Part One

As I Saw Him
President
Dr. Zakir Husain

with his predecessor
Dr. Radhakrishnan

with his successor
Shri V. V. Giri
It has been my good fortune to have known Dr. Zakir Husain for more than three decades. Our friendship grew and we became closer as the years rolled by. I was deeply struck by his mastery of the art of living. He attended to everything with grace and charm and indeed this was so much a part of his noble self.

Dr. Zakir Husain was not merely a scholar of repute and an intellectual par-excellence, but above all, he was a humanist who in his own life reflected the synthesis of different cultures. In him one found a true representative of our composite culture. He was what a man should really be—noble, graceful and humble.

Early in life Dr. Zakir Husain chose teaching as a profession and also he realised rightly his mission of evolving a system of education suited to the genius of our people in independent India.

Zakir Saheb was a firm believer in the dictum that knowledge can be made the basis of moral life and the manner in which it can be applied to the ethical reorganisation of society.

He was the leading exponent of Basic Education or Nai Talim. He rightly felt that the ideal of people’s welfare in modern times is impossible to define without reference to the spread of education and the eradication of ignorance.

The educational system that he evolved was not divorced from the practical realities of life. He himself was not an ivory-tower
Philosopher but was one who exuded warmth, understanding and fellow-feeling to all living beings.

His personality could be described in one single phrase—a real *Ajasatathru*. An unswerving defender of the dignity of man throughout the world he strove for providing essential minima of decent human existence. Speaking of our national destiny on his assumption of office as President in May 1967, he said:

"It shall fight against intellectual laziness and indifference to the demands of social justice. It shall eradicate all narrow, corporate selfishness. And it shall do all this as the willing acceptance of a moral duty, as a joyfulty life-power with morality, technique with ethics, action with meditation".

The nation will always remember his words of wisdom when he emphasised that *Bharat* was his home and its people his family. Zakir Saheb was an enemy of all that was parochial, narrow and sectarian. He fully appreciated and often underscored the need of a spiritual content to life. He passionately believed in the destiny of India. He was convinced that:

"Providence has destined India to the laboratory in which the greatest experiment of cultural synthesis will be undertaken and successfully completed".

Let us all participate zealously in this enchanting enterprise and make India strong and united. Zakir Saheb's radiant personality is no more in our midst, but his spirit will ever abide with us.
Dr. Zakir Husain was an ardent patriot and an eminent statesman who adorned many high positions in the country including the highest with great dignity and grace.

He was an erudite scholar and educationist, and was regarded with respect and esteem by learned men all over the world. He was the magnificent symbol of the composite culture of our country. He endeared himself to the common people by the simplicity and purity of his life and his unfailing humanity.

The rare qualities of his head and heart conferred a special distinction on his personality. He enhanced the prestige of the nation in the world.

I am sure the life and work of Dr. Zakir Husain will serve to inspire the rising generation of men and women in our country.
When Dr. Zakir Husain was sworn in as President he remarked that the nation had done a great honour to a teacher. His life-long quest was to learn and deepen his understanding in the educational institutions which he headed and the larger sphere of public life. Dr. Zakir Husain strove to enlarge minds and hearts of people. His own life was an education.

I think the finest trait of culture is to be free of dogmatism. Dr. Zakir Husain was free from dogma and narrowness of any kind and bent his fastidious intellect to a search for a harmony and in the interest of a larger purpose.

Dr. Zakir Husain reflected the best in the heritage of the civilized man. He was an unusual amalgam of steadfastness and gentleness, representing the finest flowering of the composite culture of our country. It is rare to find so integrated a personality as Dr. Zakir Husain’s.

Dr. Zakir Husain never lost interest in people, especially the young and the creative. He was keenly sensitive to their thinking and to their problems. He retained a remarkable capacity of communication with them and encouraged their attempts at self-expression.

He set the highest standards of conduct for himself and every act and gesture of his was a living proof of this high integrity, ennobling all around him. He stood for high ideals and even made for compassion towards all beings.

May his memory guide us on the difficult road ahead.
Democratic traditions and norms

G. S. Dhillon

Dr. Zakir Husain, as I knew him, was a man of firm convictions and a passionate defender of the noble virtues of truth and love. He considered himself first and foremost an educator. On his election as President, he said,

"It is a great honour", "that the nation has bestowed on a mere teacher who some forty-seven years ago resolved to devote the best years of his life to national education."

His devotion to Jamia Millia and the cause of education was beyond question. So much so that he had completely identified himself with that institution.

Equally unquestioned was his patriotism and a sense of dedication to scholarship. By placing the nation above creeds, he became the symbol of India’s composite culture and secularism, representing all that was best in the ancient heritage of the country and in the aspirations and ideals of modern India.

Born in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh on February 8, 1897, Dr. Zakir Husain had his early education at Etawah, U.P. For his college education, he went to Mohammadan Anglo Oriental (M.A.O.) College (later became Aligarh Muslim University) founded by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan with a view to providing educational facilities to Muslims.

The turning point in Zakir Husain’s life came in October, 1920, when Mahatma Gandhi visited Aligarh to enlist the support of the
student community in his non-cooperation movement. Speaking to
them, Gandhiji explained why Indians should boycott educational
institutions controlled by the British Government and should develop
centres of national education instead.

Zakir Husain was moved by this appeal and along with a few
students and teachers walked out of the college campus and set up an
institution which came to be known as the Jamia Millia Islamia (National
Muslim University) like that of Tagore’s Shanti Niketan. It was here
that he made his debut and developed as an educationist.

After teaching at Jamia for about two years, Zakir Husain felt
the urge to improve his own education further. It was characteristic
of his individualistic temperament that he did not choose to go to a
British University where most of the well-born Indians went in those
days.

He left India towards the close of 1922 with a passport valid for
England only, but disembarked when the ship reached Italy. He made
his way to Germany where he took a permit to study for three weeks.
The three weeks lengthened into three years and Zakir Husain secured a
Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Berlin.

On his return from Germany in 1926, Dr. Zakir Husain and his
friends found the Jamia in a sad financial plight. At 29 he became its
Vice-Chancellor and soon plunged himself heart and soul to set the
Institute in order with his characteristic zeal.

It was indeed a herculean task to collect funds and make it a self-
supporting university. To relieve the financial burden, Dr. Zakir
Husain and his colleagues reduced their salaries from Rs. 300.00 to
Rs. 150.00 Dr. Zakir Husain drew Rs. 95.00 per mensum when he left
Jamia in 1948.

Dr. Zakir Husain lost no time in converting Jamia into a pioneerin
centre of educational experiment. He considered the established
system of English education as parochial, stereotyped and anaemic.

At Jamia, he tried to infuse the “project-method” to develop a
community approach in living and learning to train students for re-
sponsible citizenship and to arouse interest in the contemplation of nature
and other varieties of aesthetic experience.

For nearly three decades, Dr. Zakir Husain worked as Vice-
Chancellor of the Jamia Millia under conditions which would have
down a man of weaker faith and devotion.

During this period, the institution blossomed into a major centre
of learning and culture. Thus, the story of the struggle for survival of
Jamia had become really the life story of Dr. Zakir Husain.

He completely merged his personality into that of the institution he sought to serve with his life blood or unparalled devotion.

Dr. Zakir Husain's experience in the educational field was put to good use by Gandhiji in 1937. As President of the All India National Educational Conference, he outlined a scheme for education through work. Gandhiji appointed Dr. Husain as the Chairman of the Committee to draft the syllabus. This new educational system became the essence of the "Nayi Talim" or the Basic Education or popularly known as the Wardha Scheme. The scheme attracted country-wide attention and appreciation.

The Aligarh Muslim University in forties had become a strong centre of separatist Muslim politics. On partition of our country, many of its teachers and students migrated to Pakistan.

It was at this critical juncture that Dr. Zakir Husain was requested by Maulana Azad, Education Minister of free India, to take up the Vice-Chancellorship of the Aligarh Muslim University. Dr. Zakir Husain accepted this challenging assignment and within a few years restored normalcy to the University.

While still in Aligarh, he was nominated to Rajya Sabha at the age of 55, out of the quota reserved for persons of eminence in literary, scientific and social fields. He served and continued in that capacity till 1957 when he was appointed as Governor of Bihar.

In 1962, he was elected Vice-President of the Republic and became ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. Throughout his tenure as ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, he guided the deliberations of the House with great dignity, tact and impartiality-traditions that has been established by the Chair in cooperation with the opposition and the Government.

He won the respect of the House through his erudition, affection, humility, impartiality and gentleness. It was a fitting tribute to the great services rendered by him to the nation that he was awarded the highest honour of the land, the Bharat Ratna in 1963.

Bidding Farewell to the Chairman, Dr. Zakir Husain on the last day of the Rajya Sabha Session on April 11, 1967 the Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi paid glowing tributes to the services rendered by Dr. Zakir Husain and said:

"...You have guided the deliberations of this august House for five years with great dignity, tact, impartiality, patience and understanding. When we have sometimes gone astray, you
have gently brought us back to the fold. It is your manner and bearing as much as your rulings which have gained you our affection and our esteem. Even though you will not be here in this House, the traditions which you have laid down for the House will be cherished, remembered and followed.”

In reply to the tributes paid by the Prime Minister and other Members of the Rajya Sabha, Dr. Zakir Husain, expressing his deep faith in parliamentary democracy said:

“This Parliament is intended for the expression of the people’s views. We are here to say and to listen, to be criticized and to persuade, to persuade others to our way of thinking, and thus come to some consensus.”

Speaking about the role of the Opposition, he said:

“....The rule is that we ought to listen to criticism and understand it; but, the side that has to criticise has probably to moderate the criticism and be constructive in making the criticism. It is the right of the Opposition to criticise, even to criticise in a way that is unpleasant because without criticism, there is no vigilance and democracy cannot function without vigilance....”

This shows how broadminded he was in his attitude towards the Opposition.

On May 9, 1967 Dr. Zakir Husain was elected President of the Indian Republic. His election to the highest office in the land was universally hailed as a triumph of the Indi’s ideals of secularism and a tribute to a man who, while remaining a devout and true Muslim, combined in his personality the noblest traits of the totality of India’s culture.

Amidst the solemn grandeur of a thirty-minute ceremony in the historic Central Hall of the Parliament House, he made a brief speech after taking oath which contains these profoundly moving lines:

“The whole of Bharat is my home and its people are my family. The people have chosen to make me the head of this family. It shall be my earnest endeavour to seek to make this home strong and beautiful, a worthy home for a great people engaged in the fascinating tasks of building up a just and prosperous and graceful life.”

During the short-lived tenure of a little less than two years as President, Dr. Zakir Husain fitted himself in that role both by temper
and conviction almost to perfection. He brought dignity, efficiency, impartiality and charm to the office of President.

His sudden death by heart attack on May 3, 1969, before the completion of his term as President, was a great misfortune and irreparable loss to the country.

The acting President, Shri V.V. Giri, paying his tributes to Dr. Zakir Husain described him "Ajathasathru, one who had no enemies." Shri C. Rajagopalachari, the first Indian Governor General of India and the first Bharat Ratna observed:

"There was no worthier citizen in India than Dr. Zakir Husain, who was one of the earliest soldiers that the Ali Brothers recruited for Gandhiji in his freedom campaign."

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan described him as "a great gentleman and a distinguished educationist" and "a self-made man."

Meeting on May 25, 1969 under the shadow of the national tragedy, both the Houses of Parliament paid glowing tributes to him as one who reflected the best in the heritage of civilised man.

The Speaker Dr. N. Sanjiva Reddy referred to him as "a symbol of modesty, secularism, wisdom and culture." The Prime Minister in a touching reference, stated that "it was fitting that he should be laid to rest in an important centre of learning which he himself had built through his dedication and where practically every brick, book and tree he had choosen. He will be one with the soil, the flowers and the plants of the land he loved so much."

In Rajya Sabha, the Chairman said that "though Gandhiji touched him, he did not involve himself in the rough and tumble of politics."

Dr. Zakir Husain was well conversant with the literary trends in Urdu, English, German and Hindi. His translations of classics in economics published under the title Mubadi Maashiyat (Edwin Cannan’s Elementary Principles of Economics; Maashiyat-e-Quami (Friedrich List’s National Economy) are original in exposition and terse in style.

He regularly contributed to the Jamia’s monthly Magazine on matters of current interest.

It was, however, on the writing of stories for children that Dr. Husain showed his superb talent. Almost all his stories are mere fables. Eventually, the stories were collected and published as Abu Khan Ki Bakri under his own name.

When he was Vice-President, he visited Koyna in Maharashtra and there wrote a short story in Urdu entitled Kashwa aur Khurgosh
(the tortoise and the hare) an old fable with entirely a different moral.

Dr. Husain's very personality exuded the fragrance of the rose, which he so much loved and tended. As a tribute to his fondness for roses, Indian rose experts named in 1967, a newly evolved rose variety as 'Zakir Husain'.

When he moved to Rashtrapati Bhavan after his election, he carried with him about 1500 rare fossils, rocks and minerals, paintings, specimens of persian calligraphy, books and manuscripts.

A perfectionist and an adherent of exquisite personal neatness and meticulousness, he was remarkably patient with other people's faults and shortcomings.

Dr. Zakir Husain was a deeply devoted man who believed that humanism was the highest form of religion and he showed the same reverence and respect for all religions of the world.

Indeed, he was a man of God. Whatever he touched, he adorned with distinction and grace and every position and office was for him an opportunity of service to the people.

He lived up to the expectations of Gandhiji's teachings and moulded his own ideals as a true Gandhian. To quote his philosophy of life, the following words reflect his thinking and mission which he followed scrupulously:

"Life, friends, is composed of sterner stuff than words. It is more than the mere glamour of the phrase. The axis on which worthwhile life rotates is not the axis of pleasure and pain, but one of progress and retrogression; not the axis of profit and loss, but one of self-realization and self-abasement; not the axis of self-seeking and self-aggrandizement, but one of service and sacrifice. It rotates round the axis of the noble and the ignoble, of the worthy and the unworthy. Life is striving for ever higher ends, life is a mission, life is service, life is worship. To be worthy worshippers at the Shrine of Life, you have to work hard and you have to work incessantly to develop to their fullest extent the capacities with which nature had endowed you."

Zakir Saheb's radiant personality is no more in our midst, but his spirit will ever be with us.
The late Dr. Zakir Husain was more than a person; he was an institution. He was an ardent Muslim and that is why he was an uncompromising patriot. His religion did not interfere with his intense love for his motherland.

He was first and foremost an Indian—an embodiment of the traditions and culture, born out of the soil of the land with the amalgamation of the cultures of different communities that make the Indian nation.

Coming from an upper class Muslim family, young Zakir lacked nothing. He had all the comforts he could wish for and, as a brilliant student of the Aligarh University, all doors of worldly knowledge were open to him. But he sacrificed all that he had and all that he could have had to respond to the call of Gandhiji. As a young man, he joined the non-violent movement against the British regime in India.

Even though he had chosen to take this vital decision he did not confine himself to the narrow walls of politics. He knew fully well that an ignorant people could never understand the value of freedom, nor protect it once it was achieved.

He realised that the book-oriented education system throughout the country would not let the mind of students develop into a free-thinking individual but turn out bookworms and bureaucrats. Zakir Husain, therefore, chose the task of educating the nation not only in
the three Rs. but in nationalism and turning out balanced minded, cultured and patriotic citizens. He was one of the propounders of concept of Basic Education.

All his life, Zakir Husain remained a teacher. The Jamia Millia Islamia at Okhla in Delhi is the result of his untiring efforts and his team of selfless workers like Devdas Gandhi, Dr. Abid Husain and Prof. Mujeeb, the present Vice-Chancellor of Jamia. Today, the Jamia remains as a centre of national renaissance and integration.

He transmitted the message of freedom into the young minds through his small interesting stories for children in an imperceptible and non-instructive manner. One example is his story of Chandni, the white goat, who preferred to fight against a wicked wolf for the privilege of enjoying the open green pastures to the security of being tied up inside a house. This and other such stories inculcated the love of freedom in children in a very effective manner.

It was his uninterrupted silent service in the cause of raising a cultured and freedom-loving generation for the country which earned for him the respect of everybody.

Only Zakir Husain could bring together on one plateform staunch opponents like the late Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and Maulana Azad on one side and Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali the founders of Pakistan on the other.

Only Zakir Husain could chide them for the communal riots that were raging throughout the country in 1946 (and later during the partition) in these words:

“This fire is burning in a noble and humane land. How will the flowers of nobility and sensibility grow in its midst? Stars of the political firmament, for God’s sake sit together and extinguish the fire of hatred. This is not the time to ask who is responsible and what is the cause? The fire is raging. Please extinguish it. The problem is not of this community’s or that community’s survival. It is the choice between civilized human life and barbarism. For God’s sake do not allow the very foundations of civilized life in this country to be destroyed”.

These words are as fresh even today in the prevailing atmosphere of organised destruction as they were 27 years ago on November 17, 1946.

Jamia was his first love for over 57 years. He nurtured this institution with his blood and sweat. He managed to resuscitate the
institution when it was in the throes of death, and only he could do so.

Himself a Ph.D. in Economics from Germany, he preferred to teach primary and secondary classes at the Jamia because it was his staunch belief that a nation’s future and character could be built or destroyed by the teacher during the formative years of its children.

Whether he was at Jamia, Aligarh University, in the Rajya Sabha, in Bihar as the State’s Governor or the Vice-President and later President of the Indian Republic, Zakir Saheb remained a teacher to the whole of the nation.

He fitted every office of distinction in such a way as to suggest that it was made for him and him alone. As a statesman Zakir Saheb commanded great respect both at home and abroad.

In the death of Zakir Husain, the country lost not only a noble son but a golden era in the history of India, an era that represented the cream of Indo-Moghul culture, of the independence struggle at its height. He should have lived a little longer. The country needed him.
For Dr. Zakir Husain the biggest consideration always was his love for the common man. What was most repulsive to him was the raising of barriers—artificial, crude barriers, often reinforced by irrational prejudices. His own personal philosophy emerged as an attempt to raise the banner of protest against the growing manifestation of pride and prejudice in human relations. His socialism had its roots in both intellectual conviction and a deep sensitivity of mind.

A man of several dimensions, Dr. Zakir Husain was great by any standards, not in an abstract concept but in terms of a number of identifiable attributes; vision, idealism, intellect, imagination, generosity and compassion. He symbolised the best and noblest in Indian thought and tradition. The nobility was his; the pride was and is ours; the pride of knowing the man, the pride of having the fortune of belonging to the generation which was inspired by the many facets of his warm personality.

The idealism of extreme youth was reflected in his passionate response to Mahatma Gandhi’s exhortation to the students of Aligarh Muslim University to develop new national centres of learning. Zakir Saheb was one of the few students who came together to found the National Muslim University of Jamia Millia. He showed his maturity in the way he stuck to his decision with quiet tenacity for 26 long years and saw the Jamia grow into a distinguished centre of learning.
The abiding impression one got of Zakir Saheb was one of charm and humility, infinite gentleness and delicacy of feeling. It was difficult to see in his gentle exterior the decisiveness, the will and the sense of purpose which had inspired his life. His death was mourned by the nation as one family. He not only represented the rich, secular culture of India but set many standards in the values that he developed as an educationist, social worker and as President of the Indian Republic.
I take this opportunity to pay my humble tribute to Dr. Zakir Husain, who was a towering personality in the social and political life of our country.

His life was a saga of dedication to the cause of enlightenment and education of the people. It was also a focal point as well as a shining symbol of Hindu-Muslim amity.

During the struggle for independence, Dr. Zakir Husain devoted considerable energy in building up Jamia Millia as a centre of learning nationalism and secularism.

During the same period, he helped Gandhiji to develop in concrete educational terms the new scheme of basic education as a work-centred pattern than book-centred education. This system of education stressed self-reform as much as self-assertion.

Dr. Husain believed in integrity of character, human equality and brotherhood, democracy, national freedom and cooperation of the nations of the world in peace and for progress.

Dr. Zakir Husain’s contribution to the educational development of this country was outstanding; his contribution to our social and cultural life was even greater for he epitomised in his day-to-day life all that is good.

In his behaviour, in his approach to people and to political and social matters of the country; he was always humane, courteous
straight forward.

On election as President of India in May 1967, Zakir Saheb said:

"A great honour indeed that the nation has bestowed on a mere teacher who some 47 years ago resolved to devote the best years of his life to national education. I began my public career at the feet of Gandhiji and he has been my guide and inspirer. In this new opportunity of service, I do my utmost to take our people towards what Gandhiji strove restlessly to achieve: a pure life, individually and socially, and insistence on the means being as pure as the end, an active and sustained sympathy for the weak and down-trodden and a fervent desire to forge unity among the diverse sections of the Indian people."

Dr. Zakir Husain in his life always strove to achieve a pure life, individually and socially.

The only tribute that we can pay to him is that we should in our own life strive to achieve pure life and an active and sustained sympathy for the weak and the down-trodden.
During a quarter of a century in public life I have come across a broad spectrum of personalities, but the memory of Zakir Sahib stands out for the deep humility and humanity that he radiated. Despite his great learning and intellectual eminence, Zakir Sahib captivated all with whom he came into contact by the manner in which he behaved with them.

Here was a man who held the very highest offices in the country without in any way allowing them to interfere with his deep commitment to human values.

I had numerous occasions of meeting and discussing matters with him when he was Governor, Vice-President and finally President. I recall one small incident which shows his puckish sense of humour.

He was in the habit of taking saccharin, and on two or three occasions he noticed a tiny silver box that I used for this purpose. Seeing that he rather liked it, I had another one made and presented it to him on one of his birthdays.

Subsequently, however, it so happened that when we met for tea he never seemed to have the box with him, and this became a sort of standing joke between us.

One day when he was President I attended a banquet at Rashtrapati Bhavan, and as usual he went round shaking hands with the guests. When he came to me, after shaking hands he solemnly
took out the little silver box from his pocket, held it up to me for several moments with a perfectly straight face, then put it back into his pocket and moved on. The guests, including the distinguished foreign dignitaries present, were thoroughly mystified at this strange ritual!

Zakir Sahib was one of those rare people who carry with them a sort of inner fragrance, a rare sense of being a truly civilized and deeply committed human being.

Persons like him are rare enough in any country, particularly in the rough and tumble of public life, and it was India's privilege to have produced a man of his eminence.
Courage and Sacrifice

Akbar Ali Khan

I have had the privilege of knowing Dr. Zakir Husain, late President of the Republic of India, since 1917 when I joined the Aligarh College, Intermediate classes. He was then in his B.A. class.

In 1921, when Mahatma Gandhi and Ali Brothers visited Aligarh College and gave a call for Non-Cooperation, Zakir Sahib took the lead as a senior student and about 300 students responded to the call and gave up their studies.

As we were in the premises of the Aligarh College, a warrant was served to vacate the premises so Maulana Mohd. Ali, in consultation with Mahatma Gandhi and other Leaders, shifted us to tents and rented houses in Aligarh and vacated the College premises.

I was nearly two years with Dr. Zakir Husain when the foundation of the Jamia Millia was laid. In 1923, Dr. Sahib left for Berlin and I left for the States. We both returned to India in 1926 and Jamia Millia was entrusted to him.

He managed the affairs of Jamia Millia in a very difficult situation till 1950 and he shaped it into a new institution on national lines under the guidance of Mahatmaji.

He was faced with great many odds and difficulties but, with a band of devoted educationists, he carried on his mission. During this period, almost in all important educational schemes, Mahatmaji and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru consulted him and his advice was given great
Dr. Zakir Husain always avoided publicity and worked hard to build up this Institution with ability and devotion. He was not only a great educationist, but the devotion and dedication with which he built-up this Institution will always stand to his credit, and his services will ever be remembered with gratitude.

During this period he visited Hyderabad and sometimes sent late Sri Shafiqu Rehman Qidwai for collection of donations and I was in close touch with him regarding the progress of Jamia Millia.

In 1950, he was persuaded by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad to accept the Vice-Chancellorship of the Aligarh University which was in a bad shape then. He devoted himself to his old institution and developed it on modern lines and many Departments were strengthened during his regime.

Later on, as Governor of Bihar and as Vice-President and President of the Republic of India, he established certain traditions and kept up the high traditions which were laid down by Dr. Rajendra Prasad—first President of the Republic of India and that of Dr. Radhakrishnan.

Dr. Zakir Husain was one of those personalities who have kept up the ideals of service and secularism with great courage and sacrifice.

He has left a mark for the younger generation to follow in his foot-prints so that the country may grow in a harmonious manner in all aspects of our national life.
Elegance and Dignity

S. S. Ray

Dr. Zakir Husain’s whole philosophy whether it was in the realm of education, economics, political thought, literature or culture, was geared to the urgent task of creating a deep sense of consciousness and awakening among his countrymen.

Though idealism was marked in his educational thought, yet he always emphasized the practical feasibility of his ideas along with their theoretical soundness.

He held various public offices with great elegance and dignity, and with his faith in the vitality of secularism and democracy, committed himself to the achievement of a just social order.
Dr. Zakir Husain, though he is no longer with us, but his life and ideals continue to inspire millions in the country and abroad who have learnt to comprehend life and its realities according to his ideas. Among those eminent Indians who strove to make India modern, secular and democratic, Zakir Sahib’s name ranks very high.

His personality was a happy blend of a political visionary who foresaw a social order free from injustice and inequality and an educationist, who sought through education, emancipation of men and his adherence to the highest human values.

Zakir Sahib’s long and dedicated service to the nation in various capacities—from a teacher to the first citizen of the State, and his deep faith in the democratic way of life have won for him admiration, respect and affection of his countrymen.

Like Maulana Azad, Dr. Husain was proud of his Islamic traditions and also equally proud of his belonging to the great Indian nation. His national outlook always remained firm and unshakable.

A great exponent of Indian nationalism, he was from the very beginning dead-set against the ‘two-nation’ theory. To him the idea of the religion-based nation was unacceptable, for he firmly believed in unity in the colourful diversity of Indian social and cultural life.

It was of this basic unity that he remained a passionate advocate and severe opponent of discrimination between man and man on the
basis of caste or creed, colour or sex.

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee ef Jamia Millia as far back as 1946, when clouds of communal holocaust were hovering over Delhi, while addressing a meeting at which leaders of various shades of political opinion had assembled including Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammed Ali Jinna, Zakir Sahib laid bare the innermost sanctuary of his heart in these words:

"Our silent and constructive work appears madness in the flames of mutual hatred about to engulf our civilization. This fire is bound to destroy decency and human dignity. How can we produce honest and decent citizens in this atmosphere? Through our work we learn to respect children but how should we reveal our feelings when we find that even little children become victims of this barbarism. For God's sake please close your ranks and extinguish the fire. This is not the time to discuss who first lit it or how it began. The fire is there, it should be extinguished first. It is not only that the country and the nation are at stake but we have to choose between civilised human life and brute barbarity."

A teacher with a vision he could foresee the destruction of a common culture and composite life and warned the leaders of the impending catastrophe.

Dr. Zakir Husain was greatly moulded by Gandhiji's thoughts and in response to his call to teachers to leave institutions controlled by the British Government, he walked out of the Aligarh Muslim University campus and founded the Jamia Milia in 1920 with Gandhiji's blessings.

Since then Zakir Sahib's name has become synonymous with the famous Jamia Milia institution which he nurtured and developed with exemplary selflessness and dedication.

The institution was for him the laboratory where he could experiment with his ideas of humanist education. The basic principle of education in a democracy, according to him was "reverence for the individuality of the child" for it is the child who is to grow into a citizen and upon whose "full development and intelligent and willing participation" the future of democracy depended. He said:

"Our future as a people will depend in no small measure on the ideas and principles which inspire education, and on how its evolution helps in the growth and development of the democratic way of life, on how it provides for the full growth
and development of individuality, and on how it harnesses harmoniously-developed individuality to social ends, on how it probes into the secrets of the self, and how it masters the mysteries of selflessness."

After independence Zakir Sahib who had associated with various aspects of the national movement, continued to serve the country in his capacity as an educationist. He became the Vice-Chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University which he tried to revitalise by introducing fresh ideas and encouraging progressive and healthy trends.

He was also a member of the University Grants Commission, UNESCO's Executive Board, the Central Board of Secondary Education and of other educational organisations.

Dr. Husain worked incessantly for promoting national unity and secular thinking in India. His heart was in great agony when flames of communal frenzy and mutual hatred engulfed the entire country in 1946-47 leading to its vivisection.

He viewed it as a catastrophe which would destroy the composite culture of India and also decency and human dignity. Kashmir alone had in those tragic days held aloft the torch of humanism and tolerance. That is why to Zakir Husain, Kashmir was not only a part of India but a symbol of "a noble principle not only of our culture, but of the culture of the mankind".

In 1965, when Pakistan sent hordes of armed infiltrators across the border into Kashmir in an unabashed attempt to grab it through aggression, Dr. Husain in his memorable broadcast as the Vice-President of India tore to shreds Pakistan's claim to Kashmir on account of its being a Muslim majority State. He said:

"There were dark days in our life when the demand for partition of the country appeared as an ominous pre-condition for our independence. Its monstrous implications were ignored by its advocates. The Indian Muslims were in fact asked to perjure themselves by asserting and defending the falsehood, that because they were Muslims, they could not be citizens of the same State as those among whom they and their ancestors had been born and had lived and to the rich fund of whose composite culture they had during centuries made a highly valued contribution. They were being asked to uproot themselves, abandon hearth and home, neighbour and culture,"
friendship and goodwill. And now we Indians, we Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis, we for whom India is and always has been one country, our country, are being asked at a point of the sword to admit that Kashmir cannot legitimately belong to India because the vast majority of Kashmiris are Muslims and must be offered to Pakistan."

Dr. Zakir Husain served the nation in his capacity as Vice-President with dignity and distinction, but the zenith of his career was reached when he was elected President of the country.

It was not merely a personal triumph for Dr. Husain but a triumph of Indian democracy and secularism which was hailed within the country and abroad.

The election of a member of the minority community to the highest office in the country demonstrated a patent fact that secular democracy had taken firm roots in India.

To the people of Kashmir, it had special significance, for it vindicated their stand in acceding to the Indian Union.

Dr. Husain's address to the nation on assumption of the office as India's President was historic and significant. He said:

"The whole of Bharat is my House and its people are my family. The people have chosen to make me the Head of this family for a certain time. It shall be my earnest endeavour to seek to make this Home strong and beautiful, a worthy Home for a great people engaged in fascinating tasks of building up a just and prosperous and graceful life."

It underlines Dr. Sahib's vision of the country and the importance he attached to the task of nation-building. His concept of India's national destiny was to provide every citizen "the essential minima of decent human existence".

The real homage we can pay to the departed leader is to live-up to his high ideals and above all the example of dedication and selflessness set by him.
Dr. Zakir Husain was an extraordinary personality, which was a symbol of simplicity, humility, love, kindness and everything that is good in our culture.

He stood for those values which are enshrined in our Constitution and which are the very core of Indian Civilization. His very sincerity of purpose and grand personality was just like a beacon light which guided the destiny of the nation in its darkest hours.

He was a true Gandhian and like Gandhiji believed in hating the sin not the sinner. He loved everybody and talked to everybody on equal terms whatever the status of the person. He never bore ill-will against anyone. Under the influence of his mellow personality even the bitterest enemies were subdued.

More than a politician, Zakir Sahib was a humanitarian. For him human well-being, human values and human goodwill mattered more than politics. It was why he centred his energies more on constructive work and specially on education and educational development.

He was a great educationist and was a great supporter of Gandhiji's basic education. Jamia Millia was his creation and his inspiration was behind every sincere educational effort.

Zakir Sahib was a man of culture. In a sense we can say he breathed culture. In his manners, in his speech, in his thoughts and even in his manner of dressing, he exhibited refined taste and accomplishment.
He was a great lover of nature, flowers and children.

He felt most at home in the company of children and was greatly concerned about the welfare of the children.

To him, children were symbols of human understanding, unity, love and kindness. Children also symbolised the values which Dr. Zakir Husain cherished.

They were far above distinctions of caste, creed, and barriers of national and State boundaries. He himself was an apostle of human unity and was a massiah of Hindu-Muslim unity in India. He was a great liberal and a generous man.

When Zakir Sahib was made President of India, it was no honour to him but actually it was an honour unto the chair itself. The highest post of the country was adorned by his appointment to it. It was as if the soul of the nation was residing in the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Zakir Sahib undoubtedly was a great Indian who had in him the best of its traditions and modern values. His personality and his ideals would ever remain the greatest source of inspiration for the generations to come.
Bravery and Insight

R. R. Diwakar

Education should be the basic instrument of National purposes this can well be the keynote of Dr. Zakir Husain's life as a teacher and an educationist. Judged by any standard, the Presidents of the Republic of India have been great men. They have always, added dignity and grace to the high office. Rajagopalachari, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Dr. Radhakrishnan, is a formidable galaxy of names, who, judged by the highest standards, have contributed richly to the public life and history of India in different fields of activity. Dr. Zakir Husain, never an aspirant for power or position showed within a few month how easily he could continue the tradition.

Dr. Zakir Husain already made his mark as Vice-President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, and earlier as the Governor of the big, important and populous State of Bihar. But his achievements in the field of erudition, education, and authorship far outshine his career as an administrator. He never sought limelight and his career in the field of education sheltered him from too much of publicity and public glare. This helped him nourish profundity and depth, and gentility and love in handling human affairs. He has brought to bear all those great qualities on the office he held and had thus made the office itself more distinguished by his acceptance of it.

Dr. Zakir Husain was a symbol of the co-existence and the synthesis that India has always stood for. Once, when I was in the
USA I was asked by a highly learned Unitarian as to whether Christ was being looked upon as a Hindu God. I had no such information but on pondering over the question I said, if Budha, rebel against some of the then existing forms of what is now called Hinduism could be later accommodated as an Avatar, (an incarnation of God), it would be no wonder if Christ is given with deep reverence a place alongside! I added, however, that there was no such conscious attempt I know of.

Multitudinous variety with basic and binding unity seems to be the very pattern of nature and of life. India has always tried to perceive and present a picture of unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

It is very difficult, nay, impossible to condense into one word or a few words what one felt when one met Dr. Zakir Husain and as a flash back one peeps into the story of his long and intensely dedicated life. And yet one can see throughout his strenuous and noble life of struggle, service and sacrifice the one refrain of a heroic attempt in this country of varied peoples at educating them, to raise their level of culture and make them conscious of the responsibilities of real Indian citizenship. What can be the hallmark of a citizen of India, an ancient country with a variety of religions and languages, with different sects and creeds but with 'cultured co-existence'—co-existence of a cultured people?

Many a time a feeling does come up, 'how can you protect humanity in a world of wild animals' when one sees mischief-making madness all around on petty questions of formal religion, link, language, and so on. It requires bravery and insight to give a call of unity and toil to the youth of this country as Dr. Zakir Husain did in one of his famous addresses. After describing the many, many immemorable ills the country is suffering from, he said... "

"In short it is a cursed country, but after all it is our country. We have to live in it and die in it. That is why this country will be the trial of your courage, the challenge to your abilities and the test of your love......I believe that destruction will not ease our work. Destruction is already there in abundance......the country needs not the spurt of your blood, but the steady flow of your perspiration. It needs work, hard and silent work".

How true this refrain rings even today at this moment? It is all the more powerful in the light of Dr. Zakir Husain's own tireless toil
in the cause of education right from the days of his student life. It is said, that he made only one decision and that was in 1920 to non-co-operate with the British controlled educational institution at Aligarh.

The seeds of a heroic saga in the form of the Jamia were sown. The growth of the rebel student into a mature educationist of the highest order can be traced along with the changing fortunes of that great national institution Jamia Millia which is the greatest attempt to blend Islamic concepts with Indian nationalism.

The great Turkish publicist Edib, describing the aims of the Institution in 1935 said:

"The Institution has two purposes. First to train the Muslim youth with definite ideas of their rights and duties as Indian citizens. Second, to coordinate Islamic thought and behaviour with Hindu .......It is nearer to the Gandhian movement than any other Islamic Institution I have come across".

The trials and tribulations of Dr. Zakir Husain and his two great colleagues, Dr. Mujeeb and Abid Husain Saheb, which went through in building-up the Institution are simply thrilling. Severe tests also came in the form of temptations to leave the path of Nationalism and Gandhi in order to finance Jamia. But instead, many of its teachers went to jail during the freedom struggle. Shri G. Ramachandran was one of the teachers in that Institution and Devdas Gandhi was a student there. Gandhiji stood by the Institution to the last.

Out of the crucible of suffering and hard work in and for the Jamia, out of the sustained effort to qualify himself as a good and inspiring teacher, by his devotion to the basic principles of Nai Talim of Gandhiji and above all by the patriotic spirit of national service with which he was suffused. Dr. Zakir Husain rose to the highest honour India can bestow on her children.

Though some controversy befogged his election to the office, Dr. Zakir Husain in a few months proved how futile it was to waste energies like that. The dignity and grace he brought to bear on the office, the brief but highly significant utterances which came from him on a variety of occasions, the sweetness and courtesy which always moved with him, endeared him to all, high and low, rich and poor. Dr. Zakir Husain proved that a good teacher with intellectual brilliance, warmth of heart and depth of feeling could as well be a teacher of humanity, could grace a gadi as well as win a place in the hearts of men,
Aloofness from all kinds of partisanship

Jayaprakash Narayan

"I may be forgiven the presumption," said the third President of the Union of India in his inauguration speech, "that my choice to this high office has mainly, if not entirely, been made on account of my long association with the education of my people." It is remarkable that on an occasion when he was being called to the highest office in the land, Dr. Zakir Husain should have referred to his career as a teacher—a profession, that he knew had been so depressed in the 20 years of national preoccupation with unashamed scramble for power.

But, for Dr. Zakir Husain, the profession of education was his whole life. Not because he too could not have become a shining "star of the political firmament" (to use his own words) but because, as he went on to say in the same address, "education is a prime instrument of national purpose" and the "quality of its education is inescapably involved in the quality of the nation".

Alas, education in this country, being so abjectly dependent on Government, has become an instrument not of national purpose but of politics. And as politics hurtles down the steep incline, education follows close behind.

It was different in the days of the freedom movement unfortunately, the challenge of building-up free India has failed to draw forth from the people the same qualities of selfless service, Collective
endeavour and hard work as the challenge of the fight for freedom
had done. The later was no better exemplified then by the numerous
efforts made in those days towards ‘national education’. The Jamia
Millia was a noble instance of those seminal efforts. And the story
of the Jamia is the story, so well told by Mr. Noorani, of the life of
Dr. Zakir Husain.

The mighty oak grows out of the humble scorn. So it is with
human life. A little spark sometimes lights a flame within, that leads
man on to great deeds. But for that initial spark, the individual might
have remained unknown and unsung. Thus it was with Dr. Zakir
Husain.

“It was the first conscious decision of my life. Perhaps the only
one I have ever taken, for the rest of my life has but flowed from it”.
Zakir Saheb was referring to his decision, as a young upcoming
student-teacher at Aligarh, to chuck every thing aside and plunge into
the non-cooperation movement, the first nation-wide mass struggle
launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. On the face of it the state-
ment appears to be an exaggeration. But those who were alive in that
dawn and had partaken of its inspiration, not in a spasm of emotion
but after intense heart-searching and earnest deliberation, would under-
stand the meaning of those words. If I may speak of personal
experience, it has always seemed to me that during those soul-stirring
days in January 1971 when I was myself preparing to take that same
plunge, a spring had been coiled within me that has been uncoiling
ever since and impelling me on.

That Aligarh decision was the acorn, out of which the third
President of India has grown. Without that initial spark, there is no
doubt, Dr. Zakir Husain would have remained not unknown perhaps,
but just one of those many educated Indians of those days who were
content to pursue the traditional path of lucrative public employment
or profession. By that decision the young Zakir committed himself
for life to the cause of national freedom, the cause of national edu-
cation and to a life of sacrifice, privation and dedication. It was
the first time at the third Presidential election that political
parties had joined issue, and the unwise attempt was made to
involve in partisan politics an office whose effectiveness lies precisely
in its being above all partisanship. But even though Dr. Zakir Husain’s
candidature was keenly contested, his whole life bears witness to his
studied aloofness from all kinds of partisanship.

Several examples of this quality of his character have been des-
cribed (by Mr. Noorani), such as his successful resistance to the powerful efforts made to drag the Jamia into the vortex of the struggle between the Congress and the Muslim League; his reluctance to join the interim Government unless the League expressed its concurrence; and his condition that he would accept the Vice-Chancellorship of Aligarh University only if the court of that body passed an unanimous resolution in his favour.

It was a measure of his success in keeping education aloof from the passions of partisanship—though not from the main spring of nationalism and the freedom movement—that he was able to bring together on the same platform, on the occasion of the Jamia’s silver jubilee (November 17, 1946) such bitter political opponents as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad on the one side and Mr. M. A. Jinnah and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan on the other.

It was a memorable speech that Dr. Zakir Husain delivered on that day. That was the time when a wave of communal rioting was sweeping over the country. Speaking as a teacher he said:

“This fire is burning in a noble and human land. How will the flowers of nobility and sensibility grow in its midst?... How can you protect humanity in a world of animals? These words might seem too harsh, but in the rapidly deteriorating situation today even harsh words would be far too mild. We, who are enjoined to respect the young know not how to express the anguish we feel when we hear that even innocent children are not safe in this reign of terror. An Indian poet has remarked that every child who comes to this world brings along the message that God has not yet lost faith in man. But have our countrymen so completely lost faith in themselves that they wish to crush these innocent buds before they blossom?”

And then addressing himself, directly to the distinguished guests, whom he described as the “stars of the political firmament”, he sounded this stirring call:

“For God’s sake sit together and extinguish this fire of hatred. This is not the time to ask who is responsible for it and what is its cause. The fire is raging. Please extinguish it. The problem is not of this community’s or that community’s survival. It is the choice between civilized human life and barbarism. For God’s sake do not allow the
very foundations of civilized life in this country to be destroyed."

I have quoted these words at length because their message is so fresh even today, and because the present stars of the political firmament need also to be roused to their simple human and national duty.
It was in October, 1937 that I had convened a National Educational conference in Wardha under the Presidentship of Gandhiji himself. At the end of that historic Conference, Dr. Zakir Husain was appointed the Chairman of the Syllabus Committee which, within a few months, drew up a detailed curriculum for the Basic system of education of seven years' duration. Subsequently, Dr. Husain functioned as the President of Hindustani Talimi Sangh at Sevagram and strained every nerve to popularise the new scheme throughout the country.

Since the Congress was voted to power in several Provinces after the 1937 General Elections, Basic education was introduced by the Congress Governments with great enthusiasm. Two years later soon after the commencement of the Second world war, the Congress Governments went out of office and, as was to be expected, Basic education was given the go-by.

Then followed the August revolution of 1942 when the nation was engaged in a life-and-death struggle during the ‘Quit India’ movement. Though India became a free nation on the 15th August, 1947 the tragedy of partition engulfed the whole sub-continent into an orgy of violence and blood-shed, and several years were consumed by the difficult and arduous problems of relief and rehabilitation. It was only after the 1952 General Elections that the nation could get some respite and settle down to the crucial work of planning and reconstruction.
It is, however, a matter of deep regret and dismay that, despite many announcements, there has hardly been any radical change in the current educational system of the country. Although the philosophy of Basic education has been repeatedly accepted by the Government of India and the State Governments, the fact remains that this scheme has not yet been given even a fair trial.

Whenever I happened to meet Dr. Zakir Husain in his different capacities, he invariably expressed his distress and anguish over the fact that we had not adopted the principles of Basic education in re-orienting our primary and secondary schools. Gandhiji was most anxious to combine hand-culture with mind-culture or productive activity with academic learning in order to transform the social and economic structure of the country and lay the foundations of a sound and stable democracy.

Unhappily, Gandhiji’s ideas regarding Basic education were not taken seriously either by the Government or by the prominent educationists of India. Dr. Zakir Husain felt piously aggrieved at this heartless indifference towards educational reconstruction in the real sense of the term. He was convinced that Basic education of Gandhiji’s conception was the only correct and practical answer to the grave problems of unemployment and indiscipline among students.

Unless all students at the primary and secondary stages, both in villages as well as cities, were provided with the opportunities of engaging themselves in productive work along with the pursuit of intellectual attainments, it would be impossible to lift our educational system out of the existing morass and stagnation. Dr. Zakir Husain had not the shadow of a doubt that our failure to introduce a creative bias in our schools and colleges would soon push the country down the precipice of disorder and confusion, imperilling the very foundations of democracy and even political freedom.

Now that Dr. Husain is no more, shall we not solemnly resolve to fulfil the genuine wishes of both the Father of the Nation as well as of Dr. Husain?

It is immaterial whether we use the word ‘Basic’ or some other term to connote the underlying principle of imparting good education through productive work. The Education Commission has recommended the introduction of ‘work-experience’ in our educational institutions, and has shied away from the work ‘Basic’. Be that as it may, I for one would be satisfied if we accept without any mental reservations the age-old principle of ‘learning through doing’ and give
it a practical shape in our educational system.

It is, sometimes, contended that Basic and Post-basic schools are more costly than primary and secondary schools of the general pattern. This is again a misconception which must be erased without delay. The whole idea of Basic education arose out of the practical need for making education free and compulsory to all children without burdening the nation with excessive expenditure. Furthermore, imparting education with a productive bias makes for better learning even from the academic point of view.

Systematic efforts should, therefore, be made to utilise all the existing development activities in the rural and urban areas for enriching the educational process and making it more practical and purposeful. For example, various programmes connected with agriculture, animal husbandry, minor irrigation, soil and water conservations, afforestation, community development and cottage industries could be harnessed for the success of work-oriented education without trying to attach separate farms and workshops to Basic or Post-basic institutions.

In substance, we should enable every student to participate in some creative activity and imbibe the dignity of labour as an integral part of his personality. This basic ideal has been accepted all the world over in some form or other by distinguished educationists. I had the privilege of meeting Professor John Wewlay in New York several years ago. When I explained to him the scheme of Basic education as propounded by Mahatma Gandhi, he feelingly remarked "Gandhiji's system of education is, I am sure, one step ahead of all the other systems. It is full of immense potentialities, and we hope to learn much from India in this revolutionary educational effort".

It is, thus, our sacred duty to introduce Basic education in India with a sense of urgency and dedication. Even Professor Gunnar Myrdal, in his recent publication the Asian Drama has strongly pleaded for the introduction of 'basic oriented' primary education as the ideal solution to the much-needed reform of the curriculum and teaching methods in our primary and secondary schools.

Let us, therefore, take a firm decision to re-orient our educational institutions towards the Basic pattern. I have no doubt that this would be the best way to perpetuate the memory of Dr. Zakir Husain. What could, unfortunately, not be achieved during Dr. Zakir Husain's lifetime may yet accomplished in his hallowed memory in the crucial years that lie ahead.
Dr. Zakir Husain was elected to the President office on April 4, 1967. He took the oath of office on April 13, 1967. At the previous general election, the party political balance had completely changed.

Congress party was no longer the monolith it was. It suffered reverses in a number of States and more than one State had a non-Congress Government. The Congress party, however, had a sufficiently strong majority at the Centre.

Some days before the presidential election it was rumoured that Dr. Radhakrishnan might continue as President for another term. But as soon as he saw that other counsels were likely to prevail in the Congress party, Dr. Radhakrishnan decided not to stand for election and announced his decision accordingly.

Dr. Zakir Husain had made it clear that he would not continue as Vice-President for another term. Mrs. Indira Gandhi wanted Dr. Zakir Husain to be the President, but in the changed political circumstances, she was unable to get a consensus of opinion in his favour from the Opposition parties.

The Swantantra party was keen on Jaya Prakash Narayana but the Jan Sangh would not accept him. Finally, they decided in favour of Koka Subba Rao, the Chief Justice of India, quietly got the consent and stole a march over the Prime Minister by announcing his candidature. Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Dr. Radhakrishnan, too had rivals,
aspiring after the President’s chair. But no one could take them seriously, as the Congress, then towered in strength over the Opposition. Now all that was changed.

Some protagonists did not hesitate to stoop down to the use of communal propaganda. The Opposition parties were keen on a trial of strength. In spite of the divided opinion in the Congress party itself about Dr. Zakir Husain’s candidature the Prime Minister went all out to support him. The Congress party though weakened in some States retained considerable strength at the Centre and elsewhere.

Dr. Zakir Husain was, therefore, able to defeat his rival Mr. Subba Rao by a comfortable majority of over one lakh votes. It was quite clear that if a number of Congress members had voted for Mr. Subba Rao, a large number of Opposition members had cast their votes in favour of Dr. Zakir Husain.

With characteristic modesty, he attributed his success to an unequivocal recognition by the people that education was indeed a prime instrument of national purpose. He also stated that he had begun public life at the feet of Mahatmaji who was his guide and inspirer and would do his utmost to take his people to the ideals for which Gandhiji strove restlessly.

It was a champion of Basic Education that I first saw him. A delegation from Jamia Millia had appeared before the Planning Commission to explain and advocate some educational schemes before the Commission. I was, Secretary, Planning Commission at that time. After the delegation had finished, Dr. Zakir Husain gave his support in a few well chosen words. His dignity, poise and brevity of speech greatly impressed me.

When one of the members tried to counter his argument, Dr. Zakir Husain replied with firmness mingled with irreproachable courtesy that he had expressed his views about the desirability and importance of the scheme relating to Basic education, but if the Planning Commission had different views they were welcome to have them. That was not the sort of delegation we were used to in the Planning Commission.

Without meaning the slightest disrespect to them, the persons appearing before the Commission in support of their pet scheme fell into two broad classes. Starry-eyed visionaries who wanted their gossamer dreams to be translated into bricks and mortar at the cost of funds to be recommended by the Planning Scheme.

The second category was hard hearted practical men who had already canvassed support from the ministries and other Government
agencies concerned. In the advocacy of their project they could easily range from the obsequious to the truculent.

Dr. Zakir Husain did not fall into either of these categories. He was true to himself and wanted his project to stand on its own feet. Either the project was good and the Commission should value it or if it was not should be rejected accordingly. He did not want it to succeed because he or others were connected with it. This straight-forwardness made great impression on me at the first glimpse I got of him on that day.

In a few months' time he was appointed Governor of Bihar. I was to take as Governor of Orissa. Rajen Babu called just the two of us to an informal lunch at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. There was an uninhibited talk over a large number of topics. Rajen Babu briefed us fully about Bihar and Orissa. Bihar in those days, had two camps led by Mr. Babu (The Chief Minister) and Anugraha Babu (The Finance Minister). The constitutional Governor's task was by no means easy. Yet by his candour and courtesy Dr. Zakir Husain was able to steer his way without much difficulty.

The fortnightly letters addressed by him as Governor of Bihar to the President were a model of lucidity, brevity and objectivity. Copies of these fortnightly letters are sent to the Prime Minister to keep him informed of what is going on in the State.

Panditji used to glance through them and pass them on to me for careful study. It was my duty as Cabinet Secretary to draw his attention to any important developments in the State on which the Governor may have commented on.

With a view to seek guidance I ventured to ask the Prime Minister whose fortnightly letters he liked the best. Without hesitation he said that he thought Fazal Ali's letters were best. Fazal Ali was my predecessor as Governor of Orissa before he was appointed Chairman of the States Reorganisation Commission.

After finishing that assignment he went to Assam as Governor. The Prime Minister added that Fazal Ali was factual and confined himself to his own State unlike some Governors who roamed from China to Peru and commented on what was happening their rather than stick to their own States. Dr. Zakir Husain followed the same standards.

As our acquaintance ripened, my regard for his personality and respect for his views on various matters increased. There were two unmistakable features of his individuality. Firstly there was a stamp of surety on what he had said and did. If he told you "you must come and see
me whenever you can. It is a real pleasure to me to meet you and discuss various matters of mutual interests,” you knew he meant it. It was not a polite but untruthful futility one often hears in the drawing rooms of all the Diplomatic Enclave in Delhi.

Secondly, he was always at peace with himself and the world and when you were with him you felt the same. Perhaps he had not found answers to all the pressing problems of life but, one thing was certain, he did not let them pressurise him. I was very keen, having regard to his eminence in the educational world, his erudition and his experience of the working of an institute like Jamia Millia, to invite him to address a convocation of the Utkal University and was very happy when he willingly accepted my invitation.

He came in the first week of December, 1959, and stayed with us for a few days. He came alone and my wife asked him why he had not brought with him her Behenji who was also included in the cordial invitation to him. He threw up his hands in despair and said all his persuasion to bring her out had failed.

His love for plants and flowering trees became known to us on this occasion. My wife, got for him four or five varieties of plants from Cuttack and Bhubaneshwar. He thanked her profusely for this small gift and whenever they met afterwards the conversation would start with a query from her or a report from him on how the plants were doing.

The Convocation took place at Cuttack on December 6, 1959. We welcomed Dr. Zakir Husain, the Chief Guest, of course as the Head of the neighbouring State with which Orissa had long political and other associations. But what had made a special appeal to every one was his unfailing interest in education and the deep study he had made of the educational problems facing the country after independence.

Alumni of two Universities—Aligarh and Berlin where he got his Ph.D., Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia, Delhi, Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, Member, University Grants Commission, he handled educational problems at close quarters with a rare sympathy for the students in their cares and anxieties.

He had also studied their problems from other vantage grounds such as member of the University Education Commission, as Member of the Rajya Sabha, as member of the Executive Board, UNESCO, and Chairman of the World University Service, Geneva for four years, and this had naturally, formed high expectations about the address and it would be no exaggeration to say that they were more than fulfilled.

It was not a long address as Convocation address go. It was com-
paratively brief but packed with stimulating thought and wise guidance. He prescribed four objectives for the youth: Health, strength, beauty and cleanliness and explained how their simple values tend to expand as the young pilgrim endeavouring to realise them sets out for the pursuit.

Education, he asserted, must help us to meet the two main crises of our national life, the crises of efficiency and the crises of moral integrity. He expressed himself against, what he called, the prevailing fashion of "making more liberal arrangement for teaching science" instead of learning whole strings of the facts of science and even repeating experiments on which they were based, the studies should be arranged to gain a real understanding of controlled methods of thinking and experimentation.

He maintained that freedom and authority in education were not antithesis. But in defending freedom, he condemned, in no uncertain terms, the licence which his friends, the students, deemed it appropriate to allow themselves in what they do and what they leave undone, the uncontrolled obsessions, distraction and dissipations of which the angry young man gave frequent evidence.

The words of exhortation at the end of the address, will bear repetition, "there are terms on which survival is a sin. There are values for defending which life is too small, sacrifice and freedom is one such value only so far as moral advance is possible and moral advance is the justification and destiny of man. Be ever true to that destiny. May God help you. He is known to help those who help themselves".

It was an address at the end of which you felt you should have had a little more rather than less. There was no feeling of relief from boredom but instead, feeling of exultation. After visiting a few spots of interest in Orissa, he returned to Bihar. Before he left, he gave us a pressing invitation to visit Bihar.

We could go there only in February 1960. We joined Dr. Zakir Husain at Ranchi and after spending sometime there we moved to Patna. Dr. Zakir Husain was a wonderful host and we greatly enjoyed his hospitality in the Raj Bhavan at Ranchi and Patna. My wife was charmed with the Begum Sahiba. Genial cheerful, hearty Begum Sahiba was the sort of person of whose friendship, my wife said, you felt certain from the moment you met her.

Her chief interest was her home and her only care her husband's health and happiness. Dr. Zakir Husain had arranged for our visit to Gaya, Bodh Gaya, the famous Nalanda University and hot springs
in the neighbourhood. He was specially keen on our going to the hot springs. After a brief and most enjoyable sojourn we returned to Orrisa.

He became Vice-President in 1962. I used to call on him at 5 Maulana Azad Road, whenever I could within the limits of time at my disposal during my brief visits to Delhi. He discussed freely political and other happenings in Delhi and elsewhere. He was distressed by some of them but it seemed to me that he was not saddened or disillusioned. It is said that when you occupy high place in the course of your career, you come to see human nature in the raw. But that you see everywhere if you have your eyes open and a capacity for correct appraisal of human strength and weakness.

In the course of his dedicated service of some twenty-seven years to Jamia Millia and his successful attempts to pull that Institution to safety from one crisis after another, he must have had ample opportunities of seeing human nature at work in public life. But above all, he valued discipline, good sense and goodwill. He had spent his impressionable years in Germany. Although this did not make him a martinet, he came to appreciate that self-control was the best form of control. He deplored nothing more than instances of loss of self-control which to him was equivalent to loss of self-esteem.

After he became President I called on him to pay my respects once or twice. My own visits to Delhi had by then become far and few between. As President he toured to the Middle East countries among others to explain India's point of view. Wherever he went he produced great impression by his courtesy, integrity and national outlook. This was, at a time, when India's stock had slumped in the council of nations.

There is no doubt that had Dr. Zakir Husain been spared for some years more to complete his term, the record of his Presidency would have made distinguished page in the history of India not less but perhaps more than that of his predecessors but that was not to be and amidst universal grief he passed away.
Above Power-Politics

J. B. Kriplani

I came in contact with Zakir Husain in 1921, shortly after Gandhiji and the Ali brothers had created a stir in the Aligarh College, and it appeared that it would be turned into an institution of national education, free from the control of the foreign government.

However, the influence of the Nawabs, who were loyalists was so great that soon the University began functioning as usual. But there were a few students who had left the University in the first flush of enthusiasm and who did not go back. With their help was started the Jamia Millia which, after a number of years, shifted to Delhi on Gandhiji's advice.

Jamia Millia was organised by Zakir Husain who, at the time, was in the M.A. class, and a batch of his companions. It owes its present position to the untiring labour of Dr. Husain and his devoted colleagues. For about twenty years, Zakir Sahib was the Vice-Chancellor of this National University. He then was, for some years, the Vice-Chancellor of the Aligarh University.

Zakir Sahib, though greatly influenced by Gandhiji, never joined in the rough and tumble of the political struggle for freedom. He remained loyal to his educational work. After the last World War, congressmen were released from jail and the national leaders were invited to Simla by Lord Wavell to find a way to satisfy the political aspirations of the Indian people. Of course, nothing came out of this
conference since the Congress, the Muslim League and Ambedkar pulled in different directions.

But, before the conference broke up, the Viceroy asked each of the different parties to furnish him with a list of fourteen names from which he could select some to form the Interim Government before a Constitution was devised for India by a freely elected Constituent Assembly. In the list we gave to the Viceroy we included Zakir Sahib's name. But, so far as I can remember, he declined the offer.

However, the whole scheme fell through principally because the Congress and the League could not come to an agreement. The League insisted that all the Muslim nominees must be appointed by it since, according to Jinnah, the Congress merely represented the caste Hindus.

Zakir Sahib was nominated as a member of the Rajya Sabha in 1952 and again in 1956. In 1957, Jawaharlal offered Zakir Sahib the Governorship of Bihar which he accepted. That is how he may be said to have joined politics. After that it was an easy ascent for Zakir Sahib. He was elected Vice-President in 1962 and ultimately the Rashtrapati.

Dr. Zakir Husain, in spite of the indirect induction into politics, never lost his interest in the educational problems of the country. When, in 1939, Gandhiji invited the nation to accept his scheme of basic education, *Nai Talim*, as the most effective way of educating the young, Zakir Husain and his devoted band of workers were among the four educationists who recognised its scientific approach.

Zakir Sahib was made the Chairman of the Committee set up for the propagation of the new system. In those days, I had a reputation of being an educationist and I was a member of this Committee. Thus we often discussed educational problems. Zakir Husain was in favour of making certain changes in Gandhiji's ideas to make them workable in the context of the present situation and it is the modified system of basic education, I believe, that still prevails in the Jamia Millia.

I think it was a wise decision that Zakir Sahib took to stick to his first love, Education. It was not in his mild and compromising nature to join in the revolutionary politics of direct action which upset normal life. Nor could he enter post-independence power-politics where a person has to make temporary alliances and permanent enemies. Zakir Sahib thus made no enemies.

He fully believed in secularism as it is called. But for him secularism did not mean the abandonment of religion. He was a devout Muslim and believed that it satisfied all the requirements of a good
life here and salvation hereafter. Secularism only meant the absence of a State Religion which exists in some other countries.

Secularism means that the state equally respects all religions within and without the country. In public matters, all citizens are equal. Politically, no one is high or low. There are no majority or minority communities.

The majority community in selecting a distinguished Indian who happened to belong to the minority community as the Rashtrapati, have proof of its catholicity. This should be an eye-opener to all those who considered designedly or otherwise, that India was a Hindu State. It may not be out of place to point out that no Catholic can ever aspire to be the Prime Minister in Protestant England. Till the last minute, the fact he was a Catholic made many Americans feel unsure about Kennedy’s election as President of the USA of course, the Pakistan, Constitution positively disqualifies a non-Muslim from contesting for the highest office.

The Rashtrapati is the symbol of the unity and the integrity of the country. The importance of the high position of the President in our Republic stems from this. With his native dignity combined with sincerity, Zakir Husain was eminently fitted to occupy this position. He was liberal in the highest sense of the term. He was also a great humanist. He was a man of universal courtesy.

All this does not mean that he had no opinion about how this country was being governed, but he was conscious of his personal and official limitations and generally kept to himself his views about the Government. In future also, the Rashtrapati will have to fall in line with these requirements of this high office. Any deviation from them might lead to complications which it should be the effort of the person holding this high office, to avoid.

It has often been complained that in the past the ceremonials performed by or for high dignitaries in India have been in accordance with Hindu traditions. This was because they were Hindus. In those ceremonies, the followers of other faiths did not usually join. In the case of Zakir Husain, however, all the ceremonies were performed as enjoined by Islamic traditions and conventions. This was in the fitness of things and nobody considered it incongruous. Rather, the people of other faiths joined in them as far as they could. This is the best way of strengthening the unity of India.
Dr. Zakir Husain was the President of the Indian Republic in the very last years of his life and yet paradoxically he did not experience a sense of fulfilment when he held this highest office in the land.

His moments of creative fulfilment were in his other stages of life and some other endeavours. He had gifts and capacities and a temperament which enabled him to be an island unto himself and dispense with dependence on others for self-expression.

All his activities however were connected with the good and well-being of others and flowed from his devotion to certain causes. Every cause he cherished testified to his breadth of outlook and sympathies.

He represented a harmonious even though a rather difficult synthesis of various urges in the life of a country pursuing new goals and endeavouring to reach new heights.

He was a devout muslim and yet his devoutness as a muslim did not come in the way of his complete identification with nationalist aspirations of the country in every field of life. His interpretation of Islam was as broad in its scope as Gandhiji’s interpretation of Hinduism. Religion for him had meaning in spiritual terms and not in terms of any narrow creed.

The best part of his adult life was devoted to the cause of education. Here he did some original thinking. The way he nurtured Jamia Millia in its difficult years was a tribute to his enormous patience and...
the intensity of his faith in the cause he was serving.

He could not escape the eagle eyes of Gandhiji. Gandhiji found in him a kindred spirit and entrusted to him the care of his latest fad—Basic education.

Free India could not leave him in seclusion which he loved. He had to be dragged out to play his part in several tasks of nation-building. We are all familiar with the part he played.

Nothing he hated more than can't and humbug or ostentation of any kind. He carried his vast learning lightly. Tolerance, respect for others viewpoint and self-restraint which are the very essence of democracy, characterised his public conduct.

It was because he saw that these virtues of democracy were on the decline that he had his moments of unhappiness in the last years of life. The country is grateful that it has had a man of Zakir Saheb's stamps and calibre.
He practised, what he preached

Saveeda Khurshid

"India is my country and all the people inhabiting it are my family," said my father, Dr. Zakir Husain, at the time of taking oath as the President of India. He lived every word of it and I know that during his last days his principal anxiety was for our nation and its future.

He was much distressed at the various forces of disintegration showing up their ugly heads and casting a dark shadow over the future. But he was not the one to despair. He thought the malady, afflicting the nation, has no quick cure but there is nothing to be disheartened about it. What was needed, he said, was detention and to beat the forces of evil.

He was hurt by the spectacle of one man hating another but he himself hated none. He thought himself, victim of a malady that needed a long-term treatment for an ultimate cure. In this context, he would often quote Mahatma Gandhi. He asked: "How can a man be called a human being if he hates another man? But such a person deserves to be treated for the sickness he suffers from". His panacea for fighting out communalism and all such evils, was good education well-imparted and a firm faith. He had that faith in himself and he practised what he preached.

He loved me very much, perhaps that is how every member of our family feels, for even in distributing love he was so just. His way of expressing affection towards children was by planting a kiss on the
forehead and when he did that to one, he would be scrupulous to do it to every other child who came to him. All my four children would have it from him and none would be made to feel the slightest discrimination on this account, either due to neglect or hurry.

His attitude to children was quite interesting and illuminating. He used to say that children have their own personality and we must not override it or belittle it.

We must pay them proper and due respect and let them develop according to their own preferences and aptitudes. He thought that no one can really stop them from becoming what they like to become. The entire edifice of Jamia Millia was built on this concept. His manner of teaching them was unique.

At Jamia Millia, he used to go round personally and see for himself how children participated in their life at the institution. Food was served to them in the dining hall on dinner tables. There used to be an extra plate for bone-remnants. One day, when my father visited the dining hall, where children’s dinner was in progress, he noticed in one such plate a boy had poured some of his soup to which he did not relish. He quietly went near the boy, took up the plate and, unmindful of the waste stuff in it, took the eatable contents himself. The lesson went home admirably and that boy, now a man, says how scrupulously he guards against any wastage of anything. That small incident had made such a deep impact on him.

At the Aligarh University, whenever he found a young man had not buttoned his shirt or sherwani, he would himself begin to do it for him. Once a student went to him stylishly keeping practically all the buttons of his sherwani open. Only one button at the bottom was closed. After the boy went away, Doctor Saheb humourously remarked to his friend Rashid Ahmed Siddiqi, who was there, “What an original trait this boy appears to reflect! He can manage with only one button for the entire sherwani”.

He had an unlimited passion for learning and he was always eager to imbibe knowledge from any source whatsoever and on all types of subjects and things so widely diffused as animals, articles of domestic use and recipes for various foods. On several occasions, he would come to me and ask me to try to prepare a certain dish for which he would tell me the recipe from his notebook. We used to be surprised as well as amused to find him take notes on such recipes from some simple and unsophisticated ladies among our relations and friends. At the fag end of his life—just one year before his death, he decided to increase
his knowledge of Persian. He knew Persian quite well, yet he liked to improve it further and started taking regular lessons from a specially engaged tutor. When he was at Ranchi, he had started learning the language of the Adi:asis, and it was his wish that one day he should be able to address them in their own language.

He had appreciably managed to keep his private and public lives apart, throughout his life. Family and household were my mother’s domain and here she enjoyed full ‘autonomy’. She would never interfere with his public life and responsibilities. Generally, our family members were absent at public functions attended by my father. He used to remain so much absorbed, in his public duties and his thoughts and anxieties for the country, that his people did not allow any family worries to trouble him. And yet we got an ample share of his love. All his advice to us was by way of suggestion and if we did not heed at any time, he would leave us free to have our choice.

He never liked expensive and gaudy clothes. During the Swadeshi movement, he had gathered all our silken garments and made a bonfire of it. But he knew my fascination for them. So he let me wear what I chose. Still he used to suggest, “If you go to a function wearing expensive dresses, no one might take note of you as there must be many others who would display much more expensive garments. But if you go in spotless Khadi, you will be an exception. There may not be many like you and thus you may become a centre of special attention. This was his way—a mild, suggestive and an imaginative way of inculcating good ideas among others.

He liked my mother’s unsophisticated and traditional dress of kurta, pyjama and dupatta and he neither insisted on nor advised against the ‘purdah’. My mother observed the veil. I did not. We were free in this matter to move as we wished.

I saw him as a man, as head of our family and as head of the State and I always found that his entire outlook was so human and so decent that it made him a beloved of all who came in contact with him. His whole outlook is well borne out by the words that he spoke at the inauguration of Guru Govind Singh Bhawan of Punjab University at Chandigarh. “The first home of the man is the mother’s lap and then, as he grows, his home too expands till it envelops the entire world and so the whole world becomes the abode of man”. This was the gist of his outlook on universal brotherhood.
A Quest For Excellence

B. H. Zaidi

one were to look for a constant feature in a life so full of new challenges and vicissitudes as Dr. Zakir Husain's, one would be nearest the truth, perhaps, in regarding it as a quest for excellence.

It is not possible to trace its origin to the influence of any person or any directly received cultural tradition. It was something that had grown, and grown because of the many aptitudes that were competing within Dr. Zakir Husain for adequate expression.

One may disregard the earliest period, when he lived with his father in Hyderabad, and it was considered beneath the dignity of the family to allow him to cross the street in front of his house on foot. But because this was followed, after the death of his father, by a fairly long period when he was subject to rigid puritanical discipline, one could trace the quest for excellence to the sheer contrast between the standards of living.

Of the days puritanical living, because they began from the time when he was about eight years old, Dr. Zakir Husain had still a vivid memory. He was made to wear coarse clothes, to eat insipid food, to crop his hair short and still to be the normal youngster that he was.

When he was leaving school, he was invited to dinner by the headmaster who believed in living for duty, and thought that if anyone wanted to do his duty, he should reject everything which gave pleasure. He made the young Zakir Husain sit opposite to him, and when the
single dish was served he poured cold water on it. Zakir Husain did not seem to notice, and ate the food without any show of distaste. When the meal was over, the headmaster congratulated him on his conduct at school and asked him to remember, that one could not enjoy life and still excel in the performance of duty.

No change could have been greater than that from the puritanical school at Etawah to the M.A.O. College at Aligarh, which aimed at producing gentlemen. The young Zakir Husain was there under the tutelage of his elder brother. He had been provided with all that was necessary to make him look like a gentleman, and the fear of appearing ridiculous in the crowd of other young gentlemen had been instilled in him.

He has described in the convocation address he delivered after he had resigned as Vice-Chancellor his feelings when, at the end of his first day at Aligarh, he waited, as he thought a proper young gentlemen should, for the proper amount of time to elapse between the ringing of the dinner bell and his appearance at the dining hall.

He was astonished when he left his room to find that instead of young men going towards the dining room they were all coming out. He had missed his dinner. It was then only that he discovered that there was a race for food among the young gentlemen at Aligarh and the amount of the prize depended upon the swiftness of the competitor.

Perhaps this was the last time when Dr. Zakir Husain failed to understand a situation. He was very soon a most popular young man at Aligarh. Not only his close friends but the students generally began to call him Murshid, which means ‘preceptor’, ‘religious guide’, ‘spiritual chief’.

He had to maintain a very high standard, set by himself of course, of conversation, repartee, eloquence, lively debate. There was naturally, an opposition party, at whose head was a young man who rose to prominence in the North-West Frontier Province in the nineteen-forties, but whatever may have been the attitude of the leader of the opposition no one denied the qualities of leadership, the charm and the ability of Dr. Zakir Husain.

He had, however, ultimately to lead a revolt against old standards, which had been his own standards, too. When Gandhiji summoned youngmen to leave institutions controlled by the Government he left Aligarh and was the leader of the student-teacher group which founded the Jamia Millia.

In 1923, he went to Germany for further study. He studied with
earnestness, and his thesis was approved *summa cum laude* which is the highest award given for a thesis.

But some who were with him in Germany wondered to the last how and when he found the time for study. He seemed to be engaged on many different projects. One of these was a biography of Mahatma Gandhi, the second to appear in European country after Roman Rolland's classic work. Another project was the publication of the *Diwan-i-Ghalib* on behalf of the Maktaba Jamia, the Publication Department of the Jamia Millia. This edition of Ghalib's poems is still remembered for its exquisite binding and print. But only those with him in Berlin knew that a good part of the type-setting had been done by Dr. Zakir Husain himself.

A third project was a tour of the Scandinavian countries to study dairy farming, and to maintain himself during the tour Dr. Zakir Husain had to write articles on Mahatma Gandhi and also to deliver lectures.

What happened to this quest for excellence when Dr. Zakir Husain returned to India and became Vice-Chancellor of the Jamia Millia, an institution without funds, without support from any of the Indian communities and, it appeared without a future?

There were many challenges to face. There was the team of the teachers who were willing to suffer hardships but who needed guidance. Dr. Zakir Husain had to excel in the understanding of persons and in the discovery of means, whereby the work of each responsive person could be made to appear as his contribution to the expansion of the Jamia Millia.

He had to excel in dealing with persons who could make substantial donations to Jamia Millia if they so desired, but were too established in their own way of life to participate in working for a change of outlook. He had to deal with the high and mighty in the Nizam of Hyderabad's Government to obtain a monthly grant for the Jamia Millia.

He had to deal with the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, on whose approval the payment of this depended, and who was sniffing all round to catch the slightest smell of disloyalty. He had to deal with business magnates outside Delhi who would not show any interest in the Jamia Millia unless they were properly impressed.

The continuous growth of the Jamia Millia is evidence of Dr. Zakir Husain's success in meeting every type of challenge and in showing to all who cared to see that the work in the Jamia Millia was only
a quest for intellectual-cultural and moral excellence.

His colleagues in the Jamia Millia remember how they were baffled by the variety of his interests and the demands he made upon them to prove equal to every situation. As his sphere of work expanded, his personality began to exercise its influence in an ever-widening circle.

At the conference on national education called together by Mahatma Gandhi to consider his idea of education through craft, Dr. Zakir Husain impressed Gandhiji by his knowledge of educational principles as well as by his tact and courage. Gandhiji appointed him president of the conference and put him in charge of the whole movement for a new education by appointing him president of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. Apart from this, several provincial governments informally made him their chief consultant and adviser in matters relating to basic education.

He had always been interested in calligraphy, the values of which he learnt from a master calligraphist in the Jamia Millia and from a collection of masterpieces of calligraphy which he had been able to buy, even though otherwise living under stringent conditions. He had cultivated an understanding of painting and music while in Germany, and it was his desire to create sense of form and colour in the young which made the schools of the Jamia Millia for quite sometime the leading exponents of children’s art.

Dr. Zakir Husain came more and more prominently before the public eye during the nineteen-forties. He had prepared himself in every way for his part in public life. He could argue without being a partisan, he could understand and overlook shortcomings, he could appreciate excellence as much among his opponents as among his supporters and admirers. He could make his search for merit independent of irrelevant considerations and a starving artists or a disconsolate poet or a gardener anxious to enrich his knowledge attracted his interest as easily as those who discoursed on matters of national importance.

As Vice-President, he impressed foreign diplomats and dignitaries not only with his charm but with the variety and keenness of his interest. As Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, he was looked for excellence with consistent impartiality. Leaders of opposition parties, though the matter may not be public knowledge, earned his esteem if they studied the subject on which they spoke and put forward their views clearly and forcefully.
I met Dr. Zakir Husain for the first time in 1936 when he had come to Calcutta to raise funds for Jamia Millia. He was then not yet forty but had already made a name for himself as an ardent nationalist and one of the leading educationists of the country.

It was then customary for able and ambitious young men to go to Oxford or Cambridge for higher studies. The scholars who went to the USA or the Continental Universities were not many. Dr. Husain had gone to Berlin and many were curious to find out the impact of German scholarship on the mind of this sensitive and highly intellectual Indian. The University of Berlin in those days had a worldwide reputation and had on its staff great names like Einstein, Max Born and many others.

Dr. Zakir Husain was known to be a keen student of economics and his studies in Marxism at a time when Marx was not yet very well known in India gave an added aura to his reputation. His interest in philosophy was equally well-known. His translation of Plato’s Republic into Urdu was evidence of his scholarship and love of theory and equally a demonstration of his love for Urdu.

It was not, however, his scholarship or even his standing as an educationist which made the greatest impression on me and others who met him then. The first and most abiding impression was of a man of almost infinite gentleness and delicacy of feelings.
 Normally, those who are passionately devoted to a cause tend to become intense and become narrow. From dedication to a cause to fanaticism is a very short step. Dr. Zakir Husain’s devotion to Jamia Millia and the cause of education was beyond question. Equally unquestioned was his patriotism and sense of dedication to scholarship.

The intensity and depth of his feeling for the Jamia and education was however combined with an urbanity of manners and suaveness that was as striking as it was rare. One reads of Sir Galahad in *Arthurian Romance* as the man who feared none because his heart was pure and yet whose nature was so gentle and sweet that even his opponents could not dislike him. In many ways, Dr. Zakir Husain was and remained a Galahad throughout his life.

Jamia Millia was Dr. Zakir Husain’s first love and remained his prime concern till almost his last day. His love for education soon brought him into a larger field and he became one of the closest colleagues of Mahatma Gandhi in framing a national system of education for the illiterate masses of India. There is perhaps nothing basically new in the idea of basic education, and yet the formulation of the programme of basic education marked a turning point in the history of education in the country.

With the growth of political democracy throughout the world, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of education. In India, Gokhale as early as the first decade of the century prepared a scheme of compulsory universal primary education, but it could not be implemented because of the reluctance of an alien Government to provide adequate funds for the purpose.

It was to resolve this problem of lack of resources that a new craft-centred programme of education was formulated in which education would at least partially create its own resources. The idea of activity as a central principle of education was already well-known but Dr. Zakir Husain gave to activity a socially useful orientation to make education both more creative and more independent of grants from external sources.

Basic education has not made the impact on India which Dr. Zakir Husain had expected but, as he himself pointed out on more occasions than one, this was because a greater emphasis was placed on the forms and techniques rather than the essential spirit of basic education.

It is not necessary to dilate on the sad story of estrangement, mistrust and bitterness which ultimately led to the partition of India.
On the eve of and immediately after partition, passions rose so high that even men and women normally sane and civilized lost their balance. Many dark and cruel deeds were done in those bitter and tempestuous days but there were also many acts of great chivalry, courage and humanity.

Dr. Zakir Husain was a member of the minority which radiated sweetness and light in the midst of the storms of passion and hatred. Even when the waves of darkness sought to engulf him personally, he never allowed any bitterness to enter his soul.

Many will remember that he himself was at the point of being killed but the bravery of some Sikh and Hindu railwaymen and police saved his life. Undaunted by this experience, Dr. Zakir Husain went out freely through riot-torn areas and brought solace and comfort to many aggrieved individuals and families without distinction of religion, caste or region.

He was a tower of strength to all nationalist forces in and around Delhi and the way in which he organized relief and sought to restore fraternal feelings between people of different communities will always be remembered with affection and gratitude.

The partition of India had seriously shaken the morale of Indian Muslims. Many of them had earlier been swept away by passion and lost their sense of balance and judgement. Many did not at first realize the consequences of partition and, when ultimately it started them in the face, there was consternation and despair in many hearts.

The Aligarh Muslim University had played a glorious role during the twenties and thirties of this century, but in the forties it had been one of the instruments for the achievement of Pakistan. When Pakistan came into being, many of the teachers and students were completely dazed. It was at this critical juncture that Dr. Zakir Husain came forward to shoulder the burdens of the university and restore normalcy and balance among its alumni. Aligarh was in many ways a symbol of Muslim India and Dr. Zakir Husain’s role in bringing Aligarh into the mainstream of national life was a service not only to Indian Muslims but to the entire Indian nation.

Dr. Zakir Husain was a great scholar and educationist but for him knowledge was not confined merely to the gymnastics of the intellect. Whatever is beautiful in nature and man’s handiwork attracted him. He was a great lover of flowers and trees and equally of stones and fossils, manuscripts and paintings...modern, medieval and ancient. He had great qualities of head and heart but perhaps of even greater
significance was his essential humanity. This was in fact the predo-
minant impression he made on anyone who came into contact with
him.

I have seen a small child of two, at first a little awed by his
beared and majestic appereance, soon lose all fear and walk up to him
to be caressed. I have seen men and women of all ages and of all
strata of society put at ease by his kind and considerate approach to
their problems.

He was gentle and courteous to every one and markedly so to
those who occupied an inferior position in social, political or economic
status. 'No man is a hero to his valet', says an English proverb-but
Dr. Zakir Husain disproved this proverb and was indeed a hero to his
valet.

Perhaps there can be no greater test of a man's courtesy and
gentleness of spirit than to retain the regard and affection of those
who live with him day and night. Dr. Zakir Husain passed this test
and will be remembered as much for his gentleness and compassion
as his integrity, courage and intellectual distinction.
Aristocracy of Character

Veerendra Patil

It was an agonising day for India that on Saturday, May 3, 1969 Dr. Zakir Husain, the third President of the Republic of India breathed his last, plunging the whole country in gloom. I was at my chambers in the Mysore Secretariat when shortly after noon, the news came that our Rashtrapati was no more. I was stunned beyond measure to hear of this sad news, and conveyed this melancholic news to my Cabinet colleagues, who with sorrow passed a condolence resolution to be conveyed to the bereaved family. Immediately after, I emplaned for New Delhi via Bombay to be present at the funeral.

To me he was a trusted guide, philosopher and a respected leader. When I was the Chief Minister, he visited Mysore State twice and on both the occasions, I had the privilege of accompanying him. He came to Bangalore to inaugurate the St. John’s Medical College and later visited Belgaum to present new colours to the Maharatta Regiment. On both the occasions it was my good fortune to come closer to him.

He was a gem among humanity. Throughout the world he carved out a name for himself as a polished gentlemen, a great educationist and an inspired and life-long teacher. It was given to him to mould the Nation’s culture to the supreme heights of excellence. Whatever offices he held in Free India, he brought to bear his uncommon intellect, with a flash of dignified approach.
As top leaders of the country have eulogised he was a shining symbol of the aristocracy of character. Man's earthly existence is indeed a boon and Dr. Zakir Husain gave a new definition of character through his universal humanism.

He always felt that he was a citizen of the world and radiated his love of humanity as such. Indians loved him for his nationalism, secularism, decency, dignity, elegance and etiquette. He was a person of nobility and equanimity.

To him the whole of India was his cherished home and all inhabitants of the country were the members of his family. When divisive forces threatened to engulf India, he championed the cause of national heritage and moulded the national character by his preservation and tireless energy.

He always adhered to the principles of ethical and spiritual values as the very bedrock of National Integration. One who was drawn towards him felt that he was Indian first and Indian last. His thoughts radiated towards noble thoughts and ideals. He was truly modern and yet propagating the best in India's ancient culture, as the essence of human values. He unceasingly and vigilantly held to the belief that harmony between the East and the West is essential to achieve the best in everything.

India has produced eminent men of letters, religious savants and balanced politicians. Dr. Zakir Husain was the embodiment of the best in everything. Be it the teacher, politician, or the Constitutional Head of the Nation, he exuded the warmth of prayerful humility, lofty respect for the human personality and above all equality between religions.

He exhorted his countrymen not to think in terms of religious groups but to think in terms of India and become Indians in the true sense of the meaning.

He had no faith in slogan-mongering. He was indeed a practical man. When the destiny of the country swerved towards waywardness he felt grieved at the turn of events. He never felt happy at the way things were happening in India.

Throughout his life, he laboured hard to keep education aloof from the passions of partisanship. One remembers with gratitude his successful efforts in 1946 in having brought together on the same platform at Jamia Millia, political figures like Jawaharlal Nehru, M.A. Jinnha, Liaquat Ali Khan and others. At that time he cautioned his countrymen to protect humanity in a world of animals.
He fervently asked the people to extinguish the fire of hatred.

Such was his personality. Though born a Muslim, he attained the heights of universal brotherhood and spiritual integrity. I say with all humility that he was one of the greatest Indians ever born in Bharath.

A good and saintly personality was snatched away and a grateful Nation ever remembered his memorable work. I always admired his approach to public life and learnt valuable lessons from his leadership.

It is my duty to pay my humble tributes to his memory which will remain always fragrant.

I close this tribute by signing his praise as Prince among Men.