

EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTION OF MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD: TODAY'S RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is one of the important leading characters in the Indian freedom movement and modern education system. His birth day on 11th November has been celebrating as National Education Day in India for his contribution in education. He has contributed in the Indian freedom movement and introduced modern educational foundation for free India. His contribution in journals is important for motivating and encouraging the young people to come forward to regenerate the social, cultural, political and economic thinking. He has realized the unity among all the religious communities for fighting against the British rule and division politics. During the interim government, Azad had been appointed as the Head of the Education Department and acted accordingly. He became the first Minister of Education in Independent India on 15th August in 1947 and reviewed the educational policies of the British and played an important role in framing the new educational planning and policy with the help of the First Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. As the first education minister and chairman of Central Advisory Board of Education, he had tried to focus upon a number of different educational activities and programs such as free and compulsory universal primary education, adult literacy, education for underprivileged section of the society including women, diversification of secondary education and vocational training, quality higher education and research and also effective science and technical education etc. His philosophy of life and his educational ideas reflected on his educational steps and policy for the required changes in the development of the education for the nation. Azad had a great vision and objectives of introducing modern education at all stages. He stressed upon the moral and social education for character building and nation building. He emphasized on communal harmony, secular education and global understanding. His contribution in science and technology will show the way to develop India independently.

Keyword: *Azad, contribution, education, politics, reflection, post-modernism, relevance.*

Introduction: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is one of the important leading characters in the Indian freedom movement and modern education system. He was born in a religious scholar family on 11th November, 1888 in Mecca presently in Saudi Arabia. His birth day has been celebrating as National Education Day in India for his contribution in education. In 1890, he started to live in Calcutta.¹ Azad received education from his father and tutors. From childhood he was becoming master in different languages such as Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Bengali, English and experiencing the traditional education system from Islamic society and culture.² He has contributed in the Indian freedom movement and introduced modern educational foundation for free India. This paper will focus his political and educational contribution to find its relevance and significance in today's society and culture. Some of the primary and secondary literary sources have been used for the critical analysis of his educational measures.

Azad's Political Inspiration and Activities: After publishing a poetic journal, Nairang-e-Aalam in Calcutta (1899), he acted as author, editor and founder for the publication of different magazines and journals such as Makhzan, Khadang-e-Nazar, Lissan-us-Sidq etc.³ He was also associated with different newspapers and acted as an editor of Vakil in Amritsar

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in 1906 and Al-Hilal in Calcutta in 1912. The journals and newspapers were examples for motivating and encouraging the young people to come forward to regenerate the social, cultural, political and economic thinking. One of the most important writings is Ghubar-e-Khatir, a collection of 24 letters dealing with social, religious and spiritual life written during his imprisonment in Ahmednagar Fort in Maharashtra.⁴ He has published 'India Wins Freedom' which has a detailed description about political views and history of Indian freedom movement. He gathered the experience about the political and educational matters from his visit to France, Egypt, Syria and Turkey etc. He has realized the unity among all the religious communities for fighting against the British rule and division politics. He appealed for common and broad purposes and remained against separatism. His thought is highly influenced by Gandhi and worked with Gandhi for non-violence and Satyagraha. He is remained by the side of Gandhi in most of the political and educational issues from beginning to the last phase of his life. He is also influenced by Shree Aurobindo Ghosh and Shyam Sundar Chakravarty and deeply motivated by followers of Kamal Mustafa Pasha.⁵

In Azad's political activities, he did not support the partition of Bengal and separate communal electorates. He joined Khilafat agitation and elected as the president of All India Khilafat Committee. He supported Gandhi's proposal to join the Khilafat agitation with Non-co-operation Non-violence movement against the Rowlatt Act and Jallianawala Bagh Killing in 1913. He took the founding role of establishing the Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi as an institution of Higher education and uplifting the Muslim community to protest against the British oppression. The violence and killing of 22 police men in Chauri Chaura in 1922, compelled Gandhi to stop the non-violence movement and a difficult condition and controversy took place in the Indian National Congress. Azad strongly supported him and had faith in Gandhi. After the period, Azad had been elected the youngest president of the Congress in 1923 and continued up to 1924 and once again in 1940 and also continued up to 1946. As the president he had tried to make the unity among all Indians irrespective of religion, cast and creed. It has been observed that Azad tried a number of times to get the hands of Jinnah for making a strong bonding between the Congress and the Muslim League. He said that he was proud of being an Indian. He was part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality.⁵ He became the close friend with Jawaharlal Nehru and understood his political and socialism ideas. During Gandhi's call for Dandi Salt March in 1930, he organized similar non-violent movement like Dharasana Salt Satyagraha to protest the injustice introduction of salt tax. Immediately he had been arrested along with all other nationalist Congress leaders and imprisoned up to 1934. During the interim government, Azad had been appointed as the Head of the Education Department and acted accordingly.

Educational Views and Contribution of Azad and its Relevance: After India's partition and independence in 1947, the violence, security and refugees problems took place and Azad got the responsibility for the safety and security of the Muslims. He became the first Minister of Education in Independent India on 15th August in 1947 and reviewed the educational policies of the British and played an important role in framing the new educational planning and policy with the help of the First Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. As the first education minister and chairman of Central Advisory Board of Education, he had tried to focus upon a number of different educational activities and programs such as free and compulsory universal primary education, adult literacy, education for underprivileged section of the society including women, diversification of secondary education and vocational training, quality higher education and research and also effective science and technical education etc.

Azad's basic philosophy of life and his educational ideas reflected on his educational steps and policy for the required changes in the development of the education for the nation. He has a faith in democracy for which he focused on the Universalization of education and 'achievement orientation'. He approached three languages such as regional languages and Hindi as medium of instruction and English to be given an important language for higher education and global communication.⁶ Today we are following the three language formula as adopted in NPE 1986. Azad is on the opinion that 'every individual has a right to an education and the state has to perform its duty'. This is similar to Right To Education (RTE) Act 2009. Now we are providing the opportunity to implement the right for all individuals in the country. He wanted to universalize the free and compulsory elementary education up to the age of fourteen years. It reflected the social demand approach of educational planning. The planning and program of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001 had been launched for the same purpose. The protest against child labour by Child Labour Act has made the program successful in removing wastage and stagnation in primary education. To meet the demand a number of institutions have been created by the Indians only. He wanted to diversify the secondary education in order to introduce vocational training. Recently the secondary education has been given the scope of Vocationalization to ensure the job opportunity. As a part of social justice approach of educational planning, he came forward for the development of the women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, handicapped and adult. According to him, women should be educated as the citizens of free India and their contribution is needed for family and national development. To remove the 85% illiterate population, he extended 1% allocation of funds to 10% for the purpose of educational expenditure. The National Literacy Drive program and the women empowerment in today's government policy are the reflections of Azad's educational views and dreams.

Azad opined that "Science is neutral. Its discoveries can be used equally to heal and to kill."⁷ He was not exclusively an Islamic minded or even an oriental minded. He wanted to make a bridge between the western science and Indian science.⁸ He also supported English as medium of instruction in higher education as followed by Egypt, Turkey, China, Japan etc. We cannot deny the progress and development of the western science and education. He opined that Indian languages needed to be improved. He encouraged for rural development including the establishment of educational institution in rural areas. He wanted to introduce quality higher education including science and technology for which he has taken a few steps to establish different organizations and institutions. He setup the Central Institute of Education in Delhi in 1947, regarded now as the department of education to the University of Delhi for acting as a research centre to overcome new educational problems in the country. He emphasized on the need and significance of the training of the teachers for providing quality education. As the first education minister, he took great step to establish the first Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur in 1951 for the development of science and technology. It has been serving the purpose since its establishment. Today a number of such institutes in Mumbai, Chennai, Kanpur, and Delhi have been established and serving the purpose in the higher education and technical field. The University Grants Commission has been setup in 1953 under his leadership. The higher education in the country has been under its control and regulations.⁹ He took great effort in the establishment of Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. He took active role in framing the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and Indian Council for Social Science Research and Central Bureau of Textbook Research for educational development at all stages.

Azad wanted to accept different curriculum at the different stages. According to him, there should be languages, Philosophy, History, Geography, Math, Science, Physical Education etc

in the curriculum. It is just like an eclectic curriculum for all round development of the child. He was also a fond of art and music. He was a musician who had been trained for playing sitar. He has mentioned about the history of the art and music and existence of God in his longest letter, *Ghubar-i-Khatir*.¹⁰ He was not satisfied with the condition of Indian art and culture. He established the most important cultural and literacy academies such as the Sangeet Natak Academy in 1953, both Lalit Kala Academy and Sahitya Academy in 1954, Indian Council for Cultural Relations etc. In the inaugural session of the Indian Academy of Dance, Drama and Music, he said, "India can be proud of long heritage and tradition in the field of dance, drama and music." Today all of the institutions have been working for the development of the creative society. We are encouraging our children to learn and train such discipline related co-curricular activities.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is clear that Azad had a great vision and objectives of introducing modern education at all stages. Like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, he stressed upon the moral and social education for character building and nation building. His 'achievement orientation' and job orientation efforts have been making India really independent. He emphasized on communal harmony, secular education and global understanding. His contribution in science and technology will show the way to develop India independently. He had been awarded the highest honour, Bharat Ratna in 1992 after 34 years from his death. The government has been taking a number of program and activities to survive his educational contribution.

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