose of our Five Year Plans is not the production of 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, industry, trade, etc. Early in his career as a Minister, as he contemplated shaping the future of India through educational policy, he thus envisaged the possibilities: 'Today India is free """" she can have any kind of mental mould she pleases. Will it be exclusive """"or will it be all- inclusive, which has been characteristic of the Indian culture throughout the ages? """"In the advancement of nations there is no greater hindrance than narrow mindedness. It is our duty, to keep ourselves free from this disease in the new era of independence'. 'The tradition in India, he said, had been that 'every kind of culture, every mode of living was allowed to flourish and find its own salvation'. He emphasized, 'the acceptance of unity in diversity has been India's motto throughout the ages. Azad wished all Indians to appreciate and imbibe the values of truth, toleration which,

according to him, should be inculcated through social and general education and in this endeavour he always underlined the critical role of teachers.

Azad's contribution to education can be studied in two distinct categories. One may be the study of his general educational ideas as derived from his basic philosophy of life and the other may be the various educational changes and measures of re-construction which were attempted during his regime with the object of making education adequately responsive to the needs and challenges of the national life. There is a significant link between Azad's educational vision and his educational policy and programmes which is reflected in the important changes and development in the field of education that took place in the eventful early few years of the country's independence.

Azad had a multi - faceted personality and was a strong believer in democracy which he thought will take roots and benefit the masses if education is democratized. For this purpose he emphasized four major programmes.

- Removal of illiteracy through universalization of elementary education up to secondary standard and a drive for adult education including education for women;
- Equalizing educational opportunities in Indian society where exploitations on the basis of class and caste divisions were rampant;
- Three language formulae where the state languages and Hindi would be medium of instruction but English will remain as an important second language; and
- Sound primary education throughout the country.

Azad viewed, "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 means to the acquisition of knowledge and self betterment". He also held that in independent India, the planning of education at the National level was even more important than economic or industrial planning. He felt that if educational training was unable to inculcate right values and ideals, the security and welfare of the state would be in jeopardy".

To conclude we can therefore say Azad was an emancipator, constructor and always geared his educational policies and actions by stressing on man making education where character building helps an individual realize his immense potential. In doing so he stressed on the importance of seven values like truth, justice enlightenment, cooperation and unity, courtesy and chivalry, spirit of pioneering and creativity and the quality of humility.

Azad was a firm believer of democracy and in his scheme of educational reconstruction he accorded highest priority to Social Education. National Integration and Secularism, Internationalism, Global Citizenship through education would also inculcate the idea of unity in diversity. Education according to him has a definite role to play in promoting world unity and global citizenship. This he expressed at a function of the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO in 1951.

With regard to curriculum Maulana was vividly clear that the content and curriculum at every stage of education had to be distinct and different from the colonial era. Since he was a pragmatic he believed in learning by doing, training in diverse skills, enriched with productivity, research and evaluation. Extensive reforms in examination system, and opportunity for co-curricular activities was also to be promoted. International cooperation according to him should also be welcome and harnessed under the auspicious of UNESCO.

During the Maulana's stewardship of the Ministry of Education, some massive tasks of fact-finding, stock-taking and national planning in the broad fields of education were carried out, preparing for some successes in the decades that followed. The work of the Committees and commissions at various levels of education, notably for secondary and university education; and for universal elementary education is well-known. New winds of change began to blow. Special aspects of the problems of education such as the promotion of Gandhian teachings and way of life, introduction of general education course, Home Science programmes, Institutes of rural higher education, the training of teachers, development of library services, audio-visual education, promotion of Hindi and other national languages, scholarship for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, education and training of the handicapped, special programmes of education of women and girls, development of cultural activities, youth welfare and physical education, reflect the vastness of the range of activities and innovations initiated by the Central Ministry of Education. The Indian Council for Social Sciences Research the India Institute of Science, the National Institute of Basic Education, Central Bureau of Textbook Research, the National Board of Audiovisual Education, the Hindi Shiksha Samiti, the Board of Scientific Terminology for Hindi where also established.

With regard to teacher and teacher preparation Azad firmly believed that no educational reforms could be effective without empowering the teachers. He had instinctive reverence for teachers and believed that no policies could be implemented successfully without taking them on board. Once he described the role of a teacher in following words : "Ultimately all reforms in education depend upon the



quality of our teachers. I have mentioned to you the changes we are seeking to bring about in elementary, secondary and university education. These changes will not give the desired results unless there are efficient and devoted teachers to carry them out. Poor wages and loss of social status have been perhaps the main reasons why there has been a fall in the quality of teachers in recent years. You are aware that some measures have already been taken to remedy this state of affairs. While we shall continue with our efforts for improving the status, service conditions and emoluments of teachers at all levels, I would appeal to them that they must also develop a spirit of real service and dedication in the cause of the nation”.

Besides other distinguished characters, in Azad was also hidden an ideal teacher. People felt, when he talked of certain values and standards, that he not only knew what he was talking about but was preaching what he had practised in his life. This, asserts Saiyidain, is one of the most essential qualities of a true teacher, in any sense of the word. Hypocrisy is at a severe discount in the teachers domain. Respect must enter into the basic relationship between the teacher and his community of learners in order to create a receptive frame of mind, and hypocrisy can never co-exist with genuine respect. This accounts for the respect in which Azad was held not only by his friends and admirers but also by his opponents.

From the beginning of accepting the ministerial responsibility, Azad tried to attend to almost all issues in education. He felt deeply concerned about the quality of education imparted in educational institutions and the contribution that teachers can make in this regard. He also believed that such a contribution can best be made by those who are systematically groomed as teachers. At the opening of the Central Institute of Education at Delhi on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1947 he thus stressed the need and significance of training of teachers for improving the quality of education. Referring to the role that was charted for CIE, Azad said, 'while this institute will turn out teachers who will be “Model teachers” for provinces, but over and above this, the institute will be a research centre for solving new educational problems of the country and will be a beacon of light for the teacher training institutes of the country. Azad's task was undoubtedly challenging but let us not forget the Constitution of India visualizes a national system of education supported by national policies and appropriate organs of consultation and co-ordination; but by and large the task of implementing policies depends upon the efforts and resources of the States. Maulana Azad's towering personality and political status helped national planning, but

It was for Azad's charismatic influence that education was later given due place in the Five Year Plan and as a result many developments took place in this field with the support of the Central Government.

Though Azad blamed the mechanisms of the state, 'the legacy of the governmental procedures' and 'the inertia of the machine', for the lack of accomplishment in educational matters. Yet he succeeded in registering notable achievements in almost every domain of education which set the tone and direction of educational development in the country in the days to come. He observed in his speech in 1958 that the progress which has been achieved in spite of these difficulties can be measured by the fact that when I assumed charge, the Central budget for education was only about Rs. 2 crores and is today considerably more than Rs. 30 crores. It is not only the financial allocation which has been increased, but there has been expansion in all types of activities.

As an Education Minister, Azad showed theoretical wisdom and he sponsored the writing of a two volume treatise on the history of eastern and western philosophy. Such an endeavor is needed to bring the east and west together. But he had deep - oriented scholarship and his role as an educator is undeniable. "The Emperor of learning" remarked Mahatma Gandhi about Azad counting him as a person of the caliber of Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras.

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