

# Maulana Azad

A COMMEMORATION VOLUME



KHALIQ AHMAD NIZAMI



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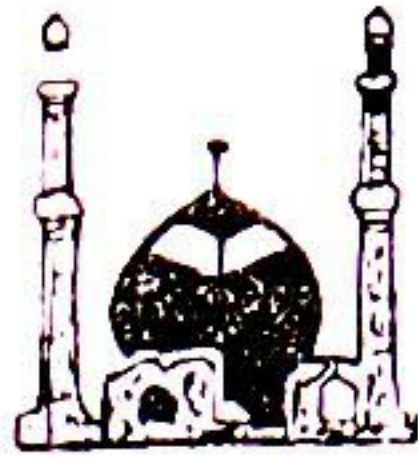




# MAULANA AZAD

( A Commemoration Volume )

KHALIQ AHMAD NIZAMI



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To

The Memory of

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

*His life was gentle, and the elements,  
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to the world : "This was a man."*







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## A Leader of the Freedom Movement

Maulana Azad was essentially a scholar—enjoying pageants of thought,<sup>1</sup> ego-centric and seclusion-loving.<sup>2</sup> The circumstances of his life, however, pushed him into politics and the freedom struggle. He used to say:

”میں نے سیاسی زندگی کے ہنگاموں کو نہیں ڈھونڈا تھا ،  
سیاسی زندگی کے ہنگاموں نے مجھے ڈھونڈھ نکالا“

(I did not go after the tumult of political life; political commotions themselves searched me out.)

He realized fully the contradiction of this situation, and wrote in *Tarjuman ul-Quran*<sup>3</sup>:

“The uproar of political activity and the calmness of literary life could not proceed together. Conciliation between fire and flake of cotton is never possible. I wished to bring the two together. On the one hand, I went on piling up the efforts of my thought, and on the other, invoked incessantly

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 86, 68, 70.
2. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p, 48.
3. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 83.



the scorching lightning to touch them. I knew the result. I have therefore no right to complain.”<sup>1</sup>

But once he had entered the arena of political struggle, there was no retreat and no looking back. With rare tenacity of purpose and dauntless courage of convictions he struggled for years for the emancipation of the country. It became the *leitmotif* of his life and he consecrated every fibre of his being to its realization. He spent nearly ten years of his life in prison; became almost a prison bird, but always recited Naziri's couplet<sup>2</sup>

نالہ از بہر رہائی نہ کفد مرغ اسیر  
خورد افسوس زمانے کہ گرفتار نبود

(The encaged bird does not yearn for release.  
It is sorrowful for the time it spent outside the cage).

Maulana Azad's political life brings out some exciting features of his character: (1) He had a revolutionary's burning passion for freedom and was prepared to undergo every torment and torture for its sake. His early statements and articles were written in characters of fire which excited every brain and swelled every heart. (2) He was prepared to use even violent methods for the achievement of freedom. He accepted Gandhi-ji's non-violence as a policy and not as a principle.<sup>3</sup> (3) He believed in the unity of the Indian nation and was, at no cost, prepared to allow any disruption of this unity. He could tolerate delay in the achievement of freedom, but was not prepared to see Hindus and Muslims divided. The former was loss of the country, the latter a loss of humanity in his eyes. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, however, thought: "We are prepared to pay any price for unity except the price of independence."<sup>4</sup> (4) He disdained petty squabbles and differences of opinion and exerted the influence of his personality—scholarship, conviction and sincerity—to patch up differences between

1. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 7, Eng. tr. Vol. I, XXIX.
2. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 34.
3. *Qaul-i Faisal*, p. 70.
4. Dorothy Norman, *Nehru*, II, p. 126.



various groups and factions in the Congress. His role as a mediator was lauded by all sections of the national organization. (5) He never hesitated to express his views for fear of losing his popularity. According to Mr. Atulya Ghose 'he was a granite where his ideal was concerned.' (6) Barring few early years of his political career, he never indulged in polemics, personal rebukes or retribution. (7) From the day that he joined politics to the last moment of his life, there was a consistency in his thought and behaviour. His thought all through runs in a straight line—without deviations and without curves. His life was, as he himself once said, 'an open book.'<sup>1</sup> This consistency of political behaviour and ideological steadfastness made him outspoken, candid and fearless (*bav panah*). (8) He possessed a keen sense of discipline and always accepted party decisions even in matters in which he held different views. "Having taken a step deliberately," Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote about him in his Diary, "he is fully prepared to accept all consequences that flow from it, without murmur or complaint, even though that step was, against his own judgement. Later happenings have justified him. Every criticism that he made during our long deliberations from May to August last (1942), is now seen to have been correct. Yet he never points out or even refers to it."<sup>2</sup> (9) Division of the country was a tragic denouement of his political life.

### Sources of Inspiration

A number of influences worked on Maulana Azad's mind and threw him into the vortex of political struggle. (1) He had intently studied the life and activities of all those eminent figures of Islam, like Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, Imam Malik, Ibn Taimiya, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and others, who had suffered for the sake of their ideals.<sup>3</sup> His thought derived support and sustenance from their examples. He referred in his statements and speeches to the fearless condemnation of

1. Speech in Parliament in reply to Mr. P.D. Tandon's criticism of his language policy.
2. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. XIII, pp. 89-90.
3. See *Tazkirah*, pp. 159-263, *Khutba-i Sadarat*, Jamiat ul-Ulama, Lahore, pp. 40-41.



Hulagu by Shaikh Sa'di, of Mangu Khan by Shamsuddin Tayeri, of Abaqa Khan by Ibn Taimiya in their presence.<sup>1</sup> Likewise he charged the British government of being 'a tyrant government' and justified his seditious activities on that account before a court of law.

(2) He was fully cognizant of the role of Syed Ahmad Shahid (ob. 1831) in the freedom struggle of the country. One of the basic aims of his movement was to liberate the country from foreign domination.<sup>2</sup> Maulana was so deeply impressed by his role that he wrote that even if Shah Wali Allah would have been alive in his day, he would have come under his banner.<sup>3</sup> The Battle of Balakot was a disaster and the British ruthlessly dealt with his followers (Mujahidin) who were later called *Wahhabis* and were punished. Maulana developed great consideration for those who belonged to the Mujahidin families —Maulvi Muhammad Yusuf Jafri Ranjur, Ajmal Khan, Humayun Kabir and others. His introduction to *al-Durr al-Manshur*, an account of the Sadiqpur branch of Mujahidin, bears witness to his early interest in the movement. He remembered that his father was born in the year of the Battle of Balakot (1831). He mentioned this once to me and closed his eyes for a few seconds—who knows where his thoughts wandered and why.

(3) Bengal had a record of zealous struggle for freedom,<sup>4</sup> Majnun Shah and his followers,<sup>5</sup> the Wahhabis<sup>6</sup> and the Faraizis,<sup>7</sup> had opposed British government and undergone terrible retributions and punishments. Maulana Azad could not have been ignorant of the terrible incidents of Narkul Bari and

1. *Qaul-i Faisal*, p. 61.

2. See his letter to the ruler of Gwaliyar. Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Musalmanon Key Tanazzul Say Duniya Ku Kiya nuqsan pohcha*, pp. 273-274.

3. *Tazkirah*, p. 270.

4. See Nizami, *Tahrik-i-Azadi main Bangal Kay Musalmanon Ka Hissa*, Ma'arif, Azamgarh, December 1989, pp. 405-437

5. See J.M. Ghose, *Sanyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1930.

6. See Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Sirat-i Syed Ahmad Shahid*, Lahore, fourth edition.

7. See *Trial of Dudu Miyan*, Appendix pp. XXVII-XXIX for Dampier's statement.



Alipore Jail. Incidentally these developments in Bengal took place when the Battle of Balakot was being fought in the frontier.

(4) The revolutionaries of Bengal—Shyam Sunder Chakravarty and Arabindo Ghose—had also influenced the mind of Maulana and sharpened his political sensitivity. In their company he got a chance to articulate his revolutionary enthusiasm.

(5) Maulana Azad had come into contact with the leaders of the revolutionary movements in Turkey, Egypt and Iraq. He was convinced that Muslim participation in freedom struggle in India was a duty which they could not shirk.<sup>1</sup>

(6) Maulana Jamaluddin Afghani (1839-1897) appeared on the stage of history as a force pitted against colonialism, slavery and westernization. He created a stir in the Arab world through his ceaseless struggle for resistance to foreign domination in Muslim lands. He had trenchantly criticised Sir Syed for his policies and had issued statements against him during his stay in Hyderabad. His successors, Mufti Muhammad Abduh and Maulana Rashid Riza were very powerful figures in the contemporary Muslim world. Maulana Azad was deeply influenced by the movement of Afghani but, as usual, he considered his own approach different from him.<sup>2</sup> However, he always had great admiration for him and had derived inspiration from his movement in his freedom struggle.

(7) The Maulana had studied the lives of the leaders of freedom movements in Europe—Mazzini, Parnel, etc.<sup>3</sup> He had visited France also and accounts of French revolutionaries must have fired his imagination. He knew that freedom was not possible without sacrifices. He often quoted Victor Hugo that the seed of freedom bears fruits only when it gets nurtured by the water of oppression and tyranny.<sup>4</sup> Justifying his seditious activities before a law court, he cited Parnel: “We are

1. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 7.

2. *Mukammal Khutba-i Sadarat*, pp. 28-30.

3. *Bayan*, Hamidiya Press, Delhi, pp. 29, 37.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 37.



considered rebels in the beginning but hero-patriots after the battle of freedom has been won.”

All these influences acted and reacted on his mind and deepened the sources of his desire to work for the liberation of his country. His restless revolutionary spirit often cried out:

“This is a situation to which the Tradition of the Prophet, as recorded by Bukhari applies. ‘I swear by God who holds my life that I want to be slaughtered in the way of God; revived again and slaughtered again, then again revived and slaughtered.’ There is such a pleasure in getting injured and killed in this way that I long for resurrection after being killed again and again.”<sup>1</sup>

In a written statement before a Calcutta court he said on 11 January 1922:

“The Prophet of Islam has said: ‘The best death is of that person who speaks the truth before a tyrant government and is executed in punishment’.”<sup>2</sup>

He himself longed for it. It was Gandhiji’s policy of non-violence which saved him from the fate of a revolutionary.

### **Joins the Revolutionaries of Bengal**

Lord Curzon’s decision in 1905 to partition Bengal led to unprecedented political agitation. Arabindo Ghose’s paper *Karmayogin* fanned the revolutionary fire. Maulana Azad was hardly 17-18 years of age at this time. He, however, joined the agitation against the Partition of Bengal. This was the first time that the Maulana had assumed an attitude which was different from the general Muslim feeling in the matter. Nawab Salimullah of Dacca had supported the Partition, while his brother Nawab Atiqullah had moved a resolution against Partition in the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress in 1906. However the Muslim opinion in general was in

1. *Maqam-i Da’wat*, p. 25.

2. *Bayan*, Hamidiya Press, Delhi, p. 20.



support of the British move. The Congress initiated, on 7 August 1905, the Swadeshi movement to push forward their agitation against Partition. On 30 December 1906 was born the the Muslim League at Dacca. The Muslims of Bengal had so far refrained from taking any part in the agitation organized against the Government.

The revolutionaries of Bengal were hostile to the Muslims.

Writes the Maulana:

“In fact all the revolutionary groups were then actively anti-Muslim. They saw that the British Government was using the Muslims against India’s political struggle and the Muslims were playing the Government’s game... The revolutionaries felt that the Muslims were an obstacle to the attainment of Indian freedom and must, like other obstacles, be removed.”<sup>1</sup>

It took sometime before the revolutionaries could be convinced about the sincerity of the Maulana who persuaded them to throw open their doors to the Muslims also. Further, they were reluctant to extend their revolutionary activities beyond Bengal and Bihar. As the result of Maulana’s persuasion

“within two years of the time that I joined secret societies were established in several of the important towns of northern India and Bombay.”<sup>2</sup>

John Gunther observes about the Maulana in his *Inside Asia*:

“...he is one of the few Indians who began important agitation before Gandhi’s great entrance to the arena.”

Maulana Azad’s entry into the freedom struggle through the revolutionary door coloured his attitude and policy all through his life.

1. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 5.
2. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 6.



### Visit to Islamic lands strengthens his faith in struggle for freedom

In 1908 Maulana Azad visited Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey and contacted many important figures of the freedom struggle in the Muslim world. He met some Iranian revolutionaries; in Egypt he came into contact with the followers of Mustafa Kamil Pasha. A group of young Turks had established a centre in Cairo and were publishing a weekly from there. When he went to Turkey he established contact with the leaders of the Young Turk movement. "I kept up my correspondence with them for many years after my return to India," remarks the Maulana.<sup>1</sup>

This contact with liberation movements in Muslim countries had deep impact on Maulana Azad's mind and he resolved to throw himself headlong in freedom struggle. He remarks:

"Contact with those Arab and Turk revolutionaries confirmed my political beliefs. They expressed their surprise that Indian Muslims were either indifferent to or against nationalist demands. They were of the view that Indian Muslims should have led the national struggle for freedom, and could not understand why Indian Muslims were mere camp followers of the British... I felt it necessary to create a new movement among Indian Muslims..."<sup>2</sup>

The impression that contact with Islamic lands had a Pan-Islamic context or was divorced of Indian political considerations is not correct. Finding the Islamic world involved in freedom struggle, Azad thought of stirring the Indian Muslims also to action. Through his support to freedom fighters in other lands, he strengthened the moral foundations of Indian freedom struggle.

### Role of al-Hilal in Indian Freedom Struggle

Maulana Azad started *al-Hilal* from June 1912. It was not merely 'a turning point in the history of Urdu journalism,' but

1. *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 7-8.

2. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 8.



a land-mark in India's freedom struggle. "It created," Maulana has rightly observed, "a revolutionary stir among the masses."<sup>1</sup> The Government forfeited one security after another and when the World War broke out in 1914, *Al-Hilal* press was also confiscated. Maulana then started another journal *al-Balagh*. The Government of India externed him from Calcutta in April 1916 under the Defence of India Regulations. His entry into Punjab, Delhi, U.P. and Bombay was already banned. He was thereafter interned in Ranchi where he remained in detention till 31 December 1919.

In a statement before the Calcutta court, on 11 January 1922, Maulana Azad referred in some detail to the role of *al-Hilal* in removing all fear-complex from the mind of Muslim minority and persuading them to join the Hindus in freedom struggle without any inhibition or any reservation. He wrote:

"This is a fact that within three years of its publication *al-Hilal* created a new stir in the religious and political life of the Muslims of India. Earlier they were not only aloof from the political activities of their Hindu brethren, but were an instrument in the hands of the bureaucracy. The dissensionist policy of the Government had created a fear complex in their minds that the Hindus are in a majority in the country, if India became free, Hindu government would be established. But *al-Hilal* exhorted the Muslims to rely on their faith rather than on their numbers and join the Hindus without any fear. This led to changes which have resulted in the joint movements of Khilafat and Swaraj... I want to tell you that *al-Hilal* put forward the options of 'freedom or death.'<sup>2</sup>

Besides, the Maulana told his co-religionists that Islam was opposed to slavery and it was their religious duty to work for liberation of the country. He said:

"Islam does not permit under any circumstances that Mussalmans should live a life of slavery. They should either

1. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 8.

2. *Mukammal Tahriri Bayan*, Hamidiya Press, Delhi, p. 30.



exist as a free people or choose extinction. There is no third alternative in Islam.”

The *al-Hilal* registered Maulana's firm and final entry in the arena of political struggle. The pages of this journal were enough proof of his seditious intentions and the British Government put him under strict surveillance thereafter.

### Support to Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill

At the fifth session of Muslim League held at Calcutta on 3-4 March 1912, a resolution was moved accepting the main principles of Mr. Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill. Mr. Mohd. Shafi opposed it and said: "If the Bill were passed into law, it would lead to political disabilities, for then Hindi would be powerful at the expense of Urdu." Maulana Azad considered this criticism British inspired. He supported the Resolution and said:

“Only title holders and members of the Council were opposing the Bill in order to show their loyalty.”<sup>1</sup>

This remark created a tumultuous scene at the Conference but Maulana Azad's frank and candid observation upset the loyalists.

### Hizbullah founded

Maulana Azad founded an association named *Hizbullah* in June 1913 with the purpose of awakening freedom sentiments among the Muslims and to prepare them for actual armed struggle against the foreign power. It was an organization the objectives of which were not publicly announced. A brochure entitled, *Hizbullah*<sup>2</sup> gives an idea of its aims and objects. The members had to sign a pledge which ran as follows:

1. *The Indian Muslims—A Documentary Record*, ed. Shan Muhammad, Vol. 3, p. 115.
2. See Mushtaq Ahmad's preface to his edition of *Hizbullah*, printed at Swaraj Printing Works Delhi and published from Meerut on 8 December 1921.



*"We are the helpers of God.*

Truly, my prayer

And my service of sacrifice,

My life and my death,

Are (all) for God,

The Cherisher of the Worlds.

No partner hath He:

This I am commanded,

And I am the first

Of those who bow

To His Will." (S. VI: 162-163)

The spirit of surrender and sacrifice which underlies this pledge is too obvious to need any comment. The organization, it appears, carried on secret work for several years. In July 1920 the branches of the organization were established in the Punjab, Sind and Bengal as Maulana has mentioned in a letter to Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi. In fact *Hizbullah* was an Indian Carbonari with a religious facade. Maulana Azad's mind, it appears, did not at any stage give up the possibilities of an armed overthrow of British power.

### **Involvement in 'Silk Letter' Conspiracy**

Maulana Azad's involvement in 'Silk Letter Conspiracy' was part of his revolutionary tactics. Its aim was to enlist foreign support for his revolutionary programmes and establish a Provisional Government in Afghanistan. Shaikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmud Hasan of Deobund, Maulana Azad, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi, Raja Mahendra Pratab and others were involved in it at one stage or the other. C.R. Cleveland, Director Central Intelligence reported to Sir William Vincent, Member Home Department on 4 October 1917:

"We found out later that this was the time (referring to December 1914 and January 1915) at which the 'Silk Letter' conspirators in India had decided to throw in their lot with the Afghans and Turks against the British Government, and



a good deal of work in this connection was done at this very time by Abul Kalam Azad and Maulvi Obedulla.”<sup>1</sup>

A detailed study of the Silk Letter conspiracy is a great desideratum. It was, in fact, the first attempt of its nature to involve foreign powers in the Indian freedom struggle.

### Shaikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmud Hasan and Maulana Azad

Shaikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmud Hasan of Deobund was a zealous freedom fighter. He inspired a whole generation with revolutionary zeal: revived the Deobund tradition of resistance against British power, carried on campaign of non-cooperation and boycott against the British Government and laid the foundation stone of a national University, the Jamia Millia Islamia as a mark of protest against British controlled Aligarh College. He was imprisoned in Malta for his seditious activities.

Significantly enough it was Maulana Azad who brought him from his lecture room to the field of freedom struggle.<sup>2</sup> In his Presidential Address to the *Jamiat-ul-Ulama* on November 21, 1921, he paid eloquent tribute to his contribution to freedom struggle and his arrest in Mecca at the age of seventy for his seditious activities. “In fact,” remarked the Maulana, “he revived the tradition of the truthful *‘ulama* of the past and left an example for Indian *‘ulama* to emulate.”<sup>3</sup> In this address he referred to his request to the Maulana in 1914 to accept the position of *Amir* and lead the Muslim community and he had accepted this. But on the advice of some people he decided to proceed to Hejaz and Maulana Azad’s ‘fervent appeals and sincere requests’ could not dissuade him from that journey.<sup>4</sup> As a result, his scheme of a *Amir* could not make any headway. The idea of an *Amir* to lead Muslim people had come to Azad from Ibn Taimiya who firmly believed that even in lands under

1. Government of India Archives, Home Department-Political, January 1918, F. No. 6. *Indian Muslims—A Documentary Record*, ed. by Shan Muhammad, Vol. 5, p. 80.
2. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. II, p. 95.
3. *Mukammal Khutba-i Sadarat*, p. 13.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 57.



the control of enemy the life of the Muslim community should be organized under an *Imam*.<sup>1</sup> Maulana Azad mentioned in his speech at Deobund on January 8, 1951 that his first meeting with the Shaikh-ul-Hind was secretly arranged in Delhi at the house of Dr. Ansari. Maulana Mahmud Hasan came from Deobund to Delhi by the evening train and left at midnight to avoid detection.<sup>2</sup> This shows that Azad and Shaikh-ul-Hind were involved in secret planning against the British.

### Life at Ranchi

Maulana Azad spent the period of his internment at Ranchi (March 1916 to January 1920) in disseminating his ideas of freedom, resistance and national solidarity. Paying tribute to Maulana's dedication to his religious mission at Ranchi, Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi said that his life seemed a reflection of the lives of Ibn-i Taimiya, Ibn-i Qaiyyim, Shams ul Aimma Sarakhsi and Omayya bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Andalus<sup>3</sup>— eminent figures in the history of Islam who had created feelings of *jihad* in their contemporaries.

Gandhiji was at that time engaged in his peasant movement at Champaran. He expressed a wish to meet Maulana Azad in Ranchi but the Government did not permit him.

### First meeting with Gandhiji

Maulana Azad was released from Ranchi internment on January 1, 1920. He had not met Gandhiji so far. Some days later he met Gandhiji in Delhi. Azad's political background and Gandhiji's earnestness to mobilize public opinion in favour of his movement brought them closer.

“Even before he joined the Congress in 1920,” remarked Dr. Radhakrishnan, “he was a revolutionary.”<sup>4</sup> His entry into the Congress was not as a novice; he had rich political

1. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

2. *Rudad Khair Maqdam*, p. 27.

3. *Ma'arif*, March 1919.

4. *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad—A Memorial Volume*, p. 4.



experience and extensive knowledge of freedom movements in the Asiatic world.

### The Khilafat Movement

At the end of his internment period at Ranchi, Maulana Azad threw himself whole heartedly into the affairs of Balkan, Tripoli and Turkey, and used these developments to awaken anti-colonial feelings in India.

A proposal was discussed in Delhi at this time to send a deputation to the Viceroy to apprise him of the sentiments of the Indian Muslims regarding Turkey and the *khilafat*. Hindu leadership fully supported this move. Maulana writes:

“Gandhiji participated in the discussions and expressed his complete sympathy and interest in the proposal. He declared himself ready to be associated with the Muslims on this issue. On 20 January 1920, a meeting was held in Delhi. Apart from Gandhiji, Lokmanya Tilak and other Congress leaders also supported the stand of Indian Muslims on the question of Khilafat.”<sup>1</sup>

On February 28-29, 1920, Maulana Azad presided over the Khilafat Conference at Calcutta. Resolutions passed at the Conference under his chairmanship give an idea of the direction of his own thought. Indignation was expressed at the attempts to dismember Turkish Empire and place Mesopotamia, Syria and other Muslim lands under non-Muslim control. The British Declaration of Protectorate over Egypt which was tantamount to depriving Egyptians of their birth-right of freedom was denounced. An appeal was made to the Muslim soldiers “to impress upon their officers that if the above-mentioned questions were decided against Muslim demand, they would sever all connection with the British Government.” Further, an appeal was made to the Hindu and the Muslim rulers of Native States to cooperate with the agitation. Resolutions were passed to boycott British goods and ‘cooperation of non-Muslim

1. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 9.



countrymen was sought.' Muslim members of the Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils and title-holders were requested to cooperate. A request was made to the non-Muslims "not to help the British Government in recruitment."<sup>1</sup> These resolutions set the tone of the struggle and amounted to preaching sedition and resistance. Maulana Azad's Presidential Address, *Mas'ala-i Khilafat wa Jazirah-i 'Arab*,<sup>2</sup> apart from being a scholarly and illuminating discourse on the concept and history of *khilafat*, stirred the Muslim sentiments to their very depth and provoked opposition to the British Government and its policies in the broader framework of world-history.

In June 1920, the Central Khilafat Committee met at Allahabad. It was attended by Maulana Azad also. The meeting resolved:

"that the Swadeshi movement should be undertaken in right earnest"

and appointed a Committee for its implementation which, inter alia, contained the name of Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari. The meeting placed on record

"it deep sense of obligation to Lala Amar Chand of Peshawar who has carefully submitted to internment and persecution as a penalty for his large-hearted sympathy with the Khilafat movement and congratulates him upon his heroic self-sacrifice and assures him of every support."<sup>3</sup>

In July 1920 members of the Non-cooperation Committee Bombay which, besides others, comprised Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, announced:

"It is expected that all title holders, Honorary Magistrates, Justices of Peace, Members of the Legislative Councils, who

1. *The Muslim Outlook*, March 1920; *Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, ed. Shan Muhammad, Vol. 6, pp. 159-160.
2. Published at Al-Balagh Press, Calcutta 1920.
3. *The Indians Annual Register*, 1921; *Indians Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, pp. 17-18.



feel about this important question affecting the well-being of millions of Muslims, and who are in sympathy with the movement, will surrender their titles or honorary posts on this day.”<sup>1</sup>

It is undeniable that Maulana Azad’s participation in these meetings and his powerful exposition of the basic implications of the Khilafat problem, had a sympathetic response from the Hindus, but it must also be admitted that Gandhiji had lent his support to it both to ensure Hindu-Muslim unity and to awaken Indian masses. In September 1920, at a special session of the Congress at Calcutta, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mr. C.R. Das had disagreed with Gandhiji on mixing the non-cooperation and *Khilafat* problems, but his resolution was passed with an overwhelming majority,<sup>2</sup> and the *Khilafat* and Boycott movements went on hand in hand. The view that Maulana Azad’s interest in the developments of the Islamic world was a deviation from his main direction or that it changed the orientation of his movement is absolutely unwarranted. Throughout his political career, Maulana Azad’s paramount concern was to strengthen the fibre of Indian national consciousness. Addressing the All India Khilafat Conference at Kanpur on 24 December 1926 he said “the Khilafat committees should ally themselves with the Congress organization for the furtherance of the national programme.”<sup>3</sup> If a careful study is made of the contemporary literature it would appear that the term Pan-Islamism was coined by the colonialists to prevent Hindu-Muslim cooperation. Maulana thought that interest in the movements of the Islamic world would deepen the desire for freedom in India. He writes:

“In Egypt, Iran and Turkey the Muslims were engaged in revolutionary activities for the achievement of democracy and freedom.”<sup>4</sup>

1. *Indian Annual Register*, 1921. *Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. VII, p. 34.
2. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 11.
3. *The Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. VIII, p. 107.
4. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 5.



It was democracy and freedom struggle of these countries which attracted the attention of Maulana Azad. He desired inspiration from these movements and exhorted the Indians to throw themselves into the freedom struggle.

Secondly, these movements created a stir in India as a whole. Referring to the Khilafat movement, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Young India* in April 1924 that he would not allow the spirit generated by the Khilafat movement to die. In fact the Khilafat movement created a mass stir against designs of colonial powers and awakened the Indian masses from their slumber at a very appropriate moment in world history. The Non-cooperation and the Boycott movements derived strength and momentum from the Khilafat agitation.

Thirdly, it is significant that the Hindus also shared the Muslim sentiments about Balkan, Tripoli and other places about which the Maulana wrote in the pages of *al-Hilal*.

Fourthly, it created a place for India in the confidence of Muslim countries and when the first Prime Minister of Independent India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, embarked on his policy of non-alignment he was welcomed in West Asia. If free India can express its support to the Palestinian struggle for freedom and find solidarity with the African movements, it was in the fitness of things that Maulana got India involved in the movements of the Islamic world and used it for bringing Hindus and Muslims nearer and closer and create a soft corner for India in the Asian world.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, whose perception of political movements is usually characterized by rare insight, remarks: "Pan-Islamism in 1914 and later was an anti-imperialist force. It weakened the British people in their war effort and later it coloured the background of the Khilafat movement in India."<sup>1</sup>

### **Proposal for the appointment of Amir-i-Shari'at**

On June 25-26, 1921 Maulana Azad presided over a Special Conference of the Jami'at-ul-'Ulama at Patna, convened to select an *Amir-i Shari'at*. Addressing the Conference he said:

1. Nehru's letter to Azad as cited by Dorothy Norman, *Nehru, the first sixty years*, Vol. II, p. 11.



“No nation could exist in the world without a Nizam Qaumi and Nizam Ijtamai (national organization and united organization)...The last stage (of the struggle) was *waljihad fi sabil illah* which meant to gain your object by means of your hand and your sword in the path of God’ (*Khuda ke rah men apna maqsad ko hasil karna apne hath se aur apne talwar ke zariaya se*).”<sup>1</sup>

At this time the Maulana was exploring all possible ways and means to inspire the Muslims with revolutionary zeal and create a religious organization as a prop to his political programmes. He was equally concerned about Hindu-Muslim unity in the pursuit of common ideals.

The intelligence report about this meeting throws light on the objectives Maulana had in mind:

“*The aim of the Jamiat was Hindu Muslim Unity. This received the particular attention of the Ulemas (sic), and they were asked to be careful to see that their actions in religious matter did not destroy the present relation between Hindus and Mussulmans. The Jamiat should help in the attainment of Swaraj. The Mussulmans had the same desire for Swaraj as the Hindus, and when Swaraj was attained Hindus and Mussulmans should live on equal terms. The Hindus and Muslims were considered to be the slaves of the British Government. They should therefore have in one hand the flag of Swaraj and in the other the Nizam Shari‘at. While well versed in theology, the Ulama were also asked to be expert in politics, otherwise the whole of their structure would come to pieces.*”<sup>2</sup>

This report makes it abundantly clear that even where religious terminology was used, the intentions were political and that Hindu-Muslim Unity was the prime consideration of Maulana Azad.

1. *Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, p. 88.
2. Report from D.I.G. of Police, Home Department, Political 1922, F. No. 868; *Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, pp. 95-96.



**Fatwa against Cooperation with the British**

A *fatwa* bearing the seal of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and other *'ulama* was also issued at this time. It said:

- “1. It is not permissible to become a member of the Government Councils.
2. It is not permissible to plead as Vakil before the British Courts.
3. It is not permissible to read in Government or semi-Government schools.
4. It is not permissible to keep Honorary Magistracies, other honorary posts and the titles conferred by the Government.
5. All Government services by which Government is helped are (*haram*) forbidden, specially serving in the Police and the Army is a great sin, because they have to fire upon their brethren. God says (a quotation from the Quran: ‘One who kills a Mussulman deliberately will be subjected to eternal hell fire.’ The Prophet has said: “Whoever took up arms against Muslims he ceases to be a Muslim.”<sup>1</sup>

This *fatwa* became the source of great embarrassment to the Government. When the Government proscribed it there was great resentment. C.A. Borron, Chief Commissioner of Delhi wrote on 2 September 1921 to H.D. Craik, Secretary to the Government of India:

“These abstracts give I am afraid but a slight idea of the effect of the speeches on the illiterate audiences, whose feelings are reported to have been deeply stirred. The effect of the meeting on the lower classes of the City population generally has been altogether bad and a feeling of unrest has been created among the public. *A few more such meetings may any day result in an outrage of explosion of an*

1. Home Department, Political 1921; *Indian Muslims*, Vol. 7, p. 96.



*anti-European character...After the last meeting a secret conference between Abul Kalam Azad and a few selected Maulvis decided that the course of action to be adopted was to arrange for the public distribution of thousands of copies of the fatwa.*"<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Azad was now using all possible religious weapons — *Dar-ul-Irshad, Hizbullah, fatwa, amir-i Shari'at* and *Jihad* to work up Muslim sentiments against the British rule. As he clearly stated in a Court statement, he brought about political awakening through the medium of religion. The same method was adopted by Gandhiji later.<sup>2</sup>

### **Non-Cooperation Programme of Gandhiji and Maulana's Support**

Disillusioned with the Government's apathy to the problems of the Indians, Gandhiji chalked out his programme of non-cooperation. Almost at the same time, or a little earlier, Maulana Azad had also worked on the same lines and had written some articles in *al-Hilal*. "He (Gandhiji) believed," writes Maulana, "that such a programme would compel any Government to come to terms. I also remembered that I had myself suggested a similar programme in some articles in *al-Hilal*."<sup>3</sup> While many Muslim leaders asked for time to give their opinion on the proposed non-cooperation movement, Maulana Azad "without a moment's hesitation fully accepted the programme" formulated by Gandhiji. He was of the view that if people really wanted to help Turkey, there was no alternative to the programme put forward by Gandhiji.<sup>4</sup>

A few weeks later a Khilafat Conference was held at Meerut. Gandhiji also participated in it and according to Azad:

1. Government of India, Home Department, Political, 1921, F. No. 137; *Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, p. 116.
2. *Qaul-i Faisal*, p. 68.
3. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 10.
4. *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 10-11.



“It was in this Conference that Gandhiji preached for the first time the non-cooperation programme from a public platform.”<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Azad’s article on “Boycott,”<sup>2</sup> which was printed and circulated in thousands, was a powerful exhortation to boycott European goods and defy the British government. He said:

“Where can I get the bugle whose strident blare may awaken forty crore hearts from their deep slumber?”<sup>3</sup>

He put forward religious arguments to justify his exhortations and said that it was the demand of religion to boycott goods manufactured by the enemies of freedom.

### **Tour of the Country**

To awaken the masses and enlist public support for the non-cooperation movement, Maulana Azad undertook extensive tours of the country with Gandhiji, Maulana Muhammad Ali, Shaukat Ali and others. Gandhiji was anxious to persuade the students to leave British run institutions and throw themselves headlong in the freedom struggle.

### **Conflict with Aligarh College Administration**

In his efforts to draw students out of Aligarh College the Maulana met with some resistance from the College administration of those days.

In his early life Maulana Azad was deeply influenced by the progressive thought of Sir Syed and was a voracious reader of his writings. When he entered into revolutionary politics, he came to believe that Sir Syed’s advice to the Muslims to keep away from politics was not correct. But then he was looking

1. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 11.
2. Printed by Lala Harnam Das Gupta at Fath Printing Works, Delhi, and published by Munshi Mushtaq Ahmad from Meerut, 1921.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 4.



at Sir Syed from 1914 backwards. Had he considered Sir Syed's advice in the context of the aftermath of 1857 he would not have disagreed with his point of view. Nawab Viqar ul Mulk used to say that had Sir Syed lived beyond the 19th century he would have entirely changed his policy and would have entered the political field. Similar was the assessment of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. "It is possible," he says, "had he (Sir Syed) lived a generation later, he would have himself given another orientation to that message."<sup>1</sup> But considered in the context of the situation then prevailing Sir Syed's advice to the Muslims to keep out of politics was perfectly sound.<sup>2</sup> Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru writes about him:

"Sir Syed's decision to concentrate on western education for Muslims was undoubtedly a right one. Without that they could not have played any effective part in the building up of Indian nationalism of the new type, and they would have been doomed to play second fiddle to the Hindus with their better education and far stronger economic position. The Muslims were not historically ready then for the bourgeois nationalist movement as they had developed no bourgeoisie, as the Hindus had done. Sir Syed's activities, therefore, although seemingly very moderate, were in the right revolutionary direction."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps Maulana Azad would not have involved Sir Syed in his criticism, had Aligarh of those days not stood by the side of the British government and opposed the Non-cooperation movement—all in the name of Sir Syed. The College administration needed a justification for their pro-British approach. They unhesitatingly used Sir Syed's name in this context which was not justified. A strange situation developed: Aligarh authorities took recourse to Sir Syed to buttress ideologically and morally their policies of support to British government; Maulana Azad, though otherwise a great admirer of Sir Syed, did not hesitate to criticise him when his name came to be

1. *An Autobiography*, pp. 463-464.

2. See Nizami: *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, Publications Division, Delhi, 1966.

3. *An Autobiography*, pp. 461-462.

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cited in support of their reactionary postures. Aligarh then called Azad an enemy of Sir Syed. Addressing a Convocation in Aligarh on 20 February 1949, Maulana Azad thus recalled those days:

“It was inevitable that I should criticise the political lead which the late Sir Syed Ahmad had given and which represented the policy of the Aligarh Party. I therefore came into a clash with this party on the political issue. This was, however, regarded by its members as opposition not only to the founder’s political policy but to the institution itself. In fact some of them went so far as to look upon me not only as an opponent but an enemy of Sir Syed Ahmad and Aligarh. Nothing was, however, farther from the truth. It is true that I regarded the political lead of Sir Syed Ahmad as a grave blunder but at the same time I had the highest admiration for the educational and other reforms which he carried out. I regarded, and still regard him, as one of the greatest Indians of the 19th century.”<sup>1</sup>

It was natural that Azad supported those students who broke from the College of those days and established another institution under the guidance of Maulana Muhammad Ali, and named it as Jamia Millia Islamia, initially in Aligarh but later it moved to Delhi. The Aligarh Muslim University itself was closed for a month. It was reported:

“A strong undercurrent of unrest amongst the student population was swaying their college life... Then boys did not attend college from this day and instead held several political meetings. The situation was becoming alarming day by day, as there was free talk of converting the College into a National University; in panic the Principal sent wires to the authorities, to the Police, to the Trustees and the parents, complaining that he was unable to cope with the new rush of developments.”<sup>2</sup>

1. *Convocation Address*, pp. 1-2.

2. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1921; *The Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, p. 59.



Considering the loyalist slant of the Aligarh administration of those days, the response of the Aligarh students to the non-cooperation movement and the appeal of Mahatma Gandhi and Azad was not insignificant. The response in Benares was less enthusiastic. The *Pioneer* (December 1920) reported:

“Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to Banaras and his mischievous attempt to wreck the Hindu University have been a total failure... There has not been any withdrawal yet, and if there are any withdrawals at all, it will be less than 60 out of a total strength of about 1600 students... The members of staff criticised in unmistakable language several aspects of Gandhi’s programme of non-cooperation. Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya, V.C. of Banaras Hindu University expressed his sorrow for those 60 students who were intending to join the Mahatma.”<sup>1</sup>

In Aligarh the speeches of Maulana Azad, Maulana Muhammad Ali, and Hakim Ajmal Khan in the College Mosque<sup>2</sup> had worked up the sentiments to fever heat.

### Hindu-Muslim Unity

Joint efforts of the Hindus and the Muslims in the Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation movements created an ideal atmosphere of amity and goodwill. The *Independent* of Allahabad reported (October 1920) about Ramlila processions:

“In Nainital, Mahomedans garlanded Ram, Lakshman and Sita in the Ramlila procession and there was naturally great cordiality of feeling between the followers of the two religions. Similarly during Mohorram, prominent Hindus distributed *pan*, tea and cigarettes to the Mahomedans. If the practice is encouraged there will be no occasion for Hindu-Moslem quarrels and the Bureaucracy will have one argument less for its continuance.”

1. *Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, pp. 58-59.
2. *Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, p. 61.



To give his efforts for Hindu-Muslim Unity a deep religious base, Maulana Azad declared that the Hindus resembled the *Ahl-i-Kitab*.<sup>1</sup> It was a momentous decision which had far-reaching religious and political implications.

Maulana Azad's one great concern all through was to maintain cordiality of relations between the Hindus and the Muslims. At the tenth session of the All India Khilafat Conference at Cocanada (30 December 1923) he moved a resolution on this subject. The report says:

“Maulana Abul Kalam Azad next moved a resolution pledging the Hindu-Muslim Unity and calling upon the community to safeguard the places of worship of all communities.”<sup>2</sup>

### Disagrees with Gandhiji on Chauri Chaura

Gandhiji suddenly stopped the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incidents. Maulana Azad, alongwith C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai and others, bitterly criticised Gandhiji's abrupt ‘Halt’ to a movement which had gathered great momentum. An infuriated mob had set fire to a police station which led to the death of 22 police-men. This created moral protest in Gandhiji. To his critics he replied:

“...the drastic reversal of practically the whole of aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound.”<sup>3</sup>

For Gandhiji non-violence was a sacred principle; Maulana Azad considered it merely a policy and was not prepared to abjure the use of force in driving out the foreign power.

### In Prison

From March 1916 when Maulana Azad was interned in Ranchi till June 1945 when he was set free from Ahmadnagar

1. *Jama al-Shawhid fi dakhul-i Ghair Muslim fil masajid*, pp. 34-35.
2. *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1923.  
*Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, p. 228.
3. Vicent Shean, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 132.



prison, was put in jail six times. His total period of incarceration was nearly one decade.

Internment in Ranchi, March/October 1916 to January 1920.  
 Arrested on Dec 10, 1921, released on January 6, 1923.  
 Arrested on Aug 21, 1930, released on 27 January 1931.  
 Arrested on March 12, 1932, released on 11 May 1932.  
 Arrested on 3 January 1941, released on 4 Dec. 1941.  
 Arrested on 9 August 1942, released on 15 June 1945.

Maulana Azad's statement before the Calcutta court, on 11 January 1922, published under the caption *Qaul-i Faisal*, is a landmark in India's political literature. Instead of defending himself against the charge of sedition, he fearlessly accepted it and adduced arguments to prove that he was justified in his seditious activities. Mahatma Gandhi hailed it as a great statement and wrote in *Young India* (February 23, 1922):

“What a change between 1919 and 1922—nervous fear of sentences and all kinds of defences in 1919, utter disregard of sentences and no defence in 1922.”

His statements before Courts breathe the fire and frown of a revolutionary. Addressing a Court which was trying him, he said on January 11, 1922: “This is an interesting and also illuminating chapter of history in the writing of which both of us are equally participants. You have for yourself the magisterial chair over there while we have the docks here... Let us complete this memorable chapter soon... The historian is waiting for us and so is the future.”<sup>1</sup>

### Elected President of the Congress in 1923

Maulana Azad was elected President of the Indian National Congress on 15 September 1923 when he was 35 years of age and was the youngest man to be elected President. It was a

1. *Qaul-i Faisal*, p. 80.



great confidence reposed in him by the national organization, but in fact, he had earned it by his sincere and consistent dedication to the national cause. Congress was then divided between no-changers and pro-changers. Mr. C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Hakim Ajmal Khan had formed a Swaraj Party and presented the Council entry programme which was opposed by the followers of Gandhiji. Mr. Rajgopalachari, Sardar Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad were leaders of the pro-changers group. Maulana Azad did not identify himself with any group. He succeeded in bringing about a reconciliation between the two groups. He was of the opinion:

“So long as the objective was the same, each group should be free to follow the programme it considered best.”<sup>1</sup>

Referring to his role as President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad once remarked:

“Within this short period of great national awakening and excitement he had deeply impressed his colleagues and co-workers not only by his eloquence, but also by the keenness of his intellect, the soundness of his counsel and his capacity to reconcile conflicting view points and bringing about amity in the midst of diversity.”

During this period Maulana Azad deeply appreciated Mr. C.R. Das's breadth of vision, dauntless pursuit of objectives and freedom from all communal considerations. “The way he solved,” he remarks, “the communal problem of Bengal is memorable and should serve as an example even today.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Refused Passport**

In 1924 Maulana Azad wanted to go to England and France for medical treatment. He was refused Passport. An official note (secret) thus spells out charges against him:

1. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 22.
2. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 23.



“With regard to the activity of Abul Kalam Azad, the secret information in our possession shows that in the latter part of 1922 he was deeply concerned in the organization of a secret society obviously in furtherance of Pan-Islamism, and was in touch with the nationalists in Angora through their agents in Afghanistan. He was at this time reported to have been working in conjunction with Dr. Kitchlew. He was also known at the time to have got into secret touch with Purna Das and other Hindu revolutionary leaders in Bengal. The arrest of Abul Kalam Azad and others including his satellites as a result of volunteering activity early in 1922, however, checked the growth of secret society for the time being, and no further information with regard to Azad’s activity in this connection was received until very lately when it has come to light through a very reliable source that Azad has cast his lot with the Swarajists and been exhorted by the inner circle of the said organization to bring up the Mahommedan secret societies to the standard of the Hindu revolutionists. With regard to his motive in going out of India, Azad, in the letter (intercepted),<sup>1</sup> wrote to one of his friends from Bombay on the 3rd June 1924 stated that he stood in need of pecuniary assistance for an Islamic and national service of great importance but which he was unable to disclose in the letter.”<sup>2</sup>

### Violation of Salt Laws

Under the guidance of Gandhiji, Maulana Azad participated in the Salt Satyagraha. The Government declared the Congress an unlawful organization and arrested its President. Each President, when arrested, nominated his successor. Maulana Azad was elected one of the Presidents of the Congress and nominated Dr. Ansari as his successor before his arrest.

1. The letter may be seen in Home Department Pol. 1924, F. No. 10/XXI. It said: “I stand in need of pecuniary assistance for such an Islamic and national service which is the most important and essential in the present times”.
2. Home Department Political, 1924, F. No. 10/XXI. *Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, Vol. 7, p. 261.



Maulana infused great vigour in the movement and arranged mass meetings in different parts of the country. A secret report of the Government says:

“Because the campaign launched by Maulana Azad has created a grave situation, we have reached the conclusion that if we do not accept the challenge and try, in every possible way to establish peace in the country *it will become impossible for us to work in this country.*”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Government of India Act of 1935 and the role of Maulana in the formation of ministries**

Maulana Azad played a very important role when the Government of India Act 1935 was promulgated. The Congress Working Committee was opposed to the acceptance of provincial autonomy and did not want to participate in the elections. “If the Congress did so,” argued Maulana, “less desirable elements would capture the Central and Provincial Legislatures and speak in the name of the Indian people.”<sup>2</sup> Maulana’s point of view was accepted and the Congress participated in the election. Later there was opposition to the assumption of office by the Congress nominees. Ultimately it was decided to accept office. When the Congress ministries were in office there were allegations of unfair treatment of minorities. “I can speak from personal knowledge,” observes the Maulana, “that these allegations were absolutely unfounded.” However in the case of Bihar and Bombay, Maulana Azad confessed, the choice of chief ministers was not justified and “the Congress did not live up to its professed ideals.”<sup>3</sup>

### **President of the Congress, a second time (1940-1946)**

Maulana Azad was elected President of the Indian National Congress a second time on March 17, 1940. He continued to hold that office till 7 July 1946, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Home Department, Political Branch 1930, F. No. D-4435.
2. *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 14-15.
3. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 18.



succeeded him. These six years of Maulana's office were characterized by hectic political developments. As Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

“Never before has India had to face more difficult problems, in the national and international field than today.”

The World War II had created enormous problems and needed careful and cautious planning of national policies. The Maulana guided the destiny of the Congress with great courage, adroitness and superb statesmanship. Under his stewardship were launched the individual ‘Satyagraha’ and the ‘Quit India’ movements. Paying tribute to his statesmanship and dedication, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel said in 1945:

“This is the first time in the history of the Congress that any one has held the reins of the office of Congress President continuously for six years. This honour goes to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. During these six years, whatever difficulties the Congress had to face and there were many difficulties in the way of the Congress, were faced under the able and inspiring leadership of Maulana Azad. After we passed the ‘Quit India’ Resolution in August 1942, we were together for three years in the Ahmad Nagar Fort... I have watched Maulana Azad during all this period work day and night. There has not been a single occasion in these six years of great stress and strain when Maulana Azad failed to maintain the dignity and honour of the high office he held. He never allowed the honour of the Congress to be sullied. Anyone else in this position might not have been able to show the courage and determination with which he bore the responsibilities of this great office for six long years. *The credit for bringing us to the present position in our struggle for independence goes entirely to Maulana Azad.*”

Maulana Azad's Presidential Address at Ramgarh—translated into excellent English by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru—breathes a spirit of indomitable faith in India as a nation. He



emphatically declared that eleven hundred years of common history had produced a common culture and therefore:

“...we do not want to leave it and go back to the times when this joint life had not begun. If there are any Hindus amongst us who desire to bring back the Hindu life of a thousand years and more, they dream, and such dreams are vain fantasies. So also if there are any Muslims who wish to revive their past civilization and culture which they brought a thousand years ago from Iran and Central Asia, they dream also and the sooner they wake up the better. These are unnatural fancies which cannot take root in the soil of reality. I am one of those who believe that revival may be a necessity in a religion but in social matters it is a denial of progress.”

### Towards Freedom

Maulana Azad has himself narrated the political developments after 1935 in his *India Wins Freedom*. His own assessment and reaction to different situations that cropped up during this crucial period of political negotiations has been described by him with candour. It is needless to repeat all this here. There were occasions when his views were not accepted but his personality and his opinions continued to command respect, as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in 1942:

“He (Maulana Azad) has been a tower of strength to us and to the country and whether one agreed with him or not, we always knew that his opinion mattered and could never be lightly brushed aside. For behind that opinion lay a keen and well-trained mind, knowledge of the past and of the present, and ripe wisdom which is given to few.”

The background of his views as expressed in the thirty pages, lately brought to light, has been discussed by me in *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Thirty pages of his India Wins Freedom*.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli*, Delhi 1989.



To the last moment Maulana Azad was opposed to division of the country. The old veteran leader of the freedom struggle who had fought vehemently and consistently to preserve the unity and solidarity of India found himself isolated when freedom was in sight. When Free India was born, he was the only sad and forlorn figure in the jubilant gathering, as Mosley wrote:

“... and only the sad, sad face of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to whom this occasion was something of a tragedy, sticking out from the sea of happy faces, like a gaunt and ravaged rock.”<sup>1</sup>

His disillusionment with the Muslim Community found expression in his speech at the Delhi Jama' Masjid in October 1947, and his disappointment with his colleagues on this count is evident from *India Wins Freedom*. His heart seemed to bleed when in his mosque speech he said:

“To tell you the truth I am (now) a fossil or a far off cry. I have passed my days as an exile in my own homeland.”

There was agony, distress and disillusionment in these words. Future historian will have to analyse the sources of his pathos and anguish which lie behind these words.

1. *The Last Days of the British Raj*, p. 240.



## An Apostle of India's Unity

Paying his homage to the memory of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan wrote:

“National spirit was the driving force of his life. He was an apostle of national unity and communal harmony, the lessons which we have to remember even now, since there are forces which are still at work in this country to divide us from one another.”<sup>1</sup>

This assessment is based on a perceptive understanding of Maulana Azad's role in contemporary history. For more than half a century, Maulana Azad struggled with single-minded devotion and superb sincerity of purpose to promote national solidarity. He began his political career by opposing the partition of Bengal and ended it by opposing the Partition of India. He considered the Partition of Bengal a device of Lord Curzon “to create a permanent division between the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal.”<sup>2</sup> Expressing his distress at the Partition of the country he said:

“We must not however forget that *the nation is one and its cultural life is and will remain one*. Politically we had failed

1. Radhakrishnan: “The Search and the Attainment”, in *Azad: A Memorial Volume*, ed. by Humayun Kabir, pp. 5-6.
2. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 4.



and were therefore dividing the country. We should accept our defeat but *we should at the same time try to ensure that our culture was not divided.*"<sup>1</sup>

Between these two Partitions the life-story of Maulana Azad may be read as one ceaselessly struggling to maintain the Indianness of India and preserve its historic traditions of catholicity and co-existence. Early in his political career he told that he was not prepared to accept freedom at the cost of Hindu-Muslim Unity. Delay in the achievement of freedom, he said, would be a loss of India but loss of Hindu-Muslim Unity would be the loss of humanity. His deep humanism refused to accept this position. When negotiations with the British Cabinet Mission were in progress, he told his colleagues that delay in attainment of freedom by a couple of years was better than division of the country.

Maulana Azad's faith in the unity of the nation was not the result of any political expediency, it had its roots in his perception of Indian history and the ethos of the Indian nation. In his Convocation Address to the Patna University (21 December, 1947), he said:

"From the dawn of history Indian mind has been comprehensive and tolerant of every kind of thought... Its orbit of social life was not shut on any creed or religion. The highest school of Vedantism flourished side by side with agnosticism and atheism... There is no school of thought which is not found here. What we actually do not find is the clash of opinions or the breaking of heads merely because of the differences of opinion. This is the one grand feature of ancient Indian culture which has been recognized by a great many thinkers of the modern world."

He then quotes from Dr. Radhakrishnan that "from the beginning the Aryan religion was expansive, self-developing and tolerant. It went on accommodating itself to the new forces

1. *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 214-215.



it met with in its growth."<sup>1</sup> He saw the roots of India's national consciousness in the comprehensiveness and tolerance of the generations that had gone by.

United political struggle, consciousness of the ethos of Indian civilization, search for unity in diversity, deep humanism and bitter awareness of the colonial machinations to drive a wedge between the Indian communities deepened the sources of his national consciousness.

Sometimes national consciousness is confused with the narrow and exclusive approach of nationalism. National consciousness is basically a patriotic sentiment; nationalism is a political approach, bereft of higher moral values. Like Rabin-dranath Tagore, Azad was opposed to that exclusive spirit of nationalism which accentuated tensions amongst nations. He once said:

"... nationalism propagated in the nineteenth century Europe is all shattered and the world is sick of the bonds of narrow nationalism... We shall find a secure place in the comity of nations only if we are internationally minded and tolerant."<sup>2</sup>

### United Political Struggle

Identity of approach and ideals paves way for the development of national consciousness. From the very beginning of his political struggle Maulana Azad was anxious to explore avenues of cooperation and collaboration with all Indian communities. He began his career in the company of the revolutionaries of Bengal—Shyam Sunder Chakravarty and Arabindo Ghose and persuaded them to throw open their doors for the Muslims also. At that time the Muslims were generally not admitted to the fold of revolutionaries, out of suspicion and distrust. He advised his comrades "not to generalize from their experience of a few Muslim officers of Bengal" and said with confidence:

1. *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 119.

2. *Speeches*, p. 20.



“The Muslims of India would also join in the political struggle if we worked among them and tried to win them as our friends.”<sup>1</sup>

This was Maulana’s first effort to create a unity of purpose and ensure national solidarity. When he turned to journalism and brought out *al-Hilal* in 1912 and *al-Balagh* in 1915—two journals which constitute a land mark in India’s struggle for emancipation—he used the power of his pen to inculcate national consciousness and to promote national unity. In *Qaul-i Faisal* he says that it was through *al-Hilal* that he prepared the Muslims to join their Hindu, Sikh, Christian, and Parsee brothers and liberate the country.<sup>2</sup> He said in a statement before a Calcutta court:

“Muslims are convinced that if they want to attain their rights and seek justice, there is only one way to do so: it is to achieve freedom (*swaraj*), i.e. a national government for the Indians, of the Indians and by the Indians.”<sup>3</sup>

All through his life Maulana Azad stood by this ideal and worked for its realization.

### Unity of the Indian nation

Maulana Azad who believed in the basic unity of the Indian nation, quoted in this context, Sir Syed’s historic speech at Lahore. Addressing a Convocation at Aligarh Muslim University on 20 February 1949 he said:

“We can form some idea of Sir Syed’s outlook on Indian nationalism from the significance he gave to the term *Hindu*. In addressing an association of Hindus in Lahore, he said: ‘I am sorry that you have restricted in this manner the application of the term Hindu. You have applied it to a particular religious group. But to my mind this application

1. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 5.
2. *Qaul-i Faisal*, p. 64.
3. *Bayan*, p. 42.



is wrong. I count as Hindu all those who are the inhabitants of this country whatever be their religion or race. This is the reason why I take pride in the fact that I am a Hindu". *If the Hindus and Muslims of India had understood the spirit of this teaching and followed it, the whole course of recent events would have taken a different turn.*"<sup>1</sup>

If Maulana's writings and speeches are analysed as a whole, it would appear that he believed that national consciousness could be developed and strengthened by meticulous adherence to the following five principles:

- (1) Rising above all narrow and parochial loyalties and developing cosmopolitanism and tolerance.
- (2) Treating the Indian cultural heritage through the ages as basically one.
- (3) Rejecting completely linguistic chauvinism and giving equal treatment to all Indian languages.
- (4) Accepting co-existence of different religious traditions in India as the result of irrefutable historical process based on the comprehensiveness of Indian religious ethos.
- (5) Abjuring all concepts of majority and minority deliberately created and developed by the imperial power and treating Indian nation as one indivisible entity.

Never for a moment did Maulana Azad waver from these principles envisaged by him for national solidarity. No resistance, no criticism, no attempts to malign and misrepresent could dissuade him from pursuing this programme which was addressed to all segments of Indian population and both the Hindus and the Muslims were expected to work for it. Maulana Azad's speech at the Delhi Jama' Masjid in October 1947 and his speech in the Indian Parliament in reply to the criticism of his language policy, when read in the light of his *India Wins Freedom*, show that he acutely felt that his efforts had proved sisyphian and that he was defeated by the forces operating

1. *Convocation Address*, p. 4.



in a different direction. We are too close the developments which seared the soul of Maulana Azad. Perhaps future historian will be in a better position to analyse the sources of agony and frustration in him.

### Sense of belonging to the Indian Cultural tradition

Maulana Azad looked upon the Indian cultural heritage as a part and parcel of his own historical self. His references to India's history and culture fully bring out the depth and dimension of his views in this regard. "The essence of Indian civilization," he said in a speech on January 28, 1953, "and culture has always been a spirit of assimilation and synthesis."<sup>1</sup> On another occasion he said: "The acceptance of unity in diversity has been her (India's) motto throughout the ages."<sup>2</sup> Like Amir Khusrau who has looked upon Indian historical heritage of the pre-Muslim period as part of his own self,<sup>3</sup> Maulana Azad looked upon different cultural trends and traditions of India as a composite whole to which he also belonged. In his address to the Ramgarh Session of the Indian National Congress (March 1940) he said:

"I am proud of being an Indian. I am a part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. *I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim.*"

He referred to the mingling of the two cultural traditions in these words:

"Like the Ganga and Jamuna, they flowed for a while through separate courses, but nature's immutable law brought them together and joined them in a Sangam."

After the partition of the country, he earnestly wished the Hindus and Muslims to ensure that our composite culture was

1. *Speeches*, p. 227.

2. *Speeches*, p. 121.

3. See his *Nuh Sipihir*, Calcutta 1948.



not divided. But things took a different turn. Maulana had warned against the division of Indian cultural traditions; unfortunately the process has gone much beyond that and even the cultural traditions of Islam in the sub-continent are being divided. Referring to the works of Professor M. Mujeeb (India) and Dr. I.H. Qureshi (Pakistan) on the Indian Muslims<sup>1</sup> I said at a Seminar on the "Study of Religion in Indian Universities" in Bangalore (September 4, 1967):

"... Dr. Qureshi and Professor Mujeeb pursue their themes in opposite directions... Then follows the process of appropriation and rejection of the traditions of Muslim religious thought in India. Before one has finished these two works, he can feel the deft hand of the historian at work in partitioning the religious heritage of Indian Islam."<sup>2</sup>

Nothing would have distressed Maulana Azad more than this partitioning of the cultural traditions of Islam in India. But the process of partitioning, once it starts, has no limits to it.

### Global Perspective

An important aspect of Maulana Azad's thought was his global perspective. He disdained narrow nationalism as 'the greatest obstacle' in the development of universal outlook. He looked upon India's contributions in a global perspective and assessed India's impact on world-thought and culture. In his view the Upanishads contain the earliest exposition of pantheistic thought in world history.<sup>3</sup> He considered Indian contribution to music "greater than that of even Greece,"<sup>4</sup> and

1. I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent*. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*.
2. Nizami, *State and Culture in Medieval India*, p. 41.
3. Speech of Welcome at the Second Session of the *Indian Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO*, New Delhi, March 24, 1951, *Speeches*, p. 152, also p. 20.
4. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 121.



remarked: "The breadth and depth of Indian music is perhaps unrivalled as is its integration of vocal and instrumental music."

He considered India a focal point in the dissemination of literary and cultural traditions in the past.

"We must not forget that in the past, India was a centre where the currents of Asiatic thought met and from which flowed our streams which spread to the farthest corners of the Asiatic continent."<sup>1</sup>

He believed that the best periods of Indian history were those when India had contact with the outside world.<sup>2</sup> He believed that Indian contribution to world thought and culture can be appreciated only when a global perspective is developed. The civilization of Mohenjo-Daro should be studied with reference to recent excavations in Bahrein and Kuwait. He suggested study of different languages of Asia in order to trace Indian cultural relations and influences on different countries of Asia.

### **Role of History in the development of national consciousness**

Maulana Azad was of the view that the historical works produced during the colonial period had seriously damaged the development of national consciousness. He said:

"All histories used in our universities today reflect these defects. They suffer from both lacunae and distortions. Nothing is more important today than the reorientation of historical studies from the primary to the highest stages."<sup>3</sup>

1. *Convocation Address* at Patna University, December 21, 1947, *Speeches*, p. 20.
2. *Speeches*, p. 37.
3. Opening Address at the *All India Educational Conference*, New Delhi January 16, 1948—*Speeches*, p. 36.



The most devastating step to prevent promotion of national unity was taken by Sir Henry Elliot and Professor Dowson in their *History of India* published in 8 volumes soon after 1877. It was a history written with a purpose: to implement the formulae 'counterpoise of natives against natives' evolved by the British Army Commission. Elliot was confident that if "the tyranny and capriciousness of the despotic rulers" of medieval India was discussed in that way, it would make the Indians shudder at their past and hail the British regime as a blessing. He, therefore, blackened the Indian past to glorify the British present. He poisoned the springs of our national life in his anxiety to serve the imperialistic needs of the British Government and thwarted through distorted history the promotion of national consciousness. For generations Sir Henry Elliot's volumes continued to be the basis of all our history text books and the virus went on poisoning our national life. Maulana Azad felt that rectifying Elliot's approach was necessary for creating a sense of national unity and solidarity. When I published a Supplement to Elliot and Dowson's *History of India* rectifying the mistakes and drawing attention to a new perspective of national history, Maulana was immensely pleased. His Secretary, Shri Kripalani wrote to me: "Maulana Sahib is glad that you have done an excellent job."

Maulana Azad's historical approach was based on his conviction that the Indian nation is one and any attempt to disrupt it by taking recourse to distorted versions of history was vicious and perverted. He wanted history books to create a sense of unity and solidarity among the Indians.

### **Teaching of History and Geography**

Maulana Azad was of the opinion that the entire method of teaching history and geography was wrong and it was necessary to change it in the interest of international understanding. He told a UNESCO meeting on March 24, 1951 :

"Till this had been done, there can be no hope of achieving



a real unity of purpose among the peoples of the world and without such unity there can be no world citizenship.”<sup>1</sup>

Illustrating his point he said:

“In our current history books, we are told that men belong to different races and nations. The story of these nations emphasises their internecine conflicts so that the relation between men from different groups is represented as one of hatred and discord. It is inevitable that history so taught must lead to a constriction of the mind, a narrowing of the vision in which the child’s identity with his group depends upon its sharp demarcation from all other groups.”

He liked the Biblical concept of common parentage—the children of Adam and Eve—as of great value in developing humanistic feelings.

Similarly he criticised the method of teaching geography:

“When we teach a 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.”<sup>2</sup>

The result of this approach is that “the idea of his membership of the human species remains a mere abstraction.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Role of English education in national awakening**

Notwithstanding his criticism of the role of Sir Henry Elliot’s work and Macaulay’s chief aim of education and his basic conviction that

1. *Speeches*, p. 150.
2. *Speeches*, p. 151.
3. *Speeches*, p. 150.



“there can be no denying that the existing system of education was shaped by non-nationals in non-national interests.”<sup>1</sup>

Maulana was not oblivious of the impact of Western education on India. He said in a Press Conference on February 18, 1947:

“It opened to them (the Indian people) a new world of science and technology. It inculcated a progressive spirit and brought Indian educational standards in line with the standards obtaining elsewhere. *It has led to the re-awakening of the national spirit and a growth of modern and progressive outlook in all affairs of the world.*”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly he was appreciative of the role of the English language in our national life. He said in his Convocation Address at Patna (December 21, 1947):

“The greatest advantage that we gained from the adoption of English was that many of the obstacles were automatically removed from our newly born national life. It has led to the unification of the whole of the country.”<sup>3</sup>

This appreciation of the role of the English language did not make him oblivious of the wrong approach of the British in imparting education:

“Whatever they decided to teach us was right, but their method of imparting education was wrong.”<sup>4</sup>

Maulana Azad clearly warned against the dangers of becoming anti-everything that is English. He once observed:

1. *Speeches*, p. 1.
2. *Speeches*, p. 1.
3. *Speeches*, p. 15.
4. *Speeches*, p. 13.



“Man is always inclined to go to extremes in realms of thought and action. It is very seldom that he steers a middle course, and it is where he stumbles. He is like the watch of which the regulator has gone wrong... It is not many years when our educated young men had lost themselves in imitating the English, in their language, dress, manners etc.... now they want to jump over to the other extreme. By Indian-nationalism it is now meant that we should forget the English language and literature... from certain quarters I hear that in order to be true nationalists we should have no tinge of modern civilization in us... just as the previous position was wrong, this latter position will also be in the same category.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Dangerous impact of narrow mindedness on national life**

Maulana Azad was of the view that there is no other disease so dangerous for the healthy growth of national life than narrow-mindedness. “It makes its appearance in every field of thought and action”, remarks Maulana, “Like an actor it masquerades in disguise. In the domain of religion it appears in the form of blind faith and wants to deceive us in the name of orthodoxy. In politics it wants to overpower us in the guise of nationalism. In learning and culture it makes an appeal in the name of our nation and country.”<sup>2</sup> Maulana Azad warned people not to be taken in by these fictitious names and deceptive roles.

### **Social Education for national purposes**

Maulana Azad announced a scheme of social education as early as May 31, 1948. His definition of Social Education gives some idea of his objectives:

“Social education may therefore be defined as *a course of study towards the production of a consciousness of citizenship*

1. *Speeches*, p. 19.

2. *Speeches*, p. 20.



*among the people and the promotion of social solidarity among them.*"<sup>1</sup>

### **Hindu-Muslim Problem—a creation of foreign power**

Maulana Azad's faith in the unity of the Indian nation led him to declare:

"The Hindu-Muslim question is also a deceptive game. Unfortunately we are playing to the tune of the gambler."<sup>2</sup>

His approach was that the question of majority and minority was the creation of colonial power and the Muslims should give up all fear-complexes which are injected in their minds in a very subtle way.

The roots of this approach of Maulana Azad lay in his deep humanism and appreciation of the real spirit of religion. He believed that God's bounty did not discriminate between one individual and another and it was necessary for man to emulate Divine ways in establishing contact with human beings.<sup>3</sup> Whoever discriminated between His creatures adopted an attitude inconsistent with the Divine purpose of life. Secondly, he believed in the basic unity of the purpose of religion. For him Religious Truth was one which was vouchsafed to different religions. Maulana Shibli had criticised Dara Shukoh on the ground that he considered Upanishads containing the same religious teaching which the Quran contains. Maulana Azad made his comment on this remark and said that Dara was correct in finding an identity between the Quran and the Upanishads.<sup>4</sup> Another very significant aspect of the Maulana's thought was that he declared Hindus as resembling the *Ahl-i Kitab*,<sup>5</sup> and justified their entry into the mosques and on that basis laid the foundation of Indian unity and solidarity.

1. *Speeches*, p. 38.

2. *Tarikh-i Azadi*, (Collection of Azad's 8 writings), Kitab Khana, Delhi, p. 12.

3. See his *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol I, p. 37 et seq.

4. *Hawashi-i Abul Kalam Azad*, ed. by S. Masihul Hasan, p. 350.

5. *Jama' al-Shawahid fi Dakhul Ghair al-Muslim fi al-Masajid*, pp. 34-35. *Ahl-i Kitab* means people who have a Revealed Book. Islamic law treats them at a higher level than others.



Maulana Azad's anxiety all through his life was to create national consciousness and solidarity among the Indians. For this purpose he had recourse to basic ideas of religion, polity, humanism and history. He rejected outright the concepts of majority and minority. For him the Indian nation was one indivisible unity and national integration was not something to be imposed from outside but an attitude of mind and an emotional experience to be evolved from within. Universalism in knowledge, federalism in political system, secularism in political ideals, humanism in social relationship and *laissez faire* in religious life were the watchwords of Maulana Azad's life and through them he sought to strengthen the fabric of the Indian nation.



## A Religious Thinker

“A man’s religious faith,” remarks George Galloway, “is the revelation of his deepest thoughts on life and destiny.”<sup>1</sup> This is true of Maulana Azad also. His religious and philosophic thought centred round God, Man and Universe and his *weltanschauung* wove them into a unity. Addressing a Symposium on the Concept of Man, he said:

“God marks the highest limit of human thought. By identifying man with God, the Eastern concept of man elevates him to godhead. Man has therefore no other goal but to re-establish his identity with God. He thus becomes superior to the entire creation.”<sup>2</sup>

Here an attempt has been made at analysing the main categories of his religious thought with reference to God, Man and Universe and establish causal nexus between them.

### Modernity and Tradition

Explaining the basic principles underlying his religious approach, Maulana Azad remarks in *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*:

1. *The Principles of Religious Development*, p. XV.
2. Inaugural speech at the *Symposium on the Concept of Man and the Philosophy of Education in the East and the West*, New Delhi, December 13, 1951. *Speeches*, p. 183.



“Distinction is, no doubt, usually made between the old and the new learning. *But in my search for truth, this distinction has never counted with me.* The old I have received as my heritage and the new is as familiar to me as the old, as I have delved in both.”<sup>1</sup>

The conflict between modernity and tradition, if it ever took place in Maulana's mind, was in the very early years of his intellectual career but disappeared completely thereafter. He developed an integrated approach, based on a clear and dynamic appraisal of all trends of thought, past and present. For him human thought was a continuous process of response and reaction and could not be dichotomized into past and present, modernity or tradition. The philosophic basis of this approach has been explained by him with reference to some couplets of the famous Arab philosopher-poet Abul 'Ala Ma'ari.<sup>2</sup>

This integrated approach was responsible for the integrated personality of the Maulana. The concepts of Religion, Nation or Secularism never clashed in his person. In fact he wove them in an over-riding ideal of human welfare. His religious commitment influenced his political behaviour and his religious ethics and secular ideals marched hand in hand. He studied religion both as a 'personal morality' and as a 'social ideal,' and combined the two in a broader framework of human struggle for a better social order and presented rationally integrated solutions of problems. Like Toynbee he believed that the missions of the higher religions were complementary, not competitive.<sup>3</sup>

### Types of Religion

James Pratt, a well known author on religious psychology, has discussed four temperamental kinds of religion: traditional,

1. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 19, Eng. tr. I, p. xliii.
2. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, pp. 248-249.
3. *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 296.



rational, mystical and practical.<sup>1</sup> Maulana Azad had his own categorization. He says:

“One religion is *hereditary*, you believe in it because your forefathers had believed in it. Another (type of) religion is *geographical*, you believe in that because it is the path chosen by the people of a particular geographical area and you follow it as others of that area did. There is (yet another type of) religion which is (based) on *Census*. There is a column of religion in census-papers and you just get *Islam* entered in it. There is *customary* religion—a structure of customs and ceremonies which you should not disturb, but allow yourself to be moulded by it. But besides all these types, there is one other but *real* religion which is generally lost sight of (in assessment of religious attitudes).”<sup>2</sup>

This last type of religion, according to the Maulana, is the result of the inner quest of man to unlock the mysteries of nature and to understand God, Man and Universe through his own intellectual effort. In this venture one is encumbered neither by the approach of his forefathers, nor by the conventions of particular areas, nor by the census entries. He himself embarks upon the journey of religious experience and struggles to find out his way in a maze of diverse religious experiences. Maulana Azad’s own religion was of this last category and was the result of his personal adventure in the realm of thought and emotions.

### Intellectual Quest

Azad was drawn to a religion of personal enquiry and investigation by a number of factors of his personal life. (1) His father was a firm believer in the Hanafite school of law and was an Ash‘arite in his religious approach. He did not like any deviation from the inherited path.<sup>3</sup> Inevitably a reaction

1. *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 14.

2. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 40.

3. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 95.



developed in Azad against religious formalism and conservatism. (2) Azad was inquisitive by nature. Interest in philosophy at an early age<sup>1</sup> intensified this quest. (3) He had avidly read the works of Sir Syed<sup>2</sup> who was a rationalist in his approach and wanted to interpret religion in terms of the contemporary trends of thought. Sir Syed appeared in the history of Indian religious thought when conflict between religion and science was in full swing. He responded to the new situation by attempting a fresh interpretation of religion. This approach of Sir Syed fascinated Azad in the early stages of his intellectual journey. He learnt from him the concept of supremacy of reason in the interpretation of religion. (4) In Bengal religious movements aiming at humanistic and utilitarian interpretations of religion had started<sup>3</sup> and the Maulana could not ignore them. (5) Indian social scene represented a mosaic of religions and an inquisitive soul could not help entering deeper into the religious spirit by studying the ethos of religions, their *raison d'être* and their social role.

### Revolt against Traditionalism

Very early in his life Maulana Azad became sceptical about the role of tradition and heredity in one's faith.<sup>4</sup> Like Imam Ghazzali, who has described his adventures in the realm of thought in *al-Manqaz min al Dulal*, he passed through all stages of religious experience: scepticism, agnosticism, atheism etc. At no stage did he allow his mind to remain confined to that particular experience. He waded through all sorts of emotional experiences and intellectual crises without accepting any stage as final.

1. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 36.
2. See *Azad Ki Kahani*, edited by Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi. Maulana Azad has referred to Sir Syed's influence in the early stages of his life in his Convocation Address at the Aligarh Muslim University, 1949.
3. See *Reflections on the Bengal Renaissance*, edited by David Kopf and Safiuddin Joarder, Dacca, 1977.
4. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 101.



But eventually he came back to his original faith; it was the same faith which he had forsaken.<sup>1</sup> There was, however, a difference: it was not inherited; it was the result of his own intellectual peregrinations. He very candidly admits:

“What my family traditions, my education and my social environment had offered me in the making of my mind, I was from the very beginning of my life, reluctant to rest content with. The bonds of inherited dependence on the past could not hold me under... There is hardly a single conviction in me which has not faced the test of denial.”<sup>2</sup>

This is where the greatness of Maulana Azad as a religious thinker lies.

### New Approach to Religion

Maulana had returned to his faith in Islam but he had developed an independent attitude towards different religious approaches. His faith in mystic ways of life disappeared and he kept away from the mystic organization of his father, Maulana Khairuddin Khuyuri. He looked askance at the excessive respect shown to the spiritual mentor.<sup>3</sup> Further, he developed faith in *ijtihad* (fresh interpretation of religious law). He came to believe that the exclusiveness and rigidity of the four schools of Muslim law—the Hanafite, the Shafi'ite, the Hanbalite and the Malikite—was not conducive to the growth of independent religious thinking. When the great *alim* family of Alusis in Baghdad—who also believed in *ijtihad*—discovered that he had broken from his family tradition and adopted the path which his father had criticised, they were taken by surprise<sup>4</sup> and could not help admiring the courage of his convictions. “We inherited this approach from our ancestors and adopted it, you discovered this path yourself, after your own patient enquiry,”

1. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 39.

2. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 19. Eng. tr. p. xlii-xliii.

3. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 82.

4. *Karavan-i-Khayal*, p. 77.



they told him.<sup>1</sup> Shaikh Mahmud Alusi, a distinguished ancestor of the Alusi family, had written a commentary on the Qur'an entitled *Ruh ul-Ma'ani*. When it was shown to Maulana Azad's father, he criticised its approach and wrote a rejoinder. This rejoinder was shown to Maulana Azad when he visited Baghdad. His departure from his family tradition in religious matters was appreciated. This was the first time that Maulana Azad's approach to religion which was basically in conflict with his family tradition became known to the outside world, particularly the scholars of Baghdad. Professor Louis Massignon once told me that Maulana's very vehement exposition of his religious ideas combined with his extremely attractive features created a stir in the academic circles of Baghdad. Vast erudition, critical judgement and fearless exposition thus became the chief features of Maulana's religious thought from the very beginning.

#### Faith in God—a *sine qua non*

Maulana Azad considered faith in God a *sine qua non* for human existence. According to him it is only through this key that the riddle of human life can be solved. There is an inner urge in man to understand himself and the Universe around him. This is possible only through faith in God.<sup>2</sup> His ontological studies convinced him that man on this planet was never without a concept of Supreme Being,<sup>3</sup> and can never exist without it. He quotes German philosopher Riehl that without faith in something higher than him, man cannot possibly stand erect and raise his head.<sup>4</sup> "God is the goal towards which man must strive if he is to retain his present stature," he remarked at the Symposium on the Concept of Man.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Raison d'être* of Religion

After all his intellectual adventures Maulana Azad came to believe that religion had a positive role to play in building the

1. *Karavan-i-Khayal*, p. 78.

2. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 107.

3. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, I, p. 32 et seq; *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, pp. 117, 118.

4. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, I, p. 116; *Speeches*, p. 181.

5. Inaugural Speech on December 13, 1951, *Speeches*, p. 181.



character of man and inspiring him with higher values in life. Without religion human life was incomplete. Man needed emotional props at every stage and these were provided by religion alone. "It is against the wall of religion that one can rest and soothe his aching back."<sup>1</sup> It gave man real satisfaction and peace of mind.<sup>2</sup> He criticised the attitude of those religious men, philosophers and moralists who interpreted life in stoic, Peripatetic or Cynic terms.<sup>3</sup> Neither an ego-centric recluse, nor a self-effacing ascetic nor a cool calculating philosopher can understand the real spirit of the cosmos.<sup>4</sup> It is genuine religious spirit which can help man find his destiny in this Universe.

### Religion, Science and Philosophy

Maulana Azad had opened his eyes when Sir Syed was battling against the obscurantist forces in order to bring about a reconciliation between religion and science. Sir Syed tried to prove religious truths in the light of the contemporary theories of science. In the beginning of his intellectual adventures, Azad was deeply influenced by Sir Syed's approach, but as years rolled on, his religious attitude took a different turn. But it was in a way, a logical development of his earlier approach. He came to believe that the paths of religion and science were different and if one attempted to reconcile religious truths with scientific theories, he created utter confusion in religious thought. Religious verities will have to be distorted to meet

1. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 37.
2. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, pp. 36-38.
3. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, pp. 74-76.
4. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 76.

Late Dr. I.H. Douglas (author of *Maulana Azad—An Intellectual and Religious Biography*) had discussed with me at length the basic categories of Maulana's thought. It is regrettable that the editors have exceeded the established norms of editorial discretion. e.g. page 191 of the published work has: "... he (Azad) could never fulfil the role of *Imam* in the popular Muslim mind". Douglas (thesis p. 158) had written *mujaddid* which the editors substituted by *Imam*. Page 225 of the published work has: "and his *solitary* drinking". The original thesis has: "*rumoured* drinking". Such alterations which are not few alter the perspective of the author.



new theories of science every now and then. In his *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* he has adopted this approach and abstained from attempting any discussion of religious values in terms of the scientific theories of his day.

It was, however, Maulana's firm view that science did not meet the needs and requirements of the human soul. It created queries and questions in human mind but failed to resolve them. And life, the Maulana believed, cannot be lived without faith (*'aqida*) which alone can integrate human personality. In *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, he writes:

“Philosophy will open the door of doubt but would never be able to close it. Science will provide proof but will not be able to give *faith*. But religion gives us faith, though not the proof. Here to live in this world one does not need only proved or established realities but *faith* also. We cannot rely only on things which we can prove. There are things we cannot prove but have to believe in them.”<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Azad quoted Einstein's remark that the efforts of science to understand Reality resembled the efforts of Sherlock Holmes to probe and pry into secrets.<sup>2</sup> In support of his approach he quoted<sup>3</sup> the following lines from Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'—

*By faith, and faith alone, embrace  
Believing, where we cannot prove.*

In his *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, the Maulana has criticised the philosophic approach of Imam Fakhruddin Razi whose *Tafsir-i-Kabir* embodies the attempts of a philosophic mind to prove religious truth through ratiocination and philosophic disquisitions. “The Imam showed”, observes the Maulana “great promptness in opening the doors of doubt but could not close them with the same alertness.”<sup>4</sup>

1. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, pp. 37, 38.
2. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 110.
3. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 38.
4. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, I, p. 13.



Maulana Azad thought that science and philosophy could not provide the satisfaction for which human heart or soul yearned. Another very significant view of the Maulana was that Science is now coming back from its absolute reliance of the objective to its appreciation of the subjective as tools of investigation. Scientific researches about electrons have brought science back into the domain of philosophy, he said.<sup>1</sup>

He believed that unless morality and religion guide the efforts of man, science will play havoc with human society. Addressing a Seminar on the contribution of Gandhian outlook on January 5, 1953, he said:

“The tragedy of the situation, however, is that this increase of knowledge and mastery over nature is being used not so much for the constructive purposes of society as to enhance man’s power of destruction. The energy of the atom has been unlocked and this can bring within the reach of all comfort and plenty. We are, however, concentrating on the use of atomic energy mainly to create terrible engines of destruction.”<sup>2</sup>

Developing his argument further he refers to the spirit of generosity, forgiveness, and magnanimity shown by the Prophet to those citizens of Mecca who had helped every conceivable type of persecution on him and his comrades.<sup>3</sup> Obviously what he means to emphasize is that without the moral and ethical principles emanating from the true religious spirit, there can be no proper use of scientific achievement.

### Spiritual Evolution of Man

A concept which Maulana Azad has developed with remarkable alacrity of thought is that science has tried to trace the stages of the physical evolution of man, but has failed to point out what happened to him after having reached the present

1. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 129.
2. *Speeches*, p. 215.
3. *Speeches*, p. 222.



stage of physical development. "If man were merely", remarks Maulana "a developed animal, there would be a limit to his advancement. If however he shares in God's infinity, there can be no limit to the progress he can achieve. Science can then march from triumph to triumph and solve many of the riddles which trouble man even to this day."<sup>1</sup> According to the Maulana religion tells us that spiritual evolution begins after the stage of physical evolution has been reached. There is a creative principle involved in human struggle to achieve higher stages of spiritual development. Biological evolution now seeks expression of its creative principle in the domain of psychology.<sup>2</sup> He remarks:

"The West sought to apply the concepts and methods of science in all fields of human experience and treat man also as an object among other objects ... Darwin sought to establish that man is descended from animals while Marx argued that his mentality is largely the resultant of his material environment. Freud ... went a step further and taught that not only is man descended from animals, but his mentality retains even today traces of his animal origin."<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to this Western concept of man, the Maulana has highlighted the approach of Vedanta and Sufism. According to these Eastern concepts the real nature of man can be understood only if we conceive of him as an emanation of God.<sup>4</sup> He quotes an Arabic verse:

*Watahsab annaka jarmum saghir,  
Wa fika antavi alemun akbaru.*

(Thou thinkest that thou art a small body: thou knowest not that a universe greater than the physical world is contained in thee.)

1. *Speeches*, p. 185.

2. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, pp. 124-126.

3. Inaugural Speech at the Symposium on the *Concept of Man and the Philosophy of Education in the East and the West*, New Delhi, December 13, 1951. *Speeches*, p. 181.

4. *Ibid.*



And remarks that man has no other goal but to re-establish his identity with God. "He thus becomes superior to the entire creation." Man as a macrocosm and as a microcosm appears in his discussion about the spiritual evolution of man.

### Religion and Society

Maulana Azad believed that the role of religion in society should be to integrate rather than disintegrate and create chaos. He firmly believed that religion has a positive and constructive function to perform in society. Delivering his Presidential speech at the Fourteenth Session of the Central Advisory Board of Education on January 13, 1948,<sup>1</sup> he brought out some basic aspects of his approach to education and religion. He said:

"... the nineteenth century liberal point of view concerning the imparting of religious education has already lost weight. Even after the World War I a new approach had begun to assert itself and the intellectual revolution brought in the wake of the World War II has given it a decisive shape. At first it was considered that religions would stand in the way of the free intellectual development of a child but now it has been admitted that religious education cannot altogether be dispensed with. If national education was devoid of this element, there would be no appreciation of moral values or moulding of character on human lines."<sup>2</sup>

The fact that he referred to the two World Wars in this context shows that he had evaluated the dimensions of religious education in the light of historical developments.

Besides, the Maulana's insight into the Indian ethos had led him to think that

"In India, we cannot have an intellectual mould without religion."<sup>3</sup>

1. *Speeches*, pp. 23-27.
2. *Speeches*, p. 24.
3. *Speeches*, p. 26.



He was however conscious of the role of fanatics in society.

He said:

“Our present difficulties, unlike those of Europe, are not creations of materialistic zealots but of religious fanatics.”<sup>1</sup>

### Goal of World Religions

Maulana Azad believed in the essential *unity of purpose* of all religions—self-realization of man. He quoted both from Gita and Arab sources to substantiate his point of view. He quoted the Arabic saying:

*Man arafa nafsahu faqad arafa rabhahu*  
(He who knows himself knows God)

and Gita:

“Here today behold the whole universe, moving and unmoving and whatever else thou desirest to see, O Gudakesa (Arjuna), are all unified in My body.”<sup>2</sup>

All religions aimed at this but orthodoxy and fanaticism made them change their courses. In essence his approach towards religions was what Toynbee has put in the following words:

“All the living religions are going to be put to a searching practical test. ‘By their fruits ye shall know them’ (Math VII 20). The practical test of a religion, always and everywhere, is its success or failure in helping human souls to respond to the challenges of suffering and sin.”<sup>3</sup>

Maulana Azad interpreted religion as service of humanity. He refers in his *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* to a Tradition of the

1. *Speeches*, p. 25.
2. *Speeches*, p. 182.
3. *A Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 296.



Prophet which deserves to be quoted in full to bring home the essence of Maulana Azad's thought:

“On the day of judgement God will address a particular individual: “O son of Adam I was sick but you did not attend on me?” Bewildered, this individual will say: “How is that possible? You are after all the Supreme Lord of all the worlds (and cannot fall sick).” God will reply: “Do not you remember that so and so among my servants was ill and lying close to you, and you did not turn to him in sympathy. If you had but gone near him, you would have found Me by his side”. In like manner, God will address another individual: O son of Adam I had asked of you a piece of bread, but you would not give it to me”. The individual will explain: “How is that possible? Could God need bread”? And God will reply: “Do not you remember that so and so among my servants had in a moment of hunger asked of you bread, and did you not refuse to give it to him? If you had given him food, you would have found Me by his side”. Similarly, God will ask another individual: “O Son of Adam! I had asked of you a cup of water, but you did not give it to Me”. The individual will cry out: “How is that possible? How can God feel thirsty”? God will reply: “So and so of My servants who was thirsty, asked of you water, but you did not give it to him. If you had given it to him, you would surely have found Me by his side.”<sup>1</sup>

This approach had its basis in Maulana's concept of *Rububiyat*.

### Concept of Rububiyat

The corner stone of Maulana's religious ideology is the Quranic concept of *Rububiyat*. God's bounty as the nourisher of the world, is for all. He makes no discrimination whatsoever in His creatures. The sun rises and gives light and warmth to the rich and the poor, the pious and the erring alike. The

1. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, pp. 100-101, Eng. tr. I, p. 75.



clouds pour water on the palace and the cottage without any discrimination. The river keeps its bosom open to all. These are expressions of *rububiyat* and it is incumbent on man to emulate these in his dealings with other human beings. The systems of universal Providence should inspire man to adopt an attitude of benevolence towards all His creatures. He remarks:

“The fact is that the basis of worship according to the Quran rests on the idea that the aim of human life is to reflect in one’s own thought and activity the attributes of God.”<sup>1</sup>

### Approach to Exigesis

Maulana Azad’s exigetical studies, in his unfinished *tafsir*, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, and various articles in *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, may be considered a landmark in the history of Islamic exigetical literature. Among the *tafsirs* of the period were the works of Shaikh Mahmud Alusi, Sir Syed, Maulana Mahmud Hasan, Maulana Ashraf Ali of Thana Bhawan and others. Maulana Azad left an indelible stamp of his erudition and insight on the exigetical literature. Though he has criticised Sir Syed’s approach to *tafsir*, as an attempt to reconcile religious principles with scientific theories of the age, his own *tafsir* also represents an interpretation in terms of contemporary religious attitudes as reflected in the Unitarian, the Humanist and other similar movements. His discussion of miracles in *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* reminds one of J.T. Sunderland’s brochure on *Miracles and Modern Knowledge*.

If Sir Syed had to deal with the problems of conflict between religion and science, Maulana Azad had to deal with the religious attitudes of his day which believed in the humanitarian role of religion. The sociological interpretation of religion—as advocated by Durkheim and Max Weber, from 1890 upto 1920,—had now begun to loom large on the intellectual horizon. When the Maulana brought out the second edition of his *Tarjuman* in 1945 he added more and significant details about

1. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 100, Eng. tr. Vol. I, p. 75.



the 'Concept of God.' The shadows of new sociological dimension of the concept are clearly discernible in this additional material. He has confessed in his *Tarjuman*:

"In every age, the author of a work is normally the product of his intellectual environment."<sup>1</sup>

And the author of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* is no exception to this.

However, Maulana Azad had some very vital ideas about *tafsir*, and wanted to write a separate volume on the Principles of *Tafsir*,<sup>2</sup> but he could not undertake it. He has, however, given in a succinct manner the basic principles of his approach in this regard:

- (1) The Qur'an has a form of presentation which is characterized by naturalness and direct appeal to basic human instinct and intellect, uncorrupted by ratiocinative

tendencies. It is opposed to artificiality وضیعت

of every type and expects man to view things in their natural simplicity and purity.

- (2) The attitude of philosophic disquisitions and discussion is alien to the Quranic spirit. Scholars like Imam Fakhruddin Razi adopted philosophic arguments to support the Quranic ideas. The Imam "invested the Quranic word with an absolutely novel import,"<sup>3</sup> remarks the Maulana.
- (3) The Qur'an should be interpreted as the early generations of Islam understood it. Later generations were influenced by the Greek and Iranian traditions,<sup>4</sup> and sought to present the Qur'an in the terminology of the day. The subject of the Qur'an is not Greek philosophy and these Greek terms were unknown when the Qur'an was vouchsafed to mankind. The import of Greek

1. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 9, Eng. tr. I, p. XXXI.

2. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 9.

3. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 11, Eng. tr. I, p. XXXIII.

4. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 10.



terms in the Quranic exegetical literature obscured the real meanings of the Qur'an.<sup>1</sup> This approach was as wrong and harmful as the efforts of the present generation to interpret the Qur'an in terms of every new development in the Science of the cosmos.<sup>2</sup>

- (4) Traditionalism and adherence to conservative patterns which overtook Islamic learning after the fourth century A.H., killed the spirit of *ijtehad* and fresh interpretation.<sup>3</sup>
- (5) The Muslim schools of jurisprudence (*mazahib-i-faqiha*) and a group of Sufis attempted Quranic interpretation in support of their own view points.<sup>4</sup>
- (6) The Qur'an cannot be understood without an insight into Arabic lexicon and semantics.<sup>5</sup> In this emphasis Maulana Azad precedes the studies of Izutsu.
- (7) The Qur'an asks man to think and ponder, but does not permit Aristotelian method of assertion and refutation.<sup>6</sup>

It is round these seven basic principles that Maulana Azad has sought to interpret the Qur'an, going back to the spirit which had guided the earliest generations of Islam. He had, as he clearly states, read most of the exegetical literature produced by the generations that had gone by,<sup>7</sup> and pondered over the problems of Quranic exegesis for full 27 years. "Every chapter of the Qur'an," he writes, "every part of it, and indeed every verse and every word of it has obliged me to traverse innumerable valleys and to counter numerous obstacles. I may assert that.. there is not, I believe, any corner of the Quranic knowledge and of all that has been written so far on the problems which it raises, which I have left unsearched and unnoticed."<sup>8</sup>

1. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 13.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

8. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, Vol. I, p. 19, Eng. tr. I, p. xlii.



This was no tall claim because as one wades through the pages of *Tarjuman* its veracity is testified. There are no serrate references of the present day academic apparatus, but the discussions reveal thorough awareness of the exegetical problems posed or created by the earlier generations. The value of *Tarjuman* as an exposition of the true spirit of Islam is enhanced by two factors: first, the author's insight into exegetical literature, past and present; and secondly, his own awareness where the seeds of doubt and dissent grow and how these can be weeded out.

### Deep Faith in Prophet's Guidance

Maulana Azad had deep and abiding faith in the Prophet and considered him an ideal model in every walk of life. In fact when he gave up *taqlid*, he drew more and more to the *sunnah* of the Prophet and sought inspiration from him. He considered Qur'an to be an exposition of the life of the Prophet. The impression sought to be created otherwise is not only misleading but mischievous. His deep devotion to the Prophet is reflected in his writings which have been published by Maulana Ghulam Rasul Mehr under the rubric "*Rasul-i Rahmat*." In a speech in Delhi on January 5, 1953 he made eloquent references to the Prophet as an ideal of justice and forgiveness.<sup>1</sup>

### An Advocate of Imam Ibn Taimiya's Ideology

Maulana Azad was an ardent advocate of Imam Ibn Taimiya's ideology and, in fact, it was he who introduced the Muslims of India to the thought and activities of the great Imam. Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan of Bhopal had no doubt displayed keen interest in Ibn Taimiya's works and taken steps to publish and popularize them, but the circumstances of his life made him pass over an important aspect of his role — i.e. *jihad*, struggle against political domination. The great Imam stood for *jihad* in political and *ijtihad* in intellectual life.

1. *Speeches*, pp. 221-222.



Maulana Azad propagated both of them. He believed that without infusing a new spirit of *ijtihad* as propounded by the Imam, and giving up rigid adherence to schools of law, the Muslim social and intellectual life cannot be revitalized. Of course he did not go to the extent that *ahl-i-Hadith* or other groups went in their denunciation of *taqlid* of the schools of Islamic law, but he clearly and categorically emphasized recourse to the original sources of Muslim law—the Qur'an and the Sunnah. No human intelligence, he said referring to the juristic schools of law, could legislate for all time. No society can be fastened to a man-made system of law. It should go on changing and responding to new challenges of life. Islamic society declined when the door of *ijtihad* (fresh interpretation of law) was closed.

Ibn Taimiya's life was a long struggle against the Mongol domination of Muslim lands. Maulana Azad took inspiration from him in his struggle against the British domination of the country. The great Imam had advised Muslims of his day to organize their life round the authority of an *Imam*, who should lead them in their struggle for liberation. The *Darul Irshad*<sup>1</sup> and the *Hizb Ullah* were practical expressions of this spirit of *jihad* imbibed from Ibn Taimiya. That Indian 'ulama, with the solitary exception of Shaikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmud Hasan of Deobund did not favourably respond to it, made the Maulana search other sources of political awakening, but Ibn Taimiya always remained a source of inspiration for him.

### Insight in Islamic History and the role of Muslim sects and groups

Maulana Azad's insight in Islamic history and the role of sects and religious groups in the socio-political life of the Muslims was sharp and penetrating. He has brought out the results of internecine conflicts in Islam and the activities of religious groups with great insight. He has shown in his *Tarjuman* that the fall of Baghdad was due to Muslim dissensions and sectarian conflicts. Chingiz Khan had conquered the upper

1. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 35.



areas of Central Asia upto Khiva but was not able to move further due to the prestige enjoyed by Baghdad. But when Hulagu came to power, conflict between the Hanafis and the Shaf'is led to penetration of Mongol forces into Muslim lands. The Hanafis of Tus invited Hulagu goaded by their animosity of the Shaf'is. Once he had entered, he spared neither the Shaf'is nor the Hanafis. After Khurasan, Hulagu turned his attention to Baghdad where dissensions between the Shias and the Sunnis paved way for his invasion and consequent sack of Baghdad.<sup>1</sup>

These episodes of Islamic history had also influenced the Maulana's approach towards Muslim sects. In his exegetical studies of the Qur'an—both in *Tarjuman* and his journals *al-Hilal* and *al-Baligh*—he has tried to rise above all sectarian conflicts and tensions. His approach is broad, catholic and rejects outright all sectarian or parochial approaches as opposed to the real spirit of Islam. If ever he had to assess the role of any religious sect he was candid and forthright, and did not hesitate to express his opinion. His assessment of the Mahdawi movement is characterized by frank and fearless appreciation of a movement which had been criticized by eminent scholars like Maulana Tahir Pattani of Akbar's period and others.

### Pantheistic Approach

Though Maulana Azad was the first among modern Indian scholars to bring to focus the significance of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sani's role in the history of Islam in India,<sup>2</sup> he does not seem to have subscribed to his views regarding *wahdat-ul-wujud*. His approach was more akin to Shah Waliullah of Delhi who appreciated the pantheistic thought of Ibn Arabi without breaking from the school of Mujaddid-i Alf-i Sani. Maulana Azad's social ideals, his concept of *rububiyat*, and his cosmopolitan approach led him to believe in *wahdat-ul-wujud*. Imam-i Akbar Ibn Arabi was its ardent advocate and his two works—*Fusus al-Hikam* and

1. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* II, p. 493.

2. See *Tazkirah*.



*Futuhāt-i Makkiya*—are classics in mystic literature. He was vehemently criticised by Ibn Taimiya and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi for both of whom Maulana Azad had great admiration. He has not openly committed himself to *wahdat-ul-wujud* but his thought runs in the same direction. From his eloquent biographical sketch of Sarmad in 1910 to his Inaugural Speech at the Symposium on the Concept of Man in December 1951 he has consistently adopted that approach. He remarks in *Ghubar-i-Khatir* that the *Upanishads* contain the earliest exposition of pantheistic thought in world history.<sup>1</sup> The structure of Neo-Platonic thought was built on it. He remarks:

“There was in Eastern philosophy a strong pantheistic strain. In the different schools of Indian philosophy, all things are regarded as expressions of God’s being....”<sup>2</sup>

Confronted with the problem that it did not always sustain monotheistic ideals, he has quoted the following remarks of Dr. Radhakrishnan:

“The *Upanishads*, no doubt, shattered the authority of these gods in the world of thought, but did not disturb their sway in the world of practice.”<sup>3</sup>

### Religion and Politics

Maulana Azad believed that religions in India—particularly Islam and Hinduism—had played a very significant role in political awakening. In January 1922, he wrote:

“The spirit that Mahatma Gandhi is infusing today in the religious life of the Hindus, *al-Hilal* finished this job in 1914. This is a strange coincidence that new life and energy was generated in Muslims and Hindus when both of them turned

1. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 120.
2. Inaugural speech at the Symposium on the *Concept of Man and the Philosophy of Education in the East and the West*, 1951.
3. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 453.



to movements of religious education in place of western culture.”<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent developments in Indian politics were interpreted by the Maulana as abuse of religion. He never faced any conflict between his religious demands and national obligations. He had an integrated approach of religion and politics. He illustrated in his life that faith in religion and secularism in politics could go hand in hand and function without any tension or disharmony. In his Presidential Address at Ramgarh (March 1940) he said:

“I am a Musalman and am proud of that fact. Islam’s splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilization are my wealth. It is my duty to protect them.

As a Musalman I have a special interest in Islamic religion and culture and I cannot tolerate any interference with them. But in addition to these sentiments I have others also which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. *The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments*: it guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am a part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim.”

### Orientation of Muslim Religious Education and Institutions

Maulana Azad felt very acutely the need of reorientating the syllabus of Muslim religious institutions and giving a new forward pull to Muslim intellectual activity. His criticism against *Dars-i Nizami* was that it did not inculcate *mujtahidana basirat* (insight of intelligent re-interpretation).<sup>2</sup> In his address

1. *Qaul-i-Faisal*, Al-Balagh Press, Calcutta 1922, p. 68.
2. *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, p. 97.



(February 22, 1947) to Muslim scholars involved in instruction in religious sciences—including the Arabic and the Persian languages—Maulana advised total reorientation of the syllabi.<sup>1</sup> This he thought necessary in order to do away with the spirit of *taqlid* and initiate an era of original religious thinking in the Muslim religious classes in India. An important aspect of Maulana's thought to which reference may be made here is his independence of thought. He did not follow any Muslim thinker or reformer in entirety. His own independent thinking discouraged total identification with any individual. He admired qualities which appealed to him but never committed himself to any thinker or scholar. He had great admiration for Ibn Taimiya's spirit of *jihad* and *ijtihad*, and drew inspiration from him in his political struggle and fresh approach to Islamic law, but did not subscribe to his criticism of Ibn Arabi. He was the first in India to present Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujaddid-Alf-i Sani in a broad reformist perspective, but did adopt his criticism of *wahdat-ul-wujud*. All the elders of his family had deep respect for Shah Abdul Aziz at whose feet they all learnt religious sciences, but his respect for his erudition did not prevent him from criticising him on certain issues. He admired Maulana Jamaluddin Afghani's restless spirit of resistance to foreign domination, but pointed out in his Presidential Address to the Jamiat ul Ulama in November 1921 that his own path was distinct and different.<sup>2</sup> He admired Sir Syed's progressive movement and his contribution to Muslim education and social reform,<sup>3</sup> but firmly combated his approach to politics. He had profound respect for Maulana Shibli, but his notes on the margin of certain books show that he could disagree with his views also.<sup>4</sup> Speaking in Delhi in February 1948, he said:

“... there is a weakness and shortcoming in my temperament. Unless any quality of any person pervades my mind and controls my neck, it does not yield to anybody. The

1. *Khutbat*, pp. 301, 322.

2. *Khutba*, Meerut 1921, pp. 28-30.

3. See his *Convocation Address* at Aligarh, February 1949.

4. See Syed Masih ul Hasan, *Hawashi Abul Kalam Azad*, Delhi 1988.



veins of my neck are hard. When any mind comes before me, my mind is first of all inclined to reject him."<sup>1</sup>

Azad was keen to inculcate the same spirit of independent enquiry and assessment in the institutions of Muslim religious learning. Adopt the best, reject the redundant and the obsolete, was his motto.

### Resume

Maulana Azad's role as a religious thinker cannot be over-emphasized. He rejected obscurantism, fanaticism and blind adherence to tradition and stood for free and independent enquiry of religious verities and truths without any inhibitions. He looked upon religion both as a 'personal morality' and a 'social ideal'. For him religion was a force to integrate human society rather than to disintegrate it. It stood for service of humanity, not for creating tensions and divisions. He firmly believed that India cannot do without some sort of religious education because the mould of Indian mind is basically religious. He illustrated both in his thought and in his action, that the religious spirit was basically humanitarian, cosmopolitan and stood for welfare of all mankind. The following lines of Mathew Arnold epitomize his approach to other religions:

the unseen Power, whose eye  
For ever doth accompany mankind,  
Hath look'd on no religion scornfully.

1. *Khutbat-i-Azad*, pp. 348-349.



## A Connoisseur of Art

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a keen lover of beauty and a discerning connoisseur of art. Aesthetic perception and romantic sensibility were ingrained in his nature. He could see and admire beauty in every form and everywhere—in the phenomena of nature,<sup>1</sup> in the twitter of birds,<sup>2</sup> in the murmur of brooks,<sup>3</sup> in the gaiety of human form,<sup>4</sup> in the cadence of music,<sup>5</sup> in the melting glow of the twilight<sup>6</sup> and in the moving moon up the sky.<sup>7</sup> Like Keats he believed that ‘a thing of beauty is a joy for ever’, and like Wordsworth he was always anxious to communicate with every blade of grass and see in every flower an urge to fly.<sup>8</sup> In fact he was made of the stuff poets are made of. Appreciation of beauty was a cosmic emotion with him and he used to say that in matters of beauty and art no patriotic sentiment should stand.<sup>9</sup> His percipient soul cried out:

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 6, 12, 68, 69, 169, 197 etc.
2. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 203-206, 207.
3. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 173, 76.
4. *Karavan-i Khayal*, p. 73; *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 263.
5. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 205; *Karavan-i Khayal*, p. 88.
6. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 258-9.
7. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 258.
8. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 196-197.
9. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 161.



“Whether in voice or in face, whether in Taj Mahal or in Nishat Bagh, beauty is beauty and beauty has its own natural demand. To be pitied is the man who is deprived of its appreciation and whose insensitive heart has not learnt to respond to beauty.”<sup>1</sup>

He could say with Shakespeare:

*The man that has no music in himself  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, strategems and spoils.*

In fact he considered aesthetic sensitivity essential for the growth of human personality. At the opening of the Art Exhibition on November 6, 1948 he said:

“Education, whether at the secondary or at the University stage, cannot be regarded as complete if it does not train our faculties to the perception of beauty.”<sup>2</sup>

For this purpose he considered art education essential:

“no scheme of national education can claim to attain perfection unless art education finds a place in it.”<sup>3</sup>

Addressing the first meeting of the Lalit Kala Akademi in Delhi on 5 August 1954, he said:

“I have always been of the view that apart from the intrinsic value of art for its own sake, it is an essential element in education as it develops the feelings and aesthetic sensibilities of man.”

He was of the view that education of art “releases the creative instinct in the child and thus diverts his superfluous energy from merely destructive channels into those of social

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 257.

2. *Speeches*, p. 48.

3. *Speeches*, p. 49.



behaviour and decorum.”<sup>1</sup> He believed that perception of beauty and appreciation of art “quickened our sensibility so that we may bring more beauty and grace in the affairs of our daily life.”<sup>2</sup> Thus appreciation of beauty had a social value and a moral context in his mind. A nature trained in the perception of beauty, he thought, ensured a happy social order.

### Perception of Beauty

As was inevitable with a person sunk in aesthetic consciousness of Reality, Maulana Azad saw beauty reigning supreme in the Cosmos. “God is Himself Beauty and He Loves Beauty” was his faith. He writes in *Tarjuman ul-Quran*:

“The greatest blessing of nature is its beautiful aspect..... Take a comprehensive view of the entire universe or look at any part or corner of it. There is a veil of beauty spread over it, so much so, that the entire universe looks like an exhibition house of beauty working deliberately for proportion and balance in every particle of it and thereby releasing forces for an all-round bliss for everything. *In fact the very nature of the Universe is constituted of beauty.* Even as elements were created to give a form to the universe, even so was it invested with the qualities of colour, light and shade, of rhythm and melody in order to lend beauty to it.”<sup>3</sup>

This perception of beauty in the cosmos made Maulana Azad interpret religion in terms of harmony, love and sympathy. His approach may neatly be epitomized in Keats’ lines:

*Beauty is truth, truth beauty  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.*

Maulana Azad was not prepared to accept any ascetic or anchorite interpretation of religion which reduced it to dry formalism. He remarks:

1. *Speeches*, pp. 295-296.
2. *Speeches*, p. 48.
3. *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, I, pp. 70-71; Tr. I, p. 53.



“It is an irrefutable fact that we cannot adjust ourselves in this picture (of the Cosmos), which the palette of the Artist of the Universe has drawn, if we bear a dry face of a philosopher, a puritan or a recluse. In a picture which has the glowing forehead of the sun, the smiling face of the moon, the glitter of the stars, the dance of the trees, the songs of the birds, the music of the flowing streams, the colourful dallying of flowers—a morose heart and a dry face does not deserve a place. In this joyful assembly of nature that life alone can bedeck itself properly which has a burning heart in the bosom and a glowing forehead, and which can find for itself a place in the moonlight by purifying itself like the moon, by twinkling like stars in the night and by blooming like a flower in the company of flowers.”<sup>1</sup>

### Early Interest in Music

Very early in his life Maulana Azad got interested in music and this interest increased with years and continued all through his life. The circumstances in which his interest in music began were extraordinary. He used to visit the shop of a bookseller in Calcutta and glance through his collection of books in print and in manuscript. One day Sir Denison Ross, Principal of Calcutta Madrasah, happened to visit the shop. Finding a boy browsing over a book on music, he asked in Persian: “Who has written this book”? “Saif Khan has written this and it deals with music”, replied Azad in Persian. Ross then asked him if he understood it. “Whatever is written is written with a view that others are able to understand and follow it. I will also understand if I read it”, replied Azad. Sir Ross opened a page and asked him to explain the meaning. Azad could not explain; it was too technical. He made up his mind to learn music as an art. His father was a strict disciplinarian and hardly could any body think of indulging in the training of music. But his father had his *murids* drawn from every background. There was a musician, Masita Khan, among them and Azad started learning

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 76-77.



music from him at a confidant's house in the vicinity. In course of time he not only learnt the art of music, but developed keen interest in it. He started playing on the *sitar* and indulged in it so much that for long his finger had an impression pointing to his interest in *sitar*.<sup>1</sup>

It was during his early years that he visited the Taj at Agra. In moonlit nights he played on *sitar* on the roof of the Taj. How graphic is his description:

“It was the month of April; the nights were moonlit, but were slowly waning away. As the last part of the night approached, the moon suddenly began to peep through the veil of night. I had made special arrangements for carrying the *sitar* to the Taj at night. I sat on the roof facing the river Jamuna. As the moonlight began spreading, I started some melody on the *sitar* and was lost in it. What should I say and how should I narrate what spectacles of mental illusion my eyes then saw. Hush of the night; stars twinkling on the sky; slowly fading light of the moon, and humid nights of April—the minarets of the Taj surrounded me with their heads erect; the turrets stood spell-bound; in the centre, the dome washed by moonlight stood motionless on its pedestal; and down below the waves of Jamuna were rushing in curves and curls. Countless eyes of the stars above gazed in a state of bewilderment. In this mixed atmosphere of light and shade I would suddenly start playing on the *sitar* and its sonorous melodies would float unhampered in the atmosphere. The stars started dropping from the sky as songs dropped from my fingers... For a while the atmosphere would remain inhibited as if it was straining to listen. Then slowly every spectator would come into motion. The moon would increase in circumference, so much so that it would come over the head; the stars would begin to stare with their eyes wide open. The branches of trees danced in ecstasy. Many a time (I saw) turrets of the Taj come into motion. Whether you believe me or not, the fact is that in those moments of ecstasy and

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 252-257.



rapture I have often talked to the turrets and whenever I have looked at the dome of the Taj I have found its lips moving."<sup>1</sup>

Thus music entered his soul and touched the deepest chords of his being. Like his favourite poet Byron, he believed

*There's music in all things, if men had ears.*

He believed that there is a rhythm pervading the Cosmos. It is Nature's music: the end is divine harmony. In this illimitable symphony of cosmic life we should play our part not as a discord but as a harmony.

### **Develops interest in Music and receives further training at Lucknow**

Some time later young Azad happened to visit Lucknow and stayed there for some months. Here he came into contact with Mirza Muhammad Hadi, the well-known author of *Umrao Jan Ada*, who was keenly interested in music and knew the technicalities of the art. Maulana Azad received instruction from him. The Mirza was so well versed in this art that Raja Muhammad Ali Khan had sought his help in the compilation of his *Ma'arif-ul-Naghmat*.<sup>2</sup>

### **Interest in Arab music**

Maulana Azad's ears felt attracted towards Arab music in his childhood when his parents lived in Mecca and he heard in the morning the call for prayer in an extremely sonorous voice from Shaikh-ul-Mu'azzinin Shaikh Hasan. When he visited Iraq, Egypt and Syria, he enquired about modern Arab music. He listened to the music of Shaikh Ahmad Salama, Tahira and others. The Egyptian Tahira was a bewitching beauty with a voice which made one's heart beat faster. Maulana Azad

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 258-259.

2. 2 Vols. Mumtaz al-Mataba', Lucknow.



developed contact with her also.<sup>1</sup> Years later Umm-i Kulsum appeared on the scene of Arab music and took the Arab world by storm. Maulana heard innumerable recordings of her music.

He believed

“There is no doubt that one who has not heard the voice of Umm-i Kulsum cannot measure the fascination of modern Arab music.”<sup>2</sup>

### Music Parties on boat

Once a prominent citizen of Bu Shahr, Mirza Muhammad Kazim Rushti, organized a music party on a moonlit night in his boat on the Tigris. He invited Maulana Azad also. A musician, Mashadi by name, played on ‘ud. Maulana cherished even in his old age the memory of this party, which was a fascinating combination of light, sound and beauty.<sup>3</sup>

### Interest in Music in old age

Maulana Azad’s interest in music continued till the very end of his life and he regularly tuned his radio to Persian and Arab music. He believed in keeping the heart warm through interest in music and response to the beauties of nature. “I may tell you,” he wrote to Nawab Habib-ur Rahman Khan Sherwani, “What is the secret of my success in this path. I never allow my heart to die. Whatever be the condition, whatever be the place, its (pleasant) agony would not diminish.”<sup>4</sup> Interest in music was one of the ways to keep his emotions lively and vibrant. “I can live without every thing that I need in life,” he wrote in 1947, “but not without music. Melodious voice is the prop of my life, palliative of my mental anguish, and the cure of all ills of my body and heart.”<sup>5</sup>

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 263.
2. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 263.
3. *Karavan-i-Khayal*, p. 72.
4. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 70.
5. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 257.



### Value of Music

In the eyes of Maulana Azad music was an effort of the human soul at integration – integration of ideals and integration of emotions. Once he said:

“Harmony of spirit and precision of thought cannot be achieved without interest in poetry.”<sup>1</sup>

And for him music and poetry were two sides of the same reality.<sup>2</sup>

If poetry stirs the emotions by means of thought, music rouses thought by means of the emotions. Music sways and is swayed by the feelings.

“If the tunes of music,” he used to say, “assume the form of verse, they would appear as songs of Hafiz, the chorus of Khayyam, the elegies of Shelley and the truthful lyrics of Wordsworth.”<sup>3</sup> His desire to see in human relationship the harmony of a perfect orchestra was in fact a projection of his interest in music. His soul longed for harmony, love and amity.

### Indian Music

Maulana Azad had great admiration for Indian music. He considered it superior to Greek and Arab contributions in the field. “It is my conviction,” he said while inaugurating the Indian Academy of Dance, Drama and Music in New Delhi on January 28, 1953, “that in the field of music, the achievement of India is greater than that of even Greece. The breadth and depth of Indian music is perhaps unrivalled as is its integration of vocal and instrumental music.”<sup>4</sup>

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 257.
2. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 264.
3. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 264-265.
4. *Speeches*, p. 227.



He has expressed his surprise at the indifference of Arabs to Indian music. He was disillusioned when he did not find any reference to Indian music in the works of Albiruni.<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Azad admired the achievements of Amir Khusrau in the sphere of music and paid generous tribute to his originality and contribution. *Saz gari*, *Aiman* and *Khayal* are, according to him, his immortal contributions to Indian musical tones and "cannot be forgotten so long as there is sweetness in Indian voice and sonorous are the tones of *tar*."<sup>2</sup>

On another occasion he said:

"In music, he (Khusrau) has created new forms through the combination of Indian and Persian melodies. *Aiman*, *Tarana*, *Qol*, *Sazgri*, and *Suhla* and other tunes, which are sung to this day by millions of Indians are a living testimony to his genius and his power of synthesis. In the field of instrumental music it was he who invented the *Sitar*. He found the *Veena* too elaborate and complicated an instrument and simplified it by reducing the number of strings to only three. The name *Sitar*, which in Persian means three strings, still bears testimony to this fact."<sup>3</sup>

Referring to the synthesis of Iranian and Indian traditions of music he once observed:

"When the Muslims came to India, Persian music was already a fully developed system but it did not take Muslims long to discover the special merits of Indian music. They not only adopted it as their own but added to it richly by adapting elements from the Persian tradition. Since then there has been no separate development of the two systems, but within India a combined stream has grown which, in richness and splendour, surpasses both the original streams."<sup>4</sup>

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 267.
2. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 258.
3. *Speeches*, p. 228.
4. *Speeches*, p. 228.



Maulana Azad was fully aware of the contributions made to Indian music by the Sufis and the Muslim kings. He had carefully assessed the role of the Mughal Emperors and the provincial rulers of Malwa, Bengal and Gujarat in the development of Indian music. He lauded Sultan Husain Sharqi's interest in music. "It was he," remarks the Maulana, "who introduced the *khayal* style in Indian music... In *khayal*, he perfected a style which has the dignity of the *Dhrupad* without its rigidity and has become one of the most cherished forms of Indian music."<sup>1</sup> He admired Akbar's patronage of music but seemed inclined to give Jahangir a higher place because of his beauty-loving nature. He was fond of poetry, painting and music—the three finest expressions of the human mind. "The musicians, painters and poets who gathered in Jahangir's court," he remarks, "never again came together in Indian history."<sup>2</sup>

Maulana Azad has also brought to light the interest of some religious people in music. Mulla Mubarak was such an expert in music that when Akbar invited him to a musical performance of Tan Sen, he simply remarked: "Yes! he *can* sing."<sup>3</sup> Mulla Abdul Qadir Badaoni, despite all his orthodoxy, was an expert in playing on the flute (*bin*).<sup>4</sup> The names of Shaikh Abdul Wahid Bilgrami, Mulla Abdus Salam Lahori, Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan, Khwaja Mir Dard have been particularly mentioned by Maulana Azad in this connection.<sup>5</sup> The 'ulama of Farangi Mahal were also experts in music.<sup>6</sup> Aurangzeb had, in his early years, fallen in love with a musician girl, Zainabadi, a servant of his aunt.

### Music and animals

Maulana Azad has referred to the hypnotic effect of music on animals. He quotes from Anand Ram Mukhlis's *Mir'at ul-*

1. *Speeches*, p. 228.
2. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 269.
3. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 271.
4. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 271.
5. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, pp. 271-272.
6. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 282.



*Mustalahat* details of *qamargha* hunts in which musical tones brought out deers and antelopes from their hideouts.<sup>1</sup> The Maulana refers to the impact of sonorous voice on snakes,<sup>2</sup> horses and elephants. The Arab practice of chanting verses by the drivers of camels was significant. Albiruni has referred in his *Kitab al-Hind* to the practice of catching antelopes through recitation of verses. In Sarandip, monkeys could be tamed by recitation of verses in praise of Hanuman contained in the Ramayana.

### Islam and Fine Arts

The Maulana did not subscribe to the view that Islam is opposed to fine arts. He remarks:

“This thing has somehow got currency that the religious ethos of Islam is opposed to Fine Arts, and music is forbidden by *shari‘at*. The reality is nothing more than this that the jurists showed strictness in this matter in order to check lewdness. This strictness was from *qaza* (the executive authority) and not from the legal side (*bab-i tashri‘*). The field of executive orders is very wide and anything which might cause any corruption in the long run could be stopped by it. But this does not alter the basic position of *shari‘at* and the Quranic injunction:

“Say: Who hath forbidden  
The beautiful (gifts) of God  
Which He hath produced  
For His servants  
And the things, clean and pure.”<sup>3</sup>  
(S. VII: 32).

This was a very bold and epoch-making declaration which shows Maulana’s capacity to view things in their proper per-

1. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 280.
2. Maulana refers also to the recent scientific opinion that the snakes have no ears. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 281.
3. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 283.



spective without allowing his vision to be clouded by later juristic declarations.

### Views about other branches of fine arts

On November 6, 1948 Maulana Azad opened an Art Exhibition in Delhi. On this occasion he expressed his opinion about some of the artefacts on display. This assessment brings to light his artistic tastes and aesthetic perception. He referred to the Bull Capital of the 3rd Century B.C., beautiful female figures from Mathura in red sand stone; world famous figure of the 12th century Nataraja or Siva in the cosmic dance; and Indian bronzes from the well-known bronze dancing girl of Mohenjo-daro to figures from Taxila, Bengal, Western India and Madras. He drew attention to specimens of the paintings of Pala, Gujarat, Rajasthani, Pahari, Deccani and the Mughal Schools. He referred to a painting of *Hamza Namah* on the cloth and illustrated manuscripts of *Tarikh-i Alfi*, *Razm Namah*, *Iyar-i-danish* etc.<sup>1</sup> When he referred to these artefacts his mind surveyed Indian achievements spread over centuries.

### Integration of Arts in Education

Maulana Azad looked upon art as an education of the emotions.<sup>2</sup> He therefore held the view that without education in Fine Arts, there can be no balanced growth of personality. Anxious to implement his ideas in this regard he once remarked about his proposals which

“will lead to the enrichment of our life through the integration of art in education, both secondary and university.”<sup>3</sup>

He advised those involved in the organization of museums “to keep constantly in view the need of linking up our art heritage with the spread of education.”<sup>4</sup>

1. *Speeches*, pp. 46-47.

2. *Speeches*, p. 48.

3. *Speeches*, p. 48.

4. *Speeches*, p. 50.



### Collection of Indian art objects

Maulana Azad believed that a nation's art is a visible representation of its history.<sup>1</sup> He had keen interest in Indian Art treasures and as he himself says:

“One of the first measures of legislation I initiated was therefore an enactment to prohibit the indiscriminate export of art treasures to foreign countries.”<sup>2</sup>

He initiated programmes for the collection of art objects in the country to develop the Museums. He noted with distress that during the past two hundred years Indian art objects had found their way to foreign countries. He thought of appointing Commissions to visit foreign countries and catalogue our national treasures there.<sup>3</sup> He wanted to depute students to foreign museums in order to attain the modern standard in museum management.<sup>4</sup> His primary aim in establishing Academies was to develop interest in art. In his inaugural speech at the All India Conference on Arts on August 29, 1949, he said:

“There should for the purpose be three Academies—namely an Academy of Letters to deal with Indian languages, literature, philosophy and history, an Academy of Arts (including graphic, plastic and applied art) and Architecture, and an Academy of Dance, Drama and Music. The object of these Academies would be to develop, promote and foster studies in the subjects with which they deal, with a view to maintaining the highest possible standards of achievement.”<sup>5</sup>

Maulana felt that the impact of Industrial Revolution on arts was not good. He once remarked:

1. *Speeches*, p. 47.
2. *Speeches* p. 194.
3. *Speeches*, p. 50.
4. *Speeches*, p. 51.
5. *Speeches*, pp. 107-108.



“One of the unfortunate results of the Industrial Revolution and the development of the capitalist system of production has been the divorce between art and craft. The result is that the artists tend to look down upon the craftsmen as mere artisans.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Integrating Influence of Arts**

Maulana Azad felt that art is an integrating force in society. He believed that there is no better example of the composite culture of India than in the field of music. “The cooperation of Hindus and Muslims for almost a thousand years has here brought a consummation that has perhaps no equal in the world.”<sup>2</sup> “While science has failed”, he once remarked, “to find a way of uniting human hearts, we recall with pleasure that life in its own course has done so for centuries.”<sup>3</sup> He then referred to cultural contacts and said “art is one of the greatest messengers of peace and goodwill among nations.”<sup>4</sup> Once he quoted Lenin’s classical utterances in this context:

“Art belongs to the people. It must be lodged with its deepest roots in the very thick of the broad masses of the working people. It must be understandable to these masses and loved by them. It must unite the feelings, thoughts and will of these masses and elevate them. It must awaken and develop the artist in them.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Reconciles rival claims of Art for Art’s sake and Art for the People**

Maulana thought that the conflict between these concepts was more apparent than real. He said:

1. *Speeches*, p. 112.
2. *Speeches*, p. 228.
3. *Speeches*, p. 197.
4. *Speeches*, p. 198.
5. Speech at the Soviet Fine Arts Exhibition on March 2, 1952. *Speeches*, p. 198.



“When an artist believes in Art for Art’s sake, what he really intends to proclaim is the value of Art as a manifestation of the human spirit. It emphasizes the fact that individual likes and dislikes must be subordinated to the claims of quality and excellence which are universal. The principle degenerates into a false dogma only when it is interpreted to mean that the artist pay no attention to the claims of society and fellowmen. This is obviously an untenable position. However valuable may be the qualities which the artists possess, these qualities are largely the result of a social milieu and can be sustained only by society.”<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Azad’s aesthetic perception, in fact, provided hue and colour to his resplendent personality and determined his attitude towards Man and Universe.

1. *Speeches*, pp. 198-199. ➤



## The First Education Minister of Independent India

“How fortunate is the country and the government,” wrote Saeed Naficy, an eminent Persian scholar, in his diary after meeting the Maulana, “that has such a wise and able Minister of Education.”<sup>1</sup> His impression was, no doubt, correct. To Maulana Azad belongs the credit of building the educational structure of independent India—a task which by no means was an easy one. An erudite scholar who was well-versed in both Oriental and Western learning; a resplendent intellectual who reminded one of “the Encyclopaedists who preceded the French Revolution, men of intellect, men of action;”<sup>2</sup> a veteran leader of the freedom movement who strove hard all through his life to maintain the unity and solidarity of the country; a sagacious statesman who knew intimately the feelings and aspirations of the Indian people; a keen and sympathetic connoisseur of Indian art who was anxious to resuscitate its glorious traditions; a discerning philosopher who appreciated the ethos of Indian civilization better than many other; a genuine patriot who sincerely aspired to see India occupy a place of intellectual eminence in the comity of nations—Azad

1. *Azad—A Memorial Volume*, edited by Humayun Kabir, p. 66.
2. Pandit Nehru in the Parliament on 24 February, 1958.



was eminently suited to lead the country in the field of education, learning and culture. He was at the helm of affairs till he breathed his last on 22 February, 1958. Eleven years of his ceaseless struggle to reconstruct the educational edifice of free India, ensured a bright future for the youth of the nation and the generations that followed.

The corner-stone of Maulana Azad's educational policy was his conviction that democracy cannot function without eradication of illiteracy. This supplied the motive power to his efforts in the field of national education. He often approvingly quoted Disraeli who used to say that a democracy has no future unless it educates its masses.<sup>1</sup> Addressing the All India Educational Conference on January 16, 1948 he said:

“We must not, for a moment, forget that it is the birthright of every individual to receive at least the basic education without which he cannot fully discharge his duties as a citizen.”

With the dawn of freedom it was all the more necessary to impart social education to the people. Addressing a Press Conference on 31 May 1948, he said:

“With the introduction of adult franchise, it is imperative for every voter to know the meaning of the vote. He should be instructed that in parliamentary democracy, the government is responsible to him, and his vote therefore is not merely a valuable right but also a great obligation.”

Soon after assuming charge of the Minister of Education, he thus laid down a five-fold programme for the expansion of education in the country. His efforts for more than a decade were directed towards the realisation of these objectives:

- (1) Universal compulsory basic education for all children of school age,
- (2) social education for all adult illiterates,

1. Press Conference on February 18, 1947.



- (3) measures for improvement in the quality of and expansion of facilities for secondary and higher education,
- (4) technical and scientific education on a scale adequate to the nation's needs, and
- (5) measures for the enrichment of cultural life of the community by encouraging the arts and providing facilities for recreation and other amenities.<sup>1</sup>

Maulana's thought rotated within these five spheres while planning his educational policy. His basic approach to educational problems was however determined by certain social ideals and historical perceptions. He believed that:

- (1) "A truly liberal and humanitarian education may transform the outlook of the people and set it on the path of progress and prosperity, while an ill-conceived or unscientific system might destroy all hopes which have been cherished by generations of pioneers in the cause of national freedom."<sup>2</sup>
- (2) "There can be no advance in either industry or technology without fundamental research work."<sup>3</sup>
- (3) "If the Indian languages had been made the media of instruction a hundred and fifty years ago they would have come in line with the progressive languages of the world."<sup>4</sup>
- (4) "In the advancement of nations there is no greater hindrance than narrow-mindedness."<sup>5</sup>
- (5) "The nationalism propagated in the nineteenth [century Europe is all shattered and the world is sick of the bounds of narrow nationalism... Instead of small cooped up nationalities the world wants to build supernationalism."<sup>6</sup>

1. Speech before the Central Advisory Board of Education, March 15, 1952.
2. Press Conference on February 18, 1947.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Convocation Address at Patna University on December 21, 1947.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*



- (6) "Our present difficulties, unlike those of Europe, are not creations of materialistic zealots, but of religious fanatics."<sup>1</sup>
- (7) "In India, we cannot have an intellectual mould without religion."<sup>2</sup>
- (8) "Education, whether at the secondary or at the university stage, cannot be regarded as complete if it does not train our faculties to the perception of beauty."<sup>3</sup>
- (9) "No scheme of national education can claim to attain perfection unless art education finds a place in it."<sup>4</sup>
- (10) "India had been at her best when her doors were wide open to all who came from abroad. She freely partook of whatever lessons the world had to teach and equally freely gave the world her best. The acceptance of unity in diversity has been her motto throughout the ages. The essence of this principle is a large and wide-hearted toleration in which differences are recognized and given their due. The Indian genius has always recognized that truth has many facets, and hatred arises because people claim a monopoly of truth and virtue."<sup>5</sup>
- (11) "...literature and culture can flourish best in an atmosphere free from the restrictive influences of officialdom ..."<sup>6</sup>
- (12) "No Eastern concept of culture is complete unless it includes the values of the spirit."<sup>7</sup>

It is round these principles that Maulana Azad's thought developed and he planned educational reconstruction and

1. Presidential Address, Central Advisory Board of Education, January 13, 1948.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Speech at Art Exhibition, November 6, 1948.
4. Speech at Museum Association of India, December 27, 1948.
5. Address to UNESCO Seminar on Rural and Adult Education, November 2, 1949.
6. First All India Conference on Letters, March 15, 1951.
7. Presidential Address, Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, January 9, 1954.



development in free India. His keen and clear vision of the needs of the country combined with his global perspective of the march of mankind added depth and dimension to his activities. He never allowed his judgement to be clouded by momentary or tactical considerations. What he considered to be correct, he expressed without any hesitation, no matter what reactions it provoked. *The Mail* (Madras) had very rightly remarked about him: "He introduced into the parochial Indian scene the influence of a worldwide culture."

### **Assessment of British System of Education as inherited by India**

No broad-based or pragmatic approach to education was possible unless one could assess objectively and accurately the role of the educational system bequeathed by the British. It had its defects, it had its virtues. The Maulana strove hard to eradicate all those elements which the British had introduced in the Indian system of education in order to achieve their imperialistic designs and objectives, but he firmly opposed any haphazard scrapping of the whole system. He criticised the British intentions but never failed to appreciate the positive results of the British system of education. He criticised Macaulay who "was primarily responsible for our existing educational methods and ideals," but remarked:

"Nevertheless, the great services which the existing system of education has rendered to the Indian people need not be denied."

These services, as he assessed them, were the following:

- (a) It opened to the Indians a new world of science and technology.
- (b) It inculcated a progressive spirit and brought Indian educational standards in line with the standards obtaining elsewhere.
- (c) It led to a re-awakening of the national spirit.

He was not prepared to loose what had been thus achieved. However, he was not oblivious of the defects of this system of



education. "Whatever they (the British) decided to teach us," he once remarked, "was right, but their method of imparting it was wrong."<sup>1</sup> He was critical of their adoption of English as the medium of instruction, and observed:

"No Indian language but English which was foreign to us was made the medium of instruction. The result was that modern education in India began to be imparted in an un-Indian way."<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding this comment, Maulana Azad was fully cognizant of the role of English language in the unification of the whole country and in helping intellectual contacts with the outside world. He said:

"The English language has been responsible for creating a bond of mental fellowship among all educated Indians from Kashmir to Cape Camorin. It is a connecting link between all Provincial Governments. Through English India cultivated direct intellectual relationship with Europe and America. Her voice reached the outer world without any intermediary. I do not feel the slightest hesitation in saying that India's position and recognition in the international world are greatly due to our having recourse to the English language both written and spoken."<sup>3</sup>

The Maulana earnestly felt that India's international position and her international contacts were entirely due to the role of the English language which the British government decided to impose on the Indian system of education.

### Urgency of Social Education

In a democracy the need of social education can hardly be over-emphasized. Maulana Azad gave his attention to this

1. Convocation Address, Patna University, December 12, 1947.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*



matter soon after his assumption of office. He considered "producing an educated mind" essential for the success of democracy in India. He defined the aim of social education thus:

"...a course of study towards the production of a consciousness of citizenship among the people and the promotion of social solidarity among them."<sup>1</sup>

It was something more than adult education. It aimed at "the production of an educated mind in the masses in the absence of literary education" and "the inculcation of a lively sense of rights and duties of citizenship, both as individuals and as members of a mighty nation."<sup>2</sup> He emphasized, as a part of his programme of social education, proper training and refinement of the emotions and included art, literature, folk music, drama, dance, poetry and recreative activities in his scheme of social education. He was of the view that social education should also contain an element of instruction in a universal ethics, with special emphasis upon the necessity of toleration of one another's differences in a democracy. With these aims and ideals in view, he formulated the following 12-point programme of social and basic education with villages as the focal point where grass-root efforts had to be made:

- (1) The village school will be a centre of instruction, welfare work, sports and recreation for the entire village.
- (2) Separate times will be allotted to children, adolescents and grown-ups.
- (3) Certain days in the week will be reserved exclusively for girls and women.
- (4) A number of motor vans fitted with projectors and loud speakers are being secured to visit the village schools. Film and magic lantern shows will be given and recorded talks played. It is proposed to visit each school at least once a week.

1. Press Conference, May 31, 1948.

2. Press Conference, May 31, 1948.



- (5) Schools will be provided with radio sets and arrangements will be made for broadcasting special programmes for school children, adolescents and grown up people ...
- (6) Popular dramas will be organised in the schools...
- (7) There will be provision for teaching national and community songs.
- (8) Arrangements will be made for giving simple instruction in some craft or industry suited to the locality.
- (9) Lectures will be arranged in cooperation with the ministries of Health, Agriculture and Labour to instruct villagers in the simple laws of social hygiene, methods of agriculture, cottage industries and cooperative activities.
- (10) In cooperation with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting suitable films and slides will be shown... Arrangements will also be made for visits of public men to speak to the villagers on problems of national importance. The help and assistance of public bodies interested in constructive work will be invited to give effect to the programme of social education.
- (11) Arrangements will be made for organizing group games. Competitions will be held from time to time between different schools and villages.
- (12) Periodic exhibitions, fairs and excursions will be organized."<sup>1</sup>

One is anxious to bring about a social transformation in the country by lifting the vast mass of illiterate population into some sort of literacy and imbuing them with a feeling of national belonging could visualize such a programme. He urged upon "every educated man and woman to regard it as a sacred national service to come forward and serve as a teacher for at least two years."<sup>2</sup>

1. Speech before Central Advisory Board of Education, January 7, 1949.
2. Address, All India Educational Conference, January 16, 1948.



### Global Perspective of Knowledge

The Maulana had a global perspective of knowledge and believed that without transcending the barriers imposed by narrow nationalism, linguistic chauvinism, and religious fanaticism, it was not possible to achieve a position of honour and dignity in the comity of nations. He used to say that the golden periods of the history of India were those when the country had close and intimate contact with the outside world and was prepared to give and take from the currents of world thought.

He said:

“From the dawn of history Indian mind has been comprehensive and tolerant of every kind of thought. It admitted every kind of faith and accommodated all shades of opinion.”<sup>1</sup>

Maulana Azad believed that in olden days India was not only a fountain of learning but a meeting place of different literary and cultural trends and this position should be recaptured through effort and sincere application. He said:

“We must not forget that in the past, India was a centre where the currents of Asiatic thought met and from which flowed out streams which spread to the farthest corner of the Asiatic continent. To appreciate Ancient India truly it is therefore essential to have a knowledge and understanding of all Asiatic languages and cultures as well.”<sup>2</sup>

He was of the opinion that the services of Syriology and Egyptology have not been fully utilised in explaining our ancient past. He suggested that Mohenjo-Daro civilization can be studied more effectively with reference to recent excavations in Bahrein and Kuwait.<sup>3</sup>

1. Convocational Address, Patna University, December 2, 1947.
2. Address, All India Educational Conference, January 16, 1948.
3. Presidential Address at the Silver Jubilee Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission, December 28, 1948.



He considered cosmopolitan outlook and global perspective a *sine qua non* for intellectual development and disdained all those trends which attempted to confine human mind to narrow and parochial grooves. He therefore looked at problems from an international point of view and advocated brisk and intimate contact with the intellectual activity going on outside the Indian frontiers. He used to say:

“We shall find a secure place in the comity of nations only if we are international minded and tolerant.”<sup>1</sup>

He viewed Indian thought, life and culture in a broad international context and wanted Indian intellectuals to project this in their academic works. He was of the opinion that the earliest exposition of pantheistic thought is in the Upanishads. The world borrowed it from here.<sup>2</sup> He appreciated the contribution of Indian philosophers and sages to world philosophic thought and remarked about Indian philosophy:

“To day the world is wonder struck at the vast all-comprehensive nature of Indian philosophy. There is no school of philosophical thought which is not found here... This is the one grand feature of ancient Indian culture which has been recognized by a great many thinkers of the modern world. They candidly avow that this is the great message of ancient Indian civilization.”<sup>3</sup>

A scholar with vast and critical knowledge of philosophy could make this observation, based as it is on a comparative evaluation of Indian philosophic thought. He emphasized the need of preparing a new History of Philosophy “in which Indian Philosophy may find its rightful place.” He believed that the Indian mind advanced beyond the stage reached by Pythagoras; it was superior in every respect to the achievements of the Greeks except in Logic and Astronomy. He considered Aristotle’s Logic superior in structure and scope to Indian

1. Convocation Address, Patna University, December 21, 1947.
2. *Ghubar-i Khatir*, p. 120.
3. Convocation Address, Patna University, December 21, 1947.



Nyaya, while in astronomy Ptolemy's Majestic was superior to Brahma Gupta's Siddhanta and the work of Aryabhata. Maulana Azad's global perspective of knowledge was absolutely unique and augured well for the future of India. It gave self-confidence on one side and made the Indians conscious of their responsibility on the other. In planning India's educational policy Maulana Azad never lost sight of this fact.

### **Fundamental Research and Scientific Education**

Maulana Azad, who had a modern mind, fully realized the importance of Fundamental Research in the scientific and technological development of the country and took momentous measures which had far-reaching impact. However as a humanist he felt that humanities and social sciences should also be developed simultaneously so that our humanistic vision does not get blurred by excessive involvement in science. He remarked:

"...there can be no advance in either industry or 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 sciences, anthropology, etc."

Keeping in view the nature of scientific research and exactness of the connotation of terms, he advised retention of international scientific terminology and endorsed the recommendations of the Central Advisory Board. Emphasis on fundamental research deepened the base of Indian scientific activity. It was not long afterwards that India secured for her a respectable position in the world of science and technology.

### **Establishment of a chain of Scientific Laboratories and Institutes**

It was as the result of Maulana Azad's initiative and encouragement that a number of Institutes and Laboratories of Scientific Research were established in India. Dr. Rajendra Prasad wrote about him:



“The great impetus and encouragement he was able to give to the development of art, literature and cultural activities and scientific research are demonstrated by the establishment of various academies and research laboratories and institutes, and the commissions which were appointed from time to time to deal with educational problems.”

Maulana Azad always looked to the best Institutes of the world as model for his own plans. While opening the Indian Institute of Kharagpur, he said:

“The Government of India had already before them a scheme for the establishment of four institutions of the standard of Massachusetts Institute of Technology...I can clearly visualize the day when the great potentialities of this Institute will be fully realized.”

### **Expansion of Facilities for education in Science and Technology**

Maulana Azad realised the value of scientific and technological education in the advancement of the country and took necessary measures to provide facilities for education in these branches of knowledge. Addressing a meeting of the Central Advisory Board on November 9, 1953, he said:

“It appears to me that increasing emphasis will have to be placed on providing higher education in the field of agriculture, medicine, engineering, technology and science.”

He gave a new orientation to the All India Council of Technical Education. Reviewing the facilities provided, he said in a meeting of the Council on February 8, 1953:

“There has been a good deal of expansion of facilities in technical education during the last five years...the intake of engineering degree courses has increased from about 2,500 to over 3,700 in the last five years...”

He set up four regional committees in order to establish closer relations between industries and educational institutions



to their mutual advantage. He formulated schemes for an Administrative Staff College and a National Institute of Management in order to develop further technical education.

### Education Commissions

Anxious to reorganize and restructure the educational system of the country, Maulana Azad appointed the University Education Commission in 1948 and the Secondary Education Commission in 1952. These Commissions submitted their reports a year after their appointment and went into every aspect of education closely and carefully. The Maulana had great admiration for the scholarship and vision of Dr. Radhakrishnan who headed the University Education Commission and desired early implementation of his recommendations. The reports of these two Commissions are, in fact, landmarks in the history of Indian Education. They viewed the Indian educational scene from all possible angles and laid down the basic principles for its growth and development.

### Established Sahitya Akademi

Maulana Azad inaugurated the Sahitya Akademi on March 12, 1954 and said:

“I have, for sometime, been thinking how best to encourage the development of creative literature in the different Indian languages...I felt that it was necessary to take measures which would secure an all India recognition for writers in different languages.”

The Maulana further remarked that the Government's function in establishing the Academy “is that of a curtain-raiser only.” While offering Chairmanship of the Akademi to Pandit Nehru he said:

“He has been appointed not because he is the Prime Minister but because he has carved out for himself a distinctive place as a writer and author.”



Maulana Azad was anxious to see the Sahitya Akademi function on the lines of the French Academy and raise the standard of Indian scholarship.

### **Established the Sangeet Natak Kala Akademi**

In 1953 the Maulana set up the Sangeet Natak Kala Akademi in order to develop dance, drama and music. The Maulana was always of the view that a personality remained incomplete unless it developed interest in such arts.

### **The Lalit Kala Akademi Established**

Addressing the first meeting of the Lalit Kala Akademi on August 15, 1954 the Maulana remarked:

“The patronage to art which in former days was extended by kings and nobles will have to be given by the people and the State in contemporary India.”

Here again he had his eyes on the development of such Academies in the outside world and said:

“I am attracted by a system...in vogue in Sweden. Whenever a public library is constructed, a percentage of the estimated expenditure is earmarked for sculpture, painting and other decoration.”

### **Proposals for establishment of a National Cultural Trust**

Delivering his inaugural speech at the All India Conference on Arts on August 29, 1949 Maulana Azad referred to proposals put forward for the establishment of a National Cultural Trust. The Maulana visualized the following additional functions for the Trust in addition to those performed by the Academies:

- (i) to encourage cultural education and research with particular reference to India on such subjects as literature,



architecture, sculpture, painting, dancing, dramatic art and music;

- (ii) to acquire for the State sites, monuments, manuscripts etc.;
- (iii) to advise the Government on cultural matters;
- (iv) to cooperate with Universities in cultural matters;
- (v) to cooperate with learned societies of India in cultural matters;
- (vi) to publish literature on cultural matters;
- (vii) to hold periodical Conferences;
- (viii) to organize archaeological and cultural missions to foreign countries.

### **National Museum in Rashtrapati Bhavan**

Maulana Azad organized on November 6, 1948 an Exhibition in the Government House on Indian Art. It was the first of its kind in India. Maulana was of the view that a nation's art is a visible representation of its history and should be so effectively organized as to make the different stages of development clearly intelligible. Referring to this Exhibition he said:

“The most significant characteristic of this Exhibition is that it opens before us a vista of five thousand years of Indian history in all its continuity and wealth.”

Later, the Maulana established a Museum at the Rashtrapati Bhavan (August 1949).

### **National Gallery of Modern Art**

The Maulana was instrumental in creating a National Gallery of Modern Art in Jaipur House in March 1954.

### **First All India Conference on Letters**

Anxious to bring the Indian languages closer and encourage them to develop characteristics which could help them in



securing international recognition, Maulana Azad convened the First All India Conference on Letters on March 15, 1951 and said:

“I have already said that one of the first duties of an Academy of Letters would be to survey and investigate the literature which now exists in all the Indian languages.”

### Indian Council for Cultural Relations

Maulana Azad's global perspective of knowledge and his anxiety to keep abreast of all developments in the world beyond, led him to establish the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Inaugurating the Council on April 9, 1950 he drew attention to “the need of re-establishing our old cultural contact in the context of a free India”. His proposals in this respect were warmly welcomed by different foreign countries particularly Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Burma, Ceylon, Indonesia etc. This Council which was established to create better understanding among peoples of different countries was expected to encourage the study of Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Chinese and other oriental languages which have contributed to the development of human culture and civilization. It was at the instance of the Maulana that the Indian Council for Cultural Relations started publishing an Arabic Quarterly *Thaqafat al-Hind* which established India's intellectual contact with the Arab world.

Anxious to expand the Cultural activities of the Council, Maulana sent three Professors of Sanskrit and Indology to Iran, Turkey and Cambodia. His interest in exchange programmes of scholars, students and literary men with various foreign countries enhanced the cultural and intellectual status of India in the contemporary world.

### University Grants Commission

In 1953 the Maulana established the University Grants Commission. Addressing its first meeting he observed:



“I am sure you will all agree that this is a momentous decision and will have far-reaching influence on the development of university education in India.”

### Analysis of Linguistic Problems

Addressing the Provincial Education Minister's Conference on August 19, 1949 Maulana Azad the expressed his views on the language problem:

“India is a vast country with many languages. We must accept unreservedly that all these languages are Indian languages and deserve the same treatment. Where a province is linguistically homogeneous, there is no difficulty in acting on this principle, but even where the languages transcend provincial barriers, this should not affect our attitude to the problem. Since all the languages are Indian languages, what objection can there be if a minority in a particular province speaks or learns a language other than that of the majority? One thing is certain. Even if our aim is unity, it cannot be achieved by compulsion or imposition. *Experience has shown that the only way to achieve unity in cultural and linguistic matters is to accept the existing difference.* Any attempt to iron out the differences only leads to greater conflict and bitterness.”

There was deep understanding of the ethos of the Indian people, the consequences of linguistic differences and the need of the nation in what the Maulana said. He thus warned the Ministers:

“If we allow grievances to grow over basic things like the question of the mother tongue, I am afraid that the consequences will affect all aspects of our national life... I would only appeal to you that we should approach this question with large hearted generosity and try to meet the wishes of the minorities in a manner which will leave no ground for dissatisfaction or complaint.”

And the Maulana was not wrong.



### Facilities for Indians resident abroad

Addressing a meeting of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations on 14 February 1958, the Maulana referred to the facilities of teaching Hindi and Indian Culture provided to the children of Indians who have settled abroad. He said:

“Lectures have been arranged by eminent Indian and foreign scholars and large number of books on India and mostly by Indian authors have been presented to libraries, universities and other educational and cultural institutions in many countries of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

### Translation of Indian Classics into foreign languages

Maulana initiated a programme of translation of Indian classics into foreign languages. Expressing his satisfaction at the progress of the programme, he made special mention of the work of Vadil Bostani who has translated the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.<sup>2</sup>

### Youth Unrest

Maulana Azad was fully conscious of the problems of the youth. What disturbed him most was the growing unrest of the student community. Addressing a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education on February 7, 1954 he said:

“What worries me most is that the extent and magnitude of students’ unrest is very often without any relation whatever to its supposed cause.”

To check this growing indiscipline he warned that unless proper measures were taken to improve the situation, ... “it will threaten the foundation of our educational structure.” To involve the youth in purposeful recreational activities and constructive programmes he introduced Youth Festivals and

1. *Indo-Iranica*, Special Number March 1958, p. 56.

2. *Ibid.*



himself participated in Boys Programmes arranged by the All India Radio. His speech at Talkatora Gardens (October 1956) before the participants of the Youth Festival throws light on his aims and objects. He wanted the youth of the country to hitch its wagons to the stars and abstain from frittering away its energies in useless, unproductive and often harmful activities.

### **International Hostels**

Maulana Azad was the first to prepare a plan for setting up International Hostels in the large metropolitan cities of India.<sup>1</sup>

### **Problem of Juvenile Delinquents**

The Maulana was deeply concerned about the inadequacy of existing arrangements in India to deal with juvenile delinquents. He pointed out that in the west the trend is towards the reclamation of the future citizen rather the punishment of an offender. He told a Conference of Provincial Education Ministers on August 19, 1949:

“The juvenile offender must be regarded as a subject for education rather than punishment... the homes and schools for the juvenile delinquents must be directly administered by the Department of Education itself.”

### **Efforts to Raise the Status of Teachers**

Maulana Azad believed that efforts to improve the standard of education would not bear any result if the status of teachers was not raised. Addressing a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education on February 7, 1954 he said:

“You will agree that there can be no adequate improvement of university education till there are better qualified and satisfied professors. Until university teachers are recognized for their standard of scholarship and character, they cannot

1. Speech at ICCR meeting on 14 February, 1958.



offer to the students the leadership which we expect from them. No real improvement of university education is possible nor can the universities give what we expect from them till this condition is fulfilled.”

### **Suggests Changes in Syllabi and Method of Instruction**

Maulana Azad was fully cognizant of the problems of syllabi, courses and methods of instruction. He wanted a total change in the method of teaching history and geography. He was of the opinion that historical and geographical fragmentation of knowledge had exercised a baneful influence on the vision of students. He said at a UNESCO meeting:

“... the entire method of teaching history and geography in schools must be changed... The terrestrial globe which nature has created as one has been divided by us for our purposes into different compartments. When we teach a child geography, we do not start by saying that he is an inhabitant of the earth, but on the contrary we start by installing in his mind that he is from Delhi, Delhi is in India, and India is in Asia, and Asia is one of the Eastern Hemisphere... the idea of his membership of the human species remains a mere abstraction... we must teach the child that he is the denizen of the world first and foremost.”

Referring to the teaching of history he observed:

“... history mistaught has also become an instrument for the division of mankind. It is inevitable that history so taught must lead to a constriction of the mind, a narrowing of the vision in which the child's identity with his group depends upon its sharp demarcation from all other groups... Perhaps the greatest of these obstacles is the cult of narrow nationalism.”

The Maulana considered “a good school a national asset of the highest value at any place or at any time.” He firmly believed in education of the English language and literature



which has "cultivated direct intellectual relationship with Europe and America."

The Maulana was of the opinion that religious education in some form or the other was indispensable. He told the Central Advisory Board of Education on January 13, 1948:

"At first it was considered that religious education would stand in the way of the free intellectual development of a child but now it has been admitted that religious education cannot altogether be dispensed with."

But he advised against entrusting religious education to teachers who though "literate were not educated", because "to them religion means nothing but bigotry. He was firmly of the opinion that in India "we cannot have an intellectual mould without religion." He reiterated this view before a meeting of UNESCO on January 9, 1954:

"No eastern concept of culture is complete unless it includes the values of spirit."

Maulana Azad suggested constant review of curriculum. He was of the opinion that "any fixed curriculum has the tendency of imposing rigid uniformity."<sup>1</sup> For reviewing syllabi he made grants to educational experimental institutions.

### **Agricultural Education**

Maulana Azad's conspectus of education covered the villages also. He gave special attention to agricultural education in his programme for educational reconstruction of the country. Addressing the Vice-Chancellors of Indian Universities, he said on November 3, 1951:

"I referred earlier to countries where agriculture is more productive, for each unit of manpower gives far better results than in India. It is obvious that if we are to improve

1. *Speeches*, p. 7.



our agricultural production, we must profit by the experience of such countries... I would therefore appeal to all educationists to have this deficiency overcome by giving an agricultural bias to our school education and introducing agricultural education in the universities practical work in farms.”

Agricultural education had to be so arranged as to produce economic results and help development of the country by ensuring self-sufficiency in food.

### **Research in Education**

The Maulana believed in a continuous and regular process of research in education, keeping in view the requirement of the country and the educational developments and reforms in other countries. Delivering his welcome speech when the foundation stone of the Central Institute of Education was being laid by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on April 18, 1949 he said that the Central Institute would carry on research on the problems of basic and secondary education, train teachers, devise quickest methods of liquidating adult illiteracy, consider the problem of text books and review the system of education. “It is my hope,” he said, “that the Central Institute of Education will be our laboratory for examining all these important questions under controlled conditions and offering suggestions as to the best methods of their solution.”

### **Education of Women**

It was Maulana’s firm view that the success of all educational programmes ultimately depended upon the proper education of women. “Educated mothers,” he used to say, “will mean children who can be easily made literate.”<sup>1</sup> He was as concerned about the education of girls as of boys.

1. Press Conference, May 31, 1948.



### **Economic Dimensions of Education**

The Maulana was never oblivious of the economic dimensions of education. He discussed thoroughly the problem of education and employment at a meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (Nov. 9, 1953). Pointing out the gap between requirement and production he said:

“Today our universities are like factories which are turning out products that do not conform to the demands of the society in either number or quality. It is therefore necessary to carry out changes in higher education.”

Referring to the standard of education that was necessary for an individual citizen in a democratic society he said:

“To my mind, the requisite standard for such education is the secondary stage and I am convinced that regardless of the question of employment, the State must make available to all citizens the facilities of education upto the secondary stage.”

He further suggested delinking degrees from service requirements:

“One of the important measures for reform of university education is the need to dissociate the possession of a degree from the condition of service ... After considering all aspects, it is today my considered judgement that, except for professional services, the possession of a degree should not be a pre-requisite for appointment to government service.”

To make the university products easily absorbable in different fields he suggested emphasis on high education in the field of agriculture, medicine, engineering, technology and science. He discussed the relation between roads and prosperity in his Inaugural speech at the Central Road Research Institute on July 16, 1952. In a speech on the opening of the Central Building



Research Institute on April 12, 1953, he dealt with the problem of housing and national prosperity and said:

“Better houses in towns and the provision of cheap, durable and comfortable houses for villagers and industrial labourers is a prime need of the day... Without better living conditions in villages and towns the state of health of the people cannot be adequately improved.”

Education, for the Maulana, was not an intellectual recreation but an instrument of social reform, a method of economic development and a process of building individual character and personality.

Maulana Azad's educational conspectus covered all segments of Indian population and dealt alike with the villages and the towns. He gave his attention to every important problem whether it concerned medium of instruction, syllabi, future of graduates, linguistic tensions, adult illiteracy, sports, festivals, roads, houses. etc. The most important aspect of his endeavour in the field was to create an awareness of what India was in the past and how rich was its contribution to world thought. He emphasized again and again the need of developing an international perspective and rise above all petty considerations of language and creed. All through his tenure of Ministership he was guided by the supreme motive that:

“The essence of a secular and democratic State is freedom of opportunity for the individual without regard to race, religion, caste or community.”

Apart from providing motive power and direction to the educational programmes of free India, Maulana Azad established/strengthened/or reoriented a number of scientific, literary and cultural organizations. Particularly to be noted are the following:

1. Central Institute of Education.
2. Central Advisory Board of Education.
3. All India Educational Conference.



4. Museum Association of India.
5. Indian Historical Records Commission.
6. Central Advisory Board of Archaeology.
7. All India Conference on Arts.
8. Indian Council for Cultural Relations.
9. All India Conference on Letters.
10. Indian Institute of Technology.
11. National Art Treasures Fund.
12. Central Road Research Institute.
13. Indian Academy of Dance, Drama and Music.
14. National Library, Alipore.
15. All India Council for Technical Education.
16. Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee.
17. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research.
18. University Grants Commission.
19. Sahitya Akademi.
20. Lalit Kala Akademi.
21. University Education Commission.
22. Secondary Education Commission.
23. Kharagpur Institute of Higher Technology.
24. Indian Institute of Science.
25. Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.  
(Development of Aeronautical Engineering, Internal Combustion Engineering, Metallurgy and Chemical Engineering, establishment of the Departments of Higher Voltage Engineering, and Power Engineering).
26. Delhi Polytechnic.
27. Western Higher Technological Institute, Bombay.

The India of Maulana's dreams was a country proudly following its past traditions of scholarship and culture but keeping itself abreast of all intellectual and scientific developments in the world.



## Some Personal Reminiscences

I was hardly 7 or 8 years old when I heard Maulana Azad's name. The first volume of *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an* had just been published. My grandfather, Maulvi Farid Ahmad Sahib Nizami, who was a great admirer of Maulana Azad, had some delay in getting the book from the publisher. Impatient to read it, he got the book issued from a local library. His method was to underline important ideas of a book; but this being a library book he started noting down important ideas on sheets of paper. He was so enchanted by the Maulana's approach that before his own copy arrived, he had almost 'chewed and digested' the entire book. I remember that for months his favourite topic of conversation with his friends was Maulana Azad's approach to religion. My grandfather was a regular subscriber of the *Rationalist Review and Literary Guide* of London and was in close touch with the Utilitarian, Unitarian and other movements of the West which were trying to interpret religion in terms of humanism, charity and benevolence. Maulana's was the first approach in that direction. He appreciated it immensely and talked to us also about the significance of his contribution to Quranic learning.

We had in our home complete files of *al-Hilal* and *al-Balagh*. I started reading *al-Hilal* at a very early age. Its language was difficult but the style was so captivating that I committed to



memory large passages from it without understanding their meaning fully.

I had the first and distant view of Maulana in Meerut when he visited the place to attend some meeting.

On February 20, 1949 Maulana Azad visited the Aligarh Muslim University. His visit to various Faculties included the Department of History also. I presented to him some booklets dealing with the life and achievements of Shah Kalimullah, Shah Fakhruddin and a few others. He glanced at the titles and turning to his Private Secretary said: "Mas'ud! Keep these." He sat down in the Seminar Room of the Department and talked about Persian historians of medieval India. Regarding Ziya-u'd-din Barani and his treatment of history he remarked that it was one of *tatwil-i-bayan* (long digressions). He referred to *Tazkirat-u'l-Waqi'at* of Jauhar as an excellent specimen of the spoken Persian of those days.

The University conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*). He addressed the Convocation also. This was the first time that I saw him speak. He had profound respect for Sir Syed who had extricated the Muslim mind from medieval grooves and had developed a progressive outlook in Muslim intelligentsia. He himself was influenced by his writings in his early years. But he was a critic of Sir Syed's policy of aloofness from political struggle and had criticised the role of Aligarh during the Khilafat and the Civil Disobedience Movements. Some years back, some hooligans had misbehaved with him at the Railway Station. Rising above every feeling of bitterness, he spoke objectively and put the Aligarh movement in its proper historical perspective with all its light and shade. Every one present realized that the Maulana was great in every respect—gracious, forgiving, large-hearted and cool-headed. My admiration for him increased.

In 1950-51 when I published *Shah Waliullah Kay Siyasi Maktubat*, I sent a copy to him. It was immediately acknowledged and his Private Secretary, Mr. M.N. Masud, wrote to me on 25 January 1951:



“Maulana Saheb is glad to find that these letters have been published and that you are responsible for this. He sends his good wishes and blessings for you and it is his sincere prayer that God may grant you **توفیق** so that you may publish more works of this nature.”

This appreciation naturally thrilled me; it was the highest recognition that one could think of. Perhaps these blessings set the tone of my academic work in the years that followed.

In 1952 I published Elliot and Dowson's *History of India* (Vol. II) with a detailed supplement identifying works which should be consulted for a complete and comprehensive picture of medieval Indian polity and society. I pointed out also how Sir Henry Elliot had distorted medieval Indian History in order to create differences between the various Indian communities, as a part of the imperial programme. I sent a copy to Maulana Sahib. His Private Secretary Mr. K. Kripalani acknowledged it on 10 July 1952 and wrote:

“I am directed by Maulana Saheb to acknowledge your letter dated 7th July. He has received the book and is very glad that you have done an excellent job.”

Subsequently Mr. Ajmal Khan wrote to me on August 15, 1952:

ایلیٹ کا نیا ایڈیشن اُنہیں مل گیا ہے۔ اُسے دیکھ کر مولانا کو خوشی ہوئی کہ ایک ضروری کام انجام پا گیا۔

Sometime in Oct. 1953, I sent a copy of *Hayat-i-Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq Muhaddith Dihlavi* to the Maulana. Mr. Ajmal Khan wrote to me:

گرامی نامہ مورخہ ۱۹ اکتوبر اور کتاب بھی پہنچی جو حضرت مولانا کو پہنچ گئی۔ اس میں شک نہیں کہ آپ اہم علمی و تاریخی خدمت انجام دے رہے ہیں۔“



In January 1953 a Seminar was organized in Delhi on "Gandhian Outlook and Techniques." The famous French Orientalist Professor Louis Massignon was invited on this occasion. He had read about Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki in my writings and when in India he came to know about Gandhiji's efforts in restoring the Mausoleum to its former position after unfortunate communal happenings there. Massignon visited the tomb and told the Maulana that he had visited the shrine inspired by my account of the saint. He wrote to me thereafter on 29 March 1953:

"I was very sorry, in January, not to be able to come and visit...(Aligarh). I was obliged to return for an official duty to Paris 4 days after the beginning of the Gandhian Seminar.

I had contemplated, since months, to have a talk with you on the two offprints from the "Islamic Review" (Islamic Culture), you had sent me years ago, on Iltutmish specially.

I realized gradually in what a striking way Gandhi had died in trying to have justice made for Muslims, and when unexpectedly invited to the New Delhi Seminar, I made the pilgrimage of Mehrauli, knowing, owing to your beautiful lines, some knowledge of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar's *manaqib*... I told it to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad..."

Years later (on June 17, 1962), when I met Prof. Massignon in Paris, he told me that when Maulana Azad took him for a quiet lunch at his house, he spoke to him about the role of Indian Sufis in medieval history and then about my work. The Maulana "very generously appreciated it." Massignon referred to my articles in his "La Signification Spirituelle Du Dernier Pelerinage De Gandhi."

People generally thought, and not without reason, that Maulana was not easily accessible. This made me also hesitant, but one day when in Delhi I thought

کیا فرض ہے کہ سب کو ملے ایک سا جواب  
آؤ نہ ہم بھی سیر کریں کوہ طور کی



Within minutes I was in the presence of Maulana—a rare combination of grace, elegance, awe and erudition. I was not sure of being granted an interview and had not prepared my mind for it. I was a bit nervous. But the Maulana spoke with such affection that I regained my composure. He appreciated my work and advised me to continue it with single-minded devotion. I referred to my paper on Sir Syed and Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, which was published in Aligarh Magazine. He had read the article and had only one advice for me:

میرے بھائی، ابھی اس پر اور مطالعہ کریں

He spoke volumes in this one sentence.

I met Maulana two or three times more. One meeting lasted less than 10 minutes and the other continued for nearly 30 minutes. The Maulana always spoke with such warmth and affection that I could feel his deep interest in the studies I was engaged in. Once I referred to people who had doubted the authenticity of Shah Waliullah's letters published by me. He listened to me and then said:

”نہیں میرے بھائی! یہ خطوط تو خود بولتے ہیں کہ کس کی زبان ہیں“

Once Maulana referred in his conversation to the harm done by Sir Henry Elliot to the historical studies pertaining to medieval India. I submitted that by confining himself entirely to political chronicles he blurred our historical perspective. He ignored large segments of population which thought otherwise. I then referred to Iltutmish—historians concentrate on his military campaigns and find his real glory in them; Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya said that he got his salvation because he constructed the *Hauz-i Shamsi* which supplied water to Delhi. Maulana's face beamed as he smiled with approbation. He appreciated three things in particular which I had set right: (1) correction of Elliot's point of view, (2) emphasis on the need of utilizing all types of literature for a complete picture of medieval Indian culture and institutions, and (3) clear realization that history of medieval India should be studied in a broader perspective, not confined to ruling dynasties alone.



The Maulana was keenly interested in my edition of Elliot and Dowson's *History of India*. He spoke about my work to Qazi Abdul Ghaffar with approbation, which according to Qazi Sahib was very unusual for him. Qazi Abdul Ghaffar mentioned it to me and also to the publisher, Mr. Aziz Hasan (Proprietor Cosmopolitan Publishers), who was close to Qazi Sahib as he had printed books and journals for the Anjuman Taraqqi-i-Urdu, of which he was Secretary. Qazi Abdul Ghaffar told him to approach Maulana for some help in expeditious completion of the project. At Mr. Aziz Hasan's insistence I drafted on his behalf an application to Maulana Sahib. One of the sentences in the application was:

"Some 90 years back Sir Henry Elliot had approached his Home Government for help in publishing his history which, he said, would crush all patriotic sentiments of Indians clamouring for political privileges, now we solicit our National Government's help in removing the misunderstandings deliberately created by a foreign historian."

At a meeting of the Sahitya Academy held under his Chairmanship on 26 March 1957 Maulana Azad suggested that I should be asked to translate *Babur Namah* into Urdu. Sometime later he told me that he wanted it to be in an abridged form on the pattern of Caldecot's work. Unfortunately the assignment remained in my name for years and I could not complete it.

Sometime in 1955 Dr. Zakir Husain asked me to assist Shah Muinuddin Nadwi Sahib of Darul Musannifin Azamgarh in preparing a scheme of research in medieval Indian History. The scheme was to be submitted to the Government of India for financial assistance. I supplied necessary data to Shah Sahib and suggested the lines on which the scheme had to be drafted. (The scheme as briefly incorporated by Ajmal Khan in *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Kay Nam Adabi Khutut*, pp. 354-357, is based on my draft). Maulana Mas'ud Ali Nadwi showed it to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru:



محترم پنڈت جی سے میں نے مفصل گفتگو کر لی۔ موصوف نے  
پسند فرمایا۔ جیسا کہ اس سے قبل ارشاد فرما چکے تھے کہ یہ کام  
ضروری ہے۔“

(p. 354)

Shah Muinuddin Sahib wrote to me on Dec. 23, 1955.

”آپ کے مرسلہ معلومات سے بہت فائدہ پہنچا اور انشاء اللہ آئندہ  
اور زیادہ پہنچے گا۔ درخواست پندرہ سولہ دن ہوتے بھیج دی گئی ہے، اگر  
ضرورت ہوئی تو زبانی گفتگو کرنے کے لئے دہلی جانے کا بھی قصد ہے“

Perhaps Shah Sahib or Maulana Mas'ud Ali Sahib told Mr. Ajmal Khan that I had helped in the preparation of this scheme and that I would also be involved in its implementation. He mentioned it to Maulana when he was going through the scheme. Mr. Ajmal Khan told me later that the Maulana was pleased to know that I would also be collaborating with Dar-ul-Musannifin.

In 1957 I discovered Abdul Latif's *Diary*. I enquired from Maulana Sahib if there was any other manuscript of this work available anywhere. Mr. M. N. Masud, his Private Secretary, informed me on November 22, 1957:

“Maulana Sahib has no knowledge that there may be in existence some more manuscript copies of the *Diary* of Abdul Latif, nor has he any knowledge of Abdul Latif himself. However, as the *Diary* you have in your possession is of historical interest, Maulana Sahib is of the view that its publication will be worthwhile and should be published”.

This *Diary* was published in October 1958 as *1857 Ka Tarikhi Rochnamcha*, but the Maulana had already departed for the world beyond.

The 1959 when I edited *Khair-ul-Majalis*, and the Department of History published it, I dedicated it to the memory of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.



In 1969 when I brought out the second edition of *Shah Waliullah Kay Siyasi Maktubat*, I dedicated it to the memory of Maulana Azad with the words:

”حضرت مولانا ابوالکلام آزاد کے نام جنہوں نے ان مکتوبات کی دریافت پر  
گہری مسرت کا اظہار کیا تھا اور جو فکروالی اللہی کے آخری ماہر تھے،  
ع افسوس کز قبیلہ مجنوں کسے نامد“

Some time in 1952-53 I came into contact with Munshi Abdul Qayyum Khattat, a favourite *katib* of Maulana, who had scribed the revised edition of *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an*. He had calligraphed my book on Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq and when he found in me deep admiration for Maulana Azad, he presented to me a few autographed pages of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* and the letters he had received from him. He came to me to Aligarh, stayed with me for a couple of days and gave graphic description of Maulana Azad's life and routine. The letters and an autographed page of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* was published in *Urdu Adab* (Azad Number 1959) by the editor who borrowed this material from me.

In 1964 the International Congress of Orientalists was held in Delhi. Professor Humayun Kabir, then Minister, appointed me as Secretary of the Islamic Studies Section. When I called on him to thank for the honour done to me, he told me, to my great amazement, that Maulana Azad had twice spoken about my work with great approbation and it was on that account that he thought of entrusting this responsibility to me.

Maulana Azad has always remained a favourite study with me and I have collected most of his works.

I have given here a bare sketch of my contact with the Maulana but it is not possible to portray my feelings of respect and admiration for him, as Bedil has warned:

آئینہ نقش بند طلسم خیال نیست







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