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## **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and His Political Ideas**

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### **Abstract**

*This presents a concise yet critical study of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's political thought, nationalism, and vision for a plural and democratic India. It explores his commitment to secularism, composite nationalism, and Hindu-Muslim unity within the context of India's freedom struggle. The work highlights Azad's contributions to education, democracy, and nation-building as independent India's first Education Minister. It argues that his ideas remain deeply relevant to contemporary debates on identity, unity, and constitutional values.*

**Keywords:** Federalism, Secularism, Composite Nationalism, Coalition Politics, Moral Politics

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Maulana Abul Kalam Azad occupies a distinguished place in the history of modern India as a statesman, philosopher, writer, poet, educationist and an architect of the nation's education system. He was also a passionate champion of secularism and national integration. Born as Abdul Kalam Ghulam Muhiyuddin Ahmed bin Khairuddin Al-Hussaini Azad, he became better known by his adopted name – “Abul Kalam Azad” – where “Azad” signified freedom and “Abul Kalam” reflected his eloquence in dialogue. The title “Maulana” denoted his stature as a learned scholar.

Azad's birthday, 11 November, is celebrated across India as *National Education Day*, a tribute to his monumental role in laying the foundations of modern Indian education. Closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, he was intimately involved in many crucial decisions of the national movement. He combined extraordinary mastery over Islamic theology with a deep engagement in modern Western thought, Indian cultural traditions, and nationalist politics. His life reflected a rare blend of spirituality, scholarship, and statesmanship.

Azad's political vision emphasized the indivisible unity of India, his secular philosophy upheld the ideal of composite culture, and his contributions as the first Education Minister of independent India shaped the trajectory of the nation's educational development. His speeches, writings, and actions continue to inspire debates on nationalism, pluralism, and education in contemporary India.

### **Early Life of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad:**

Maulana Azad was born on 11 November 1888 in Mecca, then part of the Ottoman Empire<sup>1</sup>. His family moved to Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1890, where he grew up in an atmosphere steeped in religious scholarship. His father, Maulana Khairuddin, was a respected Islamic scholar of Afghan descent, while his mother belonged to a noble Arab family.

His whole schooling was done at home<sup>2</sup>. Azad mastered Arabic, Urdu, Persian, philosophy, mathematics, law, logic, and theology at an early age. Yet, unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not restrict himself to traditional learning. He explored modern literature, science, and political writings in English, which expanded his intellectual horizons. He was deeply influenced by both classical Islamic scholarship and modern European philosophy, blending the two in his later writings and political thought.

Married at the young age of fourteen, Azad nevertheless continued his scholarly pursuits with undiminished passion. By his early twenties, he had emerged as a gifted writer and orator, able to synthesize tradition with modernity. Reflecting on his intellectual journey in *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, he observed:

“Had I confined myself to that stagnant pool of antiquated learning, my mind would have been alien to reality. My curiosity pushed me beyond the walls of tradition.”<sup>3</sup>

This unique synthesis of tradition and modernity prepared him to become one of the foremost intellectual architects of Indian nationalism.

### **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and His Political Ideas:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a visionary freedom fighter, scholar, and India's first Education Minister. He strongly believed in Hindu-Muslim unity, secularism, and a democratic India. His political ideology emphasized nationalism, social reform, and the importance of education for nation-building. He played a key role in shaping the Indian National Congress's policies and firmly believed in a united, secular, and democratic India. Azad's political ideology was rooted in the principles of nationalism, social justice, and communal harmony, emphasizing that India's freedom could only be achieved through cooperation among all communities. Through his writings, speeches, and leadership, Azad inspired generations to strive for a free, inclusive, and progressive India.

### **Nationalism According to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad:**

Maulana Abul kalam Azad views on nationalism are based on composite nationalism, which advocated for united secular India where all religious and cultural communities could coexist and have equal right. He strongly opposed the partition of India along religious line, viewing it as a product of narrow- mindedness and instead promote a single indivisible national identity. He believed that Indias multiple religious and culture were a source of strength not division. He advocated for nationalism where religion was private matter but the national itself was a shared political and cultural identity. His vision was based on mutual tolerance and cooperation between different religion and cultural practices Azad believed that nationalism and Islamic values were closely connected for him, India freedom struggle was not a spiritual duty- a trye form of jihad, meaning resistance against injustice. He referred to verse from Quran to show that Islamic permits resistance, when people are opposed and driven from their homes. He also emphasized that Islam teaches the protection of all places of worship-mosque, churches, monasteries,

temple alike. According to Azad the real message of Islam is to oppose tyranny and respect the dignity of every religion.<sup>4</sup>

### **Maulana Azad's Political Ideas on Secularism:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's idea of secularism was not borrowed from the West, nor was it limited to the separation of religion and politics. It was rooted in India's long history of coexistence and social reality. For Azad, secularism meant equal respect for all religions and the recognition that the Indian nation was formed by people of different faiths, cultures, and languages who had lived together for centuries. Azad considered secularism the most practical and holistic principle for modern India. He believed it was the only legitimate system that could protect religious freedom, ensure equality, and promote harmony among different communities. In his view, secularism was not anti-religious but the most rational and progressive way for human development. Azad strongly believed that Islam was fully compatible with secularism. His deep knowledge of Islamic history convinced him that it was a false idea that secularism was opposed to Islam. He argued that the core principles of Islam—justice, equality, and tolerance—were in harmony with secular values. Therefore, he demanded that secularism, along with religious freedom and equality, should be clearly protected in the Indian Constitution. Azad feared that mixing religion with politics would divide society and weaken national unity. This fear led him to strongly oppose the Two-Nation Theory, Partition, and separate electorates. He believed that religious politics would permanently damage India's social fabric and democratic future. While Mahatma Gandhi believed in religious harmony, his approach often mixed religion with politics, which sometimes strengthened religious identity in public life rather than reducing it. Jawaharlal Nehru supported secularism at the state level, but he failed to effectively counter communal forces at the social and political level. As a result, secularism under Gandhi and Nehru remained idealistic but weak in practice, allowing communal politics to survive and grow. Azad's secularism was more strict, constitutional, and principled. He believed that the state must remain completely neutral in religious matters while fully protecting religious freedom. "Azad approach to secularism is based on the universal view of Islam"<sup>5</sup> Maulana Azad believed that there is no distinction between the main principle of Islam and secularism. His secular ideas always inspire future generation. His secularism was rooted in unity, equality and shared national identity not in hostility to religion but harmony among religions.

Secularism is essential in the Indian Constitution because it ensures equality before law, freedom of religion, and national unity in a diverse society. Without secularism, democracy becomes fragile, and religious majoritarianism threatens minority rights. Azad believed that only constitutional secularism could protect India from division and help build a strong, stable, and inclusive nation.

### **Maulana Azad Political Ideas on Indian Federalism:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad strongly supported federalism because he believed it was the most practical system for governing a large, diverse, and plural society like India. He argued that India was not a single, uniform nation but a union of many regions, cultures, languages, and religious communities, and therefore required a political structure that balanced national unity with regional autonomy. For Azad, federalism was not a threat to unity; rather, it was a means to preserve unity without suppressing diversity. Azad frequently compared India's situation with that of the United States of America, where a

strong central government coexists with powerful states. He admired how the USA allowed its states considerable autonomy while remaining united under one constitution, one citizenship, and one national identity. Azad believed that a similar federal structure in India would prevent regional and communal alienation by giving all groups a stake in governance. He viewed federalism as a safeguard against majoritarian domination and communal politics. By decentralising power, federalism could reduce fears among minorities and provinces that they would be ruled by a distant or hostile centre. This belief was reflected in his strong support for the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946), which proposed a loose federal structure to protect Muslim-majority provinces without breaking the country. According to Azad, the failure to adopt a genuinely balanced federal system—combined with communal politics and colonial interference—contributed to Partition. He believed that if India had evolved into a strong federal union like the USA, religious divisions would not have turned into demands for separation. In essence, Azad saw federalism as a constitutional solution to India's diversity. Like the USA, India could have become a strong and stable nation by uniting different identities within a federal framework, rather than dividing them through communal politics and territorial separation.

I gave continuous and anxious thought to this subject. Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that the constitution of India must from the nature of the case be federal. Further, it must be so framed as to ensure complete autonomy to the provinces in as many subject as possible. We had to reconcile the claims of provincial autonomy with national unity. This could be done by finding a satisfactory formula for the distribution of power and functions between the central and the provincial government. Some powers and functions could be essentially central, others essentially provincial and some which could be either provincially or centrally exercise by consent. The first step to devise a formula by which a minimum number of subjects should be declared as essentially the responsibility of central government. These must be belonged to the union government compulsorily. In addition, there should be a list of subjects which could be dealt with centrally if the provinces so desired. This might be called the optional list for the central government and any province which so wished could delegate its powers in respect of all or any of these subject to the central government. (*India Wins Freedom* p. 147)

The Cabinet Mission was sent to India in 1946 to resolve the political deadlock between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. It rejected the demand for immediate partition and proposed a united India with a weak central government controlling only defence, foreign affairs, and communications. The provinces were to be grouped to ensure maximum autonomy, and a Constituent Assembly was to be formed to frame the Indian Constitution. However, due to differences between the Congress and the Muslim League, the Plan failed, ultimately leading to the partition of India. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad met the Cabinet Mission on 3 April 1946 and argued that partition would not solve India's communal problem. He proposed removing Muslim fears by granting maximum autonomy to the provinces, keeping only defence and foreign affairs with the Centre, and suggested Hindu-Muslim parity at the central level to promote unity. On 12 April 1946, Azad called a meeting of the Congress Working Committee to present his solution to the communal problem. He argued that India's unity could be preserved only through a weak federation with strong provincial autonomy. However, his proposals, especially the idea of parity, failed to gain full acceptance within the Congress leadership.

In a letter to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Azad expressed his objections to parity in the following words:

*"We are entirely opposed to the proposed parity, both in the executive and the legislature, as between wholly unequal groups. This is unfair and will lead to trouble. Such a provision contains in itself the seed of conflict and the destruction of free growth. If there is no agreement on this or any similar matter, we are prepared to leave it to arbitration."*<sup>6</sup>

The talks between the Cabinet Mission and Indian leaders continued for more than a month, but no agreement was reached. The Congress and the Muslim League failed to agree on a common constitutional plan. As a result, the Cabinet Mission presented its own proposal, known as the Cabinet Mission Plan. This Plan was largely based on the ideas earlier put forward by Maulana Azad and also had similarities with proposals made by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Like Azad's views, it rejected the demand for Pakistan and supported a weak Indian federation with extensive provincial autonomy. However, the Mission did not accept all of Azad's ideas. It rejected his proposal of two legislative lists and did not include any provision for Hindu-Muslim parity at the Centre. Instead, it divided the provinces into three groups: Group A consisting of Hindu-majority provinces, Group B consisting of Muslim-majority provinces, and Group C consisting of Bengal and Assam. Maulana Azad welcomed the Plan and believed that it was close to his own proposal in spirit. He advised the Congress to accept it. The Muslim League accepted the Plan first on 13 May 1946, hoping that it would eventually lead to the creation of Pakistan. The Congress also accepted the Plan but interpreted it differently. Congress leaders opposed compulsory grouping and argued that provinces were free to leave their assigned groups. During this period, Azad's influence within the Congress declined. Jawaharlal Nehru informed the Cabinet Mission that Congress wanted a strong central government and did not support the grouping system. Mahatma Gandhi also showed little interest in preserving the grouping provisions. The Cabinet Mission Plan was the last serious attempt to preserve India's unity. Its failure began after Nehru replaced Azad as Congress President in July 1946. On 10 July 1946, Nehru stated that Congress could modify the Plan by a majority vote. This statement weakened the Plan and damaged Azad's hope of a united India. Taking advantage of this situation, Jinnah withdrew the Muslim League's support for the Plan on 29 July 1946. He then announced 16 August 1946 as Direct Action Day, which led to severe communal violence, especially in Calcutta, where thousands of people were killed. India moved dangerously close to civil war.

Azad believed that Nehru's statement gave Jinnah an excuse to abandon the Plan. He felt that if he had remained Congress President, the Plan might have succeeded and Partition could have been avoided. Even after losing political influence, Azad continued to oppose Partition. He met Viceroy Lord Mountbatten and appealed to him not to divide India. Azad warned that Partition would harm Indian Muslims and damage Britain's reputation. He also suggested delaying Partition for one or two years so that Hindus and Muslims could reach an agreement, but his advice was ignored. On 14 June 1947, the Congress approved the June 3rd Plan for Partition. Azad strongly disagreed and stated that the division was only of land and not of the hearts of the people, and he believed that it would not last long. However, India was partitioned on 14 August 1947. While the nation celebrated independence, Azad felt deep sorrow. For him, freedom came with the

tragedy of division. Despite opposing Partition more strongly than any other leader, Azad failed to prevent it. This failure occurred because Jinnah refused to negotiate with him, Congress leaders ignored his warnings, and Azad held a weak position within the Congress. His policy of ignoring the Muslim League and supporting nationalist Muslims proved ineffective. As a result, Muslim fears were not addressed properly, communal tensions increased, and India was finally divided.

### **Azad's Political Ideas on Democratic India:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's view of democracy was deeply moral and inclusive, shaped by India's plural society and the freedom struggle. For him, democracy was not just a system of elections or majority rule, but a way of life based on freedom, equality, and mutual respect. Azad believed that real democracy could survive only in a society where all communities felt secure and represented. He strongly opposed the idea that the majority should dominate the minority. In his view, majority rule without protection of minority rights was a form of tyranny, not democracy. That is why he consistently argued for constitutional safeguards and civil liberties. He also linked democracy with national unity. Azad felt that dividing people on the basis of religion weakened democratic institutions. He rejected communal politics and believed that political parties should represent common national interests rather than religious identities. According to him, democracy in India had to be secular, inclusive, and rooted in cooperation between different communities. Azad placed great importance on education and public awareness for the success of democracy. He believed that an ignorant or fearful population could easily be misled. As independent India's first Education Minister, he worked to expand universities, promote scientific temper, and encourage free thinking, which he saw as essential for democratic citizenship. In essence, Maulana Azad viewed democracy as a system that protected diversity, upheld individual dignity, and rested on dialogue rather than division. For him, democracy and unity were inseparable.

### **Azad's Political Ideas on Panchayati Raj System:**

The Panchayati Raj system is a form of local self-government in rural India that aims to bring democracy to the grassroots level. It allows villagers to manage their own local affairs through elected bodies and promotes people's participation in administration and development. Mahatma Gandhi strongly supported Panchayati Raj and believed that India's true democracy lay in its villages. He envisioned Gram Swaraj, where villages would be self-reliant and governed by panchayats. Gandhi felt that Panchayati Raj would empower the masses, promote social harmony, and strengthen Indian democracy from the bottom up but Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was not in favour of strong Panchayati Raj Institutions in the form proposed by some Gandhian thinkers. While he supported democracy, he believed that excessive decentralisation could weaken national unity in a newly independent and fragile India. Azad feared that powerful village panchayats might reinforce caste dominance, social inequalities, and local factionalism, especially in rural areas where education and social reform were still limited. He argued that villages were often controlled by traditional elites and that giving them extensive powers could harm individual freedoms rather than promote democracy. He also believed that India, after independence, needed a strong central authority to ensure uniform laws, social justice, and national integration. According to Azad, democracy should first be strengthened at the national and provincial levels before power was devolved to village institutions. Maulana

Azad opposed Panchayati Raj not because he rejected democracy, but because he feared that premature and excessive local self-government could obstruct social reform, weaken the state, and deepen inequalities in Indian society.

### **Colonialism in Azad's Political Philosophy:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad saw colonialism as a system of exploitation and moral injustice, not just foreign rule. In his view, British colonialism in India destroyed economic self-reliance, weakened Indian culture, and denied people their natural right to govern themselves. He believed that no nation had the moral authority to rule another. From the beginning of his political life, Azad opposed colonialism through both **ideas and action**. As a young journalist, he used papers like *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* to expose the true nature of British rule and to awaken political consciousness among Indians, especially Muslims<sup>7</sup>. The British government repeatedly censored and finally banned his writings, which shows how seriously they took his challenge. Azad rejected the colonial claim that Indians were not ready for self-rule. He argued that freedom was not something to be "granted" by the British but a right that Indians had to claim themselves. This is why he supported mass movements like the Non-Cooperation Movement and later stood firmly behind the Quit India Movement, even when it meant long imprisonment. He also believed that colonialism survived by dividing people, particularly through communal politics. Azad felt that British policies encouraged Hindu-Muslim divisions to weaken the national movement. Therefore, for him, fighting colonialism also meant resisting communalism and building unity. Overall, Maulana Azad viewed colonialism as an unjust and destructive force that could be ended only through national unity, political awareness, and complete independence – not partial reforms or compromises.

### **Maulana Azad and the Importance of Unity in Politics:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad believed that governing India was never going to be simple. He understood that India was a land of many religions, languages, cultures, and communities. Because of this diversity, he felt that no single political party or community could truly represent the whole nation. In his view, the best way to govern such a country was through cooperation – by bringing different groups together in a coalition government. For Azad, coalition politics was not a sign of weakness. He saw it as a strength of democracy. When different parties work together, they are forced to listen to each other, discuss issues openly, and find common solutions. This, he believed, would create trust and shared responsibility in running the country. He especially emphasized cooperation between Hindus and Muslims, as he felt their unity was essential for India's political stability and national integration. After the 1937 provincial elections, Azad strongly suggested that the Congress should form coalition governments with Muslim representatives, including the Muslim League, in provinces like the United Provinces and Bengal. His intention was not just political strategy – it was about preventing Muslim isolation and reducing growing communal tensions. He believed that if Muslims felt included in power-sharing, the demand for Partition might lose its strength. However, Azad was also cautious. He did not support coalitions formed merely for gaining power. He insisted that any coalition must be based on shared national goals – such as secularism, democracy, and unity. If alliances were built only on communal interests or personal ambition, they would weaken the nation rather than strengthen it.

In simple terms, Azad saw coalition government as a practical and moral necessity for India. To him, it was a democratic way to protect diversity, safeguard minority rights, and maintain unity in a plural society. He believed that cooperation – not division – was the true path to a strong and united India.

### **The Role of Tawhid in Azad's Thinking:**

Azad followed Quranic understanding of Tawhid; He believed that faith in God is natural to human beings. It is a part of our inner nature. He did not think that Tawhid (Oneness of God) was just belief to be discussed in book or remembered during prayers. For him, it was something alive a truth that should shape how we live in every day. He believed that if we truly accept that God is one, then it must change the way we think speak and treat other.

Tawhid in his understanding destroyed all artificial division based on race, religion, class or God. That is why he strongly opposed communalism, caste, hierarchy and any form of oppression. He humbly accepted that human mind has limits we understand things through what we see and experience, but God is far beyond one imagination. No matter how intelligent we are we cannot fully grasp his greatness. This realization for Azad made a person humble rather proud. For him Tawhid was not only a spiritual idea it had a deep social meaning. No one can claim superiority because of caste, religion, race, wealth or nationality. All these division created by society not by God. This is why Azad strongly opposed communal hatred, caste discrimination and every form of injustice. He believed that dividing people in the name of religion was against the true spirit of Tawhid.

Azad connected Tawhid with dignity in diversity. Different religion culture and traditions may appear separate, but their moral values point toward the same truth. This understanding helped him support Hindu-Muslim unity and the idea of a united Indian nation. He believed that beliefs in one God should bring hearts closer, not push them apart.

### **Maulana Azad's Moral Values in Politics:**

Azad was not only freedom fighter but also a deep thinker and man of strong moral values. He combined courage with freedom, knowledge with practical wisdom, faith with reason. At the time when Indian politics was filled with anger, fear, communal tension Azad stood as calm and thoughtful voice. He believed India's unity and rich mixed culture, for him India belong its diversity and strength came from living together with respect. He opposed the two-nation theory because he did not believe that a nation could be formed on the basis of religion. According to him dividing India could cause deep pain and long-term problem. Azad supported ideas like a weak central government strong province and the cabinet mission plan because he believed Indias diversity could survive with in one united country. When partition finally happened, he saw it as a sad and painful compromise

### **Azad's Idea of Composite Nationalism:**

Azad described Indian history as the coming together of two great cultural tradition. Hindu- Muslim. For him Hindu-Muslim unity was not just a political slogan. It was a living reality deeply rooted in Indian history. He compared them to the river's Ganga and Jamuna. These rivers may flow separately for distance but eventually they meet and form one stream. In the same way Hindu and Muslim cultures came together and created a beautiful shared civilisation.

Azad strongly supported the idea of composite nationalism (Muttahida Qaumiyat) to explain this he gave the example of the first Islamic state in Medina established by prophet Muhammad in Medina people of different religion signed an agreement known as the covenant of Medina. According to this agreement all communities would defend the city together if it was attacked and each group was free to follow its own religion. This showed that people of different faiths could live together as one political community. Azad proudly declared that he was an Indian and inseparable part of the country. He said India's unity was like a grand building and he was an essential part of it. Without him the structure would be incomplete. He could never give up his claim to being Indian.

Azad declared,

*"I am proud of being an Indian. I am a part of this indivisible unity. I am indispensable to this noble edifice, and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element that has gone into the building of India. I can never surrender this claim."*<sup>11</sup>

For Azad, Hindu-Muslim unity was more fundamental than even independence if independence was to be achieved by partitioning India. In his address to the Special Session of the Indian National Congress in 1923, he famously stated:

*"If today an angel descending from the clouds were to declare from the top of the Qutub Minar in Delhi, 'Discard Hindu-Muslim unity and within twenty-four hours Swaraj is yours,' I would prefer to sacrifice Swaraj rather than Hindu-Muslim unity. For the delay in the attainment of Swaraj will be a loss to India alone, but if our unity disappears, it will be a loss to the whole world of humanity."*<sup>12</sup>

### **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad-Architect of Modern Education in Free India:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was one of the main builders of India's modern education system. As independent India's first Education Minister, he believed that education was the foundation of democracy, national unity, and social progress. He worked to create a system based on scientific thinking, secular values, and equal opportunities for all. Institutions like the University Grants Commission, the Indian Institutes of Technology, Sahitya Akademi, and Sangeet Natak Akademi were established with his strong support.

#### **Education for All**

Azad believed that education was the birthright of every citizen. He said freedom and democracy could survive only if education reached the poor, women, and minorities. He strongly supported free and compulsory primary education and encouraged teaching in mother tongues so that learning could be easier and more meaningful. According to him, an educated nation was the key to India's progress.

#### **Free Education**

Azad believed that no child should be denied education because of poverty. He saw free education as an investment in the nation's future, not a burden. His vision later influenced the Constitution of India, which committed the state to provide free and compulsory education to children.

#### **Support for Girls' Education**

Azad gave special importance to girls' education. He believed that if women were educated, the whole society would benefit. Educated mothers raise educated and

responsible citizens. He also wanted women to study science, technical subjects, and vocational courses so they could contribute to national development.

### **Islamic and Modern Education**

Azad believed that true Islamic education encouraged knowledge, reasoning, and moral values. He supported reform in madrasas and wanted religious education to include modern subjects like science and mathematics. During his stay in Ranchi, he founded Madarsa Islamia to combine religious and modern education. He believed education should build character and strengthen society.

### **Scientific Temper**

Azad strongly promoted science and technology. He believed scientific thinking was necessary to make India modern and self-reliant. At the same time, he said science should be guided by ethics and human values. For him, religion and science were not enemies – both encouraged the search for truth.

### **Promotion of Arts and Culture**

Azad considered art and culture the soul of a nation. He believed music, literature, and fine arts were essential for emotional and moral development. He supported national cultural institutions and believed India's culture was based on unity, harmony, and shared heritage.

### **Comprehensive Study**

#### **(I) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan:**

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were two important Muslim leaders of modern India, but they belonged to different periods and had different approaches. Sir Syed lived in the nineteenth century, after the Revolt of 1857, when Muslims had lost political power and British rule had become strong. He believed that Muslims should focus on modern education and social reform instead of politics. He encouraged loyalty to the British government and advised Muslims to stay away from political organisations like the Indian National Congress. His main goal was to uplift the Muslim community through education and rational thinking.

Azad, on the other hand, belonged to the twentieth century and actively participated in India's freedom struggle. Though he received traditional Islamic education in his early life, he was influenced by Sir Syed's rational interpretation of Islam. Azad appreciated Sir Syed's modern and logical approach and even described him as Mujtahid-e-Mutlaq (a great interpreter of Islam). However, Azad did not agree with political withdrawal. He believed Muslims should take part in national politics and work with other communities for India's independence.

While Sir Syed focused mainly on educational reform and avoided political confrontation, Azad combined Islamic reform, rational thought, and Indian nationalism. He strongly supported Hindu-Muslim unity and believed that active political participation was necessary to secure dignity and equality. In this way, Azad carried forward Sir Syed's educational legacy but gave it a nationalist direction.

#### **(II) Azad and Nehru:**

The relationship between Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru was built on friendship, trust, and shared dreams for India. Both were important leaders of the Indian

National Congress and strongly believed in secularism, democracy, and a united nation. They did not agree on everything, but their respect for each other was always strong.

Azad considered Nehru one of his closest friends. In his book *India Wins Freedom*, he wrote that from the beginning of their journey in Congress, they had been “the best of friends.” Their bond became even stronger during the years they spent together in Ahmednagar Fort prison between 1942 and 1945 after the Quit India Movement. During this time, they had long discussions about history, religion, culture, and India’s future. Even in prison, their minds were active and creative. Nehru wrote *The Discovery of India*, and Azad wrote *Ghubar-i-Khatir*. Though their writing styles were different, both showed deep thinking and love for India.

After independence, their friendship turned into partnership in building the nation. When Nehru became Prime Minister, he appointed Azad as India’s first Education Minister. This showed how much he trusted Azad’s vision. Together, they worked to build modern India. Under Azad’s leadership, important institutions like the University Grants Commission, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and the early framework of the Indian Institutes of Technology were established. These institutions reflected Nehru’s idea of scientific thinking and modern progress, which Azad fully supported.

However, their relationship was not without differences. Both believed in socialist and progressive ideas, and sometimes they faced opposition from other leaders like Sardar Patel. The biggest disagreement came over the Partition of India. Azad strongly opposed Partition and supported the Cabinet Mission Plan, which aimed to keep India united with a federal system. He was deeply saddened when Congress finally accepted Partition. Azad later felt that certain political decisions in 1946 weakened the chance of keeping India united. He even believed that history might have been different under different leadership at that critical time.

Still, despite political disagreements, the friendship between Azad and Nehru remained meaningful and respectful. When Azad passed away in 1958, Nehru paid a heartfelt tribute to him in Parliament, calling him a man of great intelligence and character whose place could never truly be filled.

In the end, the relationship between Azad and Nehru shows how two great leaders can share deep friendship while facing difficult political choices. Their story is not just about agreement, but about trust, debate, and dedication to the nation during one of the most challenging periods in India’s history.

## **(II) Azad and Jinnah:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Muhammad Ali Jinnah were two powerful leaders of early twentieth-century India. At the beginning of their political careers, both wanted freedom from British rule and believed in Indian nationalism. However, as time passed, their ideas about India’s future became very different. Jinnah was a highly educated lawyer who entered politics through the Indian National Congress in 1905. In his early years, he worked for Hindu-Muslim unity. His efforts in the Lucknow Pact of 1916, which brought Congress and the Muslim League together, earned him the title “Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity.” However, he later disagreed with Mahatma Gandhi and his method of mass movements and non-cooperation. Jinnah believed in constitutional and legal methods, so he left Congress in 1920.

After the Nehru Report (1928) and his Fourteen Points (1929), Jinnah began focusing more on protecting Muslim political rights. By the late 1930s, he rebuilt the Muslim League and, through the Lahore Resolution of 1940, demanded separate Muslim states. He believed Muslims needed a separate nation to secure their political future. This demand finally led to the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Azad, on the other hand, chose a different path. He supported Gandhi's mass movements and became one of his close associates. As Congress president, Azad strongly defended Hindu-Muslim unity. He believed that Hindus and Muslims had lived together for centuries and had built a shared culture and history. For him, India was one nation made up of many communities. He firmly opposed Partition and argued that dividing the country would cause long-term pain and conflict.

In the end, Jinnah's leadership resulted in the creation of Pakistan, while Azad remained committed to a united and secular India. Their different choices represent one of the most important debates in modern South Asian history – the debate between unity and separation

#### **(IV) Azad and Gandhi:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Mahatma Gandhi were two great leaders of India's freedom struggle. They came from different religious and cultural backgrounds, but they shared a deep love for India and a strong belief in unity and secularism. Their relationship was built on respect, trust, and a common goal – to see India free and united.

Azad greatly admired Gandhi's leadership. He was inspired by Gandhi's method of non-violence and mass movements. Gandhi believed in taking the freedom struggle to ordinary people – farmers, workers, women, and the poor – and turning it into a people's movement. Azad supported him in important movements like the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920) and the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930).

Gandhi also respected Azad's knowledge, honesty, and strong commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity. Azad often acted as a bridge between Gandhi and Muslim leaders. He strongly opposed communal politics and defended the idea that India belonged equally to all communities. Gandhi showed his trust in Azad by supporting him as the youngest President of the Congress in 1923 and again during the difficult years of World War II.

Even though they agreed on many principles, they did not agree on everything. Azad sometimes felt that politics needed practical decisions along with moral ideas. The biggest difference came over the Partition of India. Azad strongly opposed dividing the country and believed it could have been avoided. Gandhi also did not want Partition, but Azad felt that Congress leaders finally accepted it too easily.

After independence, Azad continued nation-building as India's first Education Minister. He worked to build modern education, promote scientific thinking, and strengthen cultural harmony – continuing the broader vision of unity that both he and Gandhi believed in.

In the end, the relationship between Azad and Gandhi shows how two strong leaders can respect each other even when they disagree. Their partnership made the freedom movement stronger and left a lasting message of unity, peace, and moral leadership for future generations.

**Conclusion:**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad holds a special place in modern Indian history. He was not only a freedom fighter but also a moral thinker who believed in unity, tolerance, and shared humanity. At a time when India faced British rule and growing communal tensions, Azad stood firmly for national unity. He believed that political freedom was incomplete without moral and social harmony. Azad rejected the idea that religion could define a nation. He strongly opposed the Two-Nation Theory and believed that India was a shared civilisation built by people of different faiths living together for centuries. The Partition of India deeply hurt him because it broke the ideal of unity he had always defended. He also believed education was the key to building a strong nation. As India's first Education Minister, he promoted scientific thinking, tolerance, and moral values. He believed ignorance leads to fear, fear leads to hatred, and hatred destroys nations. What makes Azad truly remarkable is that he lived by his principles. Even in difficult times, he never gave up his belief in unity and secularism. His life reminds us that true patriotism means inclusion, respect, and justice for all. Maulana Azad's legacy is a message of unity, courage, and moral strength – values that remain important even today

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