

## Reflecting of R.N Tagore and M.K Gandhi's philosophy on educational thinking of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

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### Abstract

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was emotionally and intellectually close to both — Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. He was closely associated with crucial decision making since the twenties. With the dawn of freedom in 1947, he was a natural choice to be in the Cabinet- He was the Minister of Education during 1947-52, and Minister of Education, Natural Resources and Scientific Research from 1952-58. His influence on the process of policy making was immense. He was Nehru's, comrade-in-arms during the days of the freedom movement and was one of his closest confidante and adviser in the Cabinet. Maulana Azad was a patriot, a leader, a philosopher-statesman and a great scholar. By a profound learning and "luminous intelligence" he did a real good job for Islam, by clearing it of the dust of prejudice and bigotry which had gathered up on it during the eleven hundred years of its history in India. He was a rightful inheritor of all the thought movements of the past. In the unfolding of his intellectual life and in the evolution of his thought, we find staged the whole history of Islamic thought. He was one of the very few acquainted with the philosophies of India and had deep insight into the various religions of the world and could isolate the real and essential from the spurious. Reminding of Azad's unique intellectual achievements, Pandit Nehru said, ".....He 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 encyclopaedists who proceeded 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 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."

**Keywords:** educational thinking of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, R.N Tagore and M.K Gandhi's philosophy

### Introduction

Bharat Ratna Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a man of intellectual excellence and an eminent figure in India's struggle for freedom. He is also known as a multi-faceted personality who was a leader, a noted writer, a great poet and a celebrated journalist. His fiery speeches and writings are a fine admixture of learning, vision, and purposefulness in nurturing wisdom. He dedicated his life to national integrity and the country's prosperity. He famously said that "I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure is incomplete. I am an essential element, which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim". Indeed, Azad became one of the architects in shaping India's future for which he occupies a special place in the Indian History. Azad's legacy and influence still remain the most important symbols of communal harmony in modern India. Healthy and educated population is the best weapon for the development of a nation, after independence he is the first central education minister of India. So, his responsibility to reconstruct all round education system. Azad took responsibility his own soldier and his kind of heart that was rhythm for country, his intellectual brain helps him to walk but, R.N Tagore and M.K Gandhi's innovative thought of

education able to run Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

### Rabindranath Tagore and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

*"A day will come when the unvanquished man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost heritage". - R.N Tagore*

Rabindranath Tagore was born during a period of strife in pre-independence India. He stood for the development of a free mind, free knowledge and a free nation. Even as a young boy he could sense that school was nothing but a dead routine and lifeless. He regarded schools as mills of rote learning with no freedom for creativity. Schooling almost had no influence in his life. According to him, the primary objective of education was to enable the preservation of the perfect symphony between one's life and the world outside. He insisted that education should be imparted in natural surroundings. He believed in giving children the freedom of expression. He said, "Children have their active subconscious mind which like a tree has the power to gather its food from the surrounding atmosphere". He also said that an educational institution should not be "a dead cage in which living minds are fed with food that's artificially prepared. Hand work and arts are the spontaneous overflow of our deeper nature and spiritual significance". According to him, "Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of dust and gives us

wealth not of things but of inner light, not of power but of love. It is a process of enlightenment. It is divine wealth. It helps in realization of truth". The aim of education is to bring about perfection of man by dispelling ignorance and ushering in the light of knowledge. It should enable us to lead a complete life – economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual. Azad was not exclusively an "Islamic" mind or even an "oriental" mind, unacquainted with, or insensitive to, the rich streams of influences emanating from other sources. He was deeply impressed by the advances made in the R.N Tagore in the realm of education for country. Azad most inspired him were the idea of freedom as the technique of education, and the all-embracing importance of Tagore philosophy of education. Azad agreed with Tagore in his advocacy of the child's necessity and ability to grasp the truth through his own insight. Rabindranath expressed the view that village-based mass education can play a great role in social and economic development and in minimizing mortality rate. This view of Rabindranath is echoed in the remarks of Azad diminishing of mortality rate helps minimize birth rate which further strengthens the influence of fertility awareness, especially of the female education. Educationists and development planners think that in the third world countries village-based mass education can positively turn general people into human resources. With the help of mass education, the lower class people can attach themselves to the mainstream of development activities. A country having huge population cannot be said a country of huge human resources; unless the people become conscious and skilled and engage themselves to the development thereof. People get knowledge about education and health through mass education. Education and health bring qualitative change in man and turn him into a useful manpower.

### **M.K Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**

*"My idea is not merely to teach a particular profession or occupation to the children, but to develop the full man through teaching that occupation" -M.K Gandhi*

While extending his support to Mahatma Gandhi and non-cooperation movement, Maulana Azad joined the Indian National Congress in January 1920. He presided over the special session of Congress in September 1923 and was said to be the youngest man elected as the President of the Congress. Maulana Azad emerged as an important national leader of the Indian National Congress Party. He also served as a member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) and in the offices of general secretary and president on numerous occasions. In 1930, Maulana Azad was arrested for violation of the salt laws as part of Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha. He was put in Meerut jail for a year and a half. MaulanaAbulKalam Azad was not only one of the most influential independence activists during India's freedom struggle, he was also a noted educationist, writer, poet and journalist. He was a prominent political leader of the Indian National Congress and was elected as Congress President in 1923 and 1940. Despite being a Muslim, Azad often stood against the radicalizing policies of other prominent Muslims leaders like Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Azad was the first education minister of independent India. MaulanaAbulkalam Azad related to Gandhiji and support all works not only political every aspect of Gandhiji's works heheartfully supported. Maulana travel a long journey pro-

independence congress movement to post-independence with Gandhiji, at this he directly influenced by Gandhiji's educational, political, philosophical, social, administrative thoughts, its helps him to first shaped and construct the education of India. The most essential feature of Gandhiji's philosophy of education instead of taking handicrafts of the school and impose it on the educational curriculum insisted that education must proceed from the handicrafts. Gandhi said, 'The core of my suggestion is that handicrafts are to be taught not merely for production work but for developing the intellect of the people'. Another important feature of Gandhiji's philosophy of education is the supporting aspect of the craft chosen as a means of education. All education to be true must be self-supporting. Gandhiji also emphasized that the major aim of education should be character development. He wished that the youth generation should develop a sense of courage, strength and virtue. It appears that many of the views expressed in earlier writing found in Gandhian thoughts on education. The emphasis on body, heart, mind and spirit in the educational process is most visible one. "Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education" Gandhi's thought on education form the dynamic site of his general philosophy. His philosophy of education based on biology, sociology, psychology and philosophy. This was the highest desire of Gandhiji that each individual of India should be educated, but by 'literate' he did not mean only the knowledge of how to read and write. He did not consider literacy as education. He said. "Literacy is not the end of education, nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated". He believed that education should develop all the capacities of the child so that he becomes a complete human being means full development of body mind and heart and soul of the child. In this way Gandhi advocated that education should develop the child's individuality fully and harmoniously so that he is able to realize the ultimate aim of life, which is truth or God. According to Gandhiji, a child should be trained to express his culture in his conduct. He says that culture is the foundation, the initial thing which should be manifested in your abstract behavior. Thus, he has considered cultural development as an important aim of education. Gandhi said, "this culture show itself in smallest detail of your conduct and personal behavior, how you sit, how you walk, how you dress etc. inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders". Azad experienced Gandhiji's educational philosophy and applied in the field of education in India like emphasised on quality education and considered schools as laboratories which produced future citizens of the country. He strongly believed in free primary education and compulsory education to all children upto the age of 14. He was demonstrated in moulding the educational system of the country in the immediate post-independence years. It was he who established the University Grants Commission and launched the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) which has now come up to play a significant role in the academic growth of the country. The three Academies-Sahitya Academy, Lalit Kala Academy and SangeetNatak Academy— topromote art, music and literature were his

ideas. He assisted Pandit Nehru in setting up the Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and many a chain of Science Laboratories in India. As the Minister for Education he insisted that both the Union and the States must share responsibility in promotion of education. He appointed the University Education Commission in 1948 and Secondary Education Commission in 1952. Between 1947 and 1958, on his initiative the budgetary allocation for Education was raised fifteen fold.

### **Educational Philosophy of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**

In his article on Azad's philosophy of education, this is precisely the point made by Saiyadain. He says that Azad's educational ideas are grounded in his understanding of Islam. He also says Azad's was not an exclusive "Islamic mind" or even an "oriental" mind. He was equally conversant with all other aspects of his cultural heritage – the Indian heritage and modern heritage which cuts across the East West barriers. The most often quoted pronouncement on this relationship between his Muslim heritage and Indian heritage was made in 1946 during his Presidential address at the Ramgarh session of Indian National Congress. The importance of this address lies in the fact that it throws light not only on the communal problem and the problem of relations between the minorities and majority but also indirectly on the educational problems which we have to face in forging a living sense of unity in the country of religious and cultural diversity. He said, "I am a Muslim and profoundly by conscious of the fact that I have inherited Islam's glorious traditions of the last 1300 years. I am not prepared to lose even a small part of that legacy. The history and teachings of Islam, its arts and letters, its civilization and culture are all part of my wealth and it is my duty to cherish and guard them. As a Muslim, I have a special identity within the field of religion and culture with which I cannot tolerate any undue interference. But with all these feelings, I have another equally deep realization, born out of my life's experience, which is strengthened and not hindered by the spirit of Islam. I am equally proud of the fact that I am an Indian, as essential part of the indivisible unity of Indian nationhood, a vital factor in its total make up without which this noble edifice will remain incomplete. I can never give up this sincere claim..." Saiyidain saw a clear link between Maulana Abul kalam Azad life and purpose of education. But he qualifies this link with a caveat. He writes that this can happen only if one has a thoughtful and creative mind and one's educational ideas are not a confused reflection of what one finds floating about amorously in ones' environment. Very often educationists grab at that amorphous substance and make it the mainstay of education. Then he writes, what for him was the bedrock of his educational philosophy; "Educational thinkers generally don't come from the rank of the professional educationists but from philosophers, writers and creative thinker. Neither Plato, nor Rousseau nor Freud not Montessori, Spencer, Tagore, Gandhi or Iqbal can be described as professional Educationists...yet their impact on education has been tremendous." Saiyadain considers Azad as one of those essentially a scholar, a thinker, litterateur, divine; a man who was pitch forked into intense political activity.

### **Conclusion**

Nehru and Gandhi were aware of the fact that Azad was

passionately committed to education, culture and scientific and technical progress. He surely had his limitations and Nehru always came forward positively to take care of them. On the death of Azad, Nehru called him 'a man of luminous intelligence and a mighty intellect with an amazing capacity to pierce through a problem to its core.' His erudition and high intellect led Nehru to compare him in European history, with 'the great men of the Renaissance, or, in a later period, of the Encyclopedists who preceded the French Revolution, men of intellect, Men of action'. Azad was not a professional educationist, nor were so many others like Montessori, Tagore or Gandhi, yet their impact on education have been enormous. He was essentially a scholar, a man of thought, a litterateur, a divine, who found himself pitch-forked into a life of intense political activity and who, amazingly enough, was able to combine the exacting and almost mutually exclusive demands of the life of the mind and his life of intense political activity- a rare quality which he shared with his life-long friend and colleague, Nehru. If we look retrospectively, Azad was the most eminently suited choice to bring India out of the morass it had gone into after partition. There was a need for a person of great vision and character who may be able to assess the situation correctly and adopt sound educational policies which would help, in the long run, to restore mental sanity and balance to national life and instill the right values in it. Saiyidain writes, "In retrospect, one realizes how wise and how far sighted his appointment as Minister of Education was. There was need for a person of great vision and character who may be able to assess the situation correctly and adopt sound educational policies which would help in the long run to restore mental sanity and balance to national life and instill the right values. Azad was eminently fitted for the task. Ever since his advent into public life he was essentially concerned with the basic educational problem of shaping the hearts and minds of his fellow men and women. He devoted himself to the service of his great purpose; training individuals who will have the qualities of vision, courage, tolerance and integrity and to the creation, through them, of a social order which will be inspired by ideals of social justice, broad mindedness, cooperation and rationalism. He repeatedly affirmed in his speeches that the central purpose of five year plans is not the production of more material wealth and resources but the creation of a new mind and new character for which right education is more essential than the development of industries, trade and hydro-electric projects. So when he stepped into his portfolio he was not taking on a new job but a new challenge – how to transcribe into concrete organizational terms, some of the ideas and values which he had preached all his life. Prem Kirpal, his secretary, writes in the article, 'The Educationist' about Azad's impact on the education scenario, "New winds of change began to blow. Special aspects of the problems of education such as the promotion of Gandhian teachings and way of life, introduction of general education courses, Home Science programmes, Institutes of rural higher education, the education of teachers, development of library services, audio-visual education, promotion of Hindi and other national languages, scholarship for scheduled castes and tribes, education and training of the handicapped, special programmes of education of women and girls, development of cultural activities, youth welfare and physical education, reflect the vastness of the range of activities and innovations initiated by the Central Ministry

of Education.” He also refers to the kind of people Azad selected as his aides and advisors, “His chief aides were men of intellectual eminence who could give creative leadership to their specialized concerns. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, Tara Chand, Humayun Kabir and Khwaja Ghulam Saiyidain were highly respected in the world of learning and steered the course of Indian education, science and culture during Maulana Azad’s stewardship. Educational administration at the state level was influenced by the example of the Centre. Vice-chancellors, Education Secretaries and Directors of Education in the states were generally selected from the field of education and received respect and confidence due to their expertise in the field.

” He writes: *“You may be separated into all these groups but there is one overriding sacred relationship which cannot be broken – you are creatures of the same Almighty God, bound to Him in homage and reverence. This bond cuts across all your man-made differences and can bring your hearts into concord. You may then still feel that the whole world is your home, that the entire human race is a single family and that all men and women are members of the family of one Creator.”*

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