

# Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's Views on Religion and Science



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## Abstract

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was a staunch Hindu leader during his time. Dr. S Radhakrishnan described him as, “.. not only a representative of Hinduism but the soul of Hinduism”. Mahatma Gandhi regarded him as “one of the best among Hindus, who though orthodox holds most liberal views”.

As an active member and office bearer of the Hindu Mahasabha, Malaviyaji always fought for the preservation of the traditional Hindu traditions and practices.

N.C.Kelkar, former editor of Kesari, Poona observed Malaviyaji very closely. He said, “Malaviyaji looks at Hindu renaissance in all aspects and in all its detail without being adverse to assimilate the light and spirit of new scientific age”.

Malaviyaji visioned for the linkage the heritage of ancient knowledge with modern development of science and technology. In the minutes he wrote for the Report of the Indian Industrial Commission (1916--18) reflect true India's views on industrial development accompanied with the need of technical and scientific knowledge. His Convocation Address (1929) of BHU also a testimony of his strong advocacy and policy for 'advance and diffuse such scientific, technical and professional knowledge combined with the necessary practical training'.

Certainly, it is this global view that helped Malaviyaji to create a great centre of learning with a fine amalgamation of traditional learning with modern scientific and technological subjects. Malaviyaji had tried hard to create a galaxy of the star scholars of the East and the West in his institution, Banaras Hindu University. More interestingly, Einstein even expressed his willingness to serve BHU sometime during 1940

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## Introduction

*“We believe religion to be the surest foundation of character and the truest source of human happiness”- Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya*

Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was a spotless and flawless religious leader of highest secular order. He was a true visionary who was successful to establish his vision on ground reality. He aimed to generate national spirit through the power of education and righteousness, and to achieve the economic development of the country by combining teaching of science and technology with that of religion.

## Aim and Methodology

We explore the views of Malaviyaji on science and religion in the context of education. Paper is based on the secondary data like, books, journal and such other documents.

## Review and Literature

Eminent Engineer Dr. Sir M. Visvesvarayya made an assessment on Malaviyaji's contributions, “He sought to preserve the best thought and culture of Hindu religion and philosophy and, at the same time, to train experts of science, men of business and industrial leaders, who would help to increase the country's production and wealth”.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, India's second President and who stepped into the shoe of Malaviyaji after he stepped down as BHU Vice Chancellor, remarked, “ As an outstanding sturdy patriot he realized that our country suffered on account of technical backwardness, lack of public spirit, inattention to our great culture. These were the defects which he attempted to remove by the establishment of this University”.<sup>2</sup>

The Editor, The Hindu (Madras, now Chennai), described Malaviyaji as “The Best Mind of Both the Hemispheres”. He said, “Firmly

anchored in the culture and *mores* of his people he looked out on the modern world with the frank and friendly eye of an equal".<sup>3</sup>

Another renowned Editor, N.C.Kelkar of Kesari of Poona (now Pune) analysed, "He looks at Hindu renaissance in all aspects and in all its details without being averse to assimilate the light and spirit of the new scientific age".<sup>4</sup>

Dr. U.D.Tiwari, a noted researcher on Mahamana described him in the preface of the short biography of Mahamana Malaviya, "... a spokesperson of humanitarian religion."<sup>5</sup>

"It was again the revised prospectus of the proposed Hindu University that Malaviya gave a reason for the application of the scientific methods of agriculture..." Noted in Speeches and Writings of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.<sup>6</sup>

Mushtaq Muhammad Umair while mentioning Malaviya's views on medical education reminded how he raised the issue of death rates in India were very high during the colonial period.<sup>7</sup>

Ritesh Gupta, another Research Scholar, made a comprehensive narration on Malaviya's views on science, technology, agriculture and medical education.<sup>8</sup>

#### **His Views on Religion**

The Lahore Congress Presidential Address in 1909 brought in detail what religion was meant to Malaviya. He declared, "I am a Hindu by faith, and I mean no disrespect to any other religion when I say that I will not change my faith, for all the possessions of this world or any of other. But I shall be a false Hindu, and I shall deserve less to be called a Brahmin, if I desired that Hindus or Brahmin should have any unfair advantages as such over Mohammedans, Christians, or any other community in India."<sup>9</sup>

He was the first leader to announce, "India belongs to the Hindus, the Mohammedans, the Sikhs, the Parsis and others alike. No single community can rub over the rest... Act in such a way that all may unite...Let there be mutual trust."<sup>10</sup> It was exactly in this spirit of brotherhood that he opposed the Communal Award, and even the Congress which according to him, was dividing the nation. Ultimately, the Congress could see his point and rejected the Communal Act in 1936. The Constitution of India also endorsed his views.

Delivering the presidential address at Hindu Maha Sabha in Gaya in 1923, Mahamana declared, "...it is our individual and social duty to increase our strength and be on terms of love and goodwill with the Muslims. I solemnly affirm before God I never mean to hurt Muslims or have supremacy of the Hindus over Muslims. We have forgotten our duty. We are responsible for our weakness. We should not fight shy of being called the Hindus."<sup>11</sup> Religion always played a positive role in the heart of Mahamana in spite of the fact that he was a staunch Hindu leader and was an active member and office bearer of the orthodox organizations like All Hindu Mahasabha. Despite deep faith in his own religion he never allowed himself to voice against its dogmas of the Hinduism. Having a sensitive soul, remembered eminent scholar and

politician Dr. Sampurnanand, "He had imbibed deeply the spirit of Hindu culture and he lived it. He was aware of the fact that true religion is above the limitation of time and space; it is eternal..."<sup>12</sup>

Cow protection was nearer to his heart. Once he told Dada J.P.Vaswani, Chairman Sadhu Vaswani Mission of Pune, "Tell Vaswaniji (T.L.Vaswani) to take up the cause of cow-protection and see that the barbaric and inhuman system of cow-slaughter is stopped by non-violence methods".<sup>13</sup>

#### **Synthesis of Idealism and Realism**

Mahatma Gandhi in his tribute to Mahamana said, "His internal life was purity exemplified. He was a repository of kindness and gentleness. His knowledge in scriptures was very great. He was by heredity a great religious preacher."<sup>14</sup> Infact, for an outsider, Mahamana may look as a man of contradiction. He was conservative and rigid and at the same time he was most liberal. He did not believe any sectarianism because he held Hindu religion (*Sanatana Dharma*) as universal and eternal. He used to exhort his students to be faithful towards God and their own religions. Speak truth, live truth, think truth was the call Mahamana gave in his convocation address to the students in 1929. He believed whole creation is one existence, regulated and upheld by one eternal, all pervading intelligent power, or energy. This is the message of Upanishads and Malaviya taught this throughout his life allowing his heart to welcome all that is good and constructive for the good cause of the humanity and his motherland making a strong footprint of peaceful co-existence of religion and science in his temple of learning.

India's second President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who worked with Malaviya as Vice Chancellor of BHU for long time observed two great qualities in Mahamana- yoga or contemplative energy of Lord Krishna and practical efficiency of Arjuna. He had strived all through his life for the Hindu ideals and we see the combination of idealism and practical wisdom with the result side by side with cultural studies in the University.<sup>15</sup> BHU's co-founder Annie Besant referred to Malaviya as the symbol of Indian unity among diversity of opinions.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Education: Blending of Eastern and Western Concepts**

This fine blend of idealism and realism of his mind and soul came into being on practical ground when his dream took a shape into a university in 1916. He advocated provision of agriculture, mechanical and commercial education at all levels from the primary to the university. He advocated for compulsory primary education. His vision of modern India envisaged rapid industrial and agricultural development of the country and for that he advocated education in the field of science and technology.

Thus, came in existence his dream child Banaras Hindu University, a fine centre of synthesis of Eastern and Western leaning. He strongly declared in his address on the Hindu University Bills on March 22, 1915, "My Lord, the university will be a denominational institution but not a sectarian one. It will not promote the narrow sectarianism but a broad

liberation of mind and a religious spirit which will promote brotherly feeling between man and man".<sup>17</sup> He had to fight tirelessly both inside and outside to make it clear that the University would not be a strictly "Hindu University", though he did not compromise on introducing religious study with religious instruction.

Four objectives were laid down for the creation of Banaras Hindu University reflecting his strong views on Indian culture and tradition simultaneously those on modern branches of science:

1. to promote the study of the Hindu *Shastras* and of Sanskrit literature generally as a means of preserving and popularizing for the benefit of the Hindus in particular and of the world at large in general, the best thought and culture of the Hindus and all that was good and great in the ancient civilization of India;
2. to promote learning and research generally in Arts and Sciences in all branches;
3. to advance and diffuse such scientific, technical and professional knowledge, combined with the necessary practical training as is best calculated to help in promoting indigenous industries and in developing the material resources of the country; and
4. to promote the building up of character in youth by religion and ethics as an integral part of education.<sup>18</sup> (<http://www.bhu.ac.in/>)

Malaviyaji visioned for the linkage the heritage of ancient knowledge with modern development of science and technology. In the minutes he wrote for the Report of the Indian Industrial Commission (1916-18) reflect true India's views on industrial development accompanied with the need of technical and scientific knowledge. His Convocation Address (1929) of BHU also a testimony of his strong advocacy and policy for 'advance and diffuse such scientific, technical and professional knowledge combined with the necessary practical training'. He elaborated in this address why the subjects like science, engineering and technology were introduced for learning and higher research work and also highlighted the works of Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose, Dr. Sir C.V. Raman and Dr. Meghnad Saha (three pillars of Indian science at that time).

He brought within the ambit of the University subjects like, technology, ayurveda, Indology, and higher Sanskrit studies. BHU is the first Indian university where subjects like metallurgical engineering, ceramic engineering, and mining engineering were introduced. Eminent engineer and the father of the Indian Engineering Dr. Sir M. Visvesvarayya pointed out "Pandit Malaviya started with a definite concept of what the University was to do and what general disposition was to be of various buildings which were to give it habitation. He sought to preserve the best thought and culture of Hindu religion and philosophy and, at the same time to train experts of science, men of business and industrial leaders, would help to increase then country's production and wealth".<sup>19</sup> And, that reflects Mahamana's deep foresight on what India would drastically need after independence. BHU remained

the main supplier of skilled and scholarly workforce to the Indian industry and research institutions till 80s.

Like Tagore, he had the deep foresight to spot out and collect the fine brains of all subjects in his University which was a powerhouse of galaxy of starts (teachers and students) like, V.V. Narlikar, S.S. Bhatnagar, C.N.R. Rao, Birbal Sahni, T.V. Ramakrishnan to name a few. Malaviyaji had a global view with regard to inviting persons of outstanding ability. To achieve his goal, he had correspondence with eminent scientists including Ernest Rutherford, Sir Arthur Eddington and others. In his cherished ambition, Malaviyaji tried hard to persuade the timeless legend in science and society, Albert Einstein to come over to India and BHU for a suitable period, on his own terms in perhaps some joint scheme and cooperation with Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, Vice Chancellor of the Travancore University (presently Kerala University). But his efforts remained unsuccessful for some reasons.

Simultaneously introduced was the compulsory Sunday Geeta class for all University members. Dr. V.V. Narlikar who joined BHU leaving his position in his research as an Isaac Newton student at the University of Cambridge under Sir Arthur Eddington, one of the most prominent and important astrophysicists of his time, fondly remembered his early days in the campus with a peaceful co-existence of science and religion.

#### **Conclusion**

On the solid foundation of moral, philosophical and cultural heritage of India, Malaviyaji reconstructed and built the scientific, technological and educational edifice in which the students will take a dip in the holy waters of the ancient knowledge on the one hand and the best in techno-scientific knowledge of the west on the other, to be fully equipped for the new challenge which an independent India will usher in.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Endnotes**

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3. *Ibid, p-236*
4. *Ibid, p-61*
5. *Ibid, Preface*
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7. *Mushtaq Muhammad Umair, 2009, Public Health in British India: A Brief Account of the History of Medical Services and Disease Prevention in Colonial India. Indian J Community Med, 2009 Jan; 34(1), pp 6-14*
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10. *Ibid*, p-8

11. *Ibid*, p-468

12. *Inspiring Episodes on Mahamana Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Part-I, Mahamana Foundation, Varanasi, 2002, p-33*

13. *Ibid*, p-4

14. *Ibid* p-132

15. *Ibid* p-97

16. *Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and the Formative Years of Indian Nationalism,*

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Distributors, New Delhi, 2015, pp-1

17. *Ibid*, p-422

18. <http://www.bhu.ac.in/>

19. *Inspiring Episodes on Mahamana Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Part-I, Mahamana Foundation, Varanasi, 2002, p-20*

20. BHU website [http://internet.bhu.ac.in/malaviya\\_heritage/index.html](http://internet.bhu.ac.in/malaviya_heritage/index.html)