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Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Secular Views on Social Reconstruction

Taterao Bapurao Nikalje

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is an icon of Indian Politics as well as Urdu literature. He is popularly called Azad. He was born in Mecca on November 11, 1888 in a wealthy Islamic family and passed away on February 22, 1958 in Delhi. He was a poet, philosopher, writer, educationist, politician, architect of the Indian education system and a specialist on Indian culture too. He was an accomplished scholar in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, English, Hindi, Bengali and a prolific debater. But we are yet to study and understand him properly and thoroughly.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a multi-dimensional personality, bloomed into a valiant freedom fighter; an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity is one of the pioneer nation builders in social reconstruction. This paper also highlights his social reconstruction and principles as existing in his writings and speeches to explore a devised to make India a centre of all intellectual and scientific developments in the world.

Introduction:-

What distinguished Maulana Azad was his association with education and social reconstruction. He brought his educational thought to bear on his leadership in the field of social, spread intermittently over five decades of the last century. The process of his educational leadership may chronologically be split into three broad stages. From 1900 to 1920 his leadership focused attention on the freedom programme in the Islamic system of learning in India. From 1920 to 1946, the process of his leadership was marked by the expansion of its scope to the country as a whole in the most resurgent period of her history. From 1947 to 1958 was the stage of his educational leadership in full bloom, synchronizing with his stewardship of the Education Ministry. During the period of over a decade, he availed of the unique opportunity of setting of secular views of social reconstruction in New India. Moulana Azad occupies a distinctive position in the history of our Freedom Movement. An erudite person, Maulana Azad was one of the few Philosopher-Statesmen our nation has been gifted with. He was most assuredly an outstanding scholar, a great journalist, a matchless orator but which equal ease he was also a great statesman who played a significant role in every crisis which India faced in its struggle to make our country free and independent. During the Freedom Movement and in the years immediately following independence, he was closely associated with crucial decision making in the country. Moulana Azad was a man with a mission of social reconstruction. His greatest mission in life, perhaps, was Hindu-Muslim unity and the unity and integrity of the country. He detested partition of the country. His mission was for national integration and unity of the country. Azad was passionately patriotic and had strong empathies for anti-colonial politics since his teenage. In the wake of the *Khilafat*, Non-cooperation Movement, he joined the Indian National Congress and presided over its special session of 1923. He remained with Gandhi and Nehru even as their constituency of support amongst the Indian Muslims dwindled over the years. After Independence, he committed himself to project of building a secular, pluralist and progressive nation-state and was instrumental in founding academic and cultural institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology, Sahitya Akademi, Sangeet Natak Akademi, University Grants Commission and many more institutions and organizations.

Maulana Azad's ideals have made significant contribution to India becoming a sovereign, secular and democratic republic.

Azad's views on secularism :-

Religion is a very sensitive issue. India has always followed a policy of secularism. Secularist state would be better in general for progress. Secularism must not be understood as simply the view that there is no God, or that religious doctrines are not true, or that religious morality should be rejected. A secular state guided by secularist accounts of reality, the human person, morality and the good life. The basic principle of secularism is to seek for human development by material means only. Secularism held that its principles could be established and sustained by the intellect as principle of reason and intelligence equally applicable to all humanity. Maulana Azad considered secularism to be the most proper and holistic approach to the political and social scenario of Modern India. According to him secularism is the only legitimate principles that could guarantee the safety and assure the promotion of spirit among its various faith, because secularism is the most adequate and scientific ways of development. For him, Islam is a religion that essentially stood for moral and spiritual vision of life. Islam does not commend narrow mindedness that why it prohibit racial and religious prejudice. His secular ideas always inspire future generation. The basic tenet of Islam is to respect every person who is good by virtue, whatever his be his religion. Islamic approach of secularism lies in the direction in which Islam wanted to lead the world.

Maulana Azad views on Social Reconstruction:- Maulana Azad was a firm believer in the co-existence of religions. His dream was that of a unified independent India where Hindu and Muslims co-habited peacefully. Maulana Azad stands out unique that have left a deep impact on the intellectual thoughts. His contribution to Indian nationalism and Hindu- Muslim unity in India Azad represented a synthesis of the west and the east. He combined religion with reason. He had basic differences with the Aligarh movement. He did not believe that. the majority Hindus would prevail upon the identity of the minorities or the Muslims. He was not hostile to the British rule before 1905. His earlier political attitude was shaped by his understanding of Islam. He had regarded Islam as a guide for all actions which could provide solution to all the problems. Delivering presidential address of congress in 1923 session, He said:

"Today, If an angel were to descend from the heaven and declare from the top of the Qutub Miar, that India will get Swaraj within twenty four hours, provided she relinquishes Hindu-Muslim Unity, I will relinquish Swaraj rather than Hindu- Muslim Unity, Delay in the attainment Swaraj will be a loss to India, but if our unity is lost, it will be loss for entire mankind."

Maulana Azad stands out unique that have left a deep impact on the intellectual thoughts. His personality was multi -faceted: a great nationalist firmly and irrevocably committed to the cause of Hindu-Muslim Unity. His work for education and social upliftment in India made him an important influence in guiding India's economic and social development. From the day Azad picked up the pen at the age of 24 as editor of *Al- Hilal*, the most revolutionary weekly of Calcutta, with the mission of three objectives, Hindu- Muslim Unity, National Integrity and complete freedom Education. Under Moulana Azad's tenure, a number of measures were undertaken to promote primary and secondary education, scientific education, establishment of universities and promotion of avenues of research and higher studies. As a Minister of Education, Maulana Azad made unique contribution and stressed on the necessity of laying down policies and programmes for the speedy and all round, as well as inclusive development of the educational facilities in the country. When he addressed the meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education

in January, 1949 he spoke of the approach of the National Government towards education. He stated that the first and foremost task of the National Government is the provision of free and compulsory basic education for all. Maulana Azad believed that a good school is a national asset of the highest value at any place or at any time.

Azad's views on child education:-

Maulana Azad took special interest in primary education. As the Minister of Education Maulana Azad considered basic education for the future welfare of the people as of prime importance and he emphasized on the importance of the speedy progress of adult education. As the Minister of Education of free India, Maulana created a nation-wide system of basic education for all children of school going age. He also believed that the medium of instruction in schools should be in the mother tongue. Maulana Azad re-emphasized the fivefold programme for the expansion of education in the country. The provision of basic education on a universal free and compulsory basis for all the school going children.

Azad's views on girl education:

Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women. Maulana Azad saw that the girl education can bring a drastic change in the society. He was of the opinion that educated girls can play an important role in the socially development of the country. Education of girls was of prime concern for him. Maulana observed that without an educated electorate, democracy cannot perform the functions expected in the society. He believed that education alone can bring about democratic consolidation, social cohesiveness and sustained growth.

Azad's views on Islamic education

Maulana Azad had a tryst with Islamic Education as well. During his house arrest days at Ranchi in 1916 his political, educational and journalistic activities had faced a sudden halt. Islam has a holistic view of human development, which views education and knowledge as central. Islam encourages the acquisition of knowledge and its use for the benefit of humanity. While knowledge is needed to fulfill religious and spiritual responsibilities, it is also highly important for achieving social and economic development for ensuring social harmony, freedom and human rights. Islamic education is helpful for people in all areas of life.

He said that *Madrassa Islamia* was founded to represent the reformed Madrasa curriculum, with a combination of the best of English and Arabic education, Azad believed that a good educational system can establish a healthy relationship between the individuals and the society.

Azad's views on importance of science and technology

Maulana Azad's commitment to modern scientific and technical education is important to recall today. Science and Technology are fundamental in modern contemporary society. The understanding of how social, cultural and material elements influence the production of new practices, new ways of understanding and new institutions is vital in our understanding of contemporary postmodern society. Science and Technology are in all means essential tools for rapid development of a nation. Maulana Azad gave special stress on the teaching of modern sciences and also on the education of women. In 1949, in the Central Assembly he emphasized on the importance of imparting instruction in modern sciences and knowledge and 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.

Maulana Azad: A social. journalist

Maulana Azad, an erudite religious scholar, combining in him the finest of the traditional values with the best of modern concepts; a prolific writer and fearless journalist; he acquired

proficiency in several languages, including Urdu, Arabic, Persian and Hindi. From a very young age, he showed great literary flare and edited a weekly called *Al-Misbah* and also brought out a monthly journal called *Lissan-us-Sidq*. He worked for a short period with al-Nadwa under guidance of Shibli Nomani. He worked with the renowned newspaper "*Wakeel*" in Amritsar. Azad, from a very young age, showed great literary flare and edited a weekly called *Al-Misbah* and also brought out a monthly journal called *Lissan-us-Sidq*. Maulana Azad was a true nationalist and was a fierce critic of the British policy of divide and rule. He rejected the separatist politics of All India Muslim League and even as a young man.

Azad's views on democracy:

Democracy is very effective and proved to be very successful. It has successfully ensured individual freedom. Democracy is considered the finest form of government in which every individual participates consciously and in which the people remain the sovereign power determining their destiny. In democracy the people are the ultimate source of power and its success and failure depend on their wisdom, consciousness and vigilance. Maulana Azad envisioned Islam as a perfect suitable ideology for the modern age. Islam provides a complete solution for socio-cultural, economic and political problems. Maulana Azad had a deeper faith on India's plurality and its secular ethos, an Islamic scholar detached from the conformity of thoughts and ideas on religion, avid admirer of art and culture and a renowned educationist. He also becomes important for us to re-discover his ideas and visions for a healthier democracy to flourish in International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research.

Azad's views on communal harmony

Only if there is peace and harmony in the country can it grow. However, there are certain groups and individuals that disrupt the peace and harmony in the country by spreading communal violence. Communal Harmony is necessary for every nation. He had a firm faith in a balanced mind representing a composite nationalism which is all inclusive. His life and works are the source of inspiration and teachings of clean and fair deal politics, being up from all the differences for the cause of the nation and live to be open eyed for the interest of national welfare, unity and integrity. Maulana Azad was a staunch Muslim, but he stood for national unity and communal harmony as inevitable ingredients for newly born India as a nation. The treasury of the country should be considered as the property and possession of the people. He made a plea for the establishment of parliamentary form of government in India. He said this concept of democracy was not averse to the principles of Islam. Maulana Azad had throughout his whole political life opposed forces which encouraged separatist trends in our national life. If there is any one feature which distinguishes modern India, it is the growth of the spirit of democracy which seeks to give equality of opportunity to all its citizens.

Conclusion :

Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad was a leading figure in India's struggle for social reconstruction, apart from being a noted writer, poet and journalist. He edited Urdu weekly newspapers, named *Al-Hilal*. It was consequently banned following which he started a new journal *Al-Balagh*. He published many works, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research Criticizing the British rule and advocating self-rule for India. It was as a leader of the *Khilafat Movement* that he became close to Mahatma Gandhi. He was elected Congress President for the second time and presided over several annual sessions. He became the youngest President of the Indian National Congress. He always supported the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and staunchly opposed the demand for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan. He served in the Constituent

Assembly, formed to draft India's Constitution. After India's independence, he served as the first Minister of education. He was honoured with 'Bharat Ratna' posthumously. Azad's ideals have made significant contribution to India becoming a sovereign, secular and democratic republic. Maulana Azad will be remembered for his spiritual intellect and political achievements as also for the sacrifices for social reconstruction, he made for the country, particularly in an extremely adverse pre-partition situation, He will be remembered for his educational contribution to the country and as a symbol and practical example of India really being a secular country. Azad's intellectual and political contribution to the social reconstruction to modern India needs to recall again and again to the younger generation of India.

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