

LOK SABHA

Monday, 24th February, 1958

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

DEATH OF MAULANA AZAD, SHRI B. DAS AND SHRI V. M. OBAIDUL-LAH

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Finance (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has fallen to my lot often to refer in this House to the death of a colleague or some great man. I have to perform that duty, a sad duty, again today in regard to one who was with us a few days ago and who passed away rather suddenly producing a sense of deep sorrow and grief not only to his colleagues in Parliament, but to innumerable people all over the country.

Now, it has become almost, if I may say so, a commonplace, when a prominent person passes away, to say that he is irreplaceable, that his passing away has created a void which cannot be filled. To some extent that is often true; yet, I believe that it is literally and absolutely true in regard to the passing away of Maulana Azad. I do not mean to say that no great men will be born in India; certainly not. We have had great men and we will have great men; but, I do submit that that peculiar and special type of greatness that Maulana Azad represented is not likely to be reproduced in India or anywhere else.

I need not refer to his many qualities which we all know—his deep

learning, his scholarship and his great oratory. He was a great writer and he was great in many ways. But there are other scholars; there are other writers; there are other orators, but there was this combination in him of the greatness of the past with the greatness of the present. He represented and he always reminded me of what I have read in history about the 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 encyclopædists who preceded 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. There were many bad qualities, of course, in the old days, but there was a certain graciousness, a certain courtesy, a certain tolerance, a certain patience which is sadly to seek in the world today. There is little of graciousness in the world, even though we may become more and more advance in scientific and technical ways. Even though we may seek to reach the Moon, we do it with a lack of graciousness, with a lack of tolerance, with a lack of some things which have made life worthwhile since life began. So, it was this strange and unique mixture of the good qualities of the past, the graciousness, the deep learning and toleration with the urges of today that made Maulana Azad what he was.

Everyone knows that even in his early teens he was filled with the passion for freeing India and he turned towards ways even of violent revolution. And, then, he realised, of course, soon after that that was not the way which would gain results.

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru.]

He was a peculiar and a very special representative in a high degree of that great composite culture which has gradually grown in India. I do not mean to say that everybody has to be like Maulana Azad to represent that composite culture. There are many representatives of it to various parts of India; but he, in his own venue, here in Delhi or in Bengal or Calcutta, wherever he spent the greater part of his life, represented this synthesis of various cultures which have come one after another to India, rivers that had flowed in and lost themselves in the ocean of India life, India's humanity, affecting them, changing them and being changed themselves by them.

So, he came to represent more specially the culture of India as affected by the culture of the nations of western Asia, the Iranian culture, the Persian culture, the Arabic culture which affected India for thousands of years—especially Iran—as every one knows. So, in that sense, I said that I can hardly conceive of any other person coming who can replace him because there was already a change in the age which produced him and that age is past. A few of us are just relics, who have some faint idea of that age that is past.

I do not know if the generation that is growing up will even have any emotional realisation of that age. We are functioning in a different way; we think in a different way; and a certain gap in mental appreciation and understanding separates us, separates the generations.

It is right we change; I am not complaining. Change is essential lest we become rooted to some past habit which, even if it was good at some time, became bad later. But, I cannot help expressing a certain feeling of regret that with the bad, the good of the past days is also swept away and that good was something that was eminently represented by Maulana Azad.

There is one matter I should like to mention here a curious error to the expression of which I have myself been guilty about Maulana Azad's life and education. Even this morning, the newspapers contained a Resolution of Government about Maulana Azad. The error is this, that it is stated—as I have stated sometimes—that he went and studied at Al Azhar University. He did not do so. It is an extraordinary persistence of error of wide circles. And, as I said, I myself thought so. Otherwise, I would have taken care to correct it in the Government Resolution which has appeared today. The fact is that he never studied at Al Azhar University. He went, of course, to Cairo; he visited it as a visitor, to see it; but, he never studied there. He studied elsewhere. He studied in fact, chiefly in Calcutta, in the Arabic Schools as well as other schools. But he spent a number of years in Arabia. He was born there and he visited Egypt as he visited other countries of Western Asia. That is a different matter.

So, we mourn today the passing of a great man of course a man of luminous intelligence and a mighty intellect with an amazing capacity to pierce through the problem to its core. I used the word 'luminous'. I think perhaps that is the best word I can use about his mind—a luminous mind. When we miss and when we part with such a companion, friend, colleague, comrade, leader, teacher—call him what you will—there is inevitably a tremendous void created in our life and activities.

It is possible that the initial reaction may not be a full realisation of that void. The initial reaction is one of shock and sorrow. Gradually, as days pass, the void appears deeper and wider and it becomes more and more difficult to fill that place which was filled by a person who has passed away. But that is the

way of the world and we have to face it. We have to face it not negatively but positively by devoting and dedicating ourselves to what he stood for and trying to carry on the good work which he and others who have left us—captains and generals of our peaceful forces who have worked for Independence and progress and advancement of India who have come and who have gone leaving their message behind. And so, I hope though he may go, he will live and his message will live and illumine us as it did in the past.

Shri S. A. Dange (Bombay City—Central): Sir, I associate myself completely with the sentiments expressed by our Prime Minister. In fact, it is very difficult to add to the picture that he has given us of the Maulana Sahib as well as the appreciation. It is no doubt that we who came to the non-co-operation movement in 1920 and had been reared up in the national movement for so many years feel now that with his passing a sort of a whole period is summed up and that summing up has been done by the Prime Minister very well.

As he says, he reminded us of the encyclopaedists of the French Revolution and the Leaders of the Renaissance. When I used to see him sitting either here or in the movement outside, I was reminded more of the great Arab leaders of the 10th century, combining philosophy, mathematics and something of Omar Khayyam's literature—all together. It is a beautiful personality and a beautiful ideology of the new period combined with all the grandness that was in the past.

I sometimes used to feel how Abul Fasal would have looked when he translated the Upanishads in Persian and I think Maulana was the same picture here. It was not a small thing, when 12 or 13 years ago, when the floods of communalism were sweeping away many persons, to stand like a

rock on the ground of nationalism despite adherence to one's religion, one's own community. For the Maulana Sahib to remain with the national movement required tremendous courage. Many people were washed away in the flood. But Maulana Sahib stood there. Therefore, it is quite true to say that, surely, more great men will be borne, but the period that is passed cannot be filled up.

Acharya Kripalani (Sitamarhi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, it becomes difficult for us to pay our affectionate reverence to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in silence; we have to speak and perform our duty to our leaders. I fully and completely associate myself with the words that have been spoken by the Prime Minister. I believe that the demonstration day before yesterday and the public meeting yesterday show how instinctively the common people the great loss that the nation has suffered.

Sir, as the Prime Minister said, Maulana Sahib was the embodiment of a synthetic culture which had existed in India for the last few centuries, which had been enriched by many streams assimilated in India. It is the genius of our people that whenever they take anything from outside they put their own grab upon it, before accepting it, thus enriching themselves.

Maulana Sahib was the culmination of an age, an age which will not come back. He had the old world's courtesies which may not revive. But, even as he was the culmination of an era, he was also the beginning of another era. I remember, in 1912 when he published out his famous journal *Al Hilal* in Urdu, it was a revelation. A young man who did not know any of the modern European languages yet could talk of political and historical matters with a familiarity of the expert.

He rendered the greatest service to Islam, when he recognised that Islamic countries could only be saved