

Madan Mohan Malaviya and Banaras Hindu University

B. N. Dwivedi

A brief account of Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya with regard to his manifold services to the nation and his creation of the Banaras Hindu University is presented to mark his 150th birth anniversary celebrations concluding on 25 December 2012.

If you wake up an Indian in the middle of the night and say 'Madan Mohan Malaviya' (Figure 1), he is sure to say 'Banaras Hindu University' (BHU). An ordinary man with extraordinary vision, Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (25 December 1861–12 November 1946) was a celestial light who rendered manifold services to the nation in his pure, serene, simple and selfless life. He was an educational pioneer, a silver-tongued orator, a national leader, a four-time Congress president, a social reformer, a religious leader of secular order (without greed, passion and hatred), a model of lofty-minded integrity, a fiery journalist/editor, and above all a great patriot. Some continue to grow in stature as the subcontinent's greatest creative geniuses like M. Visvesvaraya, Rabindranath Tagore and Madan Mohan Malaviya. Their 150th birth anniversary celebrations have been taking place during 2011–2012. Visvesvaraya and Tagore among others were closely associated with Malaviya and had taken keen interest in the formative years of BHU at



Figure 1. Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.

Kashi (now Varanasi). The university had conferred upon them the Honorary degree of 'Doctor of Letters'. Malaviya's immortal monument is his creation of a temple of learning at Varanasi. His vision is embedded in its unique architectural layout and its content: a magnificent silhouette against the Gangetic sky at dawn with gothic pillars: Banaras Hindu University.

An eminent maker of modern India

Malaviya was a great visionary. His passion was to dispel any ignorance from our motherland, his ambition was to rekindle the ancient fire of knowledge and virtue that had illuminated this land of the Aryans in the distant past. He firmly believed that the fusion of the country's ageless sublimity with modern science and technology could make India happy and contented.

On 4 February 1916, Lord Hardinge laid the foundation stone of BHU. Speaking on this occasion, he remarked, 'It has seldom fallen to my lot to address a more distinguished gathering than that which I see before me today, ..., and so much of the flower of India's intellect.' During 5–8 February 1916, after the BHU foundation day ceremony, a series of lectures by a galaxy of eminent people were delivered, which included Mahatma Gandhi (who gave his first public address in India), Annie Besant, J. C. Bose, P. C. Ray, C. V. Raman, Sam Higginbottom, Harold Mann, Kaviraj G. Sen and P. Geddes among others. Raman spoke on 'Mathematics' and 'Some new paths in physics'. Tracing the history of mathematics to the days of Aryabhata, he remarked, '... We need not look to foreign countries for inspiration. It is enough if we look to the glorious past of our own country. For, it was in India that numerical figures were invented, and that the decimal system of notation originated.' C. M. Sogani was the third recipient of

DSc from BHU in 1928 under the supervision of Raman, who was an Honorary Professor of the university.

Honorary DSc was conferred upon Raman in the 1932 convocation of the university. While conferring the degree upon Raman on 11 February 1932, Malaviya exhorted, 'By your achievement in the field of science, you have already won the worldwide distinction and have raised the glory of the motherland. I pray to God that you may continue to do your work for long long number of years, and with higher and higher distinction in the world of science for the benefit of the mankind and for the glory of the motherland.' Honorary DSc was also conferred upon J. C. Bose and P. C. Ray at the BHU convocation held on 11 December 1933.

In his life-long work of a patriot-politician with an eminent career of an educationist, Malaviya proclaimed, 'I am establishing a University, which will combine ancient wisdom with the knowledge of the physical sciences and technology.' Since ancient time, we had the legacy of the *ashrams of rishis*, the forest universities, the *Gurukulas*, the universities of Takshashila (in the 7th century BC, it was a centre of excellence in vedas and arts, medicine, law and military science) and Nalanda (4th century AD; Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang studied there in the 7th century AD). Malaviya conceived of a university with a blend of ancient traditions with modern universities in the West giving courses in arts, science and technology. He wished to achieve all this in a residential university to which Lord Hardinge observed, 'But, whether the idea of a residential teaching university be new or old, there is no doubt that it is a departure from the existing model, nor is this the only departure that characterizes this enterprise.'

Malaviya was at the forefront of the freedom struggle, with an ultimate goal of achieving freedom (Figure 2). The path to achieving this goal lay through toil and tears, sacrifice and sustained fight. In his

firm belief of a sound education as a prerequisite to freedom, Malaviya put in dedicated efforts in his divine spirit. And he made it, not substantially but in full measure: the Banaras Hindu University.

In order to revitalize India as a nation, Malaviya viewed the importance of feeding its youth with the ancient culture and moral food. The proposal to establish a Hindu University in *Kashi* was first put forward at a meeting held at the 'Mint House' in 1904 under the presidency of *Kashi Naresh* (King of *Kashi*). When the Congress session was held in Varanasi during 27–30 December 1905 in Rajghat plateau at the Ganges under the presidency of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Malaviya took this unique opportunity to discuss his proposal in such a distinguished gathering in the Town Hall of Banaras on 31 December 1905.

Malaviya discussed the prospectus of the proposed Hindu University in detail. He had already circulated his proposal for the 'Promotion of scientific, technical and artistic education combined with religious instruction and classical culture', to a number of leading people and eminent educationists in different parts of the country. Most of them were there to attend the Congress session in Banaras. One of the justifications put forward to establishing BHU was: 'In the present economic condition of India, there is no branch of education for which there is greater need than scientific and technical instruction.'

In order to invite distinguished scholars working abroad, thereby enriching academic environment of the university, Malaviya used to have frequent correspondence with eminent scientists like Ernest Rutherford, Arthur Eddington and others. With his wide personal contacts, Malaviya would frequently have eminent visitors to his university: Arnold Sommerfeld (German theoretical physicist), Raman, Tagore, Ashutosh Mukherji, Visvesvaraya and others.

While conferring the Honorary degree of 'Doctor of Letters' upon Tagore on 8 February 1935, Malaviya exhorted, 'Never in the discharge of my duties as the Vice-Chancellor of this university, I had greater pleasure than in performing this duty which I am doing today.... We feel very proud to have you in our midst to help and cheer us in our work, and... you may continue to preach the doctrine of peace for the benefit of mankind at large.'

Malaviya would always take a round of the campus in the evening, and even late in the night. Seeing some students working with their professor in the night would make him happy. Once an astronomical evening was organized by V. V. Narlikar for Malaviya's visitors, who wished to view the wonders of the sky through a telescope. Next morning, Malaviya visited Narlikar's department to express his happiness and satisfaction on the success of the expedition. This not only inspired Narlikar, but also brought significant donations to the university from the visitors who were potential donors.

Malaviya, dressed in immaculate white, was a unique emblem of the purity, a spotless and flawless national leader. With regard to students' participation in active politics, he raised a powerful voice against the cult of 'close your books'. To him, it was a synonym to closing one's mind. That is how Malaviya planted the sapling of knowledge in *Kashi*. And that is how he nourished and nurtured it until his last breath.

From ancient time, it is the natural curiosity of 'what, why, how and when' of the natural events that drives men/women to become scientists. From Aryabhata in the 5th century to Bhaskara in the 11th century, India was on top of the intellectual scene. This spirit could again be revived in the 20th century. Srinivasa Ramanujan, J. C. Bose, M. N. Saha,

S. N. Bose, Raman and others asserted their intellectual potential in science. After independence, many new institutions of excellence were established. And, it is gratifying to note that BHU graduates have been playing a prominent role in shaping modern India.

During the BHU silver jubilee on 21 January 1942 (*Vasant Panchami*), Malaviya and Gandhi sat side by side on the dais (Figure 3). 'Blessed is India that has given birth to Gandhiji and Malaviyaji. Lucky are we to hail the two men today,' exhorted Servapalli Radhakrishnan, Vice-Chancellor and President of the jubilee convocation. And as Jawaharlal Nehru said, 'Malaviyaji was a giant among men, one of those who laid the foundation of modern Indian nationalism and year by year, built up brick by brick and stone by stone, the noble edifice of Indian freedom.' Malaviya was an eminent maker of modern India.

Teacher of the nation: 'Satyameva jayate'

Banaras has been housing divine men, women and teachers of humanity since time immemorial. Continuity of life mirrors here: a dip in the holy Ganges sanctifies both life and death. The blend of Veda Vyasa, Gautama Buddha (he gave his first sermon at Sarnath and set in motion the wheel of *Dharma*), Shankara-



Figure 2. British Judge Lord Sankey chairing the second meeting of the India Round Table Conference in September 1931 with Indian leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malaviya on his left and William Robert Wellesley Peel and Samuel Hoare on his right.

charya, Kabir and Tulsidas reverberates everywhere in this holy city of Lord Shiva. Malaviya was a natural descendant of the great teachers and sages of India. He followed the teachings of Lord Krishna as narrated by Veda Vyasa, 'Awake, arise and engage yourselves unceasingly and dauntlessly in works leading to prosperity, with the firm faith that success shall crown your efforts.'

Malaviya started his career in July 1884 as a school teacher in Allahabad, after graduating from Calcutta University. He rendered manifold glorious services to the nation. Education is one of his most prominent services, and he is aptly known as the 'teacher of the nation'. He viewed education as the prime means of national awakening, achieving independence and regaining our ancient glory and dignity.

While still working as a teacher, Malaviya delivered his maiden, but historic speech in December 1886 (at the age of 25) at the second Indian National Congress in the Kolkata Town Hall under the chairmanship of Dadabhai Naoroji. His electrified address magnetized the audience. This marked the rising of a new brilliant star on the political horizon of the country. The audience was charmed and spell-bound by his magic power of oration and its content.

Many slogans such as 'Freedom is our birth right' by Tilak, 'Do or die' by Gandhi, 'Jai Hind' by Bose, 'Inquilab Zindabad' by Bhagat Singh, to name a few, inspired and ignited men and women to fight for our freedom. The majesty of

Malaviya, however, lay in his truthfulness. In his presidential address at the Lahore session of Congress in 1909, Malaviya declared, 'It is righteousness alone that wins', and summoned: 'Be truthful, be humble.'

Thus, he symbolized and popularized the slogan '*Satyameva jayate*' (Truth Alone Triumphs), a well-known mantra from the Mundaka Upanishad. This slogan was later adopted as the national motto of our country when we attained independence (inscribed in Devanagari script at the base of the national emblem, adapted from the Lion Capitol of Ashoka at Sarnath museum).

Malaviya was also a strong supporter of compulsory primary education ever since Gopal Krishna Gokhale introduced his bill in 1911 in the Imperial Legislative Assembly. In 1913, Malaviya started scouting in India, along with Justice Vivian Bose, Hridayanath Kunzru, Annie Besant and George Arundale. What a visionary teacher of the nation! Malaviya proclaimed, 'Let our youths receive liberal education. Side by side let them also try to learn how to evaluate the teachings of other religions.'

Malaviya always helped and encouraged a teacher or even a student, striving to extend the frontier of knowledge in his subject. To do so, he often cut across bureaucratic hussles, technical objections and narrow-minded groups in the university. While introducing his teaching staff to visiting dignitaries, Malaviya always commended his devoted band of great scholars. He would often say that he had

no money to pay high salaries, but he could certainly give his respects to all teachers.

Malaviya started the Sunday Gita Lecture Series in 1932. The first lecture of this series was delivered by Mahamana himself in Rajaputana hostel common room (the venue was later shifted to Arts College Hall and finally to Malaviya Bhawan). At the 12th convocation (1929) of the university, Malaviya's sermon included, '... Speak the truth, think truth. Continue your studies throughout your life. Be just and fear none. Fear only to do that is ill or ignoble. Stand up for right. Love the motherland. Promote public weal. Do good wherever you get a chance for it. Love to give whatever you can spare ...'.

Malaviya was affectionately given the title *Mahamana* by the people of India for his multi-faceted personality: a great patriot, a social reformer, an ardent journalist, a reluctant but effective lawyer, a successful parliamentarian, an outstanding statesman and above all a great educationist and teacher. Handing over BHU to Radhakrishnan in 1939 speaks of his strong belief that devoted eminent scholars should head the education administration. The nation celebrates the birthday (5 September) of Radhakrishnan as Teacher's Day.

Malaviya would often say, 'God loves light. Man must seek light and more light in his mind and in his life.' He was a *Maharshi*, a teacher of teachers. Mahatma Gandhi once called him *pratah smaraniyah* – a sage whose name, if spoken in the morning, would lift one out of the mire of one's sordid self. Nehru, while paying his homage to the memory of *Mahamana* on 7 December 1961, wrote, '... The Congress...was a singularly inert organization, and ... So I sought refuge from time to time in Malaviyaji, who was always full of enthusiasm and vitality.' We salute the Teacher of the Nation and his creation of 'tapering temple towers of the university'.

Malaviya's vision on higher education

Malaviya's best memorial is BHU, which epitomizes his selfless service in the cause of the nation regardless of caste, creed and religion. His 100th birth anniversary was organized in 1961, forming an All-India Malaviya Centenary



Figure 3. Mahamana Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi at the BHU silver jubilee on 21 January 1942.

Celebration Committee under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. At the auspicious occasion of unveiling his life-size statue on a pedestal at the BHU gate on 25 December 1961 (Figure 4), Radhakrishnan expressed the hope, ‘... all those who study in this university, and all those who enter this university, will look at this statue, and will remember his fascination for patriotism, his insistence on purity, his adherence to the Supreme for the rational values of life – fearlessness, love and detachment.’

Fifty years have passed since then, and we are celebrating Malaviya’s 150th birth anniversary, beginning 25 December 2011 and ending on 25 December 2012. Some three decades ago, the great Hindi poet Mahadevi Verma spoke at the BHU convocation, ‘Vidyarthi yehaan aag le ke aate hain aur raakh leke jaate hain’ (students come in with fire, and go out with ashes). We do not know what she meant at the time, but we do feel it every day when we go out of the BHU gate, although from a different standpoint, and that is what anyone ought to feel when looking at the multi-storeyed housing complexes in front of it, masking and overshadowing the majestic structure, splendour and aesthetic beauty of the Malaviya’s statue and the BHU, lying as if in a deep valley. Lately, mushrooming of horizontal growth in every field is a cause of concern for this 95-year-old great institution.



Figure 4. Life-size statue of Malaviya on a pedestal at the BHU gate, unveiled by S. Radhakrishnan on 25 December 1961.

Like pioneers of education at the time, such as Maharshi Karve in Pune, Ashutosh Mukherji in Kolkata and Annie Besant in Varanasi, Malaviya envisioned a broad-minded, tolerant and universal religion as the foundation of education. He built and nourished a unique crescent-view university at the Ganges as a centre of excellence in every branch of human knowledge. It is not just bricks and stones that an institution make. It is, indeed, a blend of excellence and dedication by exceptional and capable individuals that glorifies it.

Malaviya always maintained, ‘rules are made for man and not man for the rules’. Spirit of tolerance and accommodation with a blend of idealism and realism (gyan-vigyan) reflected both in his action and in his speech. For the maintenance and progress of the university, Malaviya counted on his countrymen rather than on the ‘halting aids doled out reluctantly by an alien administration’. His success lay in the purity of his motive and selfless devotion. His 20-year long term as Vice-Chancellor (November 1919 to September 1939) was synchronized with turbulent days of the freedom movement. Accordingly, he had twofold conflicting duties to perform: the first to take care of India’s future citizens and the second to fight for ‘*Apne Desh me Apna Raj*’ (our government in our country). He performed both the duties admirably well, as he was an embodiment of love, peace and friendship. As a result, the work in the classroom as well as outside went on uninterrupted. Its doors were always open for all to come in, or to students to go out, but the university was hardly closed.

Preserving the imperishable treasures of ancient values, Malaviya moved forward with time. For the first time in India, he established departments of mechanical and electrical engineering, glass technology, pharmaceutical chemistry, mining and metallurgy. Side by side, he introduced subjects like ayurveda, indology, ancient Indian culture and higher Sanskrit learning to bring about the synthesis of the best of the East with the advancement of science of the West. He always had his eye on the brilliant scholars working in India and elsewhere. Accordingly, he had the services of Jadunath Sarcar, Rakhil Das Banerji, U. C. Nag, Charles A. King, A. B. Dhruva, Ganesh Prasad, Birbal Sahni, R. S. Inamdar, S. S. Bhatnagar, V. V. Narlikar, R. K. Asundi and others, to guide the students and inculcate in them the spirit of research.

Malaviya always held the view, ‘Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion’ in letter and spirit. His personality radiated the sweetness and simplicity of a child, but his words carried the strength and conviction of a man with a settled philosophy of life. He could achieve all this because of his two great qualities of having contemplative energy of Lord Krishna and practical efficiency of Arjuna.

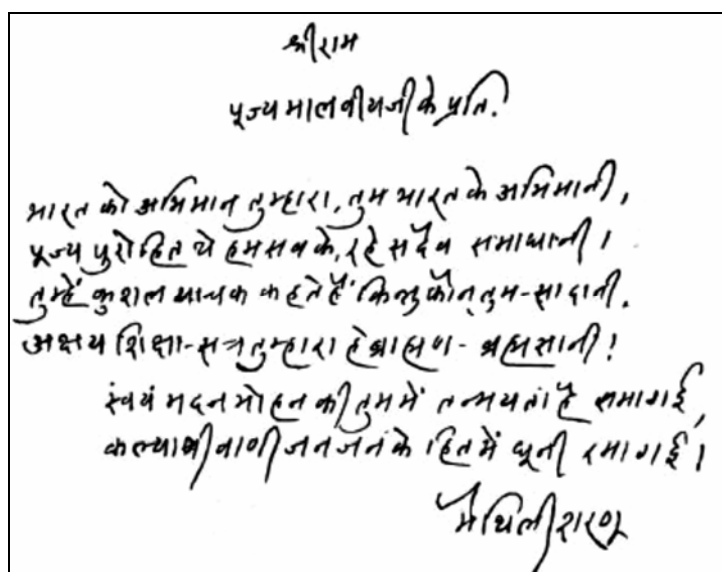
Malaviya firmly believed that the country could gain strength and develop itself only when the people of the different communities in India live in mutual goodwill and harmony. It was his earnest hope and prayer that the centre (BHU) of light and life, will produce students who will not only be intellectually equal to the best of their fellow students in other parts of the world, but will also live a noble life, love their country and be loyal to the Supreme ruler. The emotional national integration was an act of his living faith. In the history of Indian education, Malaviya and his spirit would serve as a beacon light to succeeding generations down the ages.

When Bhatnagar drew his attention to P. C. Ray’s statement that the entire scientific personnel should be Indianised, Malaviya’s viewpoint was entirely different. He had a universal perspective in all fields of human knowledge, if need be, by inviting persons of outstanding ability with a spirit of mission in their work. This reflects his global view on higher education, which has assumed great relevance today.

At the time when Aurobindo Ghosh dreamt of Swaraj through Swadeshi, Gopal Krishna Gokhale dreamt of spiritualizing the political life through public service, Malaviya dreamt of liberating India through learning and education. The BHU is an immortal monument of which he was both an architect and a builder. And it will continue to play a prominent role in shaping modern India. Like divine king Rantideva (as narrated in *Shrimad Bhagwat*), Malaviya too did not pray to God to give him salvation or freedom from re-birth. His spirit reverberates in his garden of light and life.

Malaviya’s vision on science and technology

The Vice-Chancellor/Rector of his own university, a spotless and flawless religious leader of highest secular order,



A poem of tribute to Malaviya by National poet late Maithili Sharan Gupta.

Malaviya was aptly called as ‘Devata Purush’ (a man of God) by Mahatma Gandhi. With purity in his expression and divinity in his look, he would always summon, ‘Practise truth and do your duty’. Malaviya’s vision was to generate national spirit through the power of education and righteousness, achieving the economic development of the country by combining the teaching of science and technology with that of religion. BHU was built and nourished by him out of contributions from beggars to kings. So it is truly a people’s university. This ‘temple of learning’ glorifies a unique blend of academic excellence and dedication. Malaviya viewed the excellence in science and technology with the presence of Bhatnagar and Narlikar in his dream campus. The BHU *Kulgeet* (alma mater song) was composed by Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, one of the most renowned scientists, who was a Chemistry Professor at BHU for three years during 1921–1924. Malaviya, said Radhakrishnan, ‘has lighted a lamp here whose light will penetrate far into space and will not put out, by God’s grace, as long as civilization lasts’. In the words of T. V. Ramakrishnan, ‘The “promotion of learning and research in arts and sciences in all branches” in one place was unusual in the then prevalent atmosphere of institutional degree-granting and individual research..., the impact of the university,

with its integrated activities of undergraduate and postgraduate education as well as research, on India’s national growth in science was great.’

Malaviya’s love for nature and humanity

Malaviya loved nature and prayed its Creator. He was fond of cow, birds, trees and flowers (Figure 5). He addressed a cow conference in Varanasi, which was probably the last that he attended. He used to feed the birds to welcome the messengers of the dawn. No one was untouchable to him: he gave *Mantra Diksha* to the downtrodden to bring them into the mainstream of the society. Women’s College at BHU speaks of his contribution to women’s upliftment. He always maintained proximity with poor and downtrodden. His service to humanity was unparalleled. ‘Malaviyajji is immortal’, said Mahatma Gandhi.

In conclusion, Malaviya’s manifold services to the nation were great, but he himself was greater than what he could achieve. Maintaining his vision in modern perspective, advancing forward following his footprint, and keeping BHU ‘*madhur manohar ateev sundar*’ (so sweet, serene, infinitely beautiful) will be a befitting tribute to Malaviya on his 150th birth anniversary.



Figure 5. Mahamana Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi with a cow.

I acknowledge the following references and suggest them for further reading

1. Dar, S. L. and Somaskandan, S., *History of the Banaras Hindu University*, BHU Press, Varanasi, 1966.
2. *Mahamana Malaviyajji Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume*, Published by the Secretary, All-India Malaviyajji Centenary Celebration Committee, BHU, Varanasi, 1961.
3. Dwivedi, B. N., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **99**, 1492–1493.
4. Dwivedi, B. N., Malaviya’s vision on higher education. *Hindustan Times*, 25 December 2010.
5. Dwivedi, B. N., Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya: Teacher of the Nation. *Hindustan Times*, 31 January 2011.
6. Ramakrishnan, T. V., *Banaras Hindu University and Science in India, 1916–1947*, Book on the contribution of India’s institutions to science before independence (eds Uma Dasgupta), Pearson Publishers, Delhi, 2010; a volume in the multivolume series called PHISPC, or the *Project on History of India’s Science, Philosophy and Culture* with Prof. D. P. Chattopadhyay as general editor), chapter 30, pp. 945–959.

B. N. Dwivedi is in the Department of Applied Physics, Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi 221 005, India.
 e-mail: bnd.app@itbhu.ac.in