**[Sayyid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sayyid" \o "Sayyid) Abul Kalam Muhiyuddin Ahmed Azad**: November 1888 – 22 February 1958) was an Indian scholar and a senior political leader of the [Indian independence movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_independence_movement). Following India's independence, he became the first [Minister of Education] in the Indian government. In 1992 he was [posthumously](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posthumous_recognition) awarded India's highest civilian award, the [Bharat Ratna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bharat_Ratna).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul_Kalam_Azad#cite_note-Padma_Awards_Directory_1954.E2.80.932007-1) There is also a theory which suggests that earlier when he was offered Bharat Ratna he promptly declined it saying that it should not be given to those who have been on the selection committee. He is commonly remembered as **Maulana Azad**; the word Maulana is an honorific meaning 'learned man', and he had adopted *Azad* (*Free*) as his pen name. His contribution to establishing the education foundation in India is recognised by celebrating his birthday as "National Education Day" across India.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul_Kalam_Azad#cite_note-thehindu-2)

As a young man, Azad composed poetry in [Urdu language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urdu_language), as well as treatises on religion and philosophy. He rose to prominence through his work as a journalist, publishing works critical of the [British Raj](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Raj) and espousing the causes of [Indian nationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_nationalism). Azad became the leader of the [Khilafat Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khilafat_Movement), during which he came into close contact with the Indian leader [Mahatma Gandhi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi). Azad became an enthusiastic supporter of Gandhi's ideas of non-violent [civil disobedience](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_disobedience), and worked to organise the [non-co-operation movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Cooperation_Movement) in protest of the 1919 [Rowlatt Acts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rowlatt_Acts). Azad committed himself to Gandhi's ideals, including promoting [*Swadeshi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swadeshi) (indigenous) products and the cause of [*Swaraj*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swaraj) (*Self-rule*) for [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India). In 1923, at an age of 35, he became the youngest person to serve as the [President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_President) of the [Indian National Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_National_Congress).

Azad was one of the main organisers of the [Dharasana Satyagraha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharasana_Satyagraha) in 1931, and emerged as one of the most important national leaders of the time, prominently leading the causes of Hindu-Muslim unity as well as espousing [secularism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism) and socialism.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul_Kalam_Azad#cite_note-agrawal-3) He served as Congress president from 1940 to 1945, during which the [*Quit India*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quit_India) rebellion was launched. Azad was imprisoned, together with the entire Congress leadership, for three years.

Amidst communal turmoil following the partition of India, he worked for religious harmony. As India's Education Minister, Azad oversaw the establishment of a national education system with free primary education and modern institutions of higher education. He is also credited with the establishment of the [Indian Institutes of Technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Institutes_of_Technology) and the foundation of the [University Grants Commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_Grants_Commission_%28India%29), an important institution to supervise and advance the higher education in the nation.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul_Kalam_Azad#cite_note-agrawal-3)

[National Education Day (India)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Education_Day_%28India%29) an annual observance in India to commemorate the birth anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first education minister of independent India, who served from 15 August 1947 until 2 February 1958. National Education Day of India is celebrated on 11 November every year in India.