

The Role of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in National Movement

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Abstract: Abul Kalam Muhiyuddin Ahmed Azad was an Indian scholar and a senior political leader of the Indian independence movement. Following India's independence, he became the first Minister of Education in the Indian government. In 1992 he was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna. He is commonly remembered as Maulana Azad; the word Maulana is an honorific meaning 'Our Master', and he had adopted Azad (Free) as his pen name. His contribution to establishing the education foundation in India is recognised by celebrating his birthday as "National Education Day" across India.

Keywords: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Indian independence movement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was born on November 11, 1888 in Mecca. He belonged to an orthodox Muslim scholar family. The original name of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was Abul Kalam Ghulam Muhiyuddin. His ancestors came to India from Afghanistan. His mother was an Arab and his father Maulana Khairuddin, was a Bengali Muslim of Afghan origin. Maulana Khairuddin shifted to Mecca in 1857. He returned to India in 1890 and started living in Calcutta. His mother died when he was only 11 years old. Initially Maulana Abul Kalam Azad received the traditional Islamic education at home. After that he was taught Arabic, Persian, philosophy, geometry, mathematics and algebra by some great teachers. He also acquired huge knowledge in English, history, politics and general science.

After completing education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad started writing new articles reinterpreting and analyzing the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the rules of Fiqh and Kalam. He rejected the orthodoxy of Taqlid and accepted the modern principles of Tajdid. At that time he was influenced by Pan-Islamic views of Jamaluddin Afghani and the Aligarh thought of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was also deeply inspired by modernism and Western philosophy. He visited Iraq and met the revolutionary nationalist who opposed the imperialism. He also went to Egypt and met Shaikh Muhammad Abduh, Saeed Pasha and other revolutionary leaders of the Arab world. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was moved by the idea of anti-imperialism. He came back to India and joined the Indian freedom movement. He protested against the racial discrimination of the British Government and opposed the views of Muslim politicians who were more interested in the communal issues

than national interest. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad also opposed the communal separatism of All India Muslim League. In 1905 he criticised the partition of Bengal. During that time Maulana Abul Kalam Azad met revolutionary leader Sri Aurobindo and Shyam Sundar Chakravarty and started working with them. He established many secret revolutionary centers all over north India and Bombay. He persuaded the Muslim leaders to join the revolutionary activities.

In 1912 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad started publishing a weekly journal in Urdu named Al Hilal to propagate revolutionary ideas amongst the Muslims. He also wrote many articles in this journal to promote communal harmony. In 1914 British Government banned Azad's Al-Hilal for spreading extremist views. After that he started a new journal, the Al-Balagh. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad again started propagating revolutionary ideas and nationalism through this paper. During that time he supported the Khilafat movement. In 1916 The government banned Al-Balagh under Defence of India Regulations Act. He was arrested and imprisoned in Ranchi. In 1920 he was released from the jail. After that he joined the National congress and played a crucial role in Non-Cooperation Movement. In 1923 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was nominated as the President of the special session of the Congress in Delhi. In 1930 participated in Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha. He was again arrested and sent to the Meerut jail. He was released after a year. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was selected as the president of Congress in Ramgarh session. In his presidential speech he clearly stated that ignoring the idea of religious separatism is very important. His speech thus still stands as the insignia of communal harmony. He held this post till the year 1946. He wanted unified nation and opposed the partition as well as Jinnah's Two-Nation Theory. After independence Maulana Abul Kalam Azad became Minister of Education in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet. He was the member of Constituent Assembly, which was responsible for drafting the constitution of India. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad wanted to spread education among the common people of the country. In 1956 he was selected as the President of the UNESCO General Conference in Delhi. In 1957 his famous book India Wins Freedom was published.

He left the mortal coil on February 22nd, 1958. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna in 1992.

The Indian independence movement encompassed activities and ideas aiming to end the East India Company rule (1757–1858) and the British Indian Empire (1858–1947) in the Indian subcontinent. The movement spanned a total of 190 years (1757-1947).

The very first organised militant movements were in Bengal, but they later took movement in the then newly formed Indian National Congress with prominent moderate leaders seeking only their basic right to appear for Indian Civil Service examinations, as well as more rights, economic in nature, for the people of the soil. The early part of the 20th century saw a more radical approach towards political self-rule proposed by leaders such as the Lal, Bal, Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai. The last stages of the self-rule struggle from the 1920s onwards saw Congress adopt Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's policy of nonviolence and civil resistance, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's constitutional struggle for the rights of minorities in India, and several other campaigns. Activists Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh and Vinayak Damodar Sawarkar preached armed revolution to achieve self-rule. Poets and writers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Subramaniya Bharathi, Allama Iqbal, Josh Malihabadi, Mohammad Ali Jouhar, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Kazi Nazrul Islam used literature, poetry and speech as a tool for political awareness. Feminists such as Sarojini Naidu and Begum Rokeya promoted the emancipation of Indian women and their participation in national politics. Babasaheb Ambedkar championed the cause of the disadvantaged sections of Indian society within the larger self-rule movement. The period of the Second World War saw the peak of the campaigns by the Quit India Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Army movement led by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

The Indian self-rule movement was a mass-based movement that encompassed various sections of society. It also underwent a process of constant ideological evolution. Although the basic ideology of the movement was anti-colonial, it was supported by a vision of independent capitalist economic development coupled with a secular, democratic, republican, and civil-libertarian political structure. After the 1930s, the movement took on a strong socialist orientation, due to the increasing influence of left-wing elements in the Congress as well as the rise and growth of the Communist Party of India. The All-India Muslim League was formed in 1906 as a separate Muslim party which later in 1940 called for separate state of Pakistan. The work of these various movements led ultimately to the Indian Independence Act 1947, which ended the suzerainty in India and the creation of Pakistan. India remained a Dominion of the Crown until 26 January 1950, when the Constitution of India came into force, establishing the Republic of India; Pakistan was a dominion until 1956, when it adopted its first republican constitution. In 1971, East Pakistan declared independence as the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Supporting the call for the British to "Quit India", Azad began exhorting thousands of people in rallies across the nation to prepare for a definitive, all-out struggle. As Congress president, Azad travelled across India and met with local and provincial Congress leaders and grass-roots activists, delivering speeches and planning the rebellion. Despite their previous differences, Azad worked closely with Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad to make the rebellion as effective as possible. On 7 August 1942 at the Gowalia Tank in Mumbai, Congress president Azad inaugurated the struggle with a vociferous speech exhorting Indians into action. Just two days later, the British arrested Azad and the entire Congress leadership. While Gandhi was incarcerated at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune, Azad and the Congress Working Committee were imprisoned at a fort in Ahmednagar, where they would remain under isolation and intense security for nearly four years. Outside news and communication had been largely prohibited and completely censored. Although frustrated at their incarceration and isolation, Azad and his companions attested to feeling a deep satisfaction at having done their duty to their country and people.

Azad occupied the time playing bridge and acting as the referee in tennis matches played by his colleagues. In the early mornings, Azad began working on his classic Urdu work, the *Ghubhar-i-Khatir*. Sharing daily chores, Azad also taught the Persian and Urdu languages, as well as Indian and world history to several of his companions. The leaders would generally avoid talking of politics, unwilling to cause any arguments that could exacerbate the pain of their imprisonment. However, each year on 26 January, which was then considered Poorna Swaraj (Complete Independence) Day, the leaders would gather to remember their cause and pray together. Azad, Nehru and Patel would briefly speak about the nation and the future. Azad and Nehru proposed an initiative to forge an agreement with the British in 1943. Arguing that the rebellion had been mistimed, Azad attempted to convince his colleagues that the Congress should agree to negotiate with the British and call for the suspension of disobedience if the British agreed to transfer power. Although his proposal was overwhelmingly rejected, Azad and a few others agreed that Gandhi and the Congress had not done enough. When they learnt of Gandhi holding talks with Jinnah in Mumbai in 1944, Azad criticised Gandhi's move as counter-productive and ill-advised.

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