



Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

The real name of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was Abul Kalam Ghulam Muhiyuddin. Popularly known as Maulana Azad, he was one of the foremost leaders of Indian freedom struggle. Maulana Azad was not just a prominent freedom fighter. He was also a renowned poet and scholar. He was highly educated and travelled to different countries to understand the true meaning of freedom, struggle and culture. His proficiency in many languages like Hindi, Bengali, Arabic, English, Urdu and Persian made him a leading figure in intellectual arena. Azad was his pen name that he had adopted later in his life. It represented his liberation from a narrow view of religion and life.

Born on November 11, 1888 in Mecca, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad received his primary education at home. He was first taught by his father and then eminent scholars. His family had left India during the Sepoy Mutiny but came back to India in 1890 and settled in Calcutta. His father ensured, he received best of traditional Islamic education. His visit to diverse countries like Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey, Egypt and Iraq had taught him valuable lessons about freedom struggle and Pan-Islamic spirit. His meeting with political members, freedom fighters and scholars of great repute left an indelible mark on his life. His return to India found him converted into a nationalist revolutionary. He met similar minded freedom fighters in Calcutta and decided to devote his life to freedom struggle of India.

His biggest contribution was in convincing Islamic revolutionaries to fight for India's freedom struggle. Maulana Azad explained the futility of fighting for anti-Muslim causes and urged his community to present a united front for the freedom struggle of India. His idea of freedom was based on Hindu-Muslim unity and for that he started a weekly journal which later became a big threat to British rule. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was an active participant of Non-Cooperation Movement, Khilafat Movement and Salt Satyagraha movement. British rulers kept putting him into prison every now and then and yet his spirit found him coming back to freedom struggle.

He was appointed president of Congress party in 1940 and he continued in that post till 1946. He was a staunch supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity and partition of the country left him devastated. Maulana Azad was appointed as independent India's first education minister. He died on February 22, 1958 of a stroke. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna in 1992 for his invaluable contribution to the nation.