Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the great founder of the Banaras Hindu University was among the most eminent makers of modern India. Excepting Mahatma Gandhi, probably no man in India is so loved and respected and had such a wide following among its people as has had Pandit Malaviya. Mahatma Gandhi regarded him as his elder brother. The well known editor of the ‘Leader’, Shri C.Y.Chintamani treated Pt.Madan Mohan Malaviya as the only man fit to be bracketed with the sage of Sabarmati. Mrs.Annie Besant observed Pandit Malaviya to be symbol of Indian unity among diversity of opinions.

Malaviya had a good deal to say in his note of dissent as a member of the Indian Industrial Commission (1918), about education, the neglect of which in his opinion largely accounted for the backwardness of India. Before 1770 neither India nor Britain had a national system of education. Since then British had, he opined, risen to the pinnacle of power and prosperity by virtue of measures which had transformed its education system and India would not have lagged behind but omission on the part of Government of the same in India where it had not agreed even to the modest Primary Education Bill sponsored by Gokhale and supported by Malaviya himself.

He advocated provision of agricultural, mechanical and commercial education at all levels from the primary to the University. He considered it necessary that primary education should be made compulsory if not also free. The Commission recommended mechanical training to be imparted in school attached to railway workshops. Malaviya feared that if such training were confined to railway workshops, it would not benefit Indian to any appreciable extent. He suggested the introduction of mechanical training in the ordinary school and recommended introduction of courses of mechanical and electrical engineering in schools and colleges leading to an examination of the London B.Sc. standard. He expressed the hope that Calcutta and other University would start such
courses (as he himself did at the Banaras Hindu University), practical training being made available in railway and other workshops. He consider it essential Government should give adequate financial aid to the institutions providing such training and naval engineering and stressed the immediate need for starting commercial education in all Universities.

While welcoming the Commission’s recommendation for the establishment of an Industrial Development Department at the Center and also in each of the Provinces he strongly opposed the creation of an Imperial Industrial Service and of a cadre of scientists styled ‘Imperial Chemical Service’ for carrying on scientific research in aid of industries. Such steps, he apprehended, would place the future of Indian industries in the hands of bureaucrats recruited in England like the existing Imperial Services, who would be both costly to this country and indifferent to its interests. He referred, Indignantly, to the services working such departments as agriculture, veterinary, meteorological and geological survey, which were intended to be manned by Indians but having been initially recruited abroad by reason of Indians with requisite qualifications not being available at the time, continued to be manned by Europeans even after Indian with degree in European universities became available. He cited the glaring example of the Indian Education Service to which such eminent scientists as Sir Profulla Chandra Roy has not been admitted.

Pandit Malaviya’s vision was to have Banaras Hindu University to realize vision as mentioned above. Not only one institution but he wanted that roads reaching from Benaras to Prayag dotted with such modern educational institutions. Lauding this vision, Dr. Sir M. Visvesvarayya (Diwan of Mysore) noted intensive efforts in foundation of BHU and said that the Pandit’s most notable achievement was in the sphere of constructive activities, at Benares for which he has worked ceaselessly for over 25 years. Such important institution are usually built up by the benefactions of super-rich men, or by high officials taking the lead with the backing of Government, or by means of public subscriptions raised to commemorate a great name. But in the present case the University has been brought into existence by the devoted exertions of a private citizen, mainly through the trust reposed by the public in his devotion, character and high moral purpose.
Advocate of Industrial Development

Malaviya’s interests were nation-wide and were not confined to politics or education. Every good public cause has his sympathy and support. He has been a strong supporter of compulsory primary education from the time the late Mr. Gokhale introduced his bill in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1911. He has also been one of the principal organizers of the Hindu Mahasabha Movement, the Object of which is to promote co-operative effort for all good purposes among the Hindus so that the community may not fall below other nationalities, either within or outside the country, in energy and virile power for defense or self-improvement.

He has been a vigorous advocate of the policy of industrial development in the country. The minute he wrote for the Report of the Industrial Commission (1916-18) has often been quoted the true Indian view of the industrial needs of the country. In the minute he has pointed out how Indian industries have suffered in the past by discouragement and neglect and how vital it is to foster industries on modern lines for the economic uplift of the country. If a genuine movement for this purpose were set on foot, he hope to be able to carry on a campaign and collect a very large sum within the country itself to provide the capital needed for organized industries.

Need for Scientific and Technical Education

The thinking process was to create niche for India which can not regain her prosperity until the study and application of the modern sciences becomes, so to speak, naturalized in the country. Science cannot become a national possession so long as it has to be studied through the medium of a foreign language. A wide diffusion of science in India as a means of rescuing the people from the abject poverty into which they have fallen is not possible until science, both theoretical and practical, can be learnt by Indians in their own country.

The patriotic endeavors which were made to send student to foreign countries for technical education were most praiseworthy. But they were no doubt meant to serve as a small beginning, noted first prospectus of BHU, “Technical education cannot be expected
to make any real progress until there is at least one well-appointed polytechnic institution in the country capable of giving efficient instruction in the principles and practice of the technical arts which help the production of the principal necessaries of life of the Indian population”.

It further noted that mere industrial advancement cannot restore India to the position which she once occupied among the civilized countries of the world. And even industrial prosperity cannot be attained amongst all concerned, and these can only prevail and endure amongst those who are fair in all their dealings, strict in the observance of good faith and steadfast in their loyalty to truth. Such men cannot be found in sufficiently large numbers to keep a society to which in an organized, efficient and healthy condition, when the society to which they belong is not under the abiding influence of a great religion acting as a living force.

The foregoing considerations point to the need for “bringing the Hindu community under a system of education which will qualify its members for the pursuit of the great aims of life (trivarga) as laid down in the scriptures, viz (i) Discharge of religious duties (Dharma), (ii) Attainment of material prosperity (Artha) and (iii) Enjoyment of lawful pleasures (Kama).

The fourth great aim, salvation (moksha) must be pursued by each individual by his own efforts under the guidance of his spiritual preceptor and in accordance with the methods of his own particular creed or denomination”.

Successor to Mahamana as Vice-Chancellor of BHU in 1939, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (while unveiling life size statue of Mahamana in 1961) said that Malaviya was said to be a supporter of Santanana Dharma. What is Sanatana Dharma, not the rites and ceremony, not the different things which have changed from centuries but there are certain qualities which are of a universal character which has got an appeal in vitality even to-day i.e. Abhaya, Ahimsa, Asanga. These are the qualities which are the characteristics of Indian culture. Abhaya is a freedom from fear, integrity of spirit. Look at the world and you
find everything is Subject to the Law of Times, to rotation, to death, to annihilation. You ask whether this death, whether this annihilation is all.

“If that is Abhaya it remains to be followed that it must result in action of love and friendship, Ahimsa. You find Dhammapada saying Victory breeds hatred. The conquered live in sorrow. The Yogasutra tells us when Ahimsa is established, there is (Vairatyaga). There is a complete aspect of renunciation, so to say, of hatred.

And when Malaviyaji took up this problem of raising our country from slavery to freedom, from spiritual ignorance to some kind of spiritual enlightenment, he tried to remove all these technical difficulties and defects from which we suffer. He tried to throw himself into the work of the world. He tried to do what one man can do and he has done a great deal to remove the suffering in this world, to raise the country to a higher level. Religion is a supreme effort to improve human condition”.

Noted by Dr. Shabnum Tejani (London University 2007) that there are four distinct strands to the debate on secularism in India. First, the liberal left position holds that religion and politics belong in different realms. This position saw the rise of Hindutva in the 1980s as a failure of the secular state and of modernization. For the proponents of this position, secularism represented progress, liberty, and the operation of scientific temper and rationality. However, not all defenders of secularism have embraced the modernization model. Some have argued that secularism is not a western concept but has a long history in India. This is the secularism-as-tolerance argument which asserts that the ancient history of India demonstrates the inherent secularity of its culture. India, the argument goes, has since ancient times accommodated many different peoples: Aryans, Huns, Turks, Bactrians, Scythians, Persians, and all the rest. Hindu dharma, with its loose, accommodative structure, was able to draw into its ambit the mores of these different people, for it held within it an indigenous concept of secularism, sarva dharma samabhava, the idea that all religions are true. Gandhi, most famously, argued that tolerance and the accommodation difference was a core characteristics of Indian culture. The second strand it the argument that secularism was nevr indigenous to India and it is therefore inappropriate. This view is perhaps best articulated by T.N. Madan and Ashis
Nandy. The third position is the one represented by the proponents of a Hindu nation. This holds that any recognition of minorities, specifically Muslism, is ‘pseudo-secularism’. “The fourth position is represented by the political philosopher Rajeev Bhargava, who argues that the discussion of secularism in India has to move beyond the opposition with religion in which it is mired. He reflects that the divide between the “secular” and the “religious” is somewhat of an institution in our country’ and asks if it is not possible to take the spiritual and ethical elements common to all religions and transpose them into a secular, non-doctrinal framework for behaviour. More specifically, Bhargava asks if there cannot be a ‘spiritualized, humanist secularism’. He clearly hopes to be able to incorporate values shared by many religions into the public life of India in a way that could be embraced by all a sort of secular religion. Interestingly, this suggestion is not very different from that of George Jacob Holyoake who first coined the term secularism in England in 1851. Holyoake also wanted to create an ethic for everyday life that was not irreligious or hostile to religion but was not bound by any particular religious tradition. In this sense, it was a secular, namely worldly, ethic”.

Dr. Shabnum has suggested that “secularism in India can be understood only when situated in the particularities of its historical context, I am not defending simply one more meaning for it, nor do I want to recover a lost or unrealized meaning. Rather, I seek to place myself alongside what I see as these more productive ‘critical modernist approaches”’. Where I distinguish myself from them is in the need for a longer historical analysis. Historian of Texas University, Dr. Leah Renorld in “Hindu Education (early years of BHU)” asserts that derived from the Orientalist and nationalist interpretations of Hindu tradition, concepts of identify defined particularization.

Historian Prof. Gyanendra Pandey (Oxford University) has noted in the “Construction of Communalism” that Malaviya’s political vision was obliviously very much wider and he used to say that Hindustan is no longer country of Hindus alone’. Malaviya declared in legislative council on the introduction of BHU Bill in March 1915 that BHU would be a denominational but not a sectarian institution. Theorist of French democracy Prof. Pierre Rosanvallon was of opinion that secularism in India held out the promise of freedom to practice one’s religion, of individual justice and representation, of protection of minority
cultures. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru giving his tribute to Malaviya at his birth centenary that he was one of tallest leader of National movement.

Pandit Malaviya was a man of deep convictions although he was always able to see the other man’s point of view. This exceptional quality commended him as a friend and guide to groups and parties holding different views and not unoften conflicting ideas. He had in him a store of sympathy and equanimity of temperament which always cut across political differences and religious distinctions. There is little wonder, therefore, if with the leadership of the masses he managed to combine successfully the respect of many a ruling princes, dedications to learning and western education and his own orthodox view of life. The gamut of his activities was wide enough embracing political, social, education and religious aspects which enabled him to influence all these spheres with equal felicity.

Madan Mohan Malaviya was born on December 25, 1861 and died on November 12, 1946. He got his B.A. degree in 1884, LL.B in 1891, and practiced in the High Court of Allahabad. He was editors of newspapers and journals viz. The Hindustan (a daily Hindi Newspaper), The Indian Union, Abhudaya, Maryada and The Leader. He was the Managing Editor of the Hindustan Times (New Delhi) for long many years. Malaviya was one of the earliest protagonists of the Indian National Congress and since 1886 he had been associated with it. **Four times, he was bestowed Presidentship of Indian National Congress, a unique distinction of political maturity and respect which he commanded.** He was the only leader of Congress who got associated with it in 1886 and remained with party till his death in Nov. 1946, almost entire period of our national movement. In 1903, Malaviya was elected to the Provincial Legislative Council. There he delivered important speeches on the annual financial statement, the Excise, Rowlett and the Bundelkhand Land Alienation Bills. He was subsequently elected to the Imperial Legislative Council in 1910 and continued to be its member till 1930. His enthusiastic support to Gokhale’s Elementary Education Bill was well known.

Malaviya’s vision of modern India envisaged rapid industrial and agricultural development of the country and for that he advocated education in the field of sciences
and technology. At his behest were organized the Indian Industrial Conference at Banaras (1905) and U.P. Industrial Conference at Allahabad (1907). His dissent to the report of the Industrial Commission (1916-1918), as its member, is a brilliant exposure of the economic and industrial problems of India and at the same time an indictment of the British economic policy towards the country.

At the Calcutta Congress of 1920, Malaviya opposed the adoption of Gandhian Programme of non-cooperation. In 1932, he presided over the All India Unity Conference at Allahabad. The Communal Award of Ramsay Macdonald was severely criticized by him at the Congress Nationalist Party Conference in August 1934 at Calcutta.

Malaviya was the principal figure behind the meeting of Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha at Allahabad in January 1906. He did tremendous work in solidification and rehabilitation of the Hindu Community in northern India. The establishment of the Banaras Hindu University may be deemed as part of his efforts in this direction.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya’s services to the socio-political life of Indian and its economic regeneration have indeed been great. But greater still and more enduring has been his selfless devotion to the cause of education through the establishment of the Hindu University at Banaras. He wishes to make it an ideal centre of learning, and for same he gave up his lucrative practice at the bar. Many people had greeted his scheme with ridicule, regarding it as utopian and impracticable. Obviously, there was grave problem of financial support. But by dint of his personal charm, integrity and sincerity, Malaviya was able to collect the large sum of money required to establish University of his dream. It will not be an exaggeration to record that Malaviyaji was the heart and soul of Banaras Hindu University, a living monument of his untiring energy and endeavour and supposed to be one of the greatest achievements of the twentieth century in the country. The one of the major objective behind this University was to create manpower to reconstruction of India after attainment of its freedom. It is noteworthy to record here that the mandate has been fulfilled by the alumni of the University in laying down the infrastructure and developmental projects. It may also be noted here that the engineering and science education in Banaras Hindu University had been a backbone of creating
institutional network in the country and that includes prestigious institutions like Indian Institute of Technology, Management, Medicine and number of scientific laboratories and institutions. In fact steel, coal, power and such other mining industries are flourishing because of the labour of alumni of the BHU.

He worked ceaselessly to put the University on a firmer root and guided its destiny as its Vice-Chancellor (1919-39) and Rector (1939-46). He exhorted the Indian youths to be man of character. In his famous convocation address (1929) he observed that the education they had received was required to plant an ardent desire in their minds to see their country free and self-governing. He cherished desire to prepare the youths to discharge every obligation which may be cast upon them for the early fulfillment of it. He reminded that the highest duty of a citizen was to offer that final sacrifice of his life when honour of motherland required it. Conclusively, he wished them to act with a full sense of responsibility and to work in the right spirit and under proper guidance for the freedom of the country.

To sum up Malaviya’s colossal personality, it may be relevant to quote Mahatma Gandhi, who wrote “I found him (Tilak) as Himalaya, I thought that it was not possible for me to climb up that an un scalable height. I then went to Shri Gokhale. He appeared to me like a deep ocean. I found that it was not possible for me to enter so deep. Lastly, I approached Malaviyaji. He seemed to be as crystal like as the stream and I decided to have ablutions in the sacred stream.”

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