

## NEP- 2020 and Educational ideals of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Place and Relevance

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### ABSTRACT

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*Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first education minister after independence, was a brilliant educationist, social reformer, and visionary figure who never stopped working for the welfare of the populace and the advancement of India. The famous intellectual and philosopher Azad believed that "education is the birthright of every citizen in the country" He believed that elementary and secondary education served as the cornerstone for the growth of every region of our nation and served as a bridge to higher education. As a result, he believed that every state in the country had a duty to ensure that everyone had access to education, at least up to these two important stages of education. The purpose of this study is to examine Maulana Azad's educational philosophy in light of educational goals, teaching strategies, curricula, and the teacher's role. An attempt has also been made to study the relevance of educational philosophy of Maulana Azad in the light of NEP-2020. Finally, the views of Maulana Azad in making the India a self-reliant nation has also been an epoch task of this paper.*

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**Keywords:** Maulana Azad, Philosophical Thought, NEP-2020,

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## Introduction

One of the unique tools for bringing about social change in the world is education. As a powerful force for systematized change, education genuinely converts people into human resources. It is an internal process of moral and intellectual growth for not only life preparation but also an analysis of finding the various successive ways of life. (*Vanaik & Bhargava, 2010*). These successive ways through which one becomes able to reach his/her desired goals of life are actually the noble ideas of the philosophers, social reformers and educationists of every country. India also gave birth to various noble philosophers of the world and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is one among them. He was a brilliant thinker, scholar, philosopher, and one of India's most well-known freedom fighters. He played a number of crucial roles in the Indian educational system. In the interim Cabinet, he was appointed the Minister of Education, a position he retained until his death in 1958. (*Farooqi, 2016; Meen, 2016*). He was eager to develop educational policies that would better support the nation's promising future. He was vehemently opposed to British control over India while also exhibiting a remarkable openness to contemporary western understanding. His translation and interpretation of the Quran had an enduring impact on Urdu prose literature. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had an octagonal diamond-shaped personality. His entire life seeks to be studied and researched.

## **Maulana Azad and his life history**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was born in Mecca in 1888, and two years after that, his family moved to Calcutta. He was a unique example of scholarly ability, statesmanship, elegance, and culture (*Farooqi, 2016*). He came from a family that had a wealth of religious and spiritual understanding, which had an impact on Maulana Azad's mentality. Abul Kalam's upbringing was focused on education. He studied history, philosophy, geometry, and a number of languages at home, including Persian, Urdu, and Arabic (*Hameed, 2010; Khan, 2018*). He displayed independence and a capacity for critical thinking from an early age (*Farooqi, 2016*). He is well-known for being a scholar, a Quranic commentator, a journalist, an orator, a leader, a thinker of international politics and culture, an ideologue, and a proponent of a hitherto unknown philosophy of life, notably among Muslims (*Nadvi, 2016*). An influential person among contemporary Indian philosophers as well as a well-known leader among freedom fighters was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Azad held a firm conviction that all religious groups should coexist. His travels to Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey had a significant impact on his perspective on the world and his method of approaching secular politics (*Khan, 2018*). He was one of the very few people who had thorough understanding of the major world faiths and was familiar with Indian ideas (*Qaiser, 2010*). In the words of Nehru:

*"Maulan Azad was great in many ways. He combined in himself the greatness of the past with the greatness of the present. He always reminded me of the great men of several*

*hundred years ago about whom I have read in history, the great men of the Renaissance or in a later period the encyclopedists who preceded the French Revolution, men of intellect and men of action. He remembered also of what might be called the great quality of olden days - the graciousness which we sadly seek in the world today. It was the strange and unique combination of the good qualities of the past, the graciousness, the deep learning and toleration and the urges of today which made Maulana Azad what he was" (Shahnawaz, 2016).*

Azad founded institutions of excellence and won numerous awards to advance education and culture in our nation (Meen, 2016). He was a remarkable leader because of his intellectual resourcefulness, depth of knowledge, and research (Farooqi, 2016). The politician-scholar died on February 22, 1958. In 1992, he received the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour in India, posthumously. (Shahnawaz, 2016; Khan, 2018).

### **Maulana Azad and his literary works**

Three parts can be used to analyze Maulana Azad's literary career. When he was twelve years old, he began writing essays, and he continued doing so until 1912, during the early portion of his life. At the age of twenty-four, he began publishing the "Al-Hilal" Urdu weekly from Calcutta. One of his close friends, Maulana Abdul Razzaq Malahabadi, wrote in his book "Azad ki Khani" of the power of the pen in the hands of Maulana Azad as:

*"In respect of Al-Hilal, all of a sudden, a strong earthquake gave a jolt to the deep slumber; we forgot to rub our eyes and stood up at once (Nadvi, 2016)."*

Maulana Azad was a strong lover of his nation who fought against the external forces with his pen and "Al-Hilal" was

one of the important weapons which he used to awaken his countrymen in order to save his people from exploitation of Britishers. Then follows the second phase of his literary career, during which he published some renowned works such as Tazkira Quran, Tarjuman-ul-Quran, and Wahdat-al-Wujud and founded renowned journals such as "Al-Balagh" and "Lissan-us-Sidq," and this phase of his life lasted until the year 1936 (*Wajihuddin, 2020*). During the third and final phase of his literary career, which spanned the years 1936 to 1945, he published the renowned novel "Ghubar-e-Khatir" (*Shahnawaz, 2016*). As a journalist, Maulana Azad continued to work with numerous reputable publications, including Muslim Gazette, Paisa Akhbar, Mashriq, Al-Hilal, Al-Balagh, Musalmaan, Al-Hakam, Al-Haque, Hamdard, Nairang-e-Aalam, Al-Misbah, and Comrade (*Mujtaba, 2021; Shahnawaz, 2016*). He forced many leaders to join the national mainstream and the freedom movement by his potent writings, which made Indians aware of their obligation to the motherland (*Farooqi, 2016*). Because he actively participated in the independence struggle, Maulana Azad was imprisoned multiple times (*Mujtaba, 2021*).

### **General ideas of Maulana Azad**

Maulana Azad had a unique personality and never wavered in his commitment to the nation of India's unity and its people's access to education. He had the opinion that a country's wealth is primarily found in its primary schools rather than its banks. He created the National System of Indian Education, which is still in use today in independent India (*Rizvi, 2018*). He thought that India as a country should strive for excellent educational standards and never

compromise on that front (*Khan, 2018*). For the sake of strengthening national unity, Azad stressed the significance of teaching information, particularly in the areas of history, geography, and civics (*Fatima, 2016*). In order to reiterate his position on national unity, he claimed that if an angel appeared from heaven and spoke from the top of the Qutb Minar, he would say that there were only two options available: either the country's freedom or unification between Hindus and Muslims. "I will choose the unity among the Hindus and the Muslims" (*Nadvi, 2016*). Azad was the foremost defender of peace between Muslims and Hindus (*Qaiser, 2010*). He came to see that India's Muslims needed to take part in the country's freedom fight. He firmly opposed the separatist political movement. As a Muslim nationalist, Azad has held a prominent place in the development of modern Indian political ideology. He was a powerful unifying force between Hindus and Muslims (*Farooqi, 2016*). His inspiration came from the Sufi understanding of God and his strong adherence to the Quran. Azad derived much of his belief in "the unity of existence," a Sufi concept, from this idea of the intrinsic unity of humanity and the oneness of all religions (wahdat-al-wujud). Azad believed that truth existed everywhere and was the same. The error was to mistakenly believe that certain types of Truth are the same as Truth (*Naqvi, 2016*). Maulana Azad envisioned that only inclusive, secular education and peaceful communities can lead to nation-building. Despite challenging circumstances and opposition from both inside and outside of India, he continued to support and defend the nation's secular character. Even now, his conception of a secular, liberal, contemporary, and

universal education is still relevant. His vision made it possible to provide education for all people. His belief that democracy cannot function without the eradication of illiteracy served as the keystone of his educational philosophy. He saw that a nationwide programme of mass education was necessary for the introduction of adult franchise (Rizvi, 2018). The unfortunate thing is that the world worships simple words rather than their true meaning, in Azad's own words. Therefore, "Despite the fact that everyone worships the same Truth, they will still disagree on terminology, leading to conflict. All conflicts in this world will end at once, and those who argue will realise that what they are all seeking is the same, if the veils of these externals and phrases can be lifted and Truth and Reality appear before all are revealed" (Naqvi, 2016).

### **Educational ideas of Maulana Azad**

One of the outstanding figures in India's freedom movement who made a significant contribution to education was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru chose Maulana Azad to be the country's first education minister after independence because of his intelligence and erudition (Meen, 2016). Speaking from a variety of forums after being appointed Education Minister, he expressed his philosophy on education. Maulana Azad said:

*"Every individual is having a right to an education that will enable him to develop his faculties and live a full human life. Such education is the birth right of every citizen. A state cannot claim to have discharged its duty till it has provided for every single individual means to*

*the acquisition of knowledge and self-betterment”*  
(Naqvi, 2016).

During his service as education minister, he prioritized elementary education in addition to higher education and technical training (Dutta, 2016). He established the framework for a system that has been beneficial to the country. All children of school age now have access to a national system of fundamental education thanks to Maulana Azad. Additionally, he offered resources for teaching technical skills. He had outlined a five-point plan to improve education in the nation, including social education for those who lacked a formal education and universal, obligatory basic education for all children of school age (Fatima, 2016). By founding numerous institutions in the areas of technology, liberal arts, culture, and literature, he brought his vision of education to life. One cannot discount Maulana Azad's contribution to developing a national education system based on the national spiritual character. When Maulana discussed education, he placed a strong emphasis on character development. He argued that education should assist a person in fulfilling their enormous potential. Character development should be a goal of the educational environment, the influence of family and religion, and the teacher's role. According to Maulana, the main goal of education is to pursue truth, but one should not use force or dogmatism to compel others to accept one's truth. It results from being open to many viewpoints. Education also aims to promote justice, which is related to respecting one's rights and carrying out one's obligations as a prerequisite for both individual discipline and a civil society. In order to



achieve true civilization and human equality, enlightened viewpoints must be spread through the appropriate kind of education. Chivalry and courtesies are ways of life that adorn and improve quality of life. The most prized quality in adolescents is their sense of adventure; society and schools should provide opportunities and support for these qualities to blossom. The attribute of humility, in Azad's opinion, chastens and upholds the spirit of man and striving of his mind. To put it briefly, Azad's educational perspective, while fundamentally Islamic in inspiration and framework, was distinguished by an open-ended attitude toward new advancements, whether they were made in the West or the East. He accepted what was scientific about the Western educational system, especially the notion of freedom as a method of instruction and the fundamental value of basic education (Naqvi, 2016). Azad's top priority was to educate all children with an education without any caste or religious prejudice (Fatima, 2016). Education remained a top priority for Azad at all times. On January 16, 1948, at the All India Education Conference, Azad had said,

*“We must not for a moment forget, it is a birthright of every individual to receive at least the basic education without which he cannot fully discharge his duties as a citizen” (Khan, 2018).*

He advocated that exposure to cultural material in the classroom and an understanding of the core principles of all major faiths can elevate the mind and enliven the spirit. For him, true secularism required compassion and tolerance for many worldviews and cultural traditions. He emphasized the importance of "social education," by which he meant

the incorporation of a vibrant feeling of civic rights and obligations and the development of an educated mind (Raina, 2010). Through the arts, literature, poetry, music, dance, drama, and crafts, it encompassed knowledge of the country's socioeconomic conditions, health education, and economic betterment. He was certain that they would be useful in establishing the nation. He thought that every citizen should have the right to an education. He emphasized the need of educating women. In his opinion, women need to be educated so that they may be aware of their rights and pass that knowledge on to future generations (Fatima, 2016). His biggest contribution, however, is that while being a distinguished scholar of Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, he always advocated for the preservation of the English language for educational benefits for both national and international requirements (Meen, 2016). He thought that education should be imparted to children at elementary level in their mother tongue (Dutta, 2016; Meen, 2016). He further said that, *“Educationists should build the capacities of the spirit of enquiry, creativity, entrepreneurial and moral leadership among students and become their role model”* (Fatima, 2016). Maulana believed that education has to help a person realize his enormous potential. On one occasion, he emphasized the significance of seven ideals that help to shape the way that man and his society pursue excellence. These include respect, chivalry, courtesies, justice, illumination, cooperation, and unity. The development of a new mind and a new character, he contended, is more vital than the expansion of agriculture, industry, trade, or other endeavors, and that is what our Five Year Plans are for, not

the production of more material wealth and resources (*Naqvi, 2016*).

He promoted free and compulsory primary education for all children up to the age of 14 during his tenure as the nation's first education minister (1947–1958) because he thought it was a basic human right. When Maulana Azad was selected to join the 14-member team responsible for drafting the Indian constitution in 1946, he saw a dream of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, a basic right for children between the ages of 6 and 14 (*Wajihuddin, 2020*). The Kher Committee was established in 1948 as his first attempt to advance the right to education after he was named Minister of Education. Its purpose was to determine how to more quickly achieve the aims of free and compulsory education for children up to the age of fourteen (*Farooqi, 2016*). The ideal was realized in August 2009 when India's constitution ratified the Right to Education Act, which grants every kid between the ages of 6 and 14 the fundamental Right to Education (*Kaushal, 2012*). He also had a significant role in the construction of other educational institutions in the nation and was one of the architects of the University Grants Commission, India's regulatory body for higher education. He founded a number of top-notch technical institutions for scientific and technological education, including the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur in 1950. These were followed by IITs in Bombay, Madras (Chennai), Kanpur, and Delhi (*Meen, 2016*). He founded the Indian Council for Cultural Relations to advance literature and culture throughout the nation (ICCR) (*Farooqi, 2016*) and to promote art, music, and literature, the three Academies were founded as the Sangeet Natak

Academy in 1953, the Sahitya Academy in 1954, and the Lalit Kala Academy in 1954. He helped Pandit Nehru establish a network of science laboratories across the nation as well as the Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). He argued that the Union and the States both have a responsibility to promote education in his capacity as minister of education. In 1948 and 1952, he appointed the Commissions on University and Secondary Education (*Shahnawaz, 2016*). Before independence, Maulana believed that the cultural component of Indian education was extremely underdeveloped and that it needed to be improved through our curriculum. (*Meen, 2016*). Every year on November 11th, the nation observes his birthday as "National Education Day" in honour of his contributions to India's educational system (*Shahnawaz, 2016; Qaiser, 2010; Meen, 2016*).

### **Relevance of Educational ideas of Maulana Azad in the light of NEP-2020**

After the independence of India, there have been numerous changes in the field of education in order to prepare the people for the new challenges of life. Every change has been done on the bases of recommendations and suggestions given by the eminent educationists and philosophers of our country. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad a quit noble educationist of India also provided his unique ideas for the development of whole country and these ideas are quit relevant in the present arena. At *Para 12.7, Page No. 39*, National Educational Policy 2020 emphasizes that *“The various initiatives mentioned in the policy will also help in having larger numbers of international students studying in India, and provide greater mobility to students*

*in India who may wish to visit, study at, transfer credits to, or carry out research at institutions abroad, and vice versa*". The entirety of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's life was dedicated to the advancement of international understanding, and he was adamant that education is what may help us achieve world unity and global citizenship (Moosavi, 2021). In National Educational Policy 2020, on page number 37, para 11.8 has emphasized that "Value-based education will include the development of humanistic, ethical, Constitutional, and universal human values of truth (satya), righteous conduct (dharma), peace (shanti), love (prem), nonviolence (ahimsa), scientific temper, citizenship values, and also life-skills; lessons in seva/service and participation in community service programmes will be considered an integral part of a holistic education". In contrast to career-orientation, which is the focus of today's education, character-building was a key component of Maulana Azad's educational programme (Siddiqui, 2011). National Educational Policy 2020, has clearly emphasized on page number 26, Para 6.7 that "The policy additionally recognizes the special and critical role that women play in society and in shaping social mores; therefore, providing a quality education to girls is the best way to increase the education levels for these SEDGs, not just in the present but also in future generations. The policy thus recommends that the policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should be especially targeted towards girls in these SEDGs." Maulana Azad placed special emphasis on the education of women as well as the teaching of contemporary science. He underlined the value of educating people in modern sciences and knowledge in

the Central Assembly in 1949. and he also observed that "no programme of national education can be appropriate if it does not give full consideration to the education and advancement of one-half of the society- that is the women"(*Wajihuddin, 2020*). Along with making a significant contribution to the development of India's economic and industrial policies, he was a fervent supporter of granting social rights and chances for the poor and underprivileged Indians (*Habib, 2010*). Maulana Azad made a very valuable contribution and emphasized the importance of formulating policies and programmes for the swift, all-encompassing, and inclusive growth of the nation's educational institutions.

### **Conclusion**

It appeared that Maulana's tolerance for different religions, ideologies, and points of view was not motivated by any political considerations but rather came from a thorough knowledge of India's history and syncretic culture, which had been cultivated over many years by both notable individuals and the general populace. Up till his last breath, Maulana carried the light for this common way of life. When the tallest people around him felt their feet trembling, he clung to it. This is Maulana Azad's magnificence. This is what will keep him relevant for all time, not just now.

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