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**‘INTERPRETATION OF INDIAN CULTURE IN
MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD’S LITERATURE’**

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Introduction

One of the fervent advocates of nationalism, secularism, religious diversity and dialogue, among the Indian ulema and Islamic thinkers, was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. This celebrated freedom-fighter and the first education minister of independent India was also an Islamic mystic or Sufi in his thought and practice. Born to an Islamic scholar Maulana Khairuddin Dehlvi, a practitioner of Qadiri and Naqshbandi Sufi orders, Azad was imbued in the mystical Islamic teachings from his early age. Therefore, he began to think and contemplate over the essential truths of the world religions.

Having achieved a nodding acquaintance with the traditional Islamic theology, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad developed a broader worldview in his young age. After rigorous religious studies, he reached the conclusion that the beliefs he had been taught were sheer imitation (taqlid-e-jamid), strict adherence to the inherited dogmas and unchecked religious practice of prevailing normative customs. Hence, he started questioning the common theological beliefs and practices. He studied extensively and acquired knowledge of almost everything pertaining to modern religious sciences evolving in the Arabic Islamic studies at that time. Thus, he broadened his views and became open to all trends of thought, maintaining a fine balance and moderate narrative in his religious and mystical views.

Maulana Azad's pluralistic inclinations stemmed from a broader notion of Islamic mysticism well-imbedded in the established Sufi Islamic traditions. In fact, his deep faith in the religious pluralism and brotherhood of mankind was based on the popular Sufi doctrine of wahdatul wujud (unity of being). Therefore, he had great veneration for Indian Sufi saints who, as he himself asserted, inspired him to the very core of his being. Notably, he was greatly inspired by India's forgotten Muslim mystic Hazrat Sarmad Shahid, who was executed by Emperor Aurangzeb for being charged with heresy. He was a divine mystic of such eminence and yet is little known to the modern generations of traditional Muslims.

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 is one of those rare personalities through whom the distinctions of the 20th century can be recognized and possibilities of the 21st century determined. He stood for a learning society through liberal, modern and universal education combining the humanism of Indian arts and the rationalism of western sciences, a society where the strong are just and the weak secure, where the youth is disciplined

and the women lead a life of dignity - a non-violent, non-exploiting social and economic order. He was free India's first Education Minister and guided the destinies of the Nation for eleven years. He was the first to raise the issue of the National System of Education which is today the bed-rock of the National Policy on Education (1986) updated in 1992. The concept implies that, upto a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex have access to education of a comparable quality. All educational programmes, he said, must be carried out in strict conformity with secular values and constitutional framework. He stood for a common educational structure of 10+2+3 throughout India. The Right to Free Education Bill pending t approval of Parliament is a dream project built up on Maulana Azad's vision. The wealth of the nation, according to Maulana Azad, was not in the country's banks but in primary schools. The Maulana was also a great votary of the concept of Neighborhood schools and the Common School System. In consonance with this vision, the Right to Education Bill seeks to make free and compulsory education a fundamental right.

Maulana Azad was a prolific writer with several books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic notably amongst which is '*India Wins Freedom*', his political biography, translated from Urdu to English. His translation of Quran from Arabic into Urdu in six volumes published by Sahitya Akademy in 1977 is his '*magnum opus*'. Since then several editions of '*Tarjaman-e-Quran*' have come out. His other books include '*Gubar-e-Khatir*', '*Hijr-o-Vasal*', '*Khatbat-I-Azad*', '*Hamari Azadi*', '*Tazkara*'.

He gave a new life to Anjamane-Tarrqui-e-Urdu-e-Hind. During the partition riots when the ‘Anjamane-Tarrqui-Urdu suffered, its Secretary Maulvi Abdul Haqq decided to leave for Pakistan alongwith the books of the Anjaman. Abdul Haqq had packed the books but Maulana Azad got them retrieved and thus saved a national treasure being lost to Pakistan. He also helped the Anjaman to revive by sanctioning a grant of Rs. 48,000 per month from the Ministry of Education. Likewise he increased the grants of Jamia Millia Islamia, Aligarh Muslim University in their days of financial crisis. He paid particular attention to the Archaeological Survey of India’s efforts to repair and maintain the protected monuments.

Throughout his life he stood for the cordial relationship between Hindus and Muslims and the composite culture of India. He stood for modern India with secular credentials, a cosmopolitan character and international outlook. As a man Maulana was even greater, he led an austere life. He had the humility of a Dervesh. At the time of his death he had neither any property nor any bank account. But there were lots of rare books which are now a property of the Nation.

His early career from 1906 to 1920 was influenced by his religious teachings. During this period Azad firmly believed that the Muslims were the leaders of the world. In his early writings and speeches which appeared in his journal *Al-Hilal*, Azad talked about

the superiority of Muslims over the followers of other religions and called for an “Islamic Way” to independence. In these writings he appeared as a Muslim fundamentalist who is in favor of a linkage between politics and religion. His response to a correspondent of *Al-Hilal* in the issue of December 29, 1921 characterizes his fundamentalist tone in those days.

“You have suggested separation of politics from religion”, underlines Azad in his article. “But if we do this what, then, is left with us? We have developed our political thinking from religion.... We believe that every thought which draws inspiration from any institution (including politics) other than the Quran is Kufr (infidelity).”

One can see clearly in the mind of young Azad at the same time an enthusiasm for Muslim nationalism and a passion for the Pan-Islamic theory of Jamaledin Al-Afghani. But, with time, he stood for Hindu-Muslim unity.

This occurred after 1920. The evolution of Azad’s outlook from Pan-Islamic to secular nationalist, with no doubt, was determined by his friendship and collaboration with Mahatma Gandhi and by the rise of the communal problems in the Indian liberation movement. Like Gandhi, Azad considered Hindu-Muslim unity as a necessary principle for the national reconstruction of India. In his famous address to the Agra session of the Khalifat Conference on August 25, 1921, he referred to Hindu-Muslim unity as a moral

imperative for the future of India. He proclaimed: “If the Muslims of India would like to perform their best religious and Islamic duties...then they must recognize that it is obligatory for the Muslims to be together with their Hindu brethren... and it is my belief that the Muslims in India cannot perform their best duties, until in conformity within the injunctions of Islam, in all honesty, they establish unity and cooperation with the Hindus. This belief is based on the imperative spirit of Islam.” In his presidential address at Ramgarh session of the Indian National Congress in 1940, Azad came back on the issue of unity and affirmed:

“Our language, our poetry, literature, society, our tastes, our dresses, our traditions and the innumerable realities of our daily life bears the zeal of a common life and a unified society...Our social intercourse for over one thousand years has blended into a united nationalism.”

Azad foresaw the idea of India in relation with the necessity of an inter-faith dialogue and co-existence among different religions. The idea of unity of religions was logically connected in his mind to his conception of one God and religious pluralism. Azad’s main distinction between the spirit of religion (*Din*) and its outward expressions (*Shari’a*) provided him a theoretical justification for his idea of oneness of God and the concept of unity of humanity. The foundation of Azad’s religious pluralism was that the Divine has many aspects, but the human and the divine are united in an expression of love. In his commentary on *Surat-ul-Fatiha* also called

Um-ul-Quran (core of the Quran), Azad outlined the essence of his ideas on what he considered as “the God of Universal Compassion”. “ whatever view one might take” , writes Azad, “ this is clear that the mind which the *Surat-ul-Fatiha* depicts is a type of mind which reflects the beauty and the mercy of the God of Universal Compassion. It is in no sense fettered by prejudices of race or nation or other exclusive groupings. It is a mind imbued with Universal Humanism. This is the true spirit of the Quranic invitation. [Quoted by Syeda Saiyidain Hameed: “*The Man Behind the Maulana*”]. Azad’s interpretation of the Quran keeps its closeness to the text, while at the same time it is inspired by the Sufi perception of God through “Kashf” (personal revelation). Azad’s faith in the essential unity of humanity and in the oneness of all religions stemmed essentially from the Sufi concept of “the unity of existence” (*wahdat-al-wujud*). Truth, for Azad, was one and the same everywhere. The mistake was to equate particular forms of Truth with Truth itself. In Azad's own words: “The misfortune is that the world worships mere terms and not their inner meaning”. Therefore, “though all may worship the same Truth, they will fight with each other on account of differences of the terms that they employ. If the veils of these externals and terms can be lifted so that Truth and Reality come before all unveiled, then, at once, all quarrels of this world will end, and all who quarrel will see that what all seek is one and the same”. His most important book, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* illustrates Azad’s firm beliefs in tolerance and dialogue. It is in this book that Azad’s idea of religious pluralism is expressed powerfully by the concept of oneness of faiths (*wahdat-I-Din*). For Azad, God

as the “cherisher” and “nourisher” (*Rabb*) transcends all fragmentations and divisions of humanity in race, color and religion. As a result, the path of universal God (*Rabb-ul-Alameen*) is “the right path” (*Sirat-al-Mustaqeem*), which belongs to no particular religion. In one of his celebrated works entitled *Ghubar-i- Khatir*, Azad drew a parallel between the Sufi concept of “unity of existence” and the idea of pantheism as formulated in the Upanishads. If, at root, all religions reflected the same message, then, for Azad, there was no room for Hindu as well as Muslim communalism. Azad’s insistence on the Hindu-Muslim unity emanates, therefore, from his true spiritual convictions which are notably expressed in a speech at a special session of the Indian National Congress in 1923. “If an angel were to descend from the clouds today and settle on Delhi’s Qutab Minar and proclaim that India can win Swaraj (self-rule) within two hours provided that India renounces Hindu-Muslim unity, then I would renounce Swaraj and not unity. Because if Swaraj is delayed that is a loss to India, but if unity is lost that is a loss to humanity.” Pandit Nehru, in one of his tributes to Azad, once said: “He represented and he always reminded me of what I have read in history about great men of several hundred years ago, say if, I think of European history, the great men of the Renaissance, or in a later period, of the Encyclopaedists who proceeded the French Revolution, men of intellect, men of action. He reminds me also of what might be called the great qualities of olden days the graciousness of them... He was a peculiar and very special representative in a high degree of that great composite culture which has gradually grown in India.” Azad sought a synthesis of modern

secularism and spiritual traditionalism. He took his stand upon Truth by unifying the soul of Islam with the glory of his nation. "I am a Muslim and this fills me with pride.", he proclaimed in his Presidential Address in 1942 at Ramgarh. "But in addition to these feelings, I am also the possessor of another, which has been created by the stark realities of my external life. The soul of Islam is not a barrier to this belief: in fact, it guides me in this path. I am proud to be an Indian. I am an integral part of this unified and impartible nation." Therefore, Azad considered religious communalism as a big obstacle in the way of Indian solidarity. For Azad, Hindu communalism, like Muslim communalism, was not at all compatible with the concept of secular democracy and was a negation of pluralism. It was for this reason that Maulana Azad cautioned Indian Muslims against religious nationalism and suggested that the plurality of caste and communities makes India the most democratic as well as challenging country as far as the process of nation building is concerned. For him, secular nationalism can be an effective antidote to religious fanaticism in India if Indian political processes were guided and controlled by political philosophy of secularism. It is in relation with this aspect of Azad's thought that the comment of India's President. Zakir Husain, finds all its relevance. "In my opinion" says Zakir Husain, " the greatest service which the Maulana did was to teach people of every religion that there are two aspects of religion. One separates and creates hatred. This is the false aspect. The other, the true spirit of religion, brings people together; it creates understanding. It lies in the spirit of service, in sacrificing self for others. It implies belief in unity, in the essential unity of

things.” Non-violence was also one of the ingredients of Azad’s secular nationalism. Azad held that the conviction of dialogue among faiths and the spirit of peace characterized Islam. According to him, non-violence provided an effective strategy in the struggle for independence. He was a defender of shared common values. He believed that major religions were the common heritage of all mankind. His increasing receptivity to the message of other faiths led him to the recognition of the humanist element in each religion. This is why for him the outward forms of religion were useless without moral actions. From his point of view, religion was not supposed to dictate specific political actions, but to mould one’s general principles in life. The awareness of other religions also encouraged him to formulate the idea of a humanist coexistence of faiths. Azad’s universal humanism led him on to fiercely oppose both Muslim as well as Hindu communalism that saw no place for a genuinely religiously plural and democratic independent India. His message is still relevant. He was a man ahead of his time and his lessons of religious pluralism are yet to be learnt not only among the Muslims but also among followers of other religions.

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Maulana Azad Institutionalizing Art and Culture

For Maulana Azad, no education at any level was complete without art and culture. He repeatedly emphasized the significance of culture and heritage while formulating his educational policies. While opening an art exhibition in New Delhi, he said “Art is an education of emotions and is thus an essential element in any scheme of truly national education. Education, whether at the secondary or at the university stage, cannot be regarded as complete if it does not train our faculties to the perception of beauty. He wrote in one of his letters that “Beauty, whether in sound, or in face, whether in the Taj Mahal, or Nishat Bagh, beauty is beauty...and it has its natural demands. Pity that miserable soul whose insensitive heart did not learn how to respond to the call of beauty!” It was this commitment of Azad which prompted him to set up most of the art and culture academies, soon after the attainment of freedom.

It is not a very well-known fact that Maulana Azad was an accomplished musician himself, who had undergone proper training to play sitar. In his *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, the longest letter he wrote was on the history and art of music, where he writes to Nawab Sadr Yar Jung, “Perhaps, you don’t know that at one time music had been my passion. It engrossed me for

several years.” His Islam also did not deter him in this pursuit, where he disagreed even with his father’s perception of Islam.

Here Azad was following a well established tradition within Islam, which has been marginalized by certain sections during the later centuries of Islam. Even Imam Ghazali in the eleventh century devoted a chapter on music in his Ihya Ulum al-Deen where he says that there is something wrong with the man or woman who does not like music. He declared “One who is not moved by music is unsound of mind and intemperate; is far from spirituality and is denser than birds and beasts because everyone is affected by melodious sounds. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad wrote further in the letter about music, which is in stark contrast to the Wahabi and Talibani perversion of Islam:

I can always remain happy doing without the necessities of life, but I cannot live without music. A sweet voice is the support and prop of my life, a healing for my mental labours. Sweet music is the cure for all the ills and ailments of my body and heart.

Azad was aware that the Prophet only denounced excessive music or poetry as corrupting, music as such was not prohibited. While digging the

trench around Medinah in preparation for battle, the Prophet and his companions were singing songs (Bukhari/Muslim). It is clear that music is an anathema only for the myopic, bigoted, spoilsport apostles of self-righteous Islam and regrettably, most of the Muslims have succumbed to their vicious campaign against this significant cultural expression.

Soon after he joined the interim government, few months before independence, Maulana Azad felt that enough is not being done to promote Indian classical music on All India Radio. He shot off a letter to Sardar Patel who was formally in charge of Broadcasting, where he said: “You perhaps do not know that I have always taken keen interest in Indian classical music and at one time practiced it myself. It has, therefore, been a shock to me to find that the standard of music of All India Radio broadcast is extremely poor. I have always felt that All India Radio should set the standard in Indian music and lead to its continual improvement. Instead, the present programmes have an opposite effect and lead one to suspect that the artistes are sometimes chosen not on grounds of merit. He even proposed that he can find time to advise the concerned person who is in charge of the programmes and suggest ways of improvement. This is enough to establish the commitment of Maulana Azad to matters related to arts and aesthetics.

It was this commitment of Azad, which prompted him to institutionalize Indian art and culture in the 1950s. He was conscious that the colonial government had deliberately ignored this aspect that needed to be looked after in independent India. Within a short span of ten years, he established most of the major cultural and literary academies we have today, including the Sangeet Natak Academy, Lalit Kala Academy, Sahitya Academy as well as The Indian Council for Cultural Relations. While setting up these Academies, Azad was clear that all these institutions of creative talent need to be autonomous and free from official government control and interference. He categorically pointed out at the First All India Conference of Letters that “even a National Government cannot, and should not be, expected to develop literature and culture through official fiats. The government should certainly help both by material assistance and by creating an atmosphere which is congenial to cultural activities, but the main work of the development of literature and culture must be the responsibility of individuals endowed with talent and genius.” The Indian Academy of Dance, Drama and Music was inaugurated on January 28, 1953 and Azad said at the inaugural function that “India can be proud of long heritage and tradition in the field of dance, drama, and music. In the field of fine arts, as in those of philosophy and science, India and Greece occupy an almost

unique position in human history. It is my conviction that in the field of music, the achievement of India is greater than that of Greece. The breadth and depth of Indian music is perhaps unrivalled as is its integration of vocal and instrumental music.” Azad also pointed out that the essence of Indian civilization and culture has always been a spirit of assimilation and synthesis. Nowhere is this more clearly shown than in the field of music. Maulana Azad’s cosmopolitan and international vision is reflected in his comment when he says further in his speech that “This precious heritage of dance, drama and music is one we must cherish and develop. We must do so not only for our own sake but also as our contribution to the cultural heritage of mankind. Nowhere is it truer than in the field of art, that to sustain means to create. Traditions cannot be preserved but can only be created afresh. It will be the aim of these academies to preserve our traditions by offering them an institutional form.” Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, as I have tried to bring out in this brief survey, occupies a key position in the educational, cultural and scientific development of independent India. We find that he institutionalized crucial Indian sectors like education and culture and laid the foundations of a future network of scientific and technological institutions. However, I feel that a more extensive research is needed to do justice with

the multifaceted contributions of Maulana Azad and his role in the growth robust and pluralist independent India.

To survey the writings of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (spread over the first half of the twentieth century) is to discover that he did not produce as much literature as one would have expected from a person of his literary caliber. The reasons, probably, relates to the fact that during the second decade of this century, he gave all his time and attention to politics and became the moving spirit behind the struggle for Independence.

To educate and to propagate his thoughts, he started several journals like Al-Hilal, Al- Balagh and Paigham which became the bedrock of his journalistic career. At the same time, he was most particular about his religious beliefs. He continually tried to explain the spirit of the Quran, and the fact that it should become a part of the daily lives of all Muslims. The pressure of politics, however, did not give him enough time and opportunity to pursue his scholarly interests, and, therefore, his journalistic mission was left incomplete. Due to limitations of time, there were many religious tasks he left undone. Similarly, there was a lot more they wanted to do in the educational field. Yet, the literary, educational religious, and journalistic contributions, he made are of great importance today and will remain equally relevant in the future.

At the root of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's interests lay his early appreciation of poetry. He started writing poetry at the same time as he wrote articles and translated from Arabic and Persian. His early writings were published in several magazines and journals. At first he did not think of starting a journal himself; he was content to have his work published in other journals. But as the nineteenth century drew to an end, Maulana succeeded in starting a journal called Nairang-e-Alam, which added greatly to the literary treasures of this century. His intellectual ambitions did not allow him to remain content with publishing only this one journal. Hence, in 1900, he started a weekly journal called Al- Misbah, a farewell to the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century brought further success to Maulana's journalistic efforts. he began editing the prose section of the magazine Khadang-e-Nazar. Later, he joined the editorial team of Edward Gazette. Yet he was not satisfied; he wanted to start a magazine on his own, where he would not be restrained and bound by other people's opinions. Along with his literary carvings, he also wanted to satisfy his political and social urges. His desire to educate people in matters of religions could not be fulfilled while working for others. Therefore, in November, 1903, he started Lisan-ul-Sidq, with these objectives in view.

In this journal Maulana Azad endeavored to publish various educational, moral, literary, social historical and scientific articles, which were aimed at developing the mind, broadening the outlook and elevating the thoughts of the people. A study of this journal proves, beyond doubt, that the young Abdul kalam Mohiuddin Ahmed Azad Dehlavi, felt real love and anguish for his fellow men, and that he was single-minded and clearheaded about the aims and objectives of his journal. Unfortunately, this too was short-lived. Afer Lisan-ul-Sidq, he worked for the Al Nadva for six months. In April 1906, he joined the Vakil, Amritsar. One year later, in January 1907, we find him editing the Dar-ul-Sultanat at Calcutta. Some differences arose between him and the owner, leading to his resignation. A few months later, the owner of Vakil persuaded him to return to Amritsar. Here, despite findings greater opportunity for political service, he did not like interference from the owner. Once again he left the Vakil.

During his stay in Navda, he had an opportunity to study some highly reputed magazines like Al-manzar, and Al- Hilal. Maulana was greatly impressed by their publication standard, views and aims. At the end of 1908, he travelled to Turkey, Egypt and Iraq. The desire to edit his own magazine took concrete shape during these travels and brought him in closer touch with Arab journalism. On his return, he gave this matter profound

consideration. The external and internal high standards he had set for his magazine were difficult to meet. This caused a long delay, but he was not ready to compromise and bring out a low standard magazine. After almost two years of planning on July 13, 1912, he brought out a weekly magazine Al-Hilal. It was a fine example of journalistic quality and decorum. Although from the start the journal contained articles on topics such as “Ahrar-e-Islam”, Fasana-e-Ajam”, and “The Maghrib Aqsa” and the “Aalam-e-Islam”¹, all related to Islam and Islamic countries, these articles were written to create an awakening among Indian Muslims. Maulana hoped to see Muslims at the frontline, fighting for the freedom of their a very short while, Al-Hilal persuaded the Muslims to stand up against the British. The publication of an article called “ Mashad-e-Akbar”, in September 1913, resulted in the demand for a bail of Rs. 2,000. In 1914 that bail was confiscated and the publication of Al-Hilal was suspended. This was the result of Maulana’s outspokenness against the oppression of colonial rule. The following lines from this article reflect Maulana’s mood, viewpoint, and tone of Al-Hilal:

You, the innocent victims of Kanpur, your body has been riddled with bullets, your eyes have been pierced with rods. Every limb of your has been wounded. Doesn’t this remind you of the caravan on the bank of the river Euphrates, which was similarly plundered and which resulted in complete reversal of fate in the history of the Ummayyads? You innocent children and newly opened buds of Islam, who caused you to wither so soon? The sardonic words of Sir James Meston sullied your pure and innocent

hearts, and caused you to come forward and contradict falsehood with your mouth of wounds. Fly away, you innocent holy birds! Fly to the vastness and peace of the free sky.

In the literary section of this volume some unpublished writings of Mirza Ghalib appeared for the first time, which indicate Maulana's interest in Ghalib. It also throws light on his literary tastes and standards, his critical eye and questioning mind.

After Al-Hilal, Maulana started Al- Balagh. This weekly, though modeled along the lines of Al-Hilal, was not a replica. It did not raise many political issues. The bulk of it was devoted to Islamic education, it also had as section on literary criticism.

In 1920, when Maulana was freed from internment in Ranchi and reached Calcutta, he once again felt the need for a weekly journal so that they could reach out to his countrymen and acquaint them with the political issues of the day. Accordingly, on 23 December, 1921, he started a weekly called Paigham with Abdul Razaq Malihabadi as its editor. Although Maulana was only supposed to supervise the paper, in fact he did much more. Work needed to be done on the political front, and Paigham was launched with this as its prime objective. The first issue stated its aims and objectives.

The only aim of bringing out this journal is to create a platform for instructing and enlightening people about the present struggle. It may, from time to time, contain some articles on religious or educational topics, or translations of clarifications from the Quran.

Since Maulana was deeply immersed in politics, this journal was dominated by political events. Even though it was a weekly, an effort was made to keep its readers informed about all important political news and movements. A strong point of this weekly was its language, which, compared to Al-Hilal, was much simpler. This helped to make it more widely understood.

For almost five years after Paigham, Maulana Azad could not start another weekly. During the first year of this period he was in prison, and the rest of the time was spent in negotiating matters with various missions and delegations. On 10 June, 1927, he started the second phase of Al-Hilal. But a study of its various issues reveals the Maulana could not give it as much time as it required. Therefore Al- Hilal (sani) ceased publication on 9 December 1927, after a six-month disorganized effort. The aims of the second phase Al-Hilal were as follows:

- (1) The practical problems of the present political scene in India.
- (2) The mental and practical disarray and the community life of the Muslims which became evident in the last reaction; and its rationalization.
- (3) The collective and national consciousness of the Indian Muslims; its moulding and its main postulates.

(4) Religious and scholarly discourses.

In practice, however, except in the first few issues, Al-Hilal (sani) avoided the burning issues and political arguments prevailing in India; although Maulana had, by now, become a respected leader of the political movement, and was playing a very active role in the Indian freedom struggle.

To review Maulana's journalistic achievements, is to find that Al-Hilal (1912-14), was his most important journal. It was different from the usual journalistic trends of that period; serious, compassionate, politically mature and religiously oriented. Its religious fervour did not reflect any prejudice or narrow-mindedness. It showed a vast understanding and sympathy for all humanity. Its language was dignified and majestic, with a degree of eloquent preaching, full of Arabic and Persian metaphors and similes. Yet it was not too erudite. Its contents were exhilarating. To read it was to experience a sense of dignity and honour. The Ayats from the Quran which formed the bedrock of his articles gave them immense dignity. Maulana Azad was the first Urdu journalist who brought the Quran nearer to the people, thus enabling them to take guidance from it for their daily life. Had it lasted longer, Urdu journalism could have achieved a higher status.

His journalistic achievement, especially Al-Hilal, prove that Maulana was a born journalist. Unfortunately, politics deprived him of this creative talent.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's entire life history is a testimony to his love for Islam. His reverence for Sir Syed, his attachment to Shibli, his writing in support of Al Nadva, his translation and interpretation of the Quran, his interests in Islamic countries, Hizbullah, Dars-e-Quran, Darul Irshad, nazm-Jamaat, Al-Hilal, Al-Balagh, the creation of Imarat-Sharia are all proofs of his great attachment to Islam. This deep affection for Islam did not make him narrow-minded, but gave him a depth of vision, intensified his love for his country and helped him many times during different stages of his struggle for freedom.

In addition to the environment of his home, Maulana's association with Shibli helped in awakening his national and social consciousness and his desire to serve Islam. Participation in the meeting of Nadva and Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, and exchanging views with the great leaders, trained him and defined his priorities. He learnt the art of expression, comprehension, and communication and developed a sense of responsibility towards social and national issues, as well as the courage to meet the challenges presented by them.

In December, 1906, Maulana participated with great enthusiasm in the All India Mohammedan Anglo- Oriental Educational Conference held in Dhaka. Later, in the company of Maulana Shibli, the nationalistic feelings started taking hold. His association with the Vakil, Amritsar, created a great interest in politics. His stay at Calcutta, where agitation against the division of Bengal, and the activities of the revolutionary party were causing mayhem, created in him the desire to serve his country, and fired his patriotic sentiments. In 1908, he got a chance to travel to Baghdad, Iran and Turkey, and meet and exchange views with the revolutionaries. This deeply impressed him and gave him courage and determination. On his return to India, he joined the revolutionary party of Shyam Sudner Chakravarty. But soon afterwards, he broke off from it and set out on his own course. On 13 July 1912 he started Al- Hilal, as an instrument for spreading his own political views and religious beliefs.

This was the beginning of Azad's political life. His patriotism was strengthened. Through the pages of Al-Hilal the word of Islam was presented and with a fresh approach the translation and interpretation of the Quran was accomplished. After Al-Hilal he started Al- Balagh and inaugurated Darul-Irshad. At the same time he wrote copiously to inspire all

Indians, especially Muslims, to revolt against slavery. His activities led the government to make the following statement:

This man is in league with the enemies of the British Empire.

This statement resulted in Maulana writing a strong letter to the Viceroy:

... Having studied, in great detail, all doctrines of Islam. It can be concluded that it is proper for any Muslim to serve the British Government in any capacity even for one moment. ¹¹⁴

He utilized his internment at Ranchi to complete his translation and interpretation of the Quran. The ideas expressed in his treatise *Tazkira* summarise his views on Islam:

I thank the Lord for his generosity that he gave me a family which for centuries and been engaged in instruction and education, and whose noble ancestors had passed on their heritage from generation to generation. Their descendants are fortunate to have inherited virtues such as truthfulness, fearlessness and integrity. They have learnt to raise their voices against injustice, and to sacrifice their life for the love of God. They have learnt to disdain the high and mighty and rebel against them. This is my heritage and my family treasure.

At this time influenced by a certain event Maulana wrote an important pamphlet called “*Jamiush Shavahid fi dukhul ghairul Muslim fil masjid*”. This is proof of his broadmindedness as well as his knowledge of Islam. All these events were landmarks in Azad’s political maturing, and paved the way for the role he was to play in Indian political life.

Maulana's first historic meeting with Mahatma Gandhi occurred on 18 January 1920. Later it was cemented into an everlasting relationship based on a common political ideology. Gandhiji joined hands with the supporters of the Khilafat movement. The great advantage of this movement was that it recognized the need for Hindu-Muslim unity. Maulana Azad was a frontrunner of this movement. In this speech at the Majlis-e-Khilafat, Agra on 25 August, 1921, he clearly stated;

It is my firm belief that the Indian Muslims cannot function efficiently until in the true spirit of Islam and with absolute sincerity they unite and become one with the Hindus of India. This will be consistent with the spirit of the Quran. ¹¹⁶
In this contest he repeated what he had said in the first issue of Al-Hilal.

The seven crore Muslims of India should unite with their twenty two crore Hindu brothers, so that they should become one people and one nation.

On 26 August 1921 in the inaugural address of the Majlis-i-Khilafat he addressed the British in these forceful words:

Yes, I have asked the Indian soldiers of the British army, and will go on repeating until I have any voice left in me, to leave government service. I say this today, and will repeat it every morning and every morning and every evening until I have no breath left in my body. It is my duty to incite the soldiers to quit serving the British. ¹¹⁸

Maulana Azad kept on advocating non-cooperation. In 1921, when the Prince of Wales was to visit India, he fearlessly announced:

The arrival of the Prince of Wales.
A time for the trial of India's self-respect and love for Islam.

17 November: Day of Judgment. The final decision of Jamiat-ul-Ulema, Khilafat Committee and All India Congress Committee is a total boycott of this visit.
Total Hartal to be observed everywhere on 17 November.

The annual meeting of November 1921, at which the Jamiat-ul-Ulema decreed that non-cooperation was a command in accordance with Shariat, was presided over by Maulana Azad himself. Maulana's active and fearless participation in the Independence movement delay. His Quol-e-Faisal is the historic speech he made on that occasion. It has since become an important landmark in the freedom movement. He stood before the judge; a brave soldier, freedom fighter and ardent believer in the Islamic faith. He said:

The historian in watching us. Allow me to repeatedly occupy this place, and you too may go on writing your judgments as often. The process will for some time; then the gates of another court will open wide. That will be the Court of the Lord where time will act as judge. It will pass the judgment. That will be the final judgment. And praise to God in the beginning and in the end.

While pursuing his true faith, Maulana adhered to the path of nationalism, which he had chosen and, at every dark turn, gained wisdom from the Quran. He pursued this path with great faith and confidence until his very end.

At the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress at Ramgarh in March 1940, Maulana forcefully expressed his views.

It seems to have been decreed by Divine Order that the soil of India would become a resting place and the homeland of many caravans, of different cultures, religious and races. The dawn of history witnessed the arrival of these caravans, one after the other, and this vast and generous land

welcomed them and found shelter for each within its fold. The last caravan among these was ours- the followers of Islam which walked in the foot prints of many others, and settled here forever. This was the mingling of two different cultures and races. Like the two streams of Ganga and Jamuna, they initially flowed along different paths. Then, according to the law of nature, inevitably, they had to merge and become one. This merging of two cultures is a great historical event. From the day it occurred, and unseen forces caused the process of evolution, and, in place of the old, emerged a new India.

We brought our own treasures. This land was rich; we added to it what we had to offer and, in turn, benefitted from its native wealth. We offered the most precious gift from our treasure of Islam. What it needed most was Islam's message of human equality and democracy.

It has been eleven centuries since this occurrence. Islam, today, has as much right on this land as Hinduism. If Hinduism has been the religion of the people of this land for several thousand years, Islam has also been a religion of the people for one thousand years. If a Hindu can hold head high and claim to be an Indian, so can we proclaim with pride that we are also Indians and followers to the path of Islam.

Maulana Azad was held prisoner by the British for ten years altogether, not a short period by any means. When he was freed his spirits were undeterred and his enthusiasm unabated. He did not show a single trace of fear or anxiety nor any sign of harassment or defeat. In fact, he seemed more firm in his beliefs and more courageous than ever. He always followed the path of moderation, neither associating with the Pro-changers, nor with the No-changers. He was a trusted comrade of all. In 1939, he was elected President of Congress for a second term, and remained in office for almost seven years, till 3 July, 1946.

When he was released for the last time in 1945, Maulana plunged directly into the Simla Conference, Parliamentary Delegation, and the Cabinet Mission. He impressed the Mission with his reasonable advice, and many times managed to have his say. During the interim government he was given charge of the Ministry of Education. In 1947, when Mountbatten announced 15 August as the date for the partition of India, Maulana was heartbroken. He was prepared to wait longer for Independence, rather than see the country divided. What pained him most was the fact that with the division of the country, the Hindus and Muslims of India would also be divided- a situation against which he had fought all his life. He was a staunch believer in communal harmony:

Even if an angel from heaven was to appear and proclaim from the height of the Qutab Minar, that we can achieve Swaraj or Independence within twenty four hours, provided India foregoes Hindu- Muslim unity. I would rather give up Swaraj, than accept this division. Because if Swaraj is delayed, it will be a loss to India, but if we lose our unity, that will be a loss for the entire human race.

Partition bred hatred among Hindus and Muslims, and communal riots erupted all over the country. Many parts of India were affected. Delhi could not save itself, and was caught in the flames of hatred. Maulana was deeply affected by all this destruction. Muslims in India were shaken with fear and disappointment. In this state of despair Maulana came up front and tried to bring this problem to the attention of the Government. He also gave solace to the Indian Muslims, especially to the Muslims of Delhi. With great sympathy, he gave them the message of courage and forbearance. In a voice filled with emotion, he addressed the Delhi Muslims at Jama Masjid.

My dear friends- Do you know what has urged me to stand here today? A gathering in this memorable masjid built by Shahjehan is nothing new to me. I have addressed you from this platform many time during this tumultuous period. I addressed you when your faces were radiant with peace instead of tormented with sorrow and when I look at the anguish on your faces, and the desolation in your hearts I am reminded of some forgotten stories from the past.

Do you remember when I called you, you slashed my tongue, when I raised my pen, you severed my hands. I tried to walk, ut you broke my feet. When I wanted to turn, you mutilated my back. Even at the peak of the past seven years of bitter acrid politics (which you were flowing and which has deserted you today), I tried to dissuade you following this ruinous path. You not only turned a deaf ear to my call, but continued

hurtling towards destruction. As a result, the same dangers surrounded you today, fearing which, you had digressed from the path of truth.

These words of Maulana Azad has a therapeutic effect on the Muslims. They gathered courage and their disappointment was dispelled. The entire community changed their way of thinking and reviewed their judgments. This was exactly what Maulana Azad desired. Today all the right minded people in India feel that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a respected Muslim as well as a patriot and a national leader. His politics centered around Hindu-Muslims unity. He was a torch-bearer along the path of national struggle.

For future generations, his thoughts and views, his courage and forbearance, his patience and understanding, and this steady progress along the path of freedom will make the route towards progress and stability and help build a strong and prosperous India.

LITERARY AND SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTION

The poetic period of Maulana's life corresponds with his student days. In 1899, at the age of eleven, he started writing poetry and taking part in Musharias. He became known to vast audiences and was published in several magazines. By 1902 or 1903 he suddenly said goodbye to the world of poetry and began writing prose. With great zeal he pursued this genre and

totally abandoned poetry. He was never to write poetry again, to the extent that people forgot that he was ever a poet.

In prose his first effort was to start *al-Misbah* in 1901. This was followed by a few pamphlets in support of Nadva. In 1902 he published *Ailan-e-Hag*. A study of its contents misleads one into believing that it is the writing of an older, more experienced, and serious person. For example the following extract:

It is strange that our honourable opposition has started stating and publishing in its speeches, journals and advertisements that “Maulana is a believer in astrology, apocalypse and geomancy, and proclaims the days of fasting and Eid according to this”. Perhaps they want to make the learned Maulanas of distant lands (who do not know the real facts) suspicious and turn them against me. Therefore, I plan to publish a journal concerning this fact in which I will refute this falsehood, and discuss these controversial facts, so that truth prevails and misunderstandings are removed. But alas! It has not been possible so far. Last year I happened to meet a pious Maulana by the side of the school in the “Nakhuda” mosque, just before the evening prayer. We started discussing this issue. Unfortunately, due to the lack of time I could not advance my arguments, hence this small document, which I hope will do justice to my views.

At the same time Maulana’s articles were being published in *Ahasan-ul-Akhbar*, *Makhzan*, *Tohfa-e-Ahmadiyya*, *Edward Gazette*, *Khadang-e-Nazar*, and other journals. This resulted in Maulana being appreciated in the literary circles. By the time his monthly *Lisan-Ul-Sidq* was published, Maulana had achieved a lot of depth and maturity of thought. Now his pen was raised not only for literary pursuits but also to achieve certain goals. During this period his use of language is greatly simplified. Along with articles on many subjects, his reviews of various books are proof of his

abilities as a critic. The most well-known among these is his review of *Hayat-e-Javed*, a biography of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

The articles of Maulana Azad, published in *Al-Nadva* were written under the influence of Maulana Shibli. At this juncture his writings have a scholarly thrust. Maulana also wrote a few small pamphlets, but since they were written only to fulfil the need of the moment, they do not have any lasting significance.

In 1912, when *Al-Hilal* was launched, it contained a number of Maulana's own articles. Here his prose style became known as "*Al-Hilali*", with pronounced influence of Arabic and Persian. Yet it was not heavy, dry, or dull. It was very eloquent and had a certain cadence and flow. Maulana's declamatory, literary, and arrogant style of writing produced a certain effect. Its special feature was Maulana's frequent use of verses from the Quran to express himself with greater authority. Hence, it has been said of *Al-Hilal* that in it Maulana showed the path of righteous living by using the words of the Quran, and educated people in the art of achieving the greatest benefit from this Holy book. *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Balagh*, and *Al-Hilal(Soni)* all used more or less similar type of language, which while leaving its impression on the ear, could not gain much following. This language was the speciality of Maulan Azad and some of his colleagues, who had the ability to be able to

use “Al-Hilali Urdu”. Maulana’s unique contribution was that he could give grandeur and literary dignity to the common spoken language of journalism. It can be said now, without any doubt, that it has been seventy years since the publication of the first *Al-Hilal* ceased, yet, to this day, no Urdu daily of this caliber has ever been produced. Here is an example.

I know, as the rest of the world knows, that patience and forbearance, restraint and care are, in any event, better than anger and wrath and haste and care are, in any event, better than anger and wrath and haste and impatience. I do know that forgiveness and tolerance, gentleness and civility, dominate the heart of man; while harshness and rudeness are not included in the angelic qualities of man. I have read in the Holy Quran that when an advocate of freedom and a crusader in the cause of truth was deputed by God to an autocratic monarch of Egypt, he was instructed: “And both of you should speak gently to him.” I have also heard about the greatest of men who was taught. “After this only due to the mercy of God you were gentle in your behaviors with them and if you had been ill-tempered and harsh, then all of them would have dispersed away from you.

Tazkirah is the first complete book of Maulana Azad, which wrote in a disorderly and unsettled state of mind, yet it contains a description and life of his ancestors, which he has successfully managed to record. It cannot be regarded an autobiography. It is a narration of thoughts, views, sentiments, feeling, likes and dislikes and Maulana’s great respect for and faith in people who behave with truth and integrity. The style of this book, is, at times, rhetorical but its expression is on the whole pleasing, yet the over-use of Arabic and Persian at times, marred its flow.

Maulana used *Al-Hilal* as an invitation. *Tazkirah* also satisfies his urge to invite. Through this book he invites people to follow the path of the

great scholars of religion and truth, whose character, deeds and determination he has presented before them.

In 1912, when Maulana Abul Kalam Azad started publishing *Al-Hilal* he felt the need among people to understand the true interpretation and meaning of the Quran. At that time he could not think of any means of making them understand. When he was asked (in 1914 or 1915), what should be done about teaching of Quran, he could not answer; but from that moment, this question bothered him. Hence for the first time, he made an announcement in the pages of *Al-Balagh* that a translation, interpretation, and commentary on the Quran will be prepared. Maulana felt that the translation would suffice for the general public, while for the serious scholar the interpretation and commentary would be useful.

Though Maulana had to go through many difficult times, due to frequent imprisonments, searches, and confiscation of his manuscript of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, yet his desire to translate and interpret the Quran continued unabated. As a result, in September 1931, he succeeded in publishing the first volume. Soon afterwards in 1935, or early 1936 the second volume was seen in print. The contents were distributed as follows:

The first volume had a detailed interpretation of the *Sura-e-Fateha*, *Sura-e-Baqr*, *Surah-al-Inam*.

The second volume had interpretations of *Al-Araf* to *Al-Mminoon*.

Work had began on the third volume *Sura-e-Noor* was ready for printing. But due to certain unfavorable circumstances he was forced to abandon this work. It was never taken up again.

After Maulana's death, Sahitya Akademi decided to publish all the major works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, hence taking upon itself a responsibility of great importance. To complete this task, they engaged the services of an eminent scholar, Malik Ram, who divided and published *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* in four volumes.

Tarjuman-ul-Quran is more important than any other of Maulana's works, because it serves an essential religious purpose. Unfortunately, due to certain circumstances this valuable work could not be completed. Yet its religious, instructional, and literary contribution will always be valued.

In this work Maulana raises issues which most other interpreters have either overlooked or glossed over. He explains them very effectively, in great detail, giving appropriate examples. This shows a depth of study and a penetrating vision. So far as translation is concerned, since Maulana had mastery over Arabic and Persian, he has done a superb job. He has not merely translated the Quranic verse, but has given it a certain depth, which helps the reader understand its real meaning. He has used a scholarly style,

and a language which is chaste, dignified and yet easily understandable. For example, while translating *Sura-e-Fateha*, he has explained the significance of Surat:

This is the first Surat of Quran, hence it is known as “Exodium of the Quran”. Whatever is of the greatest significance always has the pride of place, at the very beginning. This Surat has a special importance among all other Surats of Quran, and so it is natural that it should be on the very first page of the Quran.

On the whole, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* is more significant as well as being different from all the other Urdu translations of Quran. As Maulana Saeed Akbarabadi says:

Thought each and every treasure of eloquence and elegant diction that Maulana has left behind are priceless and everlasting, yet the interpretation of the Quran, in the form of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, holds the pride of place. The strength of his pen, the depth of his vision and study, his penetrating eye and enquiring mind, these are the qualities which one finds in all Maulana’s writings, but nowhere more pronounced than in these volumes.

Among all the other qualities that God bestowed on Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, was his gift of oratory. He had a special talent of knowing how to address people on different occasions and time, so that his words penetrated their hearts and minds and had the maximum effect. His historic or current reference, logical arguments, arrangement of material, cultured ideas and the confident and firm manner of expression them, all these along with his art of declamation, gave his addresses and speeches a unique individual status which was greatly appreciated.

In general, Maulana's style of writing has immense dignity. His conversation was learned and sober. When he addressed an audience he was like a magician, mesmerizing them with his enchanting diction. His words were like veils being lifted from dark corners and hidden angles. They were like a cascade of the stream of knowledge which knows no limits. He never compromised the dignity and style of his speech. If the need arose, he quoted from the Quran, or recited poetry to explain his point. In his Khutba entitled "One-ness: The brotherhood of Islam and general relationships in Religion", he says:

The greatest sin and perdition of man was, that, neglecting the divine doctrine, he forgot the unity of human alliance, and tried to build relationship on breaking-up of families and divisions of land. He turned this land of God, which was meant to be a citadel of love and unity, into a place of conflict and dispute among nations. Islam is the first voice which raised a clarion call for universal oneness, based on the devotion to God, and not man made division.

These addresses of Maulana are relevant today because they give us an insight into his religious, political and sociological thoughts. As well they are a record of his way of thinking, and his view point.

Letters are important source materials for understanding a writer, scholar, poet, politician, artist and for learning about his times. If a letter-writer is proficient in the epistolary art these letters become literary masterpieces. Maulana Azad's letters are an expression of his literary genius. Eight volumes of his letters have been published and released so far. They

are *Karvan-e-Khayal*, *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, *Makateeb-e-Abdul Kalam*, *Naqsh-e-Azad*, *Tabrrukat-e-Azad*, *Mera Aqida* and *Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Ke Naam Khutoot-o-Jawabat*.

Most of these are usual letters of enquiry about the health and welfare of the addressee from the writer. Some letters are in the category of interrogations. To be able to understand certain religious issues, literary problems, theoretical arguments of political controversies, or at times to remove certain doubts and misunderstandings that may have arisen out of Maulana's statements, people asked for clarification. To these Maulana Azad replied in considerable detail.

Mera Aqida, *Naqsh-e-Azad*, *Tabbarukat-e-Azad*, and certain letter of some others collections are in the above category. In these, Maulana has addressed the problems and queries of the writer. We find that these do not have the same quality of letter-writing that was the distinctive style of Maulana Azad.

The third category of letter are ones which Maulana wrote knowing that they would never reach the addresses, or reach after a long delay. He did not expect or receive a response. The letters were written whenever he had a moment of leisure. Maulana, lost in his own world, imagined the addresses standing before him and filled page after page with his musings. These

letters are full of philosophical thought and literary grandeur. They present him as a ‘story-teller’, or an elegant stylist. Sometimes he is a historian, or philosopher, at others, a critic, musician or researchers. Sometimes he becomes an advocate of humanism, or simply a letter-writer. All these letters are compiled in *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, and are considered an important contribution to Urdu Literature. The following examples, are like turning the pages of history:

It is strange that I have seen nearly all the historical monuments of India, but never had a chance to see the fort of Ahmednagar. Once, when visiting the city, I had intended to go there but circumstance did not permit. This city is among those important places in India, the names of which are linked with stories of revolutions which occurred centuries ago. Originally, there was a village here by the same name at the bank of the Bheengar river. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, during the decline of the Behmani Kingdom in the South, Malik Ahmed Nizam-ul-Mulk Bheri raised his banner, and laid the foundation of Ahmednagar near Bheengar, and, in place of Jainor, made it his capital.

In narrating “Chirya Chire Ki Kahani” he writes:

For a long time could hear the voice of a baby in Moti’s nest. Whenever she pecked at the grain, she would only pick one or two pieces and fly away to her nest. There the baby would start crying the moment she arrived. In another second or two, she would appear again, pick the grain and fly away. Once, when I counted, I found that she had made seven trips in a single minute.

In another letter he writes about “Insaan”:

He is surrounded on all sides by low depths. They drag him down from the height of humanity to the depth of beastliness, although he wants to soar in the skies. He rose about the elements and reached the level of vegetation. From vegetation he moved higher to the animal kingdom, from the animal kingdom he soared upwards and built his nest in the tree of humanity. Now, he does not look down from his height. The bestial depth still wants to pull him down, but he prefers to lift his face to the unlimited heights of the universe.

These quotations can help us to evaluation the value and style of the letters in *Ghubar-e-Khatir*. Unfortunately, however, the limited scope of this book does not allow more extensive quotations from Maulana's works.

Aside from these, there is a long list of Maulana's writings, which have been published as books or collections of articles, during and after his lifetime; a study of these helps us to understand Azad and his cra. Though a greater party of his life was devoted to politics, still his literary, philosophical, religious, sociological, and political writings are enough to secure him a prominent place among the foremost writers. He has a very exalted status as a learned sage, Authority on religion and a prose stylist. As time passes, and more things are revealed, his worth will be enhanced and he will achieve greater heights.

The Indian people had not even celebrated freedom when communalism tore them apart. The atmosphere became vicious and riots became the dance of the Devil. People were injured mutilated and murdered. Man became brutish. Humanity was permanently scarred. First Punjab was hit, then Delhi, Jo ek sheher tha alam mein intikhab (Delhi a city, selected among the world....)

Its lanes and bylanes, its atmosphere, its environment, everything that was Delhi became thick with human suffering. Hatred was the order of the day. A nation became parched for the faintest spray of love.

Gandhiji was greatly disturbed by these conditions. He was prepared to combat them at any cost. When nothing else was possible, he announced that he would go on a fast until such time that peace was restored. When people learnt of Gandhiji's tried his best to dissuade Gandhiji. But Gandhiji refused to change his mind. He started his fast. All his followers became greatly concerned. Maulana and others implored him to break his fast. After much difficulty, he relented; provided certain conditions were fulfilled. Maulana relates this incident:

He then made a sigh and the men and women of his circle started to sing the Ramdhun. His grand-daughter brought a glass of orange juice and

he made a sign that she should hand the glass to me. I held the glass to his lips and Gandhiji broke his fast.

Then, according to their pledge, thousands of people started the peace mission.

Maulana started his work as the Minister of Education. Although he emphasized religious education, its purpose was not narrow dogma, but humanitarianism, broadmindedness, tolerance and love. In January 1948, while speaking at meeting of the Central Advisory Board on Education, he emphasized religious instruction. On 16 January, he presented the National Education Scheme, and stated that in acquiring free education, the concept of narrow nationalism was most undesirable.

Tragedy struck the nation on 30 January, 1984. Gandhiji was shot dead by a lunatic when he was stepping out to join the morning prayers. The architect of India's freedom lay dead. The country was plunged in grief. To lose Bapu, the symbol of affection and love, was profound blow. At the time of this loss, the famous Urdu poet Majaz wrote these immortal lines.

Neither died the Hindu nor the Muslim
A man in search of humanity passed away.
One who used to cure pangs of life, is gone,
Gone is the guide; gone is the Messiah of the age!
Neither dead the Hindu nor the Muslim,
A man in search of humanity passed away;
Bereft is the Hindu; bowed with grief is the Muslim;
For the of whom non-believers were proud and of whom believers
were votaries, is dead.

Who will now provide solace to sickness-ravaged life?
One who used to diagnose and treat ills of life, is no more!

In the same year Maulana heard about the economic problems crippling Darul- Musanafeen, at Azamgarh. When Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi wrote asking for help, Maulana wrote back, “Everything happens at its proper time.”

Soon after that Maulana got Rs 60,000 sanction for this institution. It was a deserving grant for an institution which had been a front-runner in the Independence Movement.

During Maulana’s ministry, one important accomplishment was the establishment of the Universities Education Commission. Its Chairman was Dr Radhakrishnan and among its members was Dr Zakir Hussain.

On 29 January, 1949, addressing the students of the Jadavpur Engineering college, Maulana Said,

Technical education has very significant role to play in Independent India. We should provide every facility and funding for the purpose.

In his inaugural address to the All India Lalit Kala Sammelan, held on 19 August 1949, Maulana said,

The health of a nation is determined by the appreciation of art and humanities among the general public.

On 26 January, 1950, India became a Democratic Republic with Dr Rajendra Prasad as President, Jawharlal Nehru as Prime Minister, and Maulana as the Minister of Education.

On 8 May, 1951, Maulana stopped in London on his way to attend a UNESCO conference⁴ in Paris. At the British Museum he was rare pieces of Mughal art and hand-written Manuscripts at the India office Library. In a statement issued from London, Maulana said that India would want to acquire some of the original manuscripts.

He informed the foreign journalists that the Central Government, in consultation with the various State Government, had decided that basic education would be taught in the mother tongue. Due to a sudden illness, Maulana had to extend his stay by one week.

In August 1951, the Government of Bengal acquired 1000 acres of land for the Eastern Technological Institute at Hoogly near Calcutta. Originally, this was the British Collector's bungalow and estate. On it were some residential quarters where political prisoners were detained. Soon after Independence, these house were used for staff quarters and students residences.

Maulana wanted technical education to be taught at institutions in different parts of the country. The Kharagpur Institute of Techonology was

the result of Maulana's efforts and is considered a very prestigious institution today . Inaugurating it on 18 August, 1951, Maulana Said,

When I had assumed office, my first decision was that we should become self sufficient in technical education. A large number of our young people go abroad to acquire technical education. We should strive to set up centers of excellence right here, so that other countries send their students here for higher education.

Maulana was equally concerned about scientific education. Therefore, under the chairmanship of Dr. Shanti Sarup Bhatnagar, he formed a committee. Its purpose was to look out for individuals who show extraordinary promise in scientific fields. They should be provided the best possible higher education.

In this manner, Maulana was able to create scientific and technical organizations which are functioning with great efficiency today. Thanks to these institutions, in this age of technology and science, our country has marched ahead of several other countries. It has played a key role in the improvement of education administration and research.

Art sculpture, music and literature were promoted by the creation of three academies: Sangeet Natak Akademi, Lalit important Work. Sahitya Akademi. They are all doing important work. Sahitya Akademi was inaugurated on 12 March, 1954. It was an effective means of introducing authors of different India languages and of conferring national

awards. Every language has a separate board, which is responsible for the literature produced in that particular language.

On 15 February, 1958, an all India urdu Conference was held under the auspices of the Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu at the Parade Ground. Inaugurating it, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru emphasized the importance of Urdu and invited everyone to befriend the language. Addressing the audience, Maulana said tha Urdu did not want equality with Hindi, but it demanded its rights within the law. He urged the government and the people to recognize the rights of the Urdu language.

On the morning of 19 February, Maulana suffered a stroke. In a short while the news of his illness had spread throughout the country. Fr three days, Maulana was in a state of semiconsciousness. Once when he opened his eyes, Pandit Nehru was sitting by his bedside. Maulana Said, “Good bye.”

The best doctors were in attendance, including Dr B.C. Roy from Calcutta. On 22 February, 1958, at 2.15 am Maulana passed away.

At 1 p.m. thousands of mourners carried Maulana’s funeral cortege to the open grounds between Jama Masjid and Red Fort. Almost two lakh people attended the namaz-e-janaza. Having deposited his mortal remains in

his favourite ground, the mobs turned back, filled with a sense of irreparable loss.

To quote a few lines from an elegiac poem by Fiza Ibn-e-Faizi:

Luti luti si hai har jannat-e-nigah ki tu
Tamam dilkashi-e-kaynat ley key gaya
Khayal-o-fikr ki nuzhat, dil-o-jigar ka sukoon
Nazar ki tazqi, lutf-e-hayat ley key gaya.

Inaugural Speech at the annual session of the Museums Association of India, Delhi, December 27, 1948.

It gives me immense pleasure this afternoon to be in the midst of you, the custodians of Indian art and culture. You are all engaged in the reconstruction of the country through the monuments of history and art that are housed in various museums in this country. It is true, we have not been able to utilise these resources for the advancement of our education and culture. During the period of about 150 years of foreign domination we had no facilities to attend to the work of our cultural uplift. Now that we are the masters of our own destiny it is our foremost duty to set our house in order, some portion of which is in such ruin that it is beyond repairs, while a few corners are still in a position to be used after repairs. The work that you have before you is to put our old house in proper order. National education is the most important item of national life. The exhibits that are stored in our museums are a permanent source of knowledge. No scheme of national education can claim to attain perfection unless art education, finds a place in it. Unfortunately our art treasures are scattered in various collections and are lying in the most neglected condition. It is there-fore absolutely essential to bring together all such art treasures, and display them in a scientific manner. To achieve this aim, we must have a National Museum, supplying a haven for our artistic heritage. When we glance at the cultural history of the world, we find that most of the countries commence their history not earlier than the 8th or 7th century B.C. India, Egypt, and China, however, can trace their history from most ancient times. Our culture is at least 5000 years old, nay, in some cases we have a story of 7000 years to tell. It is a proud privilege of ours to be the inhabitants of one of the most ancient countries of the world.

As a free nation, now it is most essential for us to take care of our national heritage and recognise the importance of our institutions that are doing cultural 'work. In spite of the attainment freedom, India is unfortunately passing through critical times. Financial stringency, is impeding important schemes of, national reconstruction. All the same I may assure you that. our Government is desirous of helping all nation building activities like those of yours. The development of the National Museum is an important part of our nation building programme. As Mr. Gyani has just pointed out, we cannot afford to look upon our museums as mere godowns of antiquities or curio houses. Museology is a highly developed science in other countries. But we, in India, are far behind in this respect. According to my idea a museum must display lifeless relics of the past as living objects presenting a coherent picture of our glorious past. I would request the organisers of this Conference to keep constantly in view the need of linking up our art heritage with the spread of education. The National Museum can play an important part in educating the masses and the scholars alike, Such a museum should be an imperishable record-house for our ancient history and civilisation. It will tell us the story of our life and culture in the past. We cannot think of a greater source of national pride. We have been thinking of establishing national museum for sometime. We hoped that it would be possible to go ahead with the scheme after the termination of World War II but unfortunately inflation and economic crisis of unprecedented magnitude have stood in the way of achieving our objective. Even in these conditions we have been allotting some money for the purchase of exhibits for the proposed National Museum from year to year and we, hope to make a further provision for it in the coming budget.

During the past two hundred years, Indian art objects have, found their way to foreign 'countries in very large numbers and we are distressed to note that owing to the poverty and ignorance of the people important art objects and records Have gone out of India. We must send a commission to survey and catalogue our national treasures in foreign countries. It is also necessary that art objects in private collections of this country should be surveyed. There is every possibility that even an unassuming cottage may contain treasures important from the historical point of view. Thousands of 'documents and manuscripts are lying uncared for in this country. Now that the reins of Government are in the hands, of our own people, our appeal will certainly reach the masses and create a consciousness among them regarding the importance of protecting and preserving our antiquities. We should appeal to our people from this platform to present such things, if they happen to possess any, to the nation by , depositing them in a provincial or National Museum or to the National Archives if they are records. This will afford the scholars an opportunity to sift unpublished records and find out their historical or artistic importance.

The Government proposes to appoint two commissions to collect art objects in this country, and buy those that have gone out. With a view to attaining the modern standard in museum management I would also like to depute some students to foreign museums. These trained curators can then show us how our museums could best be used for the education of our people. There are many precious. things of national importance in the museums of England, France, Holland and other countries. We should try to obtain them if possible. There are also many rare manuscripts and important records in our country that can throw valuable light on our past, that are being

destroyed through neglect. They must be saved and preserved in a scientific manner. Let me assure you that your Association can always count upon the fullest support from me and my Department. Your work will not suffer on account of our apathy. I cannot, however, make a long speech and give you high hopes as vague hopes and empty pockets do not go well together.

In the end, I cannot help expressing my great pleasure that a change of outlook has come about in our people and they are becoming more and more aware and conscious of the cultural value of our antiquities. I was most impressed by the response-of the people to the Art Exhibition in Government House which had to be extended till the end of March next year on account of popular demand. With the ushering of freedom our minds have also become free. It is therefore the right time for the members of your Association to carry on the task of educating the people through your art galleries. The Government is now your own and you can surely expect the fullest co-operation and encouragement for the laudable efforts of your organisations.

With these few words, I express my gratitude to you for having called upon me to associate myself with the important educational and cultural activities of your Association to inaugurate the proceedings of this Conference.

Inaugural Speech at the All India Conference on Art, Calcutta, August 29,1949

I am glad to welcome you to this first All India Conference on Arts to be held under the auspices of the Central Government. In the past, India made valuable contributions to the cultural World, especially in the fields of literature, religious philosophy, architecture and the fine arts. While these achievements were due to the innate genius of the people, the encouragement and support extended by enlightened kings and other lovers of art and culture should not be overlooked. The great traditions of the past still remain, but, for reasons which are known to you, the patronage which was extended by the State to the fine arts and other expressions of culture, has been largely missing since India lost her independence. A situation has now been reached where, unless prompt steps are taken to preserve, develop and enrich the heritage of our cultural traditions, they may be damaged beyond repair. With the attainment of independence, the need for encouragement to the different forms of Indian culture has become even more insistent. I may recall to your memory the steps which have been taken in recent years to ensure the preservation and enrichment of our cultural heritage. About four years ago, the Asiatic Society of Bengal put forward proposals for the establishment of a National Cultural Trust which would be entrusted with the task of stimulating and promoting the culture of the country in all its aspects and represent the various cultural elements in our country. They proposed that the Trust should function as an autonomous and independent body predominantly non-official in its constitution and should operate through appropriate agencies. There should for the purpose be three Academies, namely, an Academy of Letters to deal with Indian languages,

literature, philosophy and history,-an Academy of Arts (including graphic, plastic and applied art) and Architecture, and an Academy of Dance, Drama and Music. The object of these Academies would be to develop, promote and foster studies in the subjects with which they deal, with a view to maintaining the highest possible standards of achievement. The Trust should have the following additional functions in addition to those performed by the Academies : -

- (i) to encourage cultural education and research with particular reference to the preservation and development of traditional Indian culture in relation to such subjects as literature, architecture, sculpture, painting, dancing, dramatic art and music;
- (ii) to acquire for the State sites, monuments, manuscripts, pictures or other objects of importance from the point of view of Indian culture;
- (iii) to advise the Government of India and the Provincial Governments in regard to cultural matters;
- (iv) to co-operate with the universities in the development of activities in the purely cultural fields;
- (v) to co-operate with the learned societies of India in order to encourage and expand the cultural aspects of the work now performed by them;
- (vi) to publish suitable popular literature on cultural matters;

- (vii) to maintain close touch with all parts of India (including states) by holding periodical conferences;
- (viii) to organise archaeological and other cultural missions to foreign countries and generally to develop and extend existing cultural contacts between India and other countries.

It was also proposed" that the Trust should be financed by an endowment of four crores of rupees, which would make it independent of annual grants from the Central or the Provincial Governments. The Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education which considered the proposals of the Asiatic Society of Bengal were of the opinion that such endowment was necessary if the trustees were to function properly. The Committee recommended that the Central Government should contribute half the amount while the Provincial Governments and the Indian States should contribute the balance in equip proportions.

The Government of India accepted the principle underlying the recommendations of the Central Advisory Board of Education and arrangements were made to bring the Trust into existence as 'soon as possible. A sum of rupees 'eight lakh was therefore proposed in the budget for 1947-48, but the partition of the country and the disturbances which followed prevented the execution of the plan. During 1948-49, the proposal was again considered, but in view of the financial difficulties from which the country is now suffering, the establishment of the Trust had to be postponed. Nevertheless, a sum of Rs. 1 lakh was provided in the budget for 1949-50 to carry on the preliminary work in connection with the foundation of the Trust.

Instead of spending the major portion of this inadequate amount for The setting up of a secretariat for the Trust, we considered it more advisable to utilise the money, as far as possible, in schemes for the promotion of art in the country. I therefore decided that we should have three conferences during the year, the first with representatives of the visual arts, the second with men of letters and the third with representatives of dance, drama and music. It is in accordance with that programme that the present Conference is being held and I look forward to this gathering of representative artists from all over the country to offer advice to the Government in respect of some of the most urgent issues before us. I may, however, draw your attention to the fact that when the Asiatic Society of Bengal originally proposed the establishment of a National Cultural Trust and even when the Government of India first accepted the principle underlying that recommendation, we did not have in our view the proposed Indian National Commission for co-operation with - Unesco. Now that this Commission has been established, I feel that we should re-examine the whole issue and consider whether much of the work which was originally to have been performed by the Trust cannot be performed by one of the Sub-Commissions or sections of the National Commission. You are aware that the National Commission is divided into three Sub-Commissions, namely, the Sub-Commission for Education, the Sub-Commission for Culture and the Sub-Commission for Science. Much of the work which the Cultural Trust was to have done would be co-terminus with that to be performed by the Sub-Commission for Culture. In fact, the three Academies of the proposed Cultural Trust, namely, the Academy of Letters, the Academy of Dance, Drama and Music and the Academy of the Visual Arts could very easily be formed under the aegis of the Cultural Sub-Commission of the National

Commission, This, however, is a matter which requires further consideration, and would at this stage only request all members to keep in mind the possibility of such integration of work under the National Commission. This will not only make for simplicity, but also save considerable expense in money, men and energy.

Whether the work of promoting the artistic and cultural life of the country is to be carried out through a Trust or through the National Commission, the most important point is that there should be facilities for their preservation and development. Members of this Conference are perhaps aware that the Government of India have, as a first step towards the encouragement of Indian Music, promoted the establishment of two academies — one of Hindustani Music at Lucknow and the other of Karnataka Music at Madras. The object of these academies will be to promote advanced studies and research in these branches of Indian Music. The Government have also tried to encourage young painters and sculptors by the award of suitable scholarships. In 1947-48, six scholarships each of the value of Rs. 2,500 were given to promising young artists, and this year we have offered eight scholarships of equal value to young artists who are prepared to devote their talents to the revival and development of art in the context of social education in rural areas. The selection of scholars will be made by a committee of experts consisting of the principals of recognised art schools, and the works of the candidates are being displayed in an exhibition organised in connection with this Conference. It is also proposed to establish an Artists' Travelling Fund to encourage amateur artists. The Government of India have provided an amount of Rs. 15,000 and requested the provinces to make contributions to the fund, I fully realise that these are extremely

inadequate measures, but we must recognise the grave financial difficulties through which we are passing. The fact that we have not allowed these difficulties to stand in our way and have made a beginning, even though on a meagre scale, should serve as an earnest of the future policy of the Government of India in promoting the development of our art and culture.

You are also aware that the Government of India are contemplating the establishment of a National Museum where the finest exhibits of Indian art will be collected and preserved for the nation. The entire collection of Amrita Sher-Gil's paintings has been purchased, and, in addition, the Government have acquired valuable exhibits from several well-known private collections in the country. As part of this programme, it is proposed to attempt to secure such of our art heritage as has gone out of the country and may be available on reasonable terms. You are, no doubt, aware that some of the finest specimens of our art, sculpture and miniature, went out of the country long ago. Some of these are in national museums in foreign countries and it may be difficult, if not impossible, to bring them back. There are, however, other objects in the possession of private collectors or museums which come into the market from time to time and may be regained. I think you will agree that we should try to get back such objects wherever possible, and where the originals cannot be secured we should, at any rate, obtain copies made by competent artists, so that our representation of Indian art may not remain incomplete.

Before, however, any steps in this direction can be taken it is necessary to have full knowledge about the number of such objects and their distribution. We have some knowledge of exhibits in public museums and galleries. There are records also of some of the private collections, but there are many

objects of art of which we have no information at all. I have already written to all our representatives abroad to inform us as early as possible about: the number, description and location of art objects scattered within their respective areas. I, however, feel that non-official advice from experts is essential for the purpose, and I would ask you to consider whether this Conference may set up a small committee to make an inventory of such art objects as are at present abroad and advise the Government on the best possible methods to secure either the originals or their copies.

Another important question which requires the attention of this Conference is that of the relation of art to education in general. It is a sad commentary on our present system of education that art has either no place or plays a very minor role in our general education. One reason for this is, of course, the very one-sided view of education we have had in the past. Till now our education has aimed at developing only the intellect of the child. Even this is perhaps an over-generous estimate.

The present system of education has not always been conducive, to the development of the whole intellect, but only encouraged the growth of linguistic efficiency among our pupils.. This is one reason why, there are so many people who display all the external signs of high education and at the same time exhibit in their attitudes, beliefs and conduct a totally uneducated mind.

It is today realised that no education can be complete which does not pay proper attention to the development and refinement of the emotions. This can be done best through the provision of facilities for training the sensibilities by the practice of one of the fine arts. Apart from the general

'question of developing the finest aspects of personality through artistic education, there is also the immediate utility of such education in developing our manual skill and perceptive sensibility. It is recognised today that education at pre-primary or nursery stage can be best imparted by training the child in the matching of colours, shapes and sizes. This releases the creative instinct in the child and thus diverts his superfluous energy from merely destructive channels into those of social behaviour and decorum. Thus, whether from the point of view of training of the emotions or refinement of sentiments or development of manual skill and creative urge, the importance of art as an element of education cannot be over-emphasised.

The obvious implication of this is that a society is healthy 'and well-balanced if training in and appreciation of arts are wide-spread among its members. The modern malaise of society in which individuals are torn and .divided and society riven with a hundred conflicts is the result of the fact that the arts have been divorced from intimate contact with life at a thousand points. may recall to your minds that there was no distinction recognised between art and craft in the past. In the olden days, the crafts fi men who produced objects for the use of society were also simultaneously artists. On the other hand, artists took pride in the excellence of their craft and never hesitated to take their full share in social production. One of the unfortunate results of the Industrial Revolution and the development of the capitalist - tern of production has been the divorce between art and craft. The result is that the artists tend to look down upon the craftsmen as mere artisans. The labourers who produce goods for consumption are, on the other hand, equally suspicious of the social and seemingly useless activities of the artists. In the sequel, art and craft have suffered, so that art is today divorce from our

immediate requirements while craft has degenerated into a mechanical manipulation from which all joy of creation has dis-appeared.

It is for the artists to attempt to bridge this gulf. You may remember the efforts of William Morris to overcome this breach by ensuring that even commercial products must have the highest artistic qualities. This would immediately result in an improvement of taste throughout society and thus enrich the life of the common man. It would, on the other hand, be of equal service to the artist himself. He could in such a context depend upon the support of society as a 'whole instead of a handful of rich patrons here and there. Much of the insecurity and poverty from which the artist suffers today is due to lack of social support. The moment he re-establishes contacts with society, the causes of insecurity disappear and the results would be of advantage to art and craft and to society at large.

In a growing democracy the need of this closer relation between the artist and the average man has become even more important. It is the standard of the common man which determines the standard of society. If therefore the life of the common man is poor and devoid of artistic qualities, there is no possibility of a rich and flourishing art. Artists must therefore play their full part in the education of the people, and it is for this Conference to suggest to the Government how best this could be achieved through museums, art galleries, travelling exhibitions and any other methods that may be necessary.

This Conference may also appoint a small committee of experts who may advise the Government on the selection of some of the finest specimens of Indian art which would then be reproduced and made available to the people

at large. It is obvious that the finest masterpieces will never be accessible to all individuals. Even if they are collected in the museums, only those who live in the cities where these museums are situated or those who have the means of travelling there, will enjoy such masterpieces. If, however, these masterpieces are made available in suitable copies at prices within the reach of everybody, one of the greatest obstacles to a general spread of art appreciation throughout the community will be removed.

I will conclude by drawing your attention to one other point. In the past,, great artists enjoyed patronage of kings, courtiers and other men of affluence. In the modern world where democracy is the-9rder of the day, the artist must look to th..State for. patronage. In the present stage of development of art appreciation among the people, this, however, involves a danger that the most original and talented artists may not receive that- recognition "which is their due. Excellence in art, as elsewhere, can be properly appreciated only by those who have in them the same excellence. However much we may desire that the standard of excellence must be high throughout the community, we must confess that this is not yet the case. In order therefore to ensure that the most powerful and original geniuses among the artists get their proper recognition, I would suggest for your consideration the establishment of an Academy of Art more or less on the lines of the world famous French Academy.

You will remember that the French Academy has only a handful of members and academicians. Its membership is the highest honour that can fall to the lot of a Frenchman. Many are the scholars, artists or scientists who have worked for this honour throughout their life and have not been admitted to the distinguished company of the academicians. Such exclusiveness has

given to the membership of the French Academy a distinction which has few, equals anywhere else in the world. I would therefore be happy if in India we could establish an Academy of Arts, with a membership of not more than 30, confined only to people who by their creative work have established their position beyond dispute. It is not necessary that the membership should always be full. In fact, if we institute the Academy now, I cannot see how more than a dozen members can be elected straightaway. Whatever be the number of academician: so elected, they alone should have the right to elect their fellow, members and once the full quota is complete, no one would be admitted to the Academy till a vacancy had occurred through, death or resignation. If standards are once laid down, I have no doubt that membership of the Academy will serve as incentive to the highest endeavours in the field of Art.

These are some of the problems which this Conference mu consider. I hope we will be able to arrive at judicious and balanced decisions, so that the cause of in independent India may flourish and we may recapture and enhance the glories the Gupta and the Mughal periods.

Inaugural Speech at the Indian Historical Records Commission,
Nagpur, December 25, 1950

We are meeting after a year to discuss our common problems. As you are aware, the Indian Historical Records Commission deals with all kinds of historical records. The scope of our deliberations is therefore wide and extensive. It will, however, be of advantage to confine ourselves to matters of first concern, and I am sure you will agree that these relate to questions affecting the National Archives. In all countries the National Archives are the treasure-houses of their historical wealth, and we in India can justly take pride for the extent and magnitude of our riches in this field.

Our National Archives contain a vast collection of records, but systematic series begin from 1672. Some of the latest records are as late as 1949. They therefore tell the story of nearly 300 years of a most interesting and momentous period of India's history. If what remains of the scattered records of the Moghul period are added to these collections, we can say that our records go back to the 15th century. There are not many countries-which can claim records which go so far back. From the point of view of quantity also ours is one of the biggest collections not only in Asia, but in the world. I cannot give you the exact number of our records, for much work of indexing and cataloguing still remains to be done, but to give you some idea of the extent of the collection, I may say that if all these records are assembled in one place, there is no building in India big enough to contain all of them.

It is hardly necessary for me to stress before the present audience the importance of national records. Such records are the basis of history and can alone give authenticity to our knowledge of the past. When we read of the

past, we are often troubled by the fact that our knowledge is neither complete nor adequate. Contemporary historians hardly ever leave accounts which satisfy succeeding generations, and in fact, they are often not in a position to judge what should be recorded and what left out. If, however, complete records are available, the annals of the past can be reconstructed, but, in most cases, such records' of the past do not exist. We know that during the Mughal period, India had all the instruments of civilised government and that full records were kept of all official decisions and happenings. Un-fortunately, most of these records were destroyed during the troubled period of the 18th century. In consequence, we have lost some of the most valuable sources of our knowledge of the age., It is, however, fortunate that the histories written by Abul Fazl, Abdul Hamid Lahori, Khafi Khan and others, based on official records, are available to us. Even though they were written from an official point of view, their use of records makes them a valuable source material for us.

During the 19th century, the European States adopted the convention that all State records should be opened to the public after a lapse of 50 years. The records of the Napoleonic era were thus released to the public in about 1870. The Napoleonic era was a period of great progress in different fields, and it was' described contemporaneously by many well-known historians. In fact, all the known methods of history writing were used in making the Napoleonic period vivid to the public of the day, but even then, when the official records became available in 1870, it was found that our knowledge of the period was both enriched and altered. Much new light was thrown on obscure incidents and happenings. Many old opinions had to be revised in the light of the new information.

Similarly, the official papers relating to the so-called Indian Mutiny of 1857 were released in 1907. The Government of India published a three-volume history of the Mutiny based on these records. It is true that this book was written from the, British point of view, and did not therefore do full justice to the Indian participants. It is therefore necessary that these records should be examined afresh, and a true account of the period written in as objective a manner as possible. Even then the official history which was based on these records revealed many facts that were previously unknown and corrected many of our wrong ideas "about the different characters who participated in these momentous happenings.

These two examples show how essential records are for a true interpretation • of history. If, however, the records are to be utilised to the fullest extents it is- necessary that they should not only be preserved, but also arranged and classified systematically. There must also be a sufficient number of scholars with the necessary knowledge and scientific attitude to take full advantage 'of the information contained in them. In our National Archives, we have an immense store-house of such records but two things have stood in the way of our utilising them fully :

(1) We have not been able to make arrangements for all the records to be kept in one place.

(2) We have not been able to appoint the staff necessary for the completion of the work of classification and indexing of the available records.

In 1948, I had intended that the Government of India should undertake this task at an early date, and, accordingly, a scheme was drawn up for the improvement of the tempo and the quality of the work. This demanded an

increase in the staff of the Archives to cope with the additional work, but, unfortunately, financial stringency prevented the implementation of even this modest scheme.

I would like to give the members of the Commission some idea of the magnitude of the task which faces the National Archives today. In 1939, it was little more than a medium size depository, with a limited body of records. These were, however, fairly well organised though they were not open to students for research. Today, it is one of the leading archival institutions in the world, and is certainly the largest in Asia. It is also mechanically one of the best equipped. Our holdings in the last ten years have greatly grown in • bulk, especially since December 1948. It was then decided that all records prior to August 15, 1947, of the Residencies and Political Agencies of the Government of India would be transferred to the National Archives. The increase since then has been almost phenomenal. The number of Residencies and Political Agencies which then went out -of commission was 15 and 14 respectively. Of these, the National Archives have already received the records of 14 Residencies and 11 Political Agencies though many of these records have .large gaps. These transferred records number 11,555 volumes, and 3,581 bundles, and cover a period from 1672 to 1949 A.D.

Apart from the sudden accession to our collections, we are also -getting an increasing number of records from different Ministries and their attached and subordinate offices. With growing consciousness, both in the Government and among the people, of the value of records, the destruction of records has now become out of the question. Besides, the increasing function which the Government are undertaking and the necessity • of

written instruments in a democratic government make it inevitable that the number of records will continue to grow. This will accentuate the problems of space and maintenance of records for each government department, and it is inevitable that offers of transfer of records from the different governmental agencies will continually become more pressing. It is also proposed to legislate in order to ensure complete and regular transfer of all records to the National Archives.

Further problems have been created by the fact that the material which is now coming to the National Archives is often in a chaotic condition. When it was decided to transfer the records of the Residencies and Political Agencies it was also decided to transfer all existing inventories and indexes to these records. This was essential if the National Archives were to check these records, arrange them in their proper order and supply them to the Government or to research scholars on requisition. It is, however, unfortunate. many of the Agencies either did not maintain working lists or indexes of their records, or- their records became considerably disarranged during the transfer. As a result, it is difficult to find documents as and when required. These records have therefore to be listed, re-arranged in their original order and properly indexed. Only then can these records tell correctly the story of the transactions of which they are the evidence. Unless restored to their original order, the documents will remain isolated pieces, disconnected, meaningless and un-reliable. The phenomenal increase in the production of records in the departments themselves, and their indifferent maintenance in the current and semi-current stages have also added to the difficulties which the Archives have to face. I may cite one example. One

series of the Political Department records from 1880 to 1930 which has just been transferred to the Archives does not possess even a check list.

The physical condition of a large bulk of these records also presents a serious problem. Owing to various reasons, many of these series are in a very bad state of preservation and require immediate rehabilitation in order to ensure their continued existence. To give the members some idea, I may mention that about 3,000 volumes of the Residency records require major and another 4,000 require minor repairs and reconditioning immediately. This task of restoration is very urgent as the climate of New Delhi accelerates the physical deterioration of the records. In order to cope with the situation, the processes of rehabilitation have now been mechanised.

The members of the Commission are also aware that the records have now been thrown open for research. At first, only records up to 1880 were available for inspection, but now all records up to 1901 have been brought under this category. More recent records will also be thrown open in the years to come. In addition, the Archives have undertaken an extensive programme of analysis, indexing, condensing, editing and publication of records in order to facilitate the work of research and reference. The Historical Records Commission has also increased the scope of the work of the Archives as the Records Survey Committees in the different States work directly under the Commission. The interest in the archives and archival work is consequently growing. At the same time, the demand for information from various sources has grown and is still growing.

Thus, on the one hand, we have increasing pressure of work and growing interest on the part of both the Government and the public and, on the other,

we know that the prevailing financial stringency will not permit an adequate expansion of the Department in the next few years. In this situation the only way of meeting the shortage of staff is to seek the co-operation of the universities and learned societies. If a sufficient number of scholars take up the task and assist the existing staff in the classification and cataloguing of the material which has been collected, much can be done in spite of the inadequacy of public funds. The universities can also help by allotting the task to post-graduate students of history. If the universities agree to recognise such work as part of the normal training of a post-graduate student, this will not only benefit the students themselves but it will also be a real national service. It is only through the co-operation of professors, lecturers, scholars and research and post-graduate students that the vast material we have can be utilised properly. I understand that our Director of National Archives had approached the universities once but the response was not satisfactory. I would like to take this occasion, when so many distinguished scholars are present, to press once more that this work of urgent national importance should be undertaken by all the universities and learned societies without further delay. I have every hope that with your co-operation, we can overcome the difficulties created by financial stringency and create conditions in which the Archive's can perform their proper function and serve as a treasure-house of information for all of students history.

Speech at the first meeting of the Sahitya Akademi (National Academy letters), New Delhi 12, 1954

I have pleasure in welcoming you to this first meeting of the National Academy of Letters.

In 1944, the Government of India accepted, in principle, a proposal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (as it was then called) that a National Cultural Trust should be set up to encourage cultural activities in all fields. The Trust should include three academies--one in letters, one in the visual arts and one for dance, drama and music. After the National Government was established in 1947, three conferences were convened to work out in detail the implications of this proposal. The conferences agreed about the need for the academies but felt that since a National Government had been established, it was not necessary to set up a National Trust. It was, however, recommended that steps should be taken to set up the academies as autonomous bodies and provide them with the funds necessary for their work. The Government of India has accepted that recommendation.

The Government's function in this process is mainly that of a curtain-raiser. Someone has to set up the academies., and the Government has decided to do so. Once they are set up, the Government will refrain from exercising any control and leave the academies to perform their functions as autonomous institutions. The Sangeet Natak Akadami has already been established in accordance with this decision of the Government. The Academy of Fine Arts is in process of formation, and today we have met to set up what is perhaps the most important of the three.

There are some and the Prime Minister was one of them at one stage who expressed the view that the academies should not have been established in this fashion. They regard it as an imposition from above. They hold that the growth of the academies should have been encouraged from below. Instead of establishing an academy, the Government should have waited till there grew up in the country societies or individuals who had the necessary authority to establish the academies. Once such academies had been set up, the Government's function should have been merely to recognise them.

I am afraid I cannot agree with this approach. Since the Re-naisance, many academies have been established in Europe. Today there is hardly any country in the Western world which does not have one or more national academies. All these academies were established by the Governments under letters-patent of the Sovereigns or by legislation. There was therefore no reason why the Government of India should not take the initiative for the establishment of the academies. In fact, if we had waited for the academy to grow from below we might have had to wait till the Greek Kalends.

I should like to dwell for a moment on the meaning of the term 'academy.' We are all aware that this term was first used for the school that Plato had established. The garden in which the school was set up was named after an ancient hero 'Akademus,' and it was after him that the school came to be known as the Academy. whatever the origin of the name, it has, in course of time, acquired a connotation of its own which, as far as we are aware, cannot be expressed by any other single word. What do we mean by an academy ? Is it a school ? The answer is 'No.' Is it a re-search institute ? Again the answer is 'No.' Is it then an association of writers and authors ? Still the answer is in the negative. If, however, it be asked whether it possesses the

attributes of all of them, the answer must be an emphatic 'Yes.' By calling it an academy, we refer to all these facets and signify that it is at the same time a school, an institute and an association. If we were to call it a school or an institute or association only, the full significance of what we intend would remain unexpressed. An academy is, in fact, something more than any or all of them.

The academies flourished in Greece for almost 900 years until Justinian ended them by a special decree. During this period, the term 'Academy' acquired its special significance. There is no other word in any Eastern or Western language which can convey the full flavour of the academy. That is why we have resisted the temptation of a vain search for a new term and have kept the original word in its adapted form as 'Akadami,' in conformity with the requirements of Hindi pronunciation.

Today is the first day in the life of the Indian Academy of Letters. It is necessary that we should have a clear idea of the work which it is intended to perform and the standards it will place before the world. The question of standard is, to my mind, fundamental in the concept of the academy. The Academy must lay down a standard for those who seek to be recognised as distinguished men of letters. The Academy would serve its purpose only if its standard is set as high as possible. If the standard is lowered, the very purpose of establishing the Academy is lost.

The object of the Academy is to educate public taste and advance the cause of literature. This can be done only if we maintain the highest standard. Then alone will writers aim at giving their best and create works of art which will add to the heritage of man. On this question of standard, we should, I feel, be

guided by the example of the French Academy. Established by Louis XIV in 1635 with only 40 members, it has to this day refused to increase this number. The number of men in the whole of France who can achieve the status of Academician is thus only 40. Even the most distinguished men have to wait for a place in the Academy till there is a vacancy.

The result of this insistence on standard is that France regards the membership of the Academy as an earnest of immortality. To be elected to the Academy was held to be a guarantee of permanent fame. The Academy has been so exclusive that we find that even the greatest men of letters have sometimes been denied the status of members. Descartes, Pascal, Moliere are all men whose distinction as men of letters is beyond dispute, but they never found a place among the Academicians. Montesquieu and Voltaire were fortunate in this respect but Rousseau never achieved the distinction. We -all know the high position occupied by Encyclopaedists in the world of French letters but among them only D' Alembert and Marmontel were able to become members. Even Diderot and Helvetius found no place in the Academy.

Coming to modern times, we find that some of the greatest figures of French literature waited long and sometimes in vain to achieve the distinction. The nineteenth century is perhaps the most glorious period of modern French literature. There were, in this period, writers whose works have become classics, but, even among them, there were many who never achieved the membership of the Academy. Neither Daudet nor Maupassant nor Zola were members. Lamar tine regarded himself fortunate that he was elected a member after some years' waiting. Even the author of Les Miserable had to wait for ten years before he could become a member. In

recent times, Andre Gide, who is a French writer of world-wide reputation and had received the Nobel Prize in 1947, was never a member of the Academy. If the Indian Academy of Letters does not maintain similar standards and reserve its honours only for the immortals of literature, the Academy will not be able to serve the object for which it is being established.

In framing the constitution of the Academy, these considerations were constantly before us. We saw that if we prescribed the membership of the Academy on the same basis as in the French Academy, it would have been difficult to set it up at all. We must admit that the literatures of India today have not reached a stage where 30 or 40 persons could be selected straight-away and be regarded as immortals. We have accordingly made a distinction between Members and Fellows. For membership, we have not laid down the standards prescribed for the French Academy and have considered it enough that a person should have helped in the development of literature or established his position as a man of letters. In order, however, to create the same standards as in the French Academy, we have created a separate class called 'Fellows of the Academy.' Here, as in the French Academy, only the selected will be admitted.

We considered carefully the question as to what should be the number of Fellows. We finally decided that the number of Fellows in the Sahitya Akadami must not exceed 21. This does not, however, mean that there will be necessarily 21 in the Academy. It only means that there will never be more than 21 Fellows. In the Sangeet Natak Akadami, where the limit is higher, namely, 30, there are at present only seven Fellows. For the

Academy of Letters, my feeling is that the number will perhaps be less, for the selection is to be done with even greater care.

So far as the constitution of the Academy is concerned, it may be briefly described as follows. All the fourteen languages enumerated in the Constitution of India have their representatives on the Academy. There are also representatives of the States, the universities and of the Government of India. In addition, there are eight persons nominated by the Minister for Education for their services to the cause of literature. All the three academies have a constitution more or less on this pattern.

You will find that while all the languages named in the Indian Constitution are represented in the Academy, English does not find a place there. You will agree that the Academy would have remained incomplete if some distinguished writers of English had not been included. We have to admit that for the last 100 or 150 years, English has served not only as a vehicle of knowledge and learning but also as the medium of expression for many of our finest writers. This was inevitable, for English had achieved such a pre-eminence that the status of an author was not assured till he had expressed himself through its medium. Tagore, who is the greatest poet of modern India, had been writing in Bengali ever since his childhood but his fame was not fully recognised even in his own province till the English version of *Gitanjali* declared him as one of the greatest poets of the world, Mahatma. Gandhi's contribution to national awakening and the achievement of independence is acknowledged universally. His writings in Gujarati are, however, known only to the people in Gujarat. It was his writings in English that enabled him to evoke a new political consciousness and give a

revolutionary turn to Indian life. Similarly, Aurobindo Ghosh's claim to distinction rests upon the quality of his writings in English.

I have, for some time, been thinking how best to encourage the development of creative literature in the different Indian languages. Some of the State Governments are no doubt working to this end, but I felt that it was necessary to take measures which would secure an all-India recognition for writers in different Languages. I asked the Ministry to examine the issue, and it has been suggested that one way of such encouragement is to award prizes or other distinction to writers of merit. A scheme which has been accepted by the Government is to give prizes of Rs. 5,000 every year for the best work in each of the 14 languages mentioned in the Schedule to the Constitution. Every year, the work of the three preceding years will be surveyed and a prize given to the writer of the best work. No author will be entitled to get a prize a second time, for I am sure you will agree that such a scheme should benefit as many people as possible. The awards will be made on the recommendations of the Academy of Letters.

One thing I would like to make clear is that these prizes will be given for recognised merit, and no one should apply for them.

It is my hope that the first prizes will be announced before the end of the calendar year. I have already said that the Government's function in establishing the Academy is that of a curtain-raiser only. This also applies to the appointment of its first Chairman. The Government of India have accordingly selected its first Chairman but hereafter it will be the Academy which will appoint its own office-bearers.

I am glad that Sri Jawaharlal Nehru has agreed to serve as the first Chairman of the Academy. He has been appointed not because he is the Prime Minister but because he has carved out for himself a distinctive place as a writer and author. The Committee which framed the constitution of the Academy submitted three names, of which the first was that of Pandit Nehru. The Ministry of Education offered the Chairmanship to him, as it was beyond dispute that from every point of view he is the best man we could have selected for the first Chairmanship of India's National Academy of Letters.

On the Occasion of the laying of the foundation-stone of the National Museum New Delhi, May 12, 1955

I have great pleasure in welcoming you on the occasion of the laying of the foundation-stone of the National Museum of India. The idea of having a National Museum in Delhi goes back (many years). Soon after it was decided that Delhi should be the capital of India, proposals were made in this behalf as early as 1912. The idea did not find favour with the then Secretary of State for India, and after the outbreak of the first World War the proposal was dropped. The proposal was revived in 1925 but again abandoned for lack of funds. In 1936 Hargreaves, former Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, and Markham, Empire Secretary of the Museums Association, submitted a report pressing for the establishment of a National Museum. Even on this occasion the proposal was not accepted.

In 1944, the question was taken up again on the initiative of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal—now the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. The proposal of the Society was referred in 1945 to a Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir Maurice Gwyer. The Gwyer Committee submitted a detailed report which was published in 1946. The Ministry of Education accepted the proposal in 1947 with certain modifications recommended by the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology. It is in pursuance of that decision of the Government of India that we have met today to lay the foundation-stone of the National Museum.

Some of you may recall that in 1947, a collection of some of the best specimens of Indian art and archaeology was sent to London for an exhibition which attracted world-wide notice. The entire collection was

brought back to Delhi, and towards the end of 1948 an Indian Art Exhibition was organised in the state rooms in the then Viceroy's House, now Rashtrapati Bhavan. This Exhibition may well be regarded as a landmark in the history of Indian museums. This was perhaps the first occasion when an attempt was made to bring together in one exhibition the record of Indian culture and civilisation over five thousand years. The visitors to this Exhibition could see not only some of the finest specimens of Indian Art, including masterpieces of sculpture in bronze and stone and paintings of different schools but also the pulsating life of India as expressed in objects of art created during her five thousand years of history..

The success of this exhibition gave a fresh impetus to the idea of establishing the National Museum. We felt that this magnificent collection could form the nucleus of the proposed Museum. We made an appeal to the owners of the art objects in this exhibition, and many of them responded to our appeal. It was then decided to use the state rooms of the Rashtrapati Bhavan for displaying the exhibition till the building of the National Museum was ready. This nucleus of the National Museum was thrown open to the public after a formal inauguration by the President On the 15th of August 1949.

I need hardly stress before an audience like the present one the importance of a museum as an instrument of public education. We normally think of lectures or books whenever we talk of education. It is, however, clear" that neither books nor lectures can bring so vividly before the public the treasures of past as a museum. In a museum, history is revealed before us in stone and colour in a manner which makes an impression on the dullest mind. One may read hundreds of books on Greek civilization and attend

lectures by learned men but the impress-ion created by a Greek statue or a Greek temple is far more profound. A statue by Praxiteles or Phideas brings vivid before us the grace and symmetry of Greek life and the high degree of culture evolved by this ancient people. We in India have a rich and ancient heritage but we cannot fully realize the splendour of that tradition from books or lectures alone. If however we see a statue of the Buddha with the stamp of peace and tranquillity on his face or admire the wonderful poise of Nataraja, we get a new insight into the meaning of Indian culture and civilization.

It is to fill this lacuna that the National Museum was planned as a centre of education and not a mere curio house or place of amusement. It will certainly exhibit objects which will testify to man's sense of beauty but its main purpose will be to serve as an instrument for the increase of knowledge and refinement of the taste and culture of the people. As a Centre of Visual Education the Museum must reflect the cultural heritage of the nation and simultaneously evoke in the people an interest in all matters of the spirit. It is my faith and hope that this National Museum will represent every aspect of Indian history and culture and become truly national in the fullest sense - of the term.

It is obvious that a national museum like the one we have envisaged cannot be built in one day. The Gwyer Committee had recommended that the Museum should comprise a Directorate and 5 Departments, viz., (1) Art, (2) Pre-historic Archaeology, (3) Historic Archaeology (Buddha, Jaina, Brahmanical and Muslim), (4) Numismatic Epigraphy, (5) Anthropology (cultural and physical). It should also have a circulating department, a library and a chemical laboratory.

Such a Museum cannot obviously be build overnight, and the Committee recognised that the process of building and equip-ping a new museum on the scale indicated will necessarily be a fairly long one.

The Gwyer Committee had recommended that the Museum may be developed in three main stages of which the first stage would be divided into two phases. The first phase of the first stage would be to select the Director and a nucleus staff for purposes of training and would be followed by the second phase which would see the formation of the remainder of the Directorate, together with the departments of Art, Historic Archaeology and Anthropology (cultural section). In the second stage the Committee recommended the increasing development of pre-historic archaeology and completion of the department of Anthropology by the addition of the physical section. The third stage contemplated the development of the Department of Numismatic Epigraphy and the Circulating Library.

This programme could not, however, be fulfilled for three reasons. The financial stringency which followed partition and has continued till recently made it necessary to slow down the scheme. Sufficient space was not readily available and it would take years to build up the necessary physical capacity. More important still, there was lack of trained personnel in sufficient number and quality. The plan was accordingly recast, and it is now proposed to build the National Museum in eight stages. Of these only four stages would be taken in hand immediately.

The building for the Museum has also been so planned that it can be built in phases to conform 'to the stages of the Museum's development. It will be a three-storeyed building, square in shape and with mitred corners, radial

wings and circular corridors, giving access to all the radial wings. A keynote of the plan is great economy in the circulation space and disposition of galleries so that a visitor can proceed directly to the sections in which he is interested without, having to walk idle distances. There will be an open central court decorated with a water-fountain. The building will, when completed, be, I hope, a noble monument of modern Indian architecture. The entire building will have a floor area of about 3.85 lakh square feet and the first phase covering a plinth area of 1.9 lakh square feet is to be completed in two years. The plan selected lends itself admirably to such phased construction. The phase will cover the entire facade on Queensway and Kingsway and will not appear incomplete from outside even in the absence of the later phases.

I now request the Prime Minister to lay the foundation-stone of the National Museum which, I hope, will be a faithful guardian of our past and a guarantor of our future.

**Inaugural Address at the Unesco Seminar on Development of Public
Libraries in Asia, New Delhi, October 6, 1955**

I am happy to welcome delegates from so many Asian countries assembled here to devise ways and means for the development of public libraries in this area of the world.

I am particularly happy that India had been given the opportunity of acting as host to this distinguished gathering of library workers from many parts of the world. It is hardly necessary for me to stress before a gathering like the present one the great contribution which libraries can make towards a dissemination of knowledge throughout the community. They are the depositories of ancient knowledge and the seedbeds for new knowledge. Their proper use must, therefore, be a part of a national plan of educational development. Carlyle once described the library as the university of the modern age. Nowhere is this description truer than in the Asian" countries. Millions cannot at present be offered facilities of study even in secondary schools, let alone in colleges. The services of a library can, however, be made available to all of them. I am happy to say that in the Delhi Public Library India has, in co-operation with Unesco, developed an institution which may well serve as a model of the way in which libraries can be utilised for popular education.

The need for a proper development of library service in these Asian regions is the greater because of two considerations. Due to certain historical circumstances the people of western Europe forged ahead in man's race for higher civilization from the middle of the 16th century. By the 19th century the supremacy was almost complete. The 20th century has, however, driven

home the lesson that the world cannot progress so long as any part of humanity lags behind. Sections of the world which had fallen behind must be brought to a level with the more advanced sections if we are to secure peace, prosperity and progress for all. In the political field, this has led to a repudiation of colonialism by the enlightened conscience of mankind. In the economic field, it has led to a move for ending exploitation of man by man both internally and externally. Inequalities cannot, however, be permanently eradicated unless there is an equality of educational achievement. The less educated parts of the world are also backward in all other ways. A special effort to catch up with the more progressive areas is in evidence throughout all these regions. This object can be fulfilled only by providing to these less developed regions all the knowledge and all the technology that has so far been achieved in the most advanced countries of the world. Without books and without all those records which help in communication between man and man, this knowledge of technology cannot be imparted. Libraries are thus the best means of achieving the largest amount of sharing of minds through books and other material. If, therefore, we want to do away with differences in knowledge, we must weave the institution of public libraries in the fabric of our society.

The second reason is closely linked with the first and may be regarded as both cause and effect. Almost all the countries represented in this seminar lack public libraries. This is both a measure and a cause of weakness in general educational standard. India has a population of over 360 millions living in more than half -a million towns and villages, but possesses only 32,000 libraries. In fact, many of them are libraries only in name for they lack some of the essential prerequisites of a good library. There is hardly one

book for every 50 persons and more than 10% have to content themselves with one book per year. Even if we make allowances for the huge mass of illiterate people in the country, a literate adult in India reads on the average only one book per year. If we compare this with the situation in the United States or the United Kingdom our weakness is shown up glaringly. With almost full literacy the per capita annual use of books in the United States is almost four while in the United Kingdom it is seven. In other words, a literate man in the U.K. reads at least seven times as much as a literate man in India.

I have already said that the lack of adequate library facilities is both cause and effect of our low educational achievement. Countries which have elected the democratic way of life cannot afford to keep vast numbers of the people illiterate and ignorant. Ultimately it is the quality of man-power that decides the position, prestige and future of a nation. We must, therefore, make special efforts to improve our library facilities so that the opportunity of coming abreast with the rest of the world is offered to all our people.

This becomes specially clear if we remember our own past history. It is not that India lacked libraries in the past. There is the tradition of the magnificent libraries built up in the Buddhist universities and universities of old. During the middle ages, the Sultans and later the Mughal emperors were also great lovers of books. In fact during the Mughal times it was the fashion for every nobleman to build up his own library. One was in fact not regarded as an aristocrat unless he had a library of his own. Nevertheless, the benefits of these libraries were confined to royalty and the nobility the result was that knowledge was not widespread among the masses. One main reason why India fell behind Europe is surely to be found in this restriction of libraries

for the use of only a selected few. Today, democratic India has learnt from her past and is providing facilities for education and enlightenment to all her children.

I am conscious that there are many difficulties which stand in our way. The library system in India—and what I say about India will apply to most of the countries in this region—is weak not only because of the lack of finance but also because of an inadequate and inferior production of books. Unless special efforts are made to improve the available literature both in quality and quantity, any expansion of library facilities may, in fact, prove a disservice to the community. If cheap and sensational literature, which unfortunately has become only too common in recent years, is allowed to circulate freely among the masses the result will be the lowering in tastes and general harm to social and communal welfare.

In the past, it has often been thought that a librarian's duty is merely to supply books on demand from the consuming public. I am sure that a group of experienced librarians like you will not accept this point of view but conceive of the role of librarians in a more generous way. According to modern standards, the role of the librarian is not only to devise means to reach the greatest number of books to the greatest number of readers but also to ensure that more people read more and more worthy literature. The librarian of today must, therefore, project himself into the community and devise means of discovering and in some cases training the right type of authors, finding publishers and overcoming the practical difficulties of printing. such literature attractively and yet cheaply.

You will be glad to hear that the Government of India has also been thinking on these lines and taking certain definite measures for encouraging the production of good and whole-some literature as cheaply as possible. One method we have adopted is to award prizes in all the Indian languages for outstanding work written specially for neo-literate adults. These books are intended to develop among our masses a modern. mentality and scientific outlook while, at the same time, retaining the basic values of our ancient culture: In order to encourage writers and publishers books which compete for these prizes may be submitted even in manuscript. Government further undertakes to buy 1,000 copies of every book which secures a prize. This insures the writer and the publisher against any possible loss. Further, out of the prize-winning books, the five bests are given all-India recognition and a special prize. In their case the Government promotes their translation into all the Indian languages by giving a guarantee that 1,000 copies of the book will be purchased in each Indian language. This is intended not only to encourage authors and publishers but also to build up a corpus of common literature for the whole of India. You may have seen in the paper a few days ago an announcement that 42 books from 13 Indian languages have been given a prize under this scheme.

You will also be glad to know that the Government of India has decided to set up a National Book Trust for the preparation and production of healthy literature for the masses. This Trust will promote the publication of classics, of standard books on all important subjects and of translations of outstanding books, eastern and western, into the several Indian languages. It will also help universities, academies and other approved institutions to publish such

books and ensure that they are made available to the public as cheaply as possible.

I have presented to you an example of our special problems and the manner in which we are seeking to resolve it. In this seminar you will, naturally, give your attention to the problems proper to the public libraries. I need hardly say that in every case the living background of the community will have to be kept in mind in devising a system of libraries for a country. All librarians aim at providing the greatest amount of most useful reading for the largest number of the people, but the mechanism which will achieve this ideal will differ with the different social and economic circumstances of the people. India is by and large a rural country. The rural people are in many respects less advanced than their fellow-citizens in urban areas. The need for a special library service is for these reasons far greater in rural areas than in towns. We are, therefore, seeking to devise a library system with the District Library as its pivot. The District Library will maintain a mobile service to take new books to the people in the villages and bring back to the headquarters books already used. Out of the 320 and odd districts of India, 100 have either already set up such circulating libraries or are in the process of doing so. The programme that we have drawn up will ensure that by March 1961, there will be no district without its own District Library and circulating library service.

A district library service will in its turn require support and guidance from a central library in every State. These central libraries must also be linked up with one another and be part of an integral system with four national libraries in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras with the National Central Library in Delhi as the coping-stone of the edifice.

It is obvious that such a national central library must be able not only to co-ordinate the library activities within India but also to co-operate with Unesco in organizing an adequate library service for this region of the world. Unesco has already within a short period built up a laudable tradition of service in the field of public libraries. Libraries throughout the world have benefited by the library literature and specially the five manuals which Unesco has produced. Seminars like those held at Malmo in Sweden and Sao Paulo in South America have brought home to librarians their common problems and helped to develop a new attitude and approach. I have already referred to the service which Unesco has rendered in India by setting up the Delhi Public Library as a pilot project.

I am sure this Seminar will devote a great deal of thought as to how an international organisation can best co-operate in speeding up the public library programmes of member States. It will no doubt also consider how the member States of the region can help one another in developing a national programme of library development in each. No doubt the main burden of all such programmes must fall on the shoulders of the National Government but Unesco can greatly help through the initial of pilot projects, and the training of librarians in the most modern methods of librarianship. We in India would particularly welcome a large number of pilot projects to demonstrate the use and value of mobile libraries.

In conclusion I would once again like to welcome the distinguished librarians from many countries who have come to participate in this Seminar which will be held in the Delhi Public Library. I am particularly happy that Mr. Gardner, who was a Director of the Delhi Public Library in its initial years, will be guiding your deliberations during these three weeks as the

Director of the Seminar. I have great pleasure in inaugurating this first UNESCO Seminar on Development of Public Libraries in Asia.

PROMISE OF A BRIGHT NEW DAWN

There is something strikingly similar about the end of our century and its beginning.

In the early part of our century capitalism, imperialism and Christianity's domination of the world were being challenged. Although it was not until the middle of the century that imperialism was forced on the retreat, it was the powerful challenge mounted to it in the early part of the century that contributed to its partial demise, especially in Asia.

Communism, with its promise of a bright new dawn, was also coming into its own with the creation of the Bolshevik state in 1917. Many of the most influential intellectuals and political leaders of Asia were also convinced that socialism with its humane outlook-at least that was what was evident in its philosophy-would be the answer to racism, sexism, totalitarianism and imperialism with its brutal exploitation of the so-called coloured races of the world.

Now some of these 'isms' which promised so much are on the wane, with capitalism arrogantly claiming to be the true path to material and cultural happiness and political freedom. The situation is in a state of flux and only the naïve will draw final conclusions from the struggles that still lie ahead.

Presently the East, particularly Asia, is being written out of the script despite the fact that its secular and religious philosophies, expounded by some of the greatest minds of our age, were the first to advocate tolerance, a respect for democracy, good neighborliness and cooperation across the divide for the creation of a more just world.

It is in this context, I am convinced, that the universal teachings of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad are valid for the 21st century. The beginning of which should indicate the direction the world will be taking. Like all great philosophers, Maulana Azad saw where our world was heading, was aware of its tendency toward religious intolerance, racial arrogance, selfishness and its social, moral and environmental decline. And like another great sage, Matthew Arnold, he was convinced that despite man's huge scientific and technological leaps he would still remain backward, warlike, greedy, predatory and even barbaric if he ignored the central role of religion and culture in man's development.

Philosophers sometimes tend to be aloof with their feet not always planted on terra firma. The great strength of Maulana lay in his ability, like Socrates and Marx, to take philosophy into the market place so that the people, who are the real makers of history, can bring about the desired changes.

HARSH RESTRICTIONS OF THE RAJ

Now let us illustrate from Maulana's own life, struggle and experiences. He came to India at the turn of the century as a young man, son of a famous Muslim theologian.

The India of his day was under the thrall of British Imperialism which was at its zenith. The harsh restrictions placed upon the people by the Raj, and enforced by a large army of occupation, were designed to hasten their social and moral degradation.

To walk in the Mall Road in Simla was prohibited to Indians; admission to clubs was strictly forbidden: even the opening of an umbrella in the presence of an Englishman was a grave offence .

Not only was the British Raj in occupation of vast territories but it was also, through a well co-ordinated policy of brain washing, making inroads into the intellectual, political and even spiritual outlook of the subject peoples. The Muslims were asked by some of their leaders to be loyal to the British occupation.

British rule in India was not benevolent, it was parasitical. The marquis of Salisbury, quondam Secretary of State for India, did not mince his words when he observed: 'As India must be bled... the lancet should be directed to the parts where the blood is congested....

Young though he was, Maulana quickly grasped the reality of imperialist rule. He recognized that freedom was indivisible and that imperialism was directed equally against the Muslims. It was directed against human beings. It outraged human dignity which was common to all religions. He argued that all of humanity was the family of God and therefore there should not be any difference between one man and another on the basis of religion. It was

the duty of Muslims, he maintained, to fight against tyranny and oppression wherever it existed and without any distinction of caste or creed. Consequently, it was the bounden duty of the Muslims to fight against the British. He denounced all forms of collaboration with the British rulers. He went so far as to say: ‘ It is possible for muslims to go to the jungles and associate with wolves and snakes, but it is not possible for them to cooperate with the British’.

Towards this end he started his paper Al-Hilal whose popularity and influence increased and within two years attained a circulation of 26,000 copies per week, a figure unheard of in those days.

A DANGEROUS MAN

He was naturally a dangerous man in the British view and police reports of that period unwittingly paid him a great tribute. Let us take a few gems which also show the organization, a political skills and courage of one of our most heroic freedom fighters.

“A series of objectionable articles was contributed by him to his paper, Al-Hilal, in consequence of which the issue of 13th August, 1913 was proscribed by the Bengal government under the Indian Press Act and all copies forfeited, whilst for similar articles issues dated the 14th October, 1914, a security of Rs. 2,000 was demanded in respect of the paper under the same act. As a result of this demand the Al-Hilal ceased publication and has not since reappeared.”

“The Maulana also established theological institution in Calcutta under the title of Drul Irshad. This institution had for its ostensible object the training of a number of Maulvis in the correct interpretation of the quran; it proved on enquiry, however, to be training the Maulvis to preach Pan-Islamic and anti-British views and to be disseminating seditious and revolutionary ideas under the cloak of religious instructions.

Rarely have we seen a combination of the man of action and of a profound political and religious philosopher as in the case of the maulana. From Al-Hilal, 1912-1914: “My resolve is not to seek a task, but to seek first men to do it”

SPIRIT OF A SOLDIER AND COURAGE OF A HERO

In this world there never was any lack of tasks. But there has always been a dearth of men to undertake them. The present age is an age of wars. All round us are hosts of enemies and there is not a single corner where armours do not ring. So there is no lack of fields for action. Those who possess the spirit of a soldier and the courage of a hero must come out to face life as they find it and face its trials. I assert once again that there is no lack of tasks. What we really lack among us are patriots and fighters”.

The British must devoutly have wished that they did not have so astute and sophisticated an adversary. The British oppressors, who prided themselves on their democracy at home, were totalitarians abroad, particularly in India. Apart from using administrative decrees to prevent him from publishing his newspaper they also used the long arm of their repressive law to frustrate his

political campaigns by jailing him. The Maulana was flattered not frightened by the tyrant's use of courts of law to maintain an odious, offensive and thoroughly immoral regime. Here is the Maulana on the quality of oppressive justice, not just simply the British variety, but of other tyrannies too:

“ The iniquities of courts of law constitute an endless list and history has not yet finished singing the elegy of such miscarriages of justice. In that list we observe a holy personage like Jesus, who had to stand in his time before or foreign court and be convicted even as the worst of criminals. We see also in the same list Socrates, who was sentenced to be poisoned for not other crime than that of being the most truthful person of his age. We meet also the name of that great Florentine martyr to truth, the inventor Galileo, who refused to belie his observations and researches merely because their avowal was a crime in the eyes of constituted authority... When I ponder on the great and significant history of the convicts docks and find that the honour of standing in that place belongs to me today, my soul becomes steeped in thankfulness and praise of God.”.

UNIVERSAL TRUTH CANNOT BE FLOUTED

The Maulana was to become famous for this teaching that there were certain universal truths that could not be flouted. Yes he, fought for the freedom and liberation of his people, but he was the first to recognize that India's was not the first and only freedom struggle of its kind, nor the last. Tyranny was also universal and it never discriminated. The Maulana did not believe in a specific racial or religious kind of freedom. He believed in a freedom that

was universal. He told the same court of law which sought to jail him. “It is my belief that liberty is the natural and God-given right of man. No man and no bureaucracy consisting of me has the right to make the servants of God its own slaves. However attractive the euphemisms invented for ‘slavery’ and ‘subjugation’ still slavery is slavery and is opposed to the will and the canons of God. I therefore consider it my bounded duty to liberate my country from its yoke.”

Next to the battlefields, courts have played a significant part in setting the example of injustice in the history of man. From the founding fathers of religions to the inventors and pioneers of science there is no holy or righteous individual who was not produced before the courts like criminals.”

In that magnificent and irrefutable indictment of British tyranny, the Maulana also drew comfort from his religion but in doing so demonstrated that Islam itself had a universal view of the freedom and dignity of all men. “... religious injunctions have imposed on me the same duty. In fact, in my view, the greatest proof of the truth of my religion is that it is another name for the teachings of the rights of man. I am a Musulman, and by virtue of being a Musulman this has become my religious duty.... The movement Islam appeared, it proclaimed that right is not might but right itself. No one except God has the right to make serfs and slaves of God’s creatures. All men are equal and their fundamental rights are on a par. He only is greater than others whose deeds are the most righteous of all...”

ONE OF THE MAKERS OF MODERN INDIA

In recognition of his eloquence, his charisma, his bravery political skills and resourcefulness, he was immediately given a high place in the leadership of the Indian nationalist struggle. Gandhi admired him and Nehru rightly regarded him as one of the makers of modern India. In 1923 at the youthful age of 37 the Maulana was elected President of the Indian National Congress, the youngest incumbent of that high and distinguished office.

Nehru, who shared the Maulana's universalist view of the world, said of him: "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 preceded the French Revolution, men of intellect and men of action. He reminded me also of what might be called the great quality of olden days-graciousness, a certain courtesy of tolerance or patience which we sadly lack in the world today."

India's foreign policy, realistic, visionary and non aligned, grew not just out of her history, culture and traditions but also out of an appreciation of the fact that times had changed and that our world was more inter dependent than ever before. There was no single architect of our foreign policy but many giants contributed to its evolution, among them Maulana Abul Kamal Azad. Seventeen years after his first presidency of the Congress in 1940, the Maulana was elected to that office again. In a far-ranging speech in which he exposed the hypocrisy and humbug of the British who freely bandied words

like 'freedom and democracy' but who had no respect for its real significance, the Maulana made it clear that as far as the people of India were concerned, British imperialism was on a par with Nazism and Fascism. That is why he took pains to stress that a free and independent India would play its full part in the defeat of the fascist menace.

INDIA PART OF A LARGE WORLD

Again, he stressed that India was part of a large world. "It is therefore impossible today for India to consider her problems while confirming herself within her own four walls. It is inevitable that events in the outside world should have their repercussions in India; it is equally inevitable that our decisions and the conditions prevailing in India should affect the rest of the world. It was this consciousness and belief which brought about our decision. We declared by our resolutions against the reactionary movements like Fascism and Nazism, which were directed against democracy and individual and national freedom. These movements were gaining strength day by day and India regards this as the greatest danger to world peace and progress. India's head and heart were with those peoples who were standing up for democracy and freedom and resisting this wave of reaction."

The Maulana was in the centre of the drama leading to the freedom of India. He was an astute negotiator and such was his charm and magnanimity, coupled with strict and undeviating adherence to principle, that he won the respect and even the friendship of the representatives of the British Empire, particularly Stafford Cripps, Bottomley and Pethwick-Lawrence.

INDIA CULTURALLY AND HISTORICALLY INDIVISIBLE

He held out for a united India and maintained to his dying day that religion could not be the only justification for the creation of a separate state. India was culturally and historically one, and that was the great unifying factor apart from languages, way of life, traditions etc.

It saddened him that independence brought with it the tragedy of division, with its bloodshed and bitterness. Thirteen years after his death, Bangladesh fought a bloody and costly war for secession from Pakistan, confirming Maulana's thesis that religion alone was not a solid foundation on which to build a state.

Nehru recognized and paid tribute to this realism in the Maulana as early as 1942: 'Lesser men have round some conflict in the rich variety of Indian life. But he had been big enough not only to see the essential unity behind all the diversity, but also to realize that only in unity can there be hope for India as a whole and for the varied currents of national life which course through her veins.'

The Maulana had fought with might and main for the liberation of his country and the expulsion of the British occupation. When at last the British troops, which had kept India subjugated for so long, embarked on their homeward voyage, a new and glorious chapter opened in the centuries-old history of India. Now freed from its bondage, the indestructible India should rise again to claim its heritage and to advance triumphantly in the quest for truth and purity so cruelly interrupted by the spiritual heirs of the ignoble

tradition of Nero, Hitler and General Dwyer. For the Maulana, as for the millions of India, the long dark nights of barbaric rule were over.

THE CULTIVATION OF UNIVERSAL MAN

But for him it was the beginning of a new struggle, the cultivation of universal man in India, and it was fitting that Nehru should have entrusted him with the highly important portfolio of Minister of Education to shape and mould the minds of Indias for generations to come. It was a wise choice, for few in India had the knowledge and the vision and the feel and passion for the spiritual, cultural and educational transformation of India.

The Maulana has no need to hammer out a new blueprint. It was all there based on a political and moral philosophy that had been severally tested in the fires of the struggle. For Maulana, freedom was not simply a question of economic and political emancipation, it was more than that, involving a complete moral, social and spiritual transformation.

Very early, he had exposed the hollowness and sham of the Macaulay education system, as offensive and as futile as the Bantu education that was to be the cornerstone of Apartheid in South Africa many years later, Macaulay had sought to produce a disorientated, alienated Indian personality, divorced from its intellectual, cultural, historic, spiritual and politically impotent. The Maulana was particularly trenchant about the downgrading of Indian languages in favour of the language of the foreign oppressors. .

BARRIERS OF SELF INTEREST

Recent developments, ironically are quite paradoxical. On the one hand there are many who interpret the fall of Eastern Europe as the beginning of a historic process that will eventually lead to an integration of the entire European continent. But on the other hand some very perceptive critics see in these developments the creation of barriers of Self-interest, perhaps somewhat antagonistic to the interests of Asia and Africa. They see in this process the strengthening of new economic domination through multinational corporations. Whatever the truth may be, there is a very real danger of greater divisions in our world with the possibility of even greater conflicts.

Maulana Azad faced up to such eventualities with optimism and a faith in the ability and capacity of man to bridge such divisions with what might be called 'transculturalism'. Given present political, economic, social, scientific, technological and military developments, it is worthwhile turning to some of Maulana Azad's observations on the need for the revival of the true universal spirit.

Take this for instance: "While science has failed to find a way of uniting human hearts, we recall with pleasure life in its own course has done so for centuries. Cultural relations between different regions and different nations date back to the very beginning of history. In fact, even before the dawn of recorded history, cultural contacts had been established between peoples of different regions. How these contacts developed in spite of the difficulties of communications is one of the unsolved mysteries. Some 5,000 years ago a

civilization developed in the sub-continent of India that showed clear evidence of relations with countries as far as Mesopotamia and Egypt. There are indications that such contacts spread far and wide in spite of the obstacles of distance and the difficulties of communicating's .

QUEST FOR HIGHLY DEVELOPED AND EMANCIPATED MAN

It is also worth noting that in his quest for the highly developed and emancipated man, Maulana was even prepared to borrow from the achievements of the British. He was a great admirer of the British Museum Library. One of his first places of call on his first ever visit to England was the British Museum Library of which he was recorded this impression: "What impressed me most was the Reading Room at the British Museum. Here was a vast hall, full of earnest men and women devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. There was an atmosphere of silence and dignity which marked it out immediately as a true temple of learning. Anyone who had to speak did so in a hushed voice so that others might not be disturbed. I have often felt that we should create the same conditions and atmosphere in our own libraries and reading rooms .

There is much heart-searching about the relevance of educational systems throughout the world, including India, to the century of advanced information technology and the domination of our age by market forces backed up by unparalleled wealth and, it need be said, even deliberate poverty, producing all kinds of social and economic distortions often even in those very lands which regard themselves as wealthy advanced and scientifically and technologically developed. Can it be that these people have

missed the point that they are worshipping blindly at the shrine of the false God of materialism? No doubt much though will have to be given to the development of a more purposeful, rewarding and unifying educational system, but I myself believe that to ignore some of the teachings and the contributions of the Maulana Azad to an ideal educational system would be short-sighted. These, because of their universality, are good not only for India but also valid for the wider world.

DEVELOPMENT AND REFINEMENT OF THE EMOTIONS

The Maulana Azad observed sadly that in the present system of Indian education-true for most Western and socialist systems too-art had either no place or played a very minor role in our general education. He deplored the fact that until now education had been aimed at developing only the interest of the child. Therefore we have such distortions as people who display all the external signs of higher education, but at the same time exhibit beliefs and conducts of a totally uneducated mind. No education, he maintains, can be complete which does not pay proper attention to the development and refinement of the emotions.

Let us recall these words which should offer some comfort for the future-providing they are taken aboard-for the agitated minds struggling to create syllabuses which will defeat the process of dehumanization so evident in modern developments.

“The modern malaise of society in which individuals are torn and divided and society riven with a hundred conflicts is the result of the fact that the arts

have been divorced from intimate contact with life at a thousand points... there was no distinction between arts and craft in the old days. The craftsmen who produced objects for the use of society were simultaneously artists. On the other hand, artists took pride in the excellence of their craft and never hesitated to take their full share in social production.

Great Environmental Calamities

Ironically, despite protestations of poverty and shortages, we live in a world of plenty but tragically, because of selfishness and short-sightedness, we are misusing this wealth and going so far as to destroy ourselves through great environmental calamities. We are rushing headlong, guided by rhetoric about preserving certain values. The debate about our future is being conducted at a very juvenile and superficial level. It is time we drew inspiration and guidance from giants like the Maulana, and let us remember in particular his exhortation.

“... good deeds” are not be understood in the narrow sense as the performance of certain formal duties, important as they may be for man’s spiritual and social welfare. Man must go beyond them and do everything to the best of his capacity and in accordance with this circumstances, to fashion his whole life to confirm to the twin basic concepts of unity of God and brotherhood of man. Own must not serve man except in the service of God, and one cannot serve God without serving mankind.

Some” Pearls and Bolts” from Maulana Azad’s Writings

.” if an angel descends from heaven and tells me that India will be freed provided we give up Hindu-Muslim unity, I will say no, because if India’s freedom is delayed, it would be our country’s loss, but if we give up Hindu-Muslim unity, it will be the loss of humanity.”

“In the advancement of nations, there is no greater hindrance than narrow mindedness. It is our duty to keep ourselves free from this disease in the new era of independence.

Distances which took months if not years to covers, can now be covered in hours. Science has thus brought people close together physically but we have yet to develop a machine that can bring human hearts together.

“God marks the highest limit of human thought. By identifying man with God, the Eastern concept of man elevates him to Godhead. Man has therefore no other goal but to re-establish his identity with God. He thus becomes superior to the entire creation.”

“Distinction is, no doubt usually made between the old and the new learning. But in my search for truth, this distinction has never counted with me. The old I have received as my heritage and the new is as familiar to me as the old, as I have delved in both.”

“The fact is that the basis of worship according to the QURAN rests on the idea that the aim of human life is to reflect in one’s own thought and activity the attributes of God.”

On the day of Judgment, God will ask a particular individual “O son of Adam, I was sick but you did not attend on me?” Bewildered, this individual will say: “ How is that possible?” You are after all the supreme lord of all the worlds (and cannot fall sick). “ God will reply: Don’t you remember so and so among my servants was ill and lying close to you, and you did not turn to him in sympathy. If you had gone near him, you would have found me by his side”. In like manner, God will address another individual: “O Son of Adam, I had asked of you a piece of bread, but you would not give it to me” The individual will explain” How is that possible” Could God need bread? And God will reply: “Don’t you remember that so and so among my servants had in a moment of hunger asked of you bread, and you refused to give me: If you had given him food, you would have found me by his side.” Similarly, God will ask of you a cup of water, but you did not given it to me. The individual will cry out: “How is that possible? How can God feel thirsty? God will reply: So and so of my servants who was thirsty, asked of you water, but you did not give it to him. If you had given it to him, you would surely have found me by his side.”

I am a Musalman and am proud of that fact. Islam’s splendid tradition of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilization are my wealth. It is my duty to protect them.

As a Musalman, I have a special interest in Islamic religion and culture and I cannot tolerate any interference with them. But in addition to these sentiments I have others also which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments: It guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an India. I am a part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim.

“When a man expels personal interest from his life, he is free and detached. A free and detached person is one whom not even the sharpest sword can touch because it can pierce his body but not his soul.

Conclusion

As the study has shown Maulana Abdul Kalam like so many other Indian leaders, was deeply involved in the political process in order to reinforce Indian nationalism as an integral part of the anti-colonial struggle. However, what sets him apart from other leaders, particularly, the nationalist Muslim leaders, was that he showed an early concern with regard to constructing an ideological framework that would ensure Muslims’ participation in the nationalist movement as a religious duty later than merely indulging in political activism for its own sake. He thought that aloofness of Muslims from the ongoing freedom struggle in the early part of the twentieth century was an undesirable fact to be accepted. It was for this purpose, as other

considerations such as changing the whole mindset of the Muslims of his generation, that he decided to launch a journal called At-Hilal in July 1912. The clarion call of this journal was to oppose British rule in India in every possible way. He argued that such was the duty enjoined upon a Muslim by the Quran. With the launch of Al-Hilal, Azad had launched himself as well on the firmament of India's struggle for freedom. He was able to earn recognition for himself as nationalist without having participated in any struggle, except for a brief stint with the extremist political formation called Yugantar, in the wake of the anti- Bengal partition agitation in 1906. Later his nationalist concern drew quite heavily from pan-Islamism, which had emerged in the late nineteenth century but acquired serious form in the beginning decades of the twentieth century. However, there were many nationalist Muslim leaders who too started their political journey in the course of this pan-Islamic upsurge. For instance, the Ali Brothers, Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari and Hasan Mahmood, were part of the same phenomenon. This generated a possibility of Muslim leaders moving away from the shadow of a culture of mendicancy, as was the practice in Aligarh since the late nineteenth century due to the impact of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who has tried to seek reconciliation with the British and continued to plead the same till he was alive. He was of the opinion that seeking confrontation with the British was injurious to the interests of Muslims.

In the course of his nationalist articulation Azad was influenced by his vast knowledge not just about India but other countries as well- such as Egypt, Iraq and Turkey, where rumblings of nationalist upsurge had begun rather loud, which found adequate space in the pages of Al-Hilal. By starting a journal such as the one under discussion Azad was breaking no new ground since many nationalist leaders has already done so in the past. For

instance, Lokmanya Tilka in the late nineteenth century, has launched Kesari and Maharatta, with the help of which he was able to spread the message of nationalism. It was to be recognized that a nationalist movement in a colonial society was bound to be a slow and evolutionary process more in the specific context of India where the collective existence of the people was based on religion, caste and linguistic affiliations. The major task of the nationalist movement was that without undermining these affiliations, the communities needed to be welded into a single nationhood, which was possible only by involving them in the nationalist political process. In the course of making this possibility as a district reality many nationalist leaders thought of religion as an entry point and made good use of it. The politics initiated by Tilak, Sir Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal fit into this scheme. It is another matter that in due course of time the same phenomenon did not remain static as it gave way to coalescing the communities into a political society purely on political considerations, without which the nationalist movement would have remained considerable weak.

In Al-Hilal, Azad was following much the same line by invoking the authority of religion in order to galvanize Muslims for political action. However, Azad made a distinction for himself in the course of religion – based articulation by emphasizing the need for Hindu-Muslim unity right since the beginning. In his scheme of things this unity was the cornerstone of any political action. One can argue that ideological formulation for political action was certainly couched in exclusive terms but the larger political activities. However, Azad's manner of expression while formulating ideas and making arguments in Al-Hilal gave the impression that he was speaking from a high pedestal, as pir or an imam who only needed to be heard and paid obeisance to by the followers. This impression one is able to arrive at,

despite several disclaimers by Azad that he did not like the culture of pirimuridi as was the tradition at his home till his father, Maulana Khairuddin, was alive. Despite conscious rejection of such a culture, Azad seemed to have come under its influence unconsciously. It seems that he die was cast rather early in his life and he found it difficult to overcome it in the days to come. There were reasons for such an approach. Azad was convinced that considering his family background, scholarship and sharp intellect he could only provide leadership to the people, particularly the Muslims, as partners in the freedom struggle. He was rarely swayed by populist considerations, as was the case with Jinnah, who was prone to be swayed by the popular mood.

In the course of an articulation such as the above there were occasions when Azad too seemed to have been swayed by the popular mood. There was an instance to this effect in the context of the First World War, in which Turkey had arrayed itself in the camp of Germany. The breaking out of this ward had generated a lot of heat particularly among the Muslims of India, who were given to entertain the idea that the Sultan of Turkey was truly the Khalifa of all Muslims the world over. Their concern was borne out of the consideration that the Sultan was also the custodian of the holy places of Islam. The upsurge in the popular mode was amply reflected in the Urdu press. Azad too as stated earlier came under its influence and went to the extent of describing the seat of the Sultan of Turkey as the seat of the khalifa, which might be looked upon as the political centre of Muslims across the globe. It is surprising that a conscious and politically aware person like Azad was talking in the language of a supra nationalist. Given his capacity to move his audience by his writings as well as oratory such a formulation could have produced an undesirable consequence for the future of India. Fortunately Azad had an opportunity to quickly revise his opinion

in the context of the Non-Cooperation – Khalifat movement. As compared to other Khilafat leaders it was Azad who argued that the whole struggle in the context of the Khilafat agitation was only to free India from the British rule. He used religious idioms to construct a powerful anti-colonial ideology. It is another matter altogether that when he wished to refer to his political activities and ideological construction he always wanted to impress his audience that he Hilal, which, however, was not the case. Not only this but other occasions too he emphasized the same point this but on shifts and adjustments that he made in the course of the changing political circumstances, a liner continuity was maintained. Whereas the fact remains that his changing stances did not reflect continuity as claimed by Azad, in the changing context of political developments.

It is observed in the course of the present study that Azad mostly relied on his own formulations since he was self-assured about his intellect and articulation. The problem that one confronts in the context of Azad's changing stances are that once he became a public figure then any transformation of ideological as well as political stand required consultations with others in a broader sense, which Azad was not willing to do as he always looked upon himself as someone only to provide leadership in every respect. It is possible to argue that he was making shifts and changed in his stand because he was not a part of any poetical formation and was accountable to nobody except himself. Another aspect that requires to be underlined is that even though he was formally not a part of any organization, he was consciously projecting an image of a public figure, which in some measure had become the reality. Azad perhaps did not realize or ignored the facts that once he became a public figure his activities – intellectual or political- were under scrutiny. Therefore any change of stance

should have taken the public perception into account, which mostly did not happen.

While arguing that Azad had an independent mind, as he never allowed the masses to influence him, it has to be admitted that precisely because of this reason there emerged a fault-line between him and Muslims at large. He desired to lead Muslims in the nationalist politics but in reality they started moving away from him. Part of the explanation for this could be that in the course of an evolutionary journey, Azad covered a wide spectrum of political positions starting from extremist politics to pan-Islamic ideological thinking to joining the Indian National Congress. In all circumstances he was mostly led by his conviction and analysis of the changing political circumstances, irrespective of the perception of the common Muslims.

In the course of the extremist politics Azad was not uncomfortable that only Hindu symbols such as Kali, Durga (Hindu goddesses), etc, were pressed into the cause of nationalist awakening. It was beyond the imagination of an average Muslim to have identified with these symbols. But this was also the time when the Maulana had not even thought of mobilizing Muslims for political action. The thought of involving Muslims in political action came to him later, in 1912, when he launched his papers *Al-Hilal* and later *Al-Balagh*. These papers were able to draw significant response from the Urdu-reading sections of Muslim society. The Maulana was able to convince his readers about the efficacy of pressing Islam in the service of the nation by arguing that Muslims must come forward to free India from British rule. In other words he was able to convince his readers that a fight against the British enjoyed the sanction of Islam.

In the process of building an ideological framework which was his own and not a borrowed one, he went to the extent of arguing that Muslims

in India must be their own leaders and not follow others, since they were expected to provide leadership to the larger society. This argument along with a large number of developments associated with the First World War generated plenty of political upheaval among Muslims. In due course some Muslims Jamiatul-Ulema-i-Hind were two such formations, which channeled the political energies of Muslims into the nationalist movement in the name of the Khilafat issue. It was a defining movement as regards Muslim's participation in the freedom struggle on a mass scale. Azad was closely associated with these groups during the Khilafat movement and made use of their platforms to enunciate powerful anti-colonial arguments. The hallmark of the success of the movement was large-scale mobilization and participation by Muslims. Its linkages with the Non-Cooperation movement under Gandhiji's leadership made it a formidable force. The movement held hopes that in the days to come the unity between Hindus and Muslims would emerge as a formidable force to reckon with. However, the edifice of such a political unity crumbled in the wake of the withdrawal of the movement after the Chauri-Chaura incident on 5 February 1922. This was the beginning of the alienation of Muslims from the Gandhian framework of political agitation and personally from Gandhiji himself as well as the Congress.

While the long drawn-out alienation Muslims from the Congress was beginning, Azad in a reverse manner started moving closer to the party. The fault-line between Azad and Muslims started appearing. While addressing the special session of the Congress at Delhi as its President in 1923 he argued with all, and Muslims in particular, that the country did not need any sangathan, either representing everyone. Azad's assertion was not in conformity with his own political preaching in the preceding period when he

had insisted on Muslim leadership for Muslims in a manner as if a religious community could also simultaneously act a political entity. It is argued that such thought were formulated at a time when there was little participation of Muslims in the nationalist movement in an organized manner.

A person of sharp intellect such as Azad might have been able to evaluate the political situation and come to certain conclusions that under the changed circumstances a new political strategy was the need of the hour rather than sticking to earlier formulations. The Maulana was at liberty to choose a quick transformation of his convictions in terms of associating himself with the Indian National Congress, more so when he was offered an opportunity to become its President in the special session at Delhi in 1923. However, the real problem was that since the days of Al-Hilal Azad had stated imagining himself as a national leaders representing Muslims and when it came to making a quick transformation he seemed to have moved such ahead of his co-religionists, without having waited for consultations and their response. It must be admitted that in large measures the Maulana's writing and speeches over a decade starting from the Al-Hilal days till the Khilafat movement was set rolling, had produced substantial impact on average Muslims and prepared them for political action. But when Azad made a shift in favour of the Congress, this newfound position was seen as an abrupt act. Any serious study of leadership might recognize the fact that a leader's capacity to lead would be recognized by the followers only till such time as the gap between the two does not increase beyond certain acceptable limits. In this case, soon after Azad joined the Congress in 1923 the gap between the two became visible and in due course of time staidly increased. It is true that even after changing his stance his concerns for Muslims remained undiminished. As a result he and the Muslims started drifting apart

from each other. It is difficult to fathom as to why he did so except that he might have thought that the only way to stem the tide of communalism would be to abandon pursuit of a district community-based political formations and formulations.

The drift continued even in the context of the Nehru Report, which did not adequately take care of the concerns of Muslims particularly in the Muslims- majority provinces. One can argue that Azad supported the Nehru Report, but had some reservations about it and hoped that at some point of time the Congress might like to review it. Many of Azad's associated whom he patronized and collaborated with, did not extend any support to the Nehru Report. Teh Jamiatul-Ulema-i-Hind was one such body, which did not approve of the Report. It emphasized that complete independence should have been the only option rather than the Dominion Status as it was enunciated in the said Report. It was also argued that the Report ignored the aspirations of Muslims in Muslim-majority provinces by advocating a unitary constitution. The All Parties Conference held at Calcutta in December 1928 clearly indicated that the Hindu Mahasabha had cast a shadow on the future of the Report. In the popular perception of Muslims the Congress did not appear sincere in making provisions which would take care of Muslim concerns for a share in power. Azad's support for the Report did not go down well with the Muslims. The Rangeela Rasool controversy too had vitiated the political atmosphere in the country. Many Muslims were quite agitated about it but the Maulana tried to reason with them that an emotional outburst on an issue such as this was avoidable. Azad's attempt to pacify the Muslims took place despite his strong displeasure that some people should chose to express disregard to Prophet Muhammad. These developments produced unpleasant consequences.

Maulan Azad was conscious of the growing gap between Hindu and Muslims as regards joint political action. He strongly felt that such a gap if allowed to grow would harm the long-term interest of the country. This realization was not new but he became more concerned about improving the communal situation. In the mid- 1930s, particularly with the entry of the lower middle classes into the Congress it increasingly acquired cultural colours associated with Hindus. Once again the issue of respecting the cultural identity of Muslims was seriously debated. Azad emphatically argued that it was beyond imagination that Muslims should submerge their cultural identity in the process of nation- building. Unlike the European experience of total subordination of cultural identity to the national identity, Indian Muslims would like to preserve their district identity. He was also keen that the Congress be seen as willing to share power with Muslims. Azad thought that this would help the party to convey an impression that it represented all, not only ideologically but in power-sharing arrangements too. All did not share Azad's concern. There were many Congress leaders who did not agree with Azad's views. This heightened Azad's predicament – on the one hand he was considerably alienated from the Muslims, while on the other his party colleagues did not support him.

Azad was apprehensive that the Muslims might be pushed closer to the Muslims League. His apprehension was borne out in the context of the 1937 elections when the Muslims League did not get sufficient electoral support from Muslims. But while the Muslims did not get closer to the League, they did not repose their confidence in the Congress either. The Congress made no special effort to overcome this except to conduct a half-hearted Muslims was Contact Programmed. Azad became critical of the Congress for its slack response to questions concerning Hindu-Muslim

relations, till 1938. In this regard it was Azad who took the initiative to get the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League declared communal bodies. He was critical of the party for having missed several opportunities to clinch the issue of joint electorates by making concessions to certain Muslims political groups particularly in the Muslim-majority provinces. He suggested that the Congress should try negotiating with the Muslim League to resolve the communal tangles. Azad was critical of the fact that not many Muslims were accommodated in the party structure. He demanded that if this was on account to lack of support of Muslim candidate for positions in the party, then there should be provision of reservation to ensure better representation for Muslims. Azad was trying to project an image of the Congress as representing all communities. However, he never allowed his differences with party colleagues to the surface. The Congress did not help Azad in his relationship with the Muslim masses. The alimination that had started in the 1920s continued except that in the 1930s Azad tried to retrieve lost ground-without much success. Despite the fact that all these years he was continuously making arguments to keep Muslims within the fold of the Congress, he was not able to do much for several reasons. One was that Azad was considerably circumscribed by the limitations of various programmes and policies of the Congress, which had no blue print in order to keep Muslims within its fold. There were general policies about the constructive work to be undertaken, preaching against intoxicants, removal of untouchability, etc., but no specific programmed to target Muslims as an important social base to the party. The second was that there were several political formations, which were making claims to represent Muslims interests, for instance the Unionist Party in the Punjab. The third was that Azad at this point of time did not have a larger space for political initiatives,

which attracted all, Muslims in particular. His collaboration with other nationalist Muslims formation was to materialize only in the 1940s. Therefore his attempts to retrieve lost ground were mostly taking place within the Congress where he was trying to convince top leaders of the party for greater sensitivity to issues concerning Muslims. However, these attempts did not have much visibility to let Muslims gain impression that Azad was concerned about them.

Azad's election as Congress president in March 1940 was a recognition of his services to the cause of India's freedom from British rule. However, his election coincided with the Muslim League's passing of the 'two-nation theory' resolution on 23 March 1940, which became the basis for the demand for partition of India. The Congress rejected this. But the biggest ideological challenge to the Muslim League came from the Azad Muslim conference, a coalition of several nationalist Muslim formations to which Azad extended all support. While he was engaged in questioning the legitimacy of the Muslim League's claim to represent all the Muslim of India, his president ship of the Congress itself was on shaky grounds. The frequent threats of resignation held out by his Working Committee colleagues must have weakened take political initiative. Even when he tried doing so he was advised against it. There was occasions when doubts were cast over his integrity and political wisdom.

It was with considerably compromised authority that Azad negotiated with the Cripps Mission in 1942 and the Cabinet Mission in 1946. While negotiating with both the Mission his sole concern was to protect India's integrity as a united entity. However, during his negotiations with the Cripps Mission, short of accepting a province's right to secede he was in favour of a federal structure, which would remove the fear in the Muslim-majority

provinces that a Hindu-dominated centre would override their interest. Not many in the Congress agreed with him, as most leaders wanted a unitary centre. This issue dominated the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission. Azad's contention was that if the Congress conceded the right to provinces to secede then that would help in taking the wind out of the Muslim League's sails. These political thoughts of Azad once again were not in tune with many Congress stalwarts. Due to his unflinching commitment to Indian nationalism he was struggling with various formulations and political, which would prevent India from being partitioned.

However, not many scholars have viewed Azad's efforts to prevent the partition of the country with sympathy. One such scholar was Mushirul Haq, who in his book *Muslim Politics in Modern India, 1857-1947* quoted a long passage from *India Wins Freedom*.

It is one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest that religious affinity can unite areas which are geographically, linguistically and culturally different. It is true that Islam sought to establish a society, which transcends racial, linguistic, economic frontiers. History has however proved that after the first few decades, or at most after the first century, Islam was not able to unite all the Muslim countries into one state on the basis of Islam alone.

Haq argued that such an assertion by Azad, in the context of partition politics came rather too late. Haq observed, 'had Azad emphatically expressed this opinion when it was needed probably, one may say, the situation would have been different. But he did not dare say so at that time and his main opposition to the idea to Pakistan was similar to that of any other *alim*'. One can argue that Haq was quite off the mark in his assessment of Azad. It was been shown in the preceding chapter that all through he tried

his best to fight back the separatist politics of the Muslim League more so in 1940s not as an *alim*, religious scholar of Islam, but as someone who could easily claim that he was an integral part of the nationalist political process and as a leader tried his best to street the nationalist movement in its most difficult times. While he was engaged in an exercise such as this there were the limitations of an individual, who could not have gone beyond a point in preventing partition. Moreover in a democratic politic process he could only have gone with the majority opinion within the Congress rather than his own. One statement or two were not likely to stem the ride of the Pakistan movement.

Haq's observations about the role that Azad played in the context of the Pakistan movement were certainly harsh. But other scholars too have argued that Azad's leadership was a failure that he could not win the confidence of his co-religionists in order to keep them within the fold of the Congress. These observations have been made by V.N. Datta in *Maulana Azad*. However, Datta has analysed the personal failure of Azad in a much broader context and argued that in many ways the partition of India could be seen as a failure of the Congress led nationalist movement that it could not keep the Muslims within its rank. The editors, Gail Minault and Christian W. Troll annotated *Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. An Intellectual and Religious Biography* by Ian Hednerson Douglas, too seem to suggest much the same argument. Then it becomes necessary to ask a question: was he truly failure? In many ways one would agree with Datta and the editors of Douglas' volume on Azad that he failed in his endeavors. However, there is still some room for a new interpretation that despite many of his failures , he short as well as long-term efficacy of his ideological formulations remained valid. For instance, he never wavered in his conviction that religion could ever

become the basis of formation of nationhood and therefore communities would have to be coalesced into a single nationhood. However, Azad was not merely being theoretical as he had practical suggestions to make in regard to accommodating all communities, Muslims in particular, in the power structure in order to develop their stake in the political process.

It was in the context of this understanding that he talked about the disregard shown by many top Congress leaders to the growing communal problem. Azad was aware that the communal problem was going to hinder the future march of the Indian nation. But unlike many other leaders it was Azad, who from time to time kept on coming up with various suggestions in order to stem the growing tide of communalism and save the nationalist movement from difficulties. His suggestions were practical and not theoretical. For instance in the exercise of government formation by the Indian National Congress after the 1937 elections, Azad showed his keenness that the policy to accommodate Muslims in the power-structure was a vitally important element. But this was largely ignored. Azad's understanding was that the growing alienation of Muslim from the Congress could be stemmed only by convincing them that it too was concerned about their share in power. There were issues of cultural identity of the Muslims as well particularly with regard to the language question as to whether Hindi or Hindustani would become the national language of India. Except lip service, many leaders had moved closer to accepting Hindi in Nagari script as the national language. These were issues which affected the inter-community relation as they affected the future prospects of the nationalist movement.

Azad was actually conscious that by ignoring these issues nobody would be able to serve the cause of India's future. Thus his substantial political energy was consumed in making arguments for resolving these

issues while the nationalist movement moved on in its march forward. Therefore it may appear that he was spending more energy on seeking a better inter-community relation than serving the cause of the freedom movement. The only plausible explanation that can be extended in this regard is that the evolutionary trajectory of India nationalism was such that inter-community relations in whatever form did affect it. Therefore in Azad's scheme of things it was important to retain those Muslims who were not under the influence of the Muslim League, within the fold of the nationalist movement. However, only ideological slogans would not attract them as concrete plans would. With the growing belligerence of the Muslim League in the late 1930s and 1940s the lines suggested by Azad were relevant but it required a different strategy, which could not be devised. Azad did not give up. He did not give vent to his differences within the Congress publicly since he thought that adversaries of the Congress would benefit. But at the same time he did not miss an opportunity to remind his fellow colleagues the necessity of initiating measures to retrieve lost ground. Even in the 1940s when the Muslim League, after adopting the 'two-nation theory' in March 1940, went to town declaring that the Muslims of India constituted a distinct nation, it was left to Azad to mobilize those Muslims and their political formations, who were still committed to the cause of the composite Indian nationalism. However, electoral success eluded them when it came to the crunch in the elections of 1945-6 as the Muslim League was able to carry the day.

The Partition of India on 14 August 1947 in order to make Pakistan as demanded by the Muslim League was a sad day in the annals of her long history. It saddened everybody, as Azad too was deeply sad that with the arrival of independent the unity of India was gone. He feared that such

cataclysmic development would affect those Muslims who would not go to Pakistan and stay back might be considered alien in their own homeland. He also hoped that Pakistan would be a short-lived phenomenon. His far did take shape in one form or the other but his hope remained a distant dream.

Historians have considered the Partition of India as a failure and defeat for Azad. However, it needs to be added that it was a political and electro defeat. Ideologically Azad still held on to his ground that the notion of a religion- based nation was nothing short of 'fraud'. It is another matter that the die was already cast. Despite the best of energy, intellectual as well as political, there are times in the lives of men when unfolding historical circumstances overwhelm them.

The role that Azad played in the years preceding Partition was that of a one-man army against Muslim alienation from the Congress, and the Congress' indifference towards sensitive issues of identity, culture and desire for power- sharing. In his struggle Azad found himself mostly alone. Jawaharlal Nehru was the only colleague whom he looked to for support. He was sustained by his conviction in a united India. India's partition saddened him. But he knew that despite Partition his political philosophy was still relevant. When Muslims wanted to return to him after India's Partition, he did not say no to them. He admonished them but did not abandon them out of anger or frustration. He welcomed and exhorted them to come forward to reclaim their share in the Jama Masjid in Delhi in October 1947, Azad in order to instill a of history were still blank, which they could fill with their contributions. When Azad became independent India's first Minister of Education, and the manner in which he undertook the seemed he was doing so on behalf of the educational life of India, it seemed he was doing so on behalf of the entire nation, Muslims in particular and filling the 'blank pages

of Indian history' work out an ideological framework and develop a political ethos, which would make it possible for communication to coalesce into a single nationhood.

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