



Vision and Contribution of Maulana Azad to Post Independence Indian Education System

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Abstract

Maulana Azad, a rarest of the rare personality, did not compromise on two major issues, *first*, Unity of India and *second*, education to its citizens. As a first education minister of free India, he had a great burden to democratize and universalize Indian education system, different from the then practicing British education system and irrespective of caste, creed, religion, elite class or gender. He believed that wealth of a nation is not concentrated in country's banks but in primary schools. He established 'National System of Indian Education', which is still continued in free India. According to him, the aims of education are: quest of truth, the concept of justice, spread of enlightenment, unity and cooperation, spirit of daring and practice of courtesy and chivalry. Maulana Azad was focused about girl's education, vocational training, agricultural education, adult literacy, craft and technical education. According to Maulana Azad, educational standards needed to be upgraded at the university stage. The universities have not only academic responsibilities, but social responsibilities as well. He firmly believed with Pt. Nehru that if the universities discharged their functions well, all will be well with the Nation. Here, the researcher critically examined his vision and contribution towards modernizing the education system.

Keywords: A thinker of change, Vision and Contribution, Education, Post-modernism approach.

Introduction

Firoz Bakht at birth and Ghulam Muhiyuddin Ahmed at the youth, popularly known as Abul Kalam Azad, was a multi dimensional personality: a distinguished scholar, freedom fighter, a recognized journalist, a literary craftsman, poet whose prose-style remains his own and continues to be beyond comparison even today. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a brilliant debater, as indicated by his name, Abul Kalam, which literally means "*Lord of dialogue*". Maulana Azad completed his formal education by the age of 16 years. He was influenced by the writings of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Later on, he studied Modern Science, Shariat, World History, Politics, Philosophy and Literature and English. He was well-versed in Pashto, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, English, Bengali and Hindi languages. He visited Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, France and Turkey. At the age of 14, he was writing Urdu Poetry, reviewing learned books, contributing articles to many well known literary magazines of the day and was editing a magazine of his own, In 1905, he met Maulana Shibli Nomani, who took him Nadwatul Ulma at Lucknow where for some time he edited Al- Nadva in 1906 he

took up the editorship of *vakil* of Amritsar a bi-weekly magazine. In order to disseminate his ideas among his co-religionists; he started Urdu weekly *Al-Hilal* from Calcutta. In 1915, he started a new weekly *Al-Balagh*. He met Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 and plunged into the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movements. In 1920 he was the member of Viceroy on the Khilafat issue. Between 1912 & 1919, he was associated with the Muslim League. He was elected president of congress at the end of 1939. He served as a member of the Constituent assembly during 1948- 50 and the parliament in 1950-52; He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1952 from Rampur constituency and re-elected in 1957 from Gurgaon. He was the Minister of Education during 1947- 52, and Minister of Education, Natural Resources and Scientific Research during 1952-58. He expired on February 22, 1958 and was honored with the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1992.

According to Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad had a mind like a razor, which cut through a fog of ideas. Maulana Azad contributed his ideas on religion, state and civil society in India. That is why; Nehru referred Maulana Azad as *Mir-E-Karwan*. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "I consider Maulana a person of the caliber of Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras."

In the convocational address at Aligarh Muslim University in February 1949, Maulana Azad Justified that India is a secular state.

"I think you will agree that the educational set-up for a secular and democratic State must be secular. It should provide for all citizens of the State the same type of education without any distinction. It should have its own intellectual flavor and its own national character. It should have as its aim the ideal of human progress and prosperity. The Indian Union has set before itself such a scheme of common education for all without distinction or discrimination in favor of any community or group."

Concept, Vision and Contribution to Education

According to Maulana Azad, *'If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel three key societal members, who can make a difference. They are the Father, the Mother, and the Teacher.'*

With this view, he suggested all parents, "Let us sacrifice our today so that our children can have a better tomorrow". India at the time of independence was a society riddled with differences because of caste, creed, and gender. Education was mostly restricted to upper caste males, although social reformers across the country were calling for equality. Abul Kalam was sensitive to the needs of the destitute and sought to do away with the inequalities prevalent at that time. It was Abul Kalam who first raised the issue of the National System of Education, which was the foundation of the National Policy on Education 1986 that called for equality and quality of education to all students irrespective of caste, creed, location, or gender. It was his early efforts that helped shape an all-inclusive policy of education, the benefits of which being reaped today. For democratic approach and universalization of education, he focused on following issues:

1. Primary education all over the country
2. There should be three languages, the state languages and Hindi will be medium for instruction but English will be as an important second language.
3. Universalization of elementary education, that means elimination of

illiteracy up to secondary standard and education for adults and women.

Maulana Azad was one of the uncommon identities raised for a learning society through liberal way, present day and all inclusive instruction consolidating the humanism of Indian expressions and the logic of western sciences a general public where the powerless secure, where the young is restrained and the ladies lead an existence of nobility. 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) refreshed in 1992. The concept implies that, up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, region, or gender have access to education of a comparable quality. Every single instructive program he said must do in strict congruity with common esteems and established system. He remained for a typical instructive structure of 10+2+3 throughout India. In case Maulana Azad were alive today, he would have been the most joyful to see the Right to Free Education Bill implemented in India. The Right to Education Bill gives right to every Indian child free and compulsory education up to elementary level. The great visionary Maulana Azad contributed the idea of Neighborhoods schools and the Common School System. In the meeting of the Central Advisory Board Education in January 1949, he talked about the National Approach of Government towards the Education. He presented:

“The first and foremost task of the National Government is the provision of free and compulsory basic education for all.”

This golden dream of Azad converted into reality now as the historic RTE Act 2009, which makes free and compulsory primary education for children between 6 to 14 years. According to him, the planning of education at the national level was more important than economic and industrial planning. He put that if education could not inculcate right values and ideas. Then welfare and security of the state will be meaningless. Azad’s commitment to provide secular, liberal, modern, and universal education is relevant today and continues to guide us for achieving education for all. The contribution of his education policy was his conviction that democracy cannot function without the eradication of illiteracy. His philosophy on education has reflected in the National Policy on Education and remained a corner stone for many commissions and committees that built upon the broad framework of that policy.

The roadmap about Education of Maulana Azad was: *“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 birthright 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.”*

About global perspective of knowledge, Maulana Azad said in UNESCO, *“Knowledge is above all limitations and boundaries, whatever be the region of the globe where it first emerged, it is the common heritage of all mankind. All human being regardless of country or nationality can lay claim to it with equal right.”*

Keeping global view of knowledge, Azad suggested radical change in the syllabi and method of instruction. He also mentioned his thought in the same meeting that follows:

“The entire method of teaching history and geography in school must be changed.”

The terrestrial globe which nature has created as one can divide by us for our purpose into different compartments. When we teach child geography, we do not start by saying that he is an inhabitant of earth, but on the contrary we start by instilling in his mind that he is from Delhi, and Delhi is in India, and India is in Asia and Asia is in the Eastern Hemisphere.”

He believed that without transcending the barriers imposed narrow nationalism, linguistic chauvinism, and religious fanatics; it was not possible to achieve a position of honor and dignity in the comity of nations. He said:

“We shall find a secure place in the community of nations only if we are globally minded and tolerant.”

In fourteenth session of the Central Advisory Board of Education Azad said,

“As it was observed that without religion, influential people became too rational. However, so far as it works in the Indian context we have to face the obverse side of this factor, we have no fear that People will become ultra- rational. On the contrary, we surrounded by over-religiosity. Our present difficulties unlike those of Europe are not creations of materialistic zealots but of religious fanatics. If we want to overcome them, the solution lies not in rejecting religious instructions in elementary stage, but in imparting sound and healthy religious education under our direct supervision so that misguided credence may not affect the children in their plastic stage.”

Azad has a modern mind, fully realized the importance of fundamental research in science and technology. He remarked:

“There can be no advance in either industry of technology without fundamental research work. The scope of such research should, however, be extended and cover not only the scientific subjects but also the humanities, including philosophy, the social science, anthropology, etc”.

He not only dreamt about the scientific development but also take actions to achieve the goal. It was Azad’s initiative and encouragement that a number of institutions and laboratories of scientific research were established in a very short period of time. Dr. Rajendra Prasad wrote about these achievements, “The great impetus and encouragement he was able to give the development of art, literature and cultural activities and scientific research are demonstrated by the establishment of various institutes, and the commission which were appointed from time to time to deal with educational problem.”

Maulana Azad always looked to the best institutions of the world model for his own plans. While opening the India Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, he said:

The Government of India had already initiated a scheme for the establishment of four institutions to standard of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I can clearly visualize the day when the great potentials of this institute will be fully realized.

He translated the book published in Arabic in Egypt Al- Mir’at al-Muslimah i.e. The Muslim Woman that stands for gender equality and summaries the debate, which was taking place in Egypt on women’s rights, and Azad chose to translate this book as he was in favor of gender equality. Maulana Azad’s policies were not restricted to mass-based education alone, rather he appreciated the need

for setting up centres of excellence in diverse fields. Apart from the *University Grants Commission* (UGC), he also set up the *Indian Council for Cultural Relations* (ICCR) that has made a significant contribution in the academic growth of the country. He also assisted Jawaharlal Nehru in establishing the *Council of Scientific and Industrial Research* (CSIR) that helps carrying out some pioneering research in science. He also strengthened the *All India Council for Technical Education* gauging the need for technical and vocational skills that would be needed in building a nation. The tremendous economic growth witnessed over the past couple of decades would not have been possible without our engineers and technically skilled workers. During his tenure as education minister, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) was established in Kharagpur in 1951, followed by similar institutes in Mumbai, Chennai, Kanpur, and Delhi. Even today, the IITs are considered premier institutions of higher education not just in India, but all over the world. Along with science and technology, and the social sciences, Maulana Azad laid equal emphasis on art, music, and literature. He founded the *Sangeet Natak Academy* in 1953, *Sahitya Academy* in 1954, and the *Lalit Kala Academy* in 1954 that protected and promoted Indian Culture over the decades.

Maulana Azad also focused on girl's education, vocational training, agricultural education, and technical education. All this has found a place in the agenda of Government of India today. This shows the great visionary power he had and how relevant it is today. He established UGC for disbursement of grants and maintenance of standards in Indian universities. He firmly believed with Pt. Nehru that if the universities discharged their functions well, all will be well with the Nation. Even today 70 years after the independence we are talking the same. According to him, the universities have not only academic functions; they have social responsibilities as well. This is very true even today. He was a pioneer in the field of adult education. Now we realize how important it is. He realized it seven decades ago. His greatest contribution, however, is that in spite of being an eminent scholar of Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, he stood for the retention of English language for educational advantages and national and international needs. Its relevance can be seen in the decision of government regarding starting English subject, semi English medium, starting more English medium schools in different parts of the country. Imparting primary education in mother tongue also found to be relevant even today. He said, "*What worries me most is that the extent and magnitude of the student's unrest is very often without any relation whatsoever to the supposed cause.*" It seems hundred percent true in current scenario.

The contribution to education of Maulana Azad can be studied in two different ways. 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 reconstruction in making education adequately responsive to the needs and challenges of the national life.

Objective of Education: Preparing Human Beings

The context of education, influence of home and religion and the role of the teacher should aim at building of the character and the practice of moral and cultural values. He stressed the importance of following values, which contributed to the making of man and his society in pursuit of excellence.

1. The 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.
2. The concept of justice is another aim of education, which related to appreciation of rights and performance of duties as necessary conditions to the discipline of individual and the good of society.
3. Spread of enlightenment through right type of education, for true civilization and equality of life. Co - operation and unity must be learnt through togetherness and friendship thus laying the foundation for peace and harmony.
4. The practice of courtesy and chivalry is a grace of life and enriches its quality
5. 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

Curriculum

Maulana was clear that content and curriculum of education at every level has to be distinctively different from what it used to be in the colonial era and it should address to the objectives of education defined by him. He repeatedly stressed following ideas to alter and enrich the content and scope of curriculum.

1. Educational standards needed to be raised at the university stage and curricula should be broadened and enriched.
2. Adult literacy and social education programmers should be suitably devised so as to create awareness and productivity.
3. Women's education should be given special attention.
4. The needs of rural areas with emphasis on agriculture and craft should be given due focus.
5. Physical education, recreation, and opportunities for games and sports should be incorporated at all levels.
6. Research and evaluation should test the effectiveness of curriculum and guide for future educational planning.

Conclusion

Maulana Azad visualized that nation building is possible only through holistic and secular education and communal harmony. He kept on promoting and protecting the secular character of the nation despite adverse situations and resistance from within and outside India. He designed the education policy of the country. His secular, liberal, modern and universal education is relevant even today. His vision paved the way for achieving education for all. The clue of his education policy was his conviction that democracy cannot function without the eradication of illiteracy. He realized that the introduction of adult franchise needed a national programme of mass education.

Paying tribute to Late Maulana Azad in the Indian parliament Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru stated: "We have had an awesome men and we will have incredible men, however that impossible to miss and exceptional sort of significance that Maulana Azad spoke to is not liable to be recreated in India or anyplace else."

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