

**MADARASA MODERNISATION: A STEP TOWARDS SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION
OF MUSLIMS IN INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Madarasas are considered the lifeline of Muslim Community and are in fact the base of Muslim education in India. Despite all efforts at individual, community and at Government level to transform the system of education in Madarasas in India, their lack of vision on the educational system has miserably failed to cope up with the present day socio economic needs of the Muslim community. Madarasas have not been successful in playing a positive role in the scheme of their education and they preferred to keep the community bonded under medieval thinking for their vested political and economic interests. They are still promoting orthodox attitude among Indian Muslims at the cost of secular education. In fact, orthodoxy, religious conservatism and obsession to separate identity remained the main focus of Madarasa education in India. They need to think over it urgently and take the required remedial steps to improve the conditions of Muslims in India.

INTRODUCTION

"Madarasa is primarily a Centre of religious learning. Madarasa education aims at inculcating and propagating the faiths of Islam among its followers. It teaches them to follow Quran and traditions of the Prophet. The Madarasa education is therefore, basically standing on the foundation of Quran and Sunna, the teachings of Prophet Mohammad. It is considered to be the base of Muslim education in India as a fairly large number of Muslims still prefer to send their children to Madarasa and they serve as the most convenient literacy center for the Muslim children. But in absence of clarity of vision they have failed to cope up with the present day socio economic needs of Indian Muslims. Madarasa managers remained unsuccessful in playing a positive role in the scheme of their education and preferred to keep the community subjugated under medieval thinking for their vested political interests. Madarasas are still promoting medieval attitude among Indian Muslims at the cost of secular education. In fact, orthodox attitude, conservative religious outlook and obsession to medieval identity remained the main focus of Madarasa education in India

Madarasas emerged as the institutions of religious learning with the spread of Islam outside the Arabian world. It was established to prepare personnel for royal service and

accordingly curriculum was formulated to suit the administrative needs of Muslim rulers. With the passage of time, patronage of these rulers helped it to extend its spread to different parts of India. The setup of Madarasa in India and its functioning have more or less remained religion-centric. Islam and its affiliates continually dominated its curriculum in India ever since it planted its root in Indian subcontinent. While carrying forward the tradition of medieval educational thought, Madarasas in India continuously kept spreading the conservative point of view and attitude to a larger section of Muslims community. Though many researchers have found very positive attitude of Muslim community towards the modernisation of Madarasa education, most of the Madarasa managers in India are still reluctant to think of any change in its curriculum in the changing socio economic circumstances. Undue significance on religious traits of Islam in curriculum of Madarasa education has very much undermined the rational sciences. Ignorance of reason based teaching-learning and overemphasis on religion-centric education in these establishments of Muslim education is thought to have given rise to intolerant behavior and is also thought to be a prime cause of religious unrest in our country. Muslim educationists speak of strong rationalist tradition of Islamic education, but the Madarasas in India have failed to keep pace with the fast changing modern social and educational needs of the community. But change has started taking place, although at a very small scale. Some have started thinking of changing it and some others are in the process of making and adopting a modified curriculum in the near future.

Advent of British rule and introduction of modern education system in India further filled the brain and heart of the religious and political leaders of the community with the fear of erosion of Muslim mode of life. They became impatient and deliberately established a more inflexible attitude towards religion-centric education for the community members. They rose to safeguard their archaic and medieval outlook as they found their role severely cut if their community moved towards modern education. So to ensure the carry forward of their medieval traditions, they decided to continue with the orthodox religious curriculum in the Madarasa system of education. The demagogues found it the only way to safeguard and further propagate their medieval outlook and thereby retain their supremacy in their community. They initiated their offensive through Madarasa movement by establishing Darul Uloom at Deoband in 1866 in order to broaden their reach and to indoctrinate Muslim community by means of Islamic system of education.

On the other hand, rationalist Syed Ahmad Khan with the same missionary zeal established Madarasat-ul-ulum in 1875 at Aligarh to align the Muslim educational institutions according to present-day advances in the field of education. He was very much conscious of the problems of Muslims in Indian subcontinent. He knew that their community members were unaware of the advancement made in the field of modern science and philosophy and were living in a nostalgic state of magnificent past. Syed Ahmad was a visionary. He recognized the urgent requirement of the Muslims community to obtain modern education and acquire English language, which the fundamentalists resisted furiously. He, with a missionary zeal, establish a Madarasa, a school where the Indian Muslim youth would receive definite guidelines about their future. He tried to enlighten the community members with the provision a mix of Islamic concept of 'Deeni' balanced with 'Duniyavi' education. He struggled all his life to achieve his aim of establishing an institution which combined the best of the two i.e. Deeni and Duniyavi that is religious teaching combined with scientific education. He strongly fought the dogmatism prevalent in his community. He was severely criticized for his so-called radical views for the transformation of education system for his community members. But He disowned every activity and idea which prohibited the social and economic uplift of his society.

Deoband and Aligarh Madarasa movement later led to the establishment of many other prominent Islamic seminaries like Dar-ul-ulum Nadwat-ul-Ulamain Lucknow (1898), Jamia Osmaniya University in Hyderabad (1917) and Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi (1920). Dar-ul-ulum Nadwat-ul-Ulama was later declared the modern seat of theological learning. It was founded on the principal of balanced synthesis of classical education with modern. The curriculum for some of the medieval branches of learning have either been modified or changed from time to time. A large part of the theological studies have been discarded and replaced by some modern sciences and languages but their over emphasis on Arabic literature and Islamic History did not bring the desired outcome for its products in job market. Jamia Millia Islamia, first established in Aligarh in the wake of Non-cooperation and Khilafat movement and later shifted to Delhi, tried to provide facilities for both the modern education and religious instruction at the same time. It has a statutory association of religious studies called *Majlis-i-Diniyat* to supervise the religious instructions and foster religious atmosphere in the campus. Its religious atmosphere and preoccupation to Urdu language as medium of instruction remained a great barrier to its appreciation as an icon of modern educational institution. Jamia Osmaniya University was established by the decree of the Nizam of

Hyderabad with the objective of blending the knowledge and culture of ancient times with the modern ones. The fundamental characteristics of the university is that Urdu is the medium of instruction at all levels, but the knowledge of English as a language is, at the same time, compulsory at all levels up to B.A. Since the inception of this university many Islamia colleges were opened, encouraging and patronizing women education as well. But medieval attitude in the veins of Muslim community in India is so deeply implanted that these Islamic universities and their associates also failed to alter the attitude of their students so that they could be able to think critically and independently. This is essential for the students that they are capable of developing a critical perspective of life and see through it in a more scientific manner suitable to current global environment. Accordingly Nadwa also remained as conservative as Deoband. Jamia however, accepted modern education to a considerable extent but its obsession to Urdu as medium of instruction could not bring its students at par with other modern educational institutions in the country as far as their job opportunity is concerned. Osmaniya has taken a leap forward but that is not sufficient to liberate the community from the shackles medieval psyche.

Aligarh Movement launched by Sir Syed Ahmad though very much successful as a positive response to western education, has not received support from vast section of Muslim masses. Majority of the Muslim community supported Deoband movement, which was established to propagate religious education. The people associated with Deoband and their supporters vehemently opposed the launch of Aligarh movement as it was trying to inculcate modern and scientific values and education in Muslims.

Government of India also started many programmes to transform the Madarasas. Scheme for Madarasas modernisation is an initiative of Govt. of India to introduce Science, Mathematics, English, and Social Studies on voluntary basis in Madarasa system of education. This was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme in 1994. In the 10th five-year plan (2002-07) the programme was clubbed together with Area Intensive Programme to form Area Intensive and Madarasa Modernization Programme (AIMMP). It had two components:

1. Infrastructure Development and
2. Madarasa Modernization programme.

Under the Madarasa Modernization and development, salary to two teachers per Madarasa@ Rs 3000/- per month per teacher for study of modern subjects like Science, Mathematics, English and Social Studies, one time grant of Rs. 7000/- for purchase of Science, Mathematics kits per Madarasa and book bank grant of Rs. 7000/- per year for strengthening libraries are provided.

Now the Madarasa modernisation programme was revised as centrally sponsored Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarasas (SPQEM) to make it more attractive. It was initiated in 2009 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. SPQEM is a demand driven scheme. The scheme provides for extending support and capacity building of Madarasas to teach modern subjects by making provision for the following category: salary of teachers, strengthening of libraries and book banks, providing teaching learning materials (TLMs) and other essential pedagogical equipment for teaching modern subjects at primary/middle/secondary and senior secondary levels. Financial assistance is also available for establishment of Science/Computer Labs/workshops in Madarasas at the Secondary/Senior Secondary levels followed by an annual grant for maintenance/ purchase of consumables. Besides direct financial assistance to the Madarasas, there is a provision in the scheme for in-service training for teachers as well as linkages with the NIOS and other institutes offering vocational courses. The need to modernize Madarasas has been especially recognized since independence. India's first education minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, emphasized on the need for an All India Madarasas Board. More recently, the Sachar Committee Report, while looking into SPQEM'S predecessor the Area Intensive and Madarasas Modernisation Programme developed in the tenth plan, explained the need to work out a mechanism to link Dini Madaris with a higher secondary board so that students desirous to shift to regular/mainstream education can do so even after having passed from a Madarasas. The provision of equivalence to Madarasas certificates/degrees for subsequent admissions. The recognition given to these courses by some universities has contributed in a large measure towards students of these courses moving to accessing mainstream higher education. But there are also reports of the help given to Madarasas are on paper alone. Despite the apprehension the report mentioned that the training of Madarasa teachers in pedagogy and management has been a welcome idea. In fact, inclusion of modern subjects in the syllabus without excluding religious subjects is acceptable to many. The Sachar Committee report also felt that degrees from Madarasas should be recognized for eligibility in competitive examinations. According to it the idea is to facilitate a process whereby Madarasa graduates too have a choice and an incentive to participate in these employment streams. The report also mentioned that while the Madarasa modernisation scheme was - a step in the right direction, certain deficiencies robbed it of its utility. According to them the Government will be well advised to review and revamp the scheme before embarking on its expansion. It can be said that the literature is clear in acknowledging the important and progressive role of the Madarasas. Though elsewhere, these age-old institutions have evolved into universities and mainstream institutions of higher education but in India such an evolution is yet to be achieved. Many leading Madarasas themselves, Civil Society Organizations and the government have recognized this lag

and have made conscious as well as innovative efforts in bridging it. The main provisions under SPQEM are mentioned in the following table.

Key Provisions under SPQEM

Sl. No.	Activities to be undertaken	Action to be taken by	Allotment of Fund
1.	Recruitment of Teachers for Maths, Science, Soc. Sc., Languages, Computers, etc.	Madarasas	Graduate Teacher Rs. 6000/- P.G./B.Ed- Rs.12000/-
2.	Strengthening of libraries	Madarasas	Rs. 50,000/ one time assistance Rs. 5,000/- per annum
3.	Purchase of Science/ Maths and other Teaching Learning Materials (TLM)	Madarasas	Rs. 15,000/-
4.	Establishment of computer / science labs/workshops	Madarasas	Rs. 1 Lakh for each lab Rs. 5000/- annual
5.	In-Service teacher's training	Madarasas through SCERT/DIET/BRC	Fund (Rs. 100 per trainee) to be given directly to SCERT /DIET
6.	Registration of students in NIOS – for Secondary and Senior Secondary level	Madarasas/NIOS	Up to 100% financial assistance provided to meet NIOS expenses of registration /examination and study material cost
7.	Vocational Courses opted by Madarasas - NIOS	Madarasas	Linkage between Madarasa and industries, such as ITI's, etc.
8.	Monitoring of the SPQEM	State Madarasas Board	To strengthen capacity to monitor SPQEM and generate awareness in the community for participation in education Rs. 5 Lakh per year

But despite all these efforts at individual, community and at Government level to transform the system of education in Madarasas in India, the community has not moved very far from their main objective to propagate Islam and its orthodox attitude through the Madarasas. They are steadily continuing their socio-political agenda on traditional line with a view to keeping the Muslim community away from the contemporary, modern and scientific education. They do not show any concern for the material progress of the community. They are only producing Islamic zealots who will remain loyal to Islam and to the political interest of elite community members at the helm. Islamic education at the cost of secular education has proved detrimental to national interest and has cost the country very dear. But unfortunately Madarasa modernisation has been deprived of such zealots. They are unable to find the required number of real rationalist in their community who could go to any extent to transform the Madarasa education system in India. The few who are working in the field with a genuine desire to free the community from the shackles of Madarasa education system find the task extremely difficult due to tight control of fundamentalist forces over the community. Even most of the community members become blind fold when they are asked to

see the problems of the people studying in Madarasas. They have in fact overlooked this problem and are reluctant to decide to the extent to which the current Madarasa education is appropriate in contemporary setup for social and economic development of the country and also the community as a whole.

There have been few changes in the mindset of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent with regard to modernisation of Madarasa education; they continue to be preoccupied with traditional Madarasa education and its medieval legacy. This has made it difficult for them to acknowledge the idea of existence of any significant knowledge in anywhere else. It is almost impossible for them to have the imagination of any treasure outside the Islamic world. They are not ready to understand that Memorisation of Quran and learning it by rote or any other Islamic literature without any understanding of the same will not serve any real purpose. But they think of it to be the only treasure on earth which can show them the path of Jannat. We acknowledge that Madarasas have produced some world class Islamic scholars, but a very large number of them also remain deprived of a decent socio-economic status and job opportunities because of their ignorance of contemporary knowledge and skills. They wasted their life in promoting the traditions of Islamic system of education and ended up playing detrimental role in the division of social fabric of India and promoting the idea of separate Islamic state. And later on they also turned successful in realising it, we all know this and still bearing the brunt of it.

Everyone has the right to basic amenities in life. They should know their religion but only religion will not do. They should be at home in other skills which enhances their employability so that they could earn well and support their family in need and are able to lead a balanced life. Their social and economic wellbeing needs to be taken care of when they come out of Madarasas after 15-16 years of education there. They must be equipped with the choice to bloom in the field of their desire when they become mature enough to decide which way to go: to science or to religion; to arts or to commerce; or any other field. There is no need to drag religion everywhere. We must realize that science or scientific developments have no religious inclination, it is neither eastern nor western. They are universal in the same sense as different facts are universal. Muslim community is in dire need of an up-to-date scientific attitude and technical inclination. There is no harm in absorbing positive developments of other cultures without necessarily forgoing one's own. We can see the influence of Arab culture on Europe in the matter and methods of learning, without in any way forgoing its own intellectual and aesthetic developments. A man can be religious even

after following science. When surveyed, Most of the Muslim community members were found to have favourable attitude towards modernisation of Madarasa education. They do believe that transforming Madarasas will make them more suitable for the present day requirement. But they find themselves unable to muster the courage to oppose the fundamentalists, who suggest that instead of turning Islamic Madarasas into English or modern institutions, the modern educational institutions be made Islamic.

After the independence, Indian constitution under Article 30 of the Fundamental Rights gave protection to Minority communities to establish and manage the educational institutions of their interest. Taking benefit of this provision, Madarasas mushroomed all over the country as they sensed a danger to their cultural identity. Continuance of Madarasa education in a country with Hindus in majority in most of the states became a matter of serious concern for them. Their demagogues in India gave them the false impression about alleged majority biased education. Instead of joining hands with other communities in national reconstruction programmes, Muslims in India perceived the problem of their separate identity of prime concern and failed to avail the equal opportunity provided to all the Indian citizens under constitution. Even the Islamic institutions like Dar-ul-ulum Deoband and Dar-ul-ulum Nadwat-ul-Ulama hardly altered their curriculum and method of teaching even after such ill effects on the community. They have produced lakhs of graduates who established huge number of Madarasas throughout the country over the years but did not provide them an opportunity for the economic prospect of their products. Affordability to education was another major attraction as the Madarasa model of education took pride in providing free education with boarding and lodging facilities. Moreover, for the Muslims of poor economic background, the chance of gaining employment as Muezzins, Imams and Madarasa teachers brightened after enrolling in such institutions. They are therefore, equally responsible for their economic, social and educational backwardness as we see today.

It is also important to take notice of the fact that if Madarasas continue to expand in this way, other communities like Hindus and Sikhs may also ask and opt for their religious intuition and mushroom it throughout the country. Such things will certainly jeopardies national integration and hamper the religious of the country and will pose a problem to the development of a national education policy. Going against the secular education system formulated in India after Independence, Madrassas posed a major obstacle for Muslims in taking advantage of functional concept of education. They are away from even the open and non-formal forms of education. They inculcated among Indian Muslims an obsession to education in purely Islamic environment, which kept them off from government/private

secular schools. A section of Muslim elite entered into the field of modern education but they could not inspire the common Muslims, who remained under the subjugation of the fundamentalists forces within the community. They are still obsessed with interpretation of education in terms of Islam by the conservative Muslim leaders.

Conclusion

As Muslim community does not look willing to impart modern education among their children at whatsoever cost, they are not making the utmost use of alternative education system like open schooling, distance education and Open University system available at the doorstep. It is also important to cite that in many surveys and studies, majority of the Islamic study center of Madarasa and Maktab were found to be no better than mere literacy center with inadequate infrastructure and lack of basic amenities. A thoroughly traditional education system designed to produce a class of mullas and Maulavis were found to be very difficult to be converted into one necessary to meet the needs of fast changing socio-economic and scientific development. A reformed structure on entirely new background is required. But so long the community leaders do not respond to the remedial measures it is difficult to transform it. The whole country is ready for their rescue if they come forward and make a conscious endeavour to transform their Madarasas into modern educational institutions with religious subjects as elective courses. Islamic teaching is not conducive to the job market in the contemporary world is the ground reality. In the absence of modern knowledge the graduates produced by Madarasas are neither able to improve their own economic prosperity nor they are able provide leadership to the Muslim community to face the challenge of modern world. Muslim Community might have their own opinions in support of their theological structure but keeping off the Muslims from the realities of modern world has caused enormous harm to the community as far as its social and economic development is concerned. They need to think over it urgently and take the required steps to improve the conditions of Muslims in India.

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