

Educational Thought of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and His Contribution to The Modern Education System of India

DR. NAJMAH PEERZADA

Faculty of Education, University of Kashmir, India.

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 girls 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

Education in the largest sense is an act or an experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another of society. Education in real sense is to humanize humanity and to make life progressive cultured and civilized. It is very important for the progress of the individual and society. It is through education that man develops his thinking and reasoning, problem solving and creativity, intelligence and aptitude, positive sentiments and skills, good values and attitudes. Education is a dialogue between the past, present and the future, so that the coming generations receive the accumulated lessons of the heritage and carry it forward (UNESCO, 1998). Besides, Kothari Commission (1964-1966) has put forth that of all the different factors which influences the quality, competence and character of teacher are undoubtedly, the most significant. It is necessary that teachers should be given full support to develop their potential and creative skills so that their teaching be more effective. Teacher acts as a pivot for the transmission of intellectual and technical skills and the cultural traditions from one generation to other. The responsibility of the teacher is very great. Therefore, it is right to say that the nations well depend on the teachers well-being. A teacher needs much more than he needs to have the vision of the kind of the society for which he is preparing the students. Every trade or occupation requires certain necessary qualities and qualifications which an individual member of it required to possess. It is an admitted fact that the effective and fruitful teaching depends on the personality of the teacher which influences the developments of the taught. It cannot be denied that certain typically divergent characteristics make a person an ideal teacher. Kneller (1968) is of the opinion that of all the person the teacher is the best placed to promote the growth of free and creative mind; in those who came before him aspiring with a passionate concern. His function is to assist each student personally in his journey. Towards self-realization, the teacher has the task of stimulating and guiding his child learning so as to assure his attainment of socially approved goals in most efficient way possible. The job of teacher is more than teaching, it also involves the job of improving the profession and education and there is a third role that he has to play the role educational leader. This third role for teachers are, perhaps unique among the professions, because the members of no other profession is so intimately involved in lives in almost all the people of the community so involved in the task of economic, political, social, and cultural life as the teacher. Every year in India, 11 November is celebrated as the 'National Education Day', in order to remember the legacy of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Azad was one of the prominent figures both in pre-and post-independent India. As a prominent Muslim leader, he always fought for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and opposed the partition of India both on political and communal bases. Though he did not have much formal education, he gained skill in several languages including Urdu, Hindi, Arabic and Persian. He was also trained in Mathematics, World History, Philosophy and Science by some teachers selected for him by his father. From his early age, he showed a keen interest in literature and edited a weekly called *Al-Misbah* and also started a monthly journal known

as *Lissan-us-Sidq*. He also learned English through serious personal study and became well-versed in history, contemporary politics and western philosophy. Azad was a key figure in the Indian history of the twentieth century. His learning and training in the traditional Islamic sciences and his strong intellect earned him prominence even among his towering contemporaries. He began his career as a journalist with a keen eye on a large number of issues. One of these issues was education. He laid emphasis on scientific and technical education, which he felt was essential for the development of a country, colonized and exploited for hundreds of years. Azad grew as a highly skilled man having knowledge of religion. While he had a respect for it, he was not satisfied with the old and traditional approach. He was an ardent supporter of rational thinking. He thought that the processes of enlightenment will liberate people from old and superstitious thinking. His firm belief in modernity stemmed from the idea that the scientific knowledge and rationality would be able to remove many evils in a country like India.

Azad wanted to revolutionize the education system in India. He was an ardent supporter of the emancipation process. He saw so many intricate flaws because of the orthodoxy that prevailed in most parts in the country. There is an opinion among scholars that Azad had personally nothing much to do with education, and it was Nehru who handed over the task to him. No doubt Azad accepted the responsibility on the insistence of Nehru and Gandhi. However, he was a qualified person to take on the responsibility for the same. They were aware of the fact that Azad was keenly committed to education, culture and scientific and technical progress. If there were some mistakes and limitations in his work, Nehru always came forward positively to take care of them. Though Azad was not a professional educationist like Tagore and Gandhi, his impact on education was vast. In a newly independent India, there was a need for a person who had an immense vision and character and who might have been able to judge the situation correctly. In addition, the person should have been able to implement the sound educational policies which would help infuse its citizens with the right values. After the Independence of India in 1947, when he took over the ministry of education, which included science and culture, he presided over this ministry for a decade. Education for Azad meant nothing less than man's being and becoming, derived from both religion and humanism. While talking about education, he says: Education, science and culture have a unique role to play in making the new India of our dreams, with its rich composite culture, its precious unity in the midst of valuable diversities, its overall national integrity, its abiding values of truth, justice and tolerance, and its unique capacity to synthesis the cultures of the East and the West into a new and creative blend that preserves the best of the part, along with the eager pursuit of new paths of progress to enrich the quality of our lives. Let us all work together to eradicate illiteracy and ignorance, laziness and poverty, so that our country can take an equitable place in the comity of nations. Azad understood that the introduction of adult franchise for a national program of education should stress the rights and duties of citizenship and the ability to participate in national development. There ought to be a difference between the citizens of independent India and the colonial subjects of foreign rule. This change could be only possible through the program of mass

education. He established a section of social education as one of his first measures. Azad emphasized the role of education in national development and inspired the growth of science and technology. During an opening address at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur in August 1951, he said: One of the first decisions I took on assuming charge as minister was that we must so improve the facilities for higher technical education in the country that we would ourselves meet most of our needs. The large number of our young men who have been going abroad for higher training could have received such training in the country itself. Indeed, I looked and still look forward to the day when the facilities of technical education in India will be of such level that people from abroad will come to India for higher scientific and technical training. Azad gave special stress on the education of women. In 1949, in the central assembly he said, “no program 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 women.” Further talking about women’s education that had been most marginalized, Azad argued that it was important for two reasons: first, women need education as citizens of free India. Second, their education makes the task of educating the younger generation easy.

Objectives

1. To study the Educational Thought of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.
2. To study his Contribution to Modern India.

As a first union minister of education Azad made a unique contribution and stressed on the necessity of starting programs and policies for the speedy, all-round and inclusive development of educational facilities in the country. In the meeting of Central Advisory Board of Education in January 1949, he stated, “The first and foremost task of the national government is the provision of free and compulsory basic education for all.” Azad thought that two things were very important. First, the creation of a nation-wide system of basic education for all children of school going age. Second, the provision of facilities of the highest type of education in the technical field. After joining the interim government in January 1947, Azad left his legacy for Indian education system by establishing various institutions and organizations. He appointed University Education Commission in 1948 and the Secondary Education Commission in 1952. He recognized All-India Council for Technical Education, established the University Grants Commission in 1953, and The Indian Institute of Science. To strengthen cultural relations between India and other countries, Indian Council for Cultural Relations was established. To provide an advanced training and to conduct research, a National Institute of Basic Education was established. To review the progress in the field of secondary education, an All-India Council for Secondary Education was constituted. A Central Bureau of Textbook Research was established. To promote research and training programs, a Central Bureau of Educational and Vocational Guidance was established. A National Council for Rural Higher Education was set up in 1956. To upgrade the teacher training programs, the Central Institute of Education was established. Library services were extended in various parts of the country. Azad occupies a key position in the educational, cultural and scientific development of modern India. At a

crucial stage of the nation, he steered sectors such as education and culture and laid the foundation for a future network of scientific and technological institutions. At the time of Azad's death, Jawaharlal Nehru said, "It was the strange and unique mixture of the good qualities of past, the graciousness and deep learning and toleration, with the urges of today that made Maulana Azad what he was." Even after 70 years of independence, India still houses the largest number of illiterate people in the world, in spite of many achievements in various fields like science, technology, arts, etc. There is still a wide gap between the opportunities available to the rich, educated, urban people and the poor, illiterate or semi-literate rural and other disadvantaged people, as well as between men and women. There is a serious dearth of quality public education at every level of learning and research. Socio-economic development bypasses a major section of population today, as they do not have access to quality education. An important challenge facing the country is to bridge the urban-rural divide in educational investment and opportunities. In the present scenario, it is also necessary to take urgent measures to ensure gender-parity in education by educating communities and families about the benefits of girls' education and by imparting incentives to retain the girls in schools. What India needs is a national commitment to achieve what Maulana Azad had started as the first education minister of independent India. It must make all efforts to reach that goal. 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- Miat 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 need 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 considered premier institutions of higher education not just in India, but the 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 about 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 pioneer in the field of adult education. Now we realized 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.

Objectives of Education

The quest of truth is the principal aim of education, but one should not impose ones 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 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 man 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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