



**Review Paper**

# Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's philosophic percipience of a new India: A Dream unaccomplished

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## Abstract

*India's soil is very prosperous to produce great personalities of all time. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was one of them a whose contribution to Indian Freedom movement, educational movement and political movement was unprecedented. His philosophy of life and education were based on Islamic wisdom and the combination of Eastern and Western Philosophy. He saw education as a weapon, used to cultivate the individual and prepare them to face future challenges. He had framed the education system into the new way which might be produced an advance human resource to give the backup in the light of all-round progress of a country. Azad was firmly believed that without educational, agricultural and industrial progress, our nation could not be able to move forward, and our present situation cannot be changed. So, he prudently introduced the new education system's scientific and technological outlook to make self-empowering India. The mission guided the new generation to achieve a higher goal of life. The study focuses to analyse Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's philosophical visionary and its accomplishment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

**Keywords:** Maulana Azad, Philosophy, Education, Democracy, Modernization, New India.

## Introduction

"Education imparted by heart can bring revolution in the society"- M.A.K Azad

Maulana Azad was one of the most versatile intellectual luminaries of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He was born on Nov. 11, 1888<sup>1</sup>. His whole schooling was done at home<sup>2</sup>. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan deeply inspired him. After reading Sir Syed's work, Azad began rejecting the tradition made upon the authority of conventional wisdom and began the new tradition made upon the authority of rationality and logical viewpoints. He was among the pioneers of the freedom movement and a creator of institutions, a role model for our democratic thought<sup>3</sup>. Azad travelled several countries and met the world leaders much time which transformed him into a nationalist revolutionary<sup>2</sup>. He laid the foundation of the socio-political movement and dreamt of an entirely educated India. He quoted "I did not go after the tumult of political life; political commotions themselves searched me out"<sup>4</sup>. However, it is miserable for us that the goal is still in progress even after 73 years of Independence. Yet, it is now a dream to be academic and all-round progress of the country. Maulana Azad—an advocate of democracy and non-violence for all—was a great revolutionary thinker<sup>5</sup>. Azad was hopeful that if people imbibe the spirit of progressive Nationalism of the secular democratic State, you can enter any field of life with ease. He also encourages an individual to acquire knowledge to fulfil his role in the country's future growth and development.

He worked for learning through need-based education and liberal education with the combination of the humanism of Indian arts and western science, where the new knowledge added to the youth to become progressive, discipline and women can find the dignity. Maulana Azad believed that a good school has significant relevance to people everywhere and for all time. A school is a place where the country's future generation is made. The quality of the laboratory will decide the proficiency of the product. It is essential in modern India to have the best standard of schools. In our modern society, we are getting a high illiteracy problem though at the same time we have numerous resources. Maulana Azad's contribution to modern science and technical education can be recognized as an important consideration today<sup>6</sup>. Maulana Azad Stress that every individual should have a minimum level of education up to the age of fourteen years to discharge his responsibilities and national duties. This was why the government-mandated everyone to be in elementary school until 14. Azad thought that our country could never be a self-regulated nation without agricultural, technical and industrial revolution. He introduced education for girls with handicraft skills, vocational training, professional knowledge and agricultural education. Later it gave the mileage to industrialization, Green Revolution, and many working resources.

Azad gave a very objective and compelling argument on the future of democracy and secular ethos. His thought on Modern India is focused on providing equality of opportunity.

All barriers based on caste, gender, and resources are being demolished. It is only possible through the blessing of education. The religious conflict (mainly Hindu and Muslim) in our country is not new. Maulana Azad believed that our country would only progress when we live peacefully and make harmony irrespective of religion, class and caste. But all the dreams envisioned by Maulana Azad were shattered after India's partition. Still, he emphasized that only education can remove religious dogma and misunderstanding about religion and practising secularism.

He quoted "no programme of national education can be appropriate if it does not give full consideration to the education and advancement of one-half of the society – that is the women"<sup>7</sup>. Maulana Azad experienced that in making women educated, we can achieve two goals: to make women as a citizen and to educate the new generation. In the constitutional assembly, Maulana Azad also asked to avail women's educational opportunities by arguing that it will be useless, harmful, and bizarre to provide education for women without freeing them from forced veils. Soon after the Independence, as an education minister, Maulana Azad had started working for the democratization of education and spreading it throughout the country despite the then widely prevailed discriminations and deprivations. Azad rightly realized that our target could never be achieved unless we remove our rigidity and narrow-mindedness. Azad, an innovative thinker familiar with conventional and modern education, laid the framework for modern education in India<sup>8</sup>.

The communal tensions and riots have been major disasters in India. It was basically between the majority community (Hindu) and minority community (Muslim). The soil of this country has always been stained by human blood. One of the bitter causes of this type of genocide is most politicians' hate speeches to divide and rule society. The ideological difference and irrationality provide the fuel in spreading communalism. Maulana Azad had a pure secular soul and an honest believer in religion's co-existence. In his address, he points out that communalism is a strong poison for this country<sup>9</sup>. His faith in religions was founded of his interpretation of the principle of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being)<sup>2</sup>. When he joined the arena of political struggle, he explored religion guidance for dealing with concrete political problems of the day<sup>2</sup>. Maulana Azad's refusal to become a citizen of the Muslim state governed by Jinnah was an unforgettable event of the history<sup>10</sup>. Maulana Azad's dream was to build a society where Hindu and Muslim would live peacefully and in harmony. Maulana Azad was a believer of equality, and he professed that majoritarianism should not be supported in any way. During the presidential address of congress in 1923 session, Azad quoted "Today, if an angel were to descend from the heaven and declare from the top of the Qutub Minar, that India will get Swaraj within twenty-four hours, provided she relinquishes Hindu-Muslim Unity, I will relinquish Swaraj rather than Hindu-Muslim Unity, Delay in the attainment Swaraj will be a loss to India, but if our unity is

lost, it will be a loss for entire mankind"<sup>9</sup>. He played a significant role in propagating Hindu and Muslim unity. He will always be remembered for his universal humanism and for being a great leader who stood for Hindu-Muslim dialogue<sup>10</sup>. So, his view on Hindu and Muslim unity had immense importance in the present era where communal riots and hate speeches became daily hazards.

### Azad's philosophical view

He was both a religious and socio-philosophical intellectual. With his pluralistic and multi-disciplinary approach, he has a great blend of axiology, metaphysics, epistemology and aesthetics<sup>11</sup>. Azad's philosophy was based on the flavour of Islamic philosophical ideas. He has developed an interest in Islamic philosophy and the works of J. Afghani and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan<sup>1</sup>. He was spirituality connected with the deep religious temperament. It is rational views always helped make one free from religious misconceptions and prejudices. Azad has divided his thoughtful approach into three metaphysical concepts- God, Universe and Man. He said that God is ultimate and the matter of great importance to one and all<sup>12</sup>. It is the combination of man's innate faith and his acquired belief, leading to monotheism, the concept of love and beauty. Men (person) must develop their wisdom to realize God and higher-level creation. God is a source of inspiration. Azad said that the Universe is a perfect manifestation of all his (God) attributes (Ibid). His (God) attributes of prudence sustain its entity. Azad emphasized God's tender providential care<sup>13</sup>. His kindness takes a step for its complacency, beauty, and equity that bring its perfection. The concept of man is the sprout of the idea of God and the Universe. It is God's best creation, and finally, it flowered as men. By virtue, Men acquired the innate qualities and competency to serve mastery over the entire planet as God's vicegerent. Maulana Azad wrote a book "Tarjuman-al-quran (1964), which holds the religious principles of Islam<sup>12</sup>. He reframed the Concept of *Taqdir* (luck) and *Wahi* (Revelation). He has formulated five ethical principles (Good, Truth, Beauty, Love and justice) and recommended that all human beings should implement them in their lives.

### Educational philosophy of azad

Saiyadain has precisely pointed out the educational philosophy of Azad and said that the educational thoughts of Azad perceived Islamic ideology<sup>14</sup>. But Saiyadain also acknowledged that Azad was not exclusively Islamic and oriental in mind. Azad always tried to conversant both the Indian cultural and modern education. He argued that educational theorists are more likely to be philosophers, authors and creative thinkers than the education professionals. Maulana Azad was impressed by the philosopher Rousseau and his philosophy of life, the concept of the child's necessity and ability to grasp the truth about his insight. The western concept of education intensely influenced Maulana Azad. By researching the Indian education system, he tries to model it scientifically and systematic way<sup>7</sup>.

Azad's conception of a successful educational system was an atmosphere where people could form a positive relationship with each other and with the community<sup>6</sup>. He strongly felt to empower India's people, and it is necessary to revise and reorientate education content. Maulana Azad believed that education is a birthright of all. Education is a process that helps to develop a perfect human being. Azad believes that the education of knowledge will be beneficial for people to live per their environments. Education's primary objectives to Azad were that the children should nourish or train as a member of society, become a good citizen of India, and develop a habit to cooperate with others. "Teaching by the tongue can be perspired but by good deed can stay stronger", stated Azad<sup>15</sup>. He agreed with Ibn Khaldun that religious and secular learning should not be without the questioning to clear the doubt. The teaching method should be for full-fledged understanding of fact or reality. Maulana Azad was always conscious and committed to modern education for national progress. According to him, education is the only way to rectify errors. Maulana Azad had criticized the curriculum of Islamic Madrasas' fundamentally narrow and mainly concentrated on Islamic Philosophy which is a considerable omission of modern mathematics, science and technology. So, the students from Madrasa were not able to acquire advanced education. On the other hand, Maulana Azad was immensely influenced by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's great educational reformist and his role in spreading modern education and modern science among the Muslim community. Azad defined in his book '*Azad ki Kahani*' that Sir Syed's writing gave a great revolution in his thoughts, both in religious and intellectual demesne<sup>7</sup>. Macaulay's negative perception of the Indian language and literature lead to more intense faith in its language and culture to the Indian people. Azad claimed that if Indian languages continue to be used for 150 years, they would have competed with progressive languages<sup>7</sup>. English could serve the purpose no better. Azad compared India with China, Turkey and Japan, who impart modern education through their languages. Azad strongly believed that education should be imparted with regional language, which may truly educate the people. He noticed that the time has come to expand instruction in the mother tongue until the compulsory Education and the Education made available to the people in their language. A child should be taught in the mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction<sup>7</sup>. He was firmly against the idea to adopt one language policy as a medium of instruction. He said that we could not adopt the unilingual approach as a medium of instruction in a multi-lingual society. He said, suppose there are many languages in a state, and we prefer only one language as a medium of instruction. In that case, the resulting loss will lead to resentment and bitterness, which will affect provincial relations<sup>7</sup>. It may give birth to retaliation and provincialism that would lead to big trouble to Indian Nationalism.

## Discussion

Does Azad's dream of 'New India' has been fulfilled? To find out the answer of this question, the researcher has selected three

basic dimensions (Literacy, Philosophical attributes and the quality of political leaders) to analyze the present scenario of new India after 73 years of its Independence. The literacy rate of India during Independence was 21.60%. Undoubtedly, India has got 74.08% literacy in 2011, but the remaining illiterate people (Approximately 360 million) are greater than many countries' population. The literacy rate of age group 15(Elementary) is 69.3% which is less than the national literacy average. It proves that Azad's dream of compulsory and elementary education is still on its way to reach its destination. Maulana Azad was the believer of mix philosophy like Mahatma Gandhi. He tried to merge the eastern and western philosophy to import human values and wisdom into its people. The deterioration of human values and life reminds us of the lack of philosophical practice in everyone's life. We can find the cultural, moral, and ethical degradation in India's society. Our self-centric approaches make us more selfish. Sometimes, our communal attitude is unsheathed in religious dogmatism and hate to others' religion, leading to communal violence. The secular aspect of India was always facing a significant challenge. Maulana Azad was one of the great protectors of secular ethos in India's heart. But now in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is more challenging to transmit secular principles to the new generation. The value erosion was confined not only in society but also among the country's political leaders. The National Watch published a shocking report after gathering self-sworn affidavits from 539 out of 542 winners (Member of Parliament) in the 2019 (Lok Sabha) elections and reviewing them. According to self-proclaimed affidavits submitted by the candidates while filing nominations, the current Lok Sabha (2019) has more M.P.s with criminal records than its predecessors<sup>16</sup>. Approximately 50 percent of the 539 winners analyzed in Lok Sabha 2019 have been found to have criminal proceedings against themselves. There has been an increase in the number of M.P.s with criminal charges from 2009 to 2019<sup>16</sup>. The chances of winning for a candidate with a criminal record in the Lok Sabha is 15.5% higher, while a candidate without a criminal background is 4.7%. These cases include culpable homicide, house trespass, burglary, criminal abuse and trespass to land. According to the 2014 Lok Sabha Election figures, 34% of the election winners were found to have criminal cases against them while 30% of the winners of the 2009 Lok Sabha Election were found to have criminal cases against them<sup>16</sup>. There has been a 109% rise in the number of M.P.s with criminal charges over the past ten years. India's present scenario after 73 years of Independence proved that the dream of Maulana Azad is still too fulfilled.

## Conclusion

J.L. Nehru compares him as a great man of Renaissance and action because of his high intellect and erudition<sup>17</sup>. He was not a professional educationist, but his thought in education has a tremendous effect on the Indian educational system. He will always be known for his view, political activities, litterateur, who amazingly combined National ethos with academic growth as a sign of a modern nation. Maulana Azad, the name always

connected him in India's Azadi (Freedom) Movement. He took a distinctive viewpoint on socio-political issues of the Indian Subcontinent with his views and approaches<sup>18</sup>. He was a great social reformer and leader of the Khilafat Movement. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was honored by the nation by being given India's highest civilian distinction, the Bharat Ratna, in 1992<sup>19</sup>. His concept and thoughts have contributed to India becoming a sovereign, secular and democratic republic. He was the pioneer of Modern India. So, we need to remember him to the young generation of India. Maulana Azad influenced or inspired by the Western education system and tries to connect the Western and Eastern materialism and spiritualism. In honor and remembrance of his invaluable contribution to the Indian education system, his birthday, 11<sup>th</sup> November, is celebrated as the National Education Day. His life and philosophical ideas have guided us to become more advanced towards higher existence levels.

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