

Fellow's Presentation

Topic: “**Re-thinking conceptual understanding of learning society with special reference to Maulana Azad's values education**”

Presenter: **Sk Akhtar Ali**, Senior Research Assistant (MAKAIAS)

Expert: **Dr. Tandra Mitra**, Jadavpur University

Date : **8.08.2012**

Time : **3.30 pm**

Venue: **Azad Bhawan, Salt Lake**

Rapporteur: **Anwasha Ghosh**, Researcher, MAKAIAS

Sk Akhtar Ali's presentation attempted to collate the emerging concept of learning society and its various dimensions with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's idea of value education. The presentation was divided into two sections, one dealing with the process of globalization and its different interpretations, attributes for learning society, and the second addressing the implication of values education in learning society with particular reference to Azad's notion of values education. Akhtar Ali started by discussing the core concepts, practices and paradoxes of life-long learning before summarizing key elements of social theory which have informed discourses on lifelong learning and the learning society. He tried to point out changes that the society had experienced in the past few decades as a result of development in information and communication technology and to what extent that has impacted the concept of 'Knowledge Society.' An attempt was made to track the evolution of the concept from a historical and social perspective with particular reference to the process of globalization. The presentation then focused on Indian educational policy, which with time has been accrediting exceptional significance to lifelong learning to raise compatibility with the knowledge-based society.

The evolution and the concept of 'value education' was discussed in detail before getting into Maulana Azad's idea's on the same. He pointed out at his contribution in the field of education and observed that it had two dimensions: a) metaphysical, more related to theory and b) epistemological i.e related to practice. Of the three metaphysical concepts of Azad, the most important is the concept of God. Studied in its historical perspective, the concept includes man's innate faith in the Divine Existence, on the one hand and his acquired belief in His attributes on the other. The presenter argued that what Azad put forward as values education evolved organically from his basic philosophical concepts. In the scheme of creation, man's role consisted in asserting himself as the co-sharer of Divine attributes and co-worker in the creative progress. As the supreme goal of human destiny, it determined the entire character of man's education which becomes, therefore, a process of his preparation for the achievement of the set purpose. Apart from the impact of this ideology on other aspects of his educational theory, it guided Azad in the formulation of his educational values, constituted in the over-all aim of the programme and the absolute in its subservience. The ultimate objective of education, embodied in the ideal of fulfilment on the part of man as God's viceroy, distinguished itself as unique among the various objectives of education. The sole aim of education, as understood in 'the ideal of fulfilment', topped Azad's value hierarchy. In order to achieve the objective at the top, it was natural to realize the values which constituted the main body of this hierarchy. The five universal values were *Ma'aruf* or Good, *Haq* or Truth, *Jamal* or Beauty, Love and *Adl* or Justice. The presentation dealt with each of them. To conclude, Akhtar Ali pointed at the loopholes of overt mechanization in the education process and urged the infusion of cultural and spiritual attributes into the process of learning.

Discussion Session

Dr. Tandra Mitra congratulated the presenter for the extremely well researched paper that he presented. She particularly appreciated the first part of the presentation that dealt with the evolution of the concept of Lifelong Learning and its relevance in the present context. She mentioned that education, Lifelong Learning and values- the main concepts raised in the paper - are attributes that cannot be demarcated easily. The conceptualizations of knowledge lead to wisdom and according to Dr. Mitra these are not mutually exclusive. She questioned the absolute and time independent attributes about 'truth' and 'ethics'. She added that the world has gone through significant changes and shifts in the past few decades and in light of those it becomes difficult to stick to the old concepts of values and perhaps they now need an analytical approach as well. There is a need today to find out value parameters and rethink them. She concluded by suggesting that Lifelong Learning should be considered from both horizontal and vertical approaches.

Dr. Sreeradha Dutta, Director, MAKAIAS thanked the expert for her valuable comments and insight on the subject and agreed that the vertical and horizontal approach to learning can be extremely relevant for an evolving dynamic society. However she disagreed with expert on one issue when she argued that there should be a baseline for ethics. Dr. Dutta observed that though the presentation was extremely fertile from the lifelong learning perspective there was a major disconnect with Azad's education and as a result a synergy was lacking between the two parts and she felt that must be addressed.

A vibrant discussion session followed after the comments from the senior members, the points raised during the discussion session are as follows:

- ✓ Questions were raised on the influence of great thinkers like Rousseau on Azad with reference to *Al Hilal*, as mentioned by the presenter. References were made to Azad's non-formal educational background and his formal professional background as a teacher.
 - ✓ Questions were raised on the usage of the terms "value" and "ethics" in the presentation and on whether these have been used interchangeably.
 - ✓ The discourses that Azad might have referred to in order to develop his concepts and ideas on values, ethics etc were asked about.
 - ✓ Questions were raised on the sources from which the five values of Azad were gathered. The term "Rubuihat" and its interpretation by the presenter was also questioned.
 - ✓ Suggestions were forwarded to define a few umbrella terms which were used in the presentation. Since the definitions of such terms differ widely, it would be useful to specify the definition the presenter is abiding by.
 - ✓ The difference between value and values education was discussed.
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