
**Notion of Nation Building and Pluralism in Abul Kalam Azad's
Autobiography *India Wins Freedom***

Dr. Md. Abu Katadah

Assistant Professor

T.K.R College of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad

Email: abukatadah9148@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines the idea of nation-building and pluralism through a close reading of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's autobiography *India Wins Freedom* (1959). Situating the text within the historical context of India's anti-colonial struggle. The study explores Azad's intellectual and political vision of an inclusive nation grounded in unity amid diversity. It analyzes how his reflections on nationalism, secularism, and cultural coexistence challenge communal divisions and advocate a composite national identity shaped by shared history and ethical responsibility.

The paper further investigates Azad's engagement with colonial power structures and his response to the crises of partition, displacement, and religious polarization. His emphasis on dialogue, mutual respect, and constitutional democracy is interpreted as a framework for sustainable nation-building in a heterogeneous society. By placing his ideas within broader colonial and postcolonial debates, the study highlights the philosophical depth of his pluralist thought and its relevance to contemporary discussions on citizenship, identity, and democratic belonging. Ultimately, the paper argues that Azad's vision offers enduring insights for negotiating diversity while preserving national cohesion in modern India. By reassessing his reflections on education, leadership, and moral responsibility, the study underscores the continuing relevance of his ideas for policy discourse and social harmony in plural.

Keywords: Nation-building, Identity, Pluralism, Freedom Struggle

Introduction

The real name of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was Abul Kalam Ghulam Muhiyuddin. He was popularly referred to as Maulana Azad. One of the most influential leaders of the Indian freedom struggle was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. He was also a prominent scholar. Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, English, Persian, and Bengali were among the many languages that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was proficient in. As a symbol of his mental liberation from a constrictive perspective on religion and life, he chose the pen name Azad. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad served as the Minister of Education (the first education minister in independent India) in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet from 1947 to 1958. He died of a stroke on February 22, 1958. For his invaluable contribution to the nation, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna in 1992.

Azad's Literary Contribution and His Pan-Islamic Outlook

Azad was educated and trained as a priest. He wrote many books, journals and reinterpreted the Holy Quran. His learning enabled him to abandon the tradition of Taqliq, or conformity, and embrace the principle of Tajdid, or innovation. He became interested in the pan-Islamic doctrines of Jamaluddin Afgani and Aligarh thought of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Imbued of the pan-Islamic spirit, he visited Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Turkey. In Iraq, he met revolutionaries in exile who were fighting for the establishment of a constitutional government in Iran. In Egypt, he met Shaikh Muhammad Abduh and Saeed Pasha and other revolutionary activists from the Arab world. He had first-hand knowledge of the ideals and spirit of the Young Turks of Constantinople. All these contacts turned him a nationalist revolutionary.

Participate in Revolutionary Movement and Remove the Predetermined thought against Muslims

After returning from abroad, Azad met two leading revolutionaries of Bengal- Aurobindo Ghosh and Sri Shyam Shundar Chakravarty - and joined the revolutionary movement against British rule. Azad felt that revolutionary activity was limited to Bengal and Bihar. Within two years, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad helped to establish secret revolutionary centres throughout North India and Bombay. During this period, most of his revolutionaries were anti-Muslim because they felt that the British government was using the Muslim community against India's freedom struggle. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad tried to persuade his colleagues to abandon their enmity against Muslims.

Azad as a Politician and the Precursor of Hindu-Muslim Unity

At a young age, he was associated with the Indian independence movement. He was an apostle of Hindu-Muslim coexistence. He was an advocate of Hindu-Muslim harmony and opposed the partition of India on the basis of binationalism. He even predicted the partition of Pakistan and military rule in the newly formed state of Pakistan. He was the first education

minister of independent India. His birthday is celebrated as "National Education Day" across the country to commemorate his brilliant contribution to education in independent India. Today is the 59th death anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the eminent Indian freedom fighter and the first education minister of independent India.

After his release from imprisonment, Azad sparked the Muslim community through the Khilafat Movement. The movement's goal was to restore the Khalifa to his position as the ruler of the British-occupied Turkey. In 1920, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad joined the Indian National Congress and supported the Gandhian Non-Cooperation Movement. He was chosen to preside over the Congress's extraordinary session in Delhi (1923). In 1930, Maulana Azad was once more detained for breaking the salt restrictions as a result of Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha. He spent a year and a half in prison in Meerut. In 1940 (Ramgarh), Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was elected president of the Congress, a position he held until 1946. He sought a union of independent states and was a fervent opponent of partition. Partition hurt him greatly and shattered his dream of a unified nation where Hindus and Muslims can co-exist and prosper together. During the Delhi Convention, he made an historic remark which made him the "ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity."

He said, "Today if a farishta (an angel) were to descend from the Heaven and declare from the heights of the Qutab Minar that India will get Swaraj within 24 hours provided she relinquishes Hindu-Muslim unity, I will relinquish Swaraj rather than give up Hindu-Muslim unity. Delay in the attainment of Swaraj will be a loss to India but if our unity is lost it will be a loss to entire mankind" (INC session 1923)

Azad is a Promulgator of Composite Culture

Although he was a distinguished Islamic scholar, the Maulana was a major supporter of composite culture. He maintained, "We should accept our defeat but at the same time try to ensure that our culture was not divided" (India Wins Freedom 168) even as he accepted separation. A lovely comparison is added after that: "If we put a stick in the water, it may appear that the water has been divided, but the water remains the same, and the moment the stick is removed, even the appearance of division disappears". (Azad, 215)

Azad as a Journalist

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is also a renowned journalist, educationist and one of the exponents of the Indian independence movement of the subcontinent. In the early years of the 20th century, he edited at least six newspapers and journals with success. *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, however, are emblems of his spirited journalism, careful storytelling, and heartfelt generosity. His main objective as a journalist was British imperialism. He began by interpreting religious truth with his synthesising ability, flexible yet impetuous pen, and by using historical analogies and events to emphasise the negative effects of allowing injustice and tyranny.

Depiction of Azad's Contemporary Outlook Through His Journals

With Nairang Alam, he began his journalism career in 1899, which lasted for eight months. He was the editor of Al-Misbah, which stopped being published after a few days, in 1900. Then he contributed several essays to Makhzan, one of the most renowned Urdu literary journals of the time, which was published from Lahore under the editorship of Shaikh Abdul Qadir. Azad provided a fascinating piece to it on the "Art of Newspaper Writing" in its May 1902 edition, in which he talked about the usefulness of newspapers as a tool for shaping public opinion. He demonstrated how the media in Europe and the United States had changed how society thought. Azad joined Ahsan-ul-Akhbar, a weekly published in 1901 and edited by Maulvi Ahmad Hussain of Fatehpuri and Abdul Ghaffar a publisher and dealer. The 1901 publication barely lasted for two to three months. He revised the prose section of *Khadang e-Nazar, Lucknow*, in 1902. Azad's innovative and contemporary viewpoints on education, which he thought was the key to social changes, were represented in the essays in Lisan-ul-Sidq. He was concerned with the spread of scientific ideas among the educated. He focused on translating the scientific and philosophical writings of Bacon, Newton, and Darwin. He aimed to foster a spirit of inquiry among his audience.

Azad's Participation in an Islamic Educational Centre, named Al-Nadwa

Azad joined Al-Nadwa, the literary arm of Nadwat-ul-Ulama, a periodical of Islamic theology, upon Shibli Nomani's (1857–1914) request following the closing of Lisan-ul-Sidq due to financial constraints. Azad gained much respect from Muslim intellectuals and divines as a result of his affiliation with Al-Nadwa between October 1905 and March 1906. His goal as a journalist was mostly first realised in an essay that appeared in the April 1910 edition. In this article, titled "Nadwat-ul-'Ulama' ka Ijlas-i-Dehli aur Quran ki Shahrah-i-Maqsud" (The Delhi session of the Nadwat-ul-'Ulama' and the goal of Quran), he wrote that English education among Muslims, for the urgent need of which so much hue and cry was raised as if it was the only panacea for all the ills of Muslim society, had failed to yield any revolutionary results. He continued by saying that it had proven to be a fruitless endeavour since it could only generate job-seekers who would work for the British bureaucracy's administrative apparatus. He also spoke of the sad plight of the current class of "Ulama" and claimed that although they were meant to be the community's natural leaders, the "Ulama" had morally degenerated. According to him, graduates of madrasas that pursued traditional study programs—which could not be of higher quality than Nadwah—wanted to bring about a fundamental change in the situation. He placed all of his faith in Shibli and everyone else he may be able to sway.

Journals of Azad

In order to attract more Muslim revolutionaries, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad launched a weekly journal in Urdu Al-Hilal in 1912. Al-Hilal was crucial in restoring harmony between

Hindus and Muslims after Morley-Minto reforms caused animosity between the two groups. Al-Hilal developed as a radical platform for the dissemination of extremist ideas. In 1914, the government outlawed Al- Hilal because it was seen as a proponent of separatist ideas. A second weekly, Al-Balagh, was then launched by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad with the same goals of promoting Indian nationalism and revolutionary ideas founded on Hindu-Muslim harmony. In addition to banning this publication in 1916, the government also banished Maulana Abul Kalam Azad from Calcutta and interned him in Ranchi, where he was later freed following the First World War. Azad's primary motivation for founding this newspaper was to appeal to Muslims to act in accordance with the Prophet Muhammad's examples and adhere to the Qur'an in both their beliefs and deeds. Additionally, he aimed to promote political awareness among Muslims. He made an effort to demonstrate through the columns of his newspaper Al-Hilal that being a devout patriot and a good Muslim were not incompatible. He gave the eradication of foreign dominance high priority because he understood the demands of the period.

Conclusion

From the above discussion the study has conclude that the research topic highlights the significance of Azad's notions of nation-building and pluralism and his enduring relevance in shaping a cohesive and inclusive India. Furthermore, the study has emphasized the importance of learning from historical figures like Azad to build a harmonious and pluralistic society. His heart consistently beats for the unity of India. He has perpetually supported a secular India and he has never favoured electorates that are divided according to religion. Maulana Azad, a genuine Indian, has continued to strive for India's welfare throughout his entire life notwithstanding the condemnation from many Muslims. It's not always about the lead character; the supporting characters also contribute to a country's establishment.

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