

**MUSLIM HARMONY AN EDIFICE OF HINDU  
MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD**



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**Short Profile**

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**ABSTRACT:**

In my last column I traced the life and political career of Maulana Azad, India's leading Muslim nationalist, during the struggle against the British. But it is above all as a visionary of the place of Muslims in India's civilisational history - and therefore in its present and its future - that Azad must be remembered.<sup>1</sup>

**KEYWORDS**

*Muslim Harmony, life and political career, India's civilisational history.*

**INTRODUCTION :**

When he became President of the Indian National Congress at Ramgarh in 1940, Azad delivered perhaps the greatest testament of the faith of a religious Muslim in a united India. He declared that "every fibre of my being revolted" against the thought of dividing India on communal lines. "I could not conceive it possible for a Musulman to tolerate' this," he declared, "unless he has rooted out the spirit of Islam from every comer of his being." It galled him that the secularized Jinnah claimed to speak for India's Muslims and to assert their claims to being a separate nation, while the Maulana was both a deeply committed

Muslim and a passionate Indian. "I am a Musulman and proud of the fact," he said to his majority non-Muslim Congress audience. "Islam's splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. In addition, I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of that indivisible unity that is Indian nationality."

Then he added - and this is the key part: "I am indispensable to this noble" edifice. 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. It was India's historic destiny that many human races and cultures and religions should flow to her, and that many a caravan should rest here.... One of the last of these caravans was that of the followers of Islam.<sup>2</sup>

They came here and settled for good. We brought our treasures with us, and India too was full of the riches of her own precious heritage. We gave her what she needed... most, the most precious of gifts from is Islam's treasury, the message of human equality. Full eleven centuries have passed by since then. Islam has now as Partition, he represented a key bridge between secularists like Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Saifuddin Kichlew, on the one hand, and Deobandi Muslim fundamentalists like Maulana Maudoodi (who felt that Islam should prevail over the world at large and certainly over India as a whole, and believed it to be treasonous - both to India and to Islam itself - to advocate that the religion be territorially circumscribed as Jinnah and the Muslim Leaguers did). Critics like Keonraad Elst have associated Azad with the latter view, seeing him as a surrogate fifth columnist for an eventual Islamicisation of the whole of India. While there is no denying that in some of his appeals to Muslim supporters Azad may have given grounds for such beliefs, Elst and others overlook the profundity of Azad's lifelong engagement with the multi-religious civilisational heritage of his homeland. "Islam," Azad averred, "has now as great a claim on the soil of India as Hinduism."<sup>3</sup>

If Hinduism has been the religion of the people here for several thousands of years Islam also has been their religion for a thousand years. Just as a Hindu can say with pride that he is an Indian and follows Hinduism, so also we can say with equal pride that we are Indians and follow I Islam. I shall enlarge this orbit still further. The Indian Christian is equally entitled to say with pride that he is an , Indian and is following a religion of India, namely Christianity." What became the great cliché of "unity in diversity" emerged from Azad as an affirmation of the equality of the rights of all of India's communities to be themselves<sup>4</sup>.

Today, Maulana Azad is largely forgotten. To Pakistanis, he was a pathetic figure on the wrong side of history; to Indian Muslims, a symbol still, but little more; to other Indians, a name associated with medical colleges and other institutions rather than the progenitor of a legacy to either cherish or contest. His tomb lies largely neglected in Delhi. In the history of nations, the great rewards go to the winners, and Azad, by his own lights, failed in the most important cause of his life. But in the history of

the ideas that make up the intellectual underpinnings of any country, there must be an honoured place for those who, whether they won or lost, had the great merit of being right. Maulana Azad was right. That is his legacy - and ours.

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