



AN INTRODUCTION TO MADRASA EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

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Abstract

The Madrasa education system is the largest non formal education network in India with more than 2 lakhs of Madrasas and 10 lakhs of teachers. It played a vital role in the field of inclusive education by providing education for the poor section of the society and in the development of Muslim education. Government of India has also extended needy support to the development of Madrasa education by providing funds through different minority schemes like Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasa (SPQEM), which was formerly known as Madrasa Modernization Scheme, launched in 1993-94. Indoctrination of value education as the major aim of the madrasa, it should be more concentrated over affective domain more than cognitive and psychomotor domains of learning. For attaining this aim, varieties of teaching, learning experiences should be provided to the learners at the time of classroom interaction. Unfortunately, most of the madrasas are following the traditional 'chalk and talk' system of instruction. The present paper will talk about the present status of Madrasa education in India, which originated several centuries ago in a different political and social context and how it continues to address the educational needs of a large section of Muslim population.

Key words: Muslim Education, Madrasa Education, Quality Improvement, Curriculum Revision, Instructional Strategies, Teacher Empowerment, Madrasa Modernisation



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India is the museum of all the world religions with the presence of all major religions of the world. It is a land of diversity; a mosaic of many castes, communities, languages, religions and cultures. In exercise of its freedom, it has chosen to be a socialist, secular, democratic Republic. The essence of secularism is the recognition and preservation of different groups of people with diverse languages and beliefs and integrating them into a whole and united India. Its Constitution reflects the pluralistic

essence of the Indian society and the right of each segment to self-development, but as an integral part of a nation in the making. Unity in diversity or plurality is the key concept which leads India to set an ideal for peaceful co-existence of diverse groups. Significantly, all the religions have contributed in forming the culture, heritage and traditions of the nation.

The contribution of Muslims, like any other community, to the culture and history of the nation is undeniable. “Next to Indonesia, India is home to the largest number of Muslims in any single country in the world. But the significance of the Muslim community in the Indian context is not merely a matter of statistics. The contributions that Muslims have made to the art and architecture, history and culture, politics and polemics of India are so integral that it inspired the Father of the Nation to declare that Hindus and Muslim are like his two eyes. To see the wider picture, we need to see how they live in tandem. We cannot afford to be a one-eyed nation! The educational empowerment of a sizeable community, like the Muslims, heirs to one of the most intellectually vibrant cultures in history, is an issue of crucial significance, hence, for the country as a whole. Thanks to a confluence of geo-political and cultural sensitivities, Madrasa education is today a major international and national concern”. (National Commission For Minority Educational Institutions Report 2005 Page 3

BRIEF HISTORY OF MADRASA EDUCATION

The origin of *Madrassa* goes back to the time of the Prophet of Islam established first such Madrasa in his mosque, Masjid al Nabawi of Madina, with dedicated learners called *Ashab u Suffa* . There he would teach them the tenets of Islam and explain them the contents of the revelation, which he received. The establishment of organized institution of Madrasa took place much later. The first formal Madrasa was established in Neshapur in Khurasan, and the second was Madrasa Nizamia in Baghdad (Iraq), both in 11th century by Nizam-ul-Mulk Tusi (1018-1092 AD), who is considered to be the father of the Islamic public education system (Haqqani, 2002) . The first two institutions, which achieved everlasting fame, were Madrasa Nizamiah and Madrasa Mustansariyyah in Baghdad. Starting from Masjid al Nabawi of Madina Al Munawwara, it steadily developed through Nizamia, Zaituna Tunisia (732) , Baithul Hikma Iraq (830) by Caliph Al-Mamun, Al Qaraviyin Morrocco (859), Al Azhar Cairo (972) by Caliph Al-Muizz, MadrasaNizamiahin Baghdad (1067) by Nizam- ul-Mulk Hassan Bin Al-Tusi, Grenada and Qurtaba (Cardova) , Jami'ulAndulus of Andulus (Spain) and spread all over the world (Anzar 2003). There are about 1,00,000 small and big Madrasas in India,

40,000 in Pakistan, 37,000 in Bangladesh and 36532 in Indonesia (Ahmed 2002). Afghanistan, Malaysia, and Nigeria have a large number of Madrasas which may vary in their levels and sizes.

INDIAN SCENARIO

The Madrasa education system in India is very old and unique. It was started with the advent of the Muslim rule during the medieval period when Madrasas were the prominent centers of learning. During every Muslim regime in India a separate group of scholars was appointed to look after the Islamic educational institutions. The rulers generously spent large amount of money on these institution. and they built big Madrasas to educate the people. These Madrasas were engaged in promoting education among Muslim families living in those areas. They were provided with free education, scholarship, food and lodging without any distinction between the haves and the have notes. Madrasas have been generally providing traditional education in India. They have helped in promoting literacy and education among the Muslims. Over the centuries, they have produced distinguished academics and administrators such as Sher Shah Suri, Abul Fazal, Faizi, Todar Mal and Fatehullah Shirazi, among a host of others. Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the Hindu reformer and the founder of the Brahma Samaj, was educated in a Madrasa. (Khan 2003).

History of Madrasa education in India begins with the reign of first Turkish Sultan, Qutubuddin Aibek. He established hundreds of mosques, which were centers of both religious rituals and learning. Ilthumish was the next king who showed more concern for education and established Nasiriya College at Delhi and Al Firoza Madrasa at Multan. The Khilji rulers also established Madrasas on similar lines. Tuglaqs, who followed Khiljis, merit special mention for their efforts towards the development of Islamic education. Sultan Sikandar Lodhi transferred his capital from Delhi to Agra, which soon became an important center of learning. In course of time Agra grew into a great educational center with several *Maktabs* and *Madrasas*. Giyasuddin Awwal who ruled Bengal between 1212 AD and 1227 AD is said to be one of the distinguished rulers, who established Madrasas and provided the students with the scholarships. In Gujarat, Sultan Ahmad Shah (1411 AD to 1441 AD), the founder of Ahmadabad city, established many *Maktabs* and *Madrasas*. The southern part of India too did not lag behind in education. As a matter of fact, it was a step ahead of the North in some fields of education.

The Mughal rulers Sultan Zaheeruddin Babar (1483-1531) , Naseeruddin Humayun (1508-1556) and Akbar (1542-1605) comparatively took greater interest in education of the subjects. About Babar's educational contribution, it is reported that he not only exhorted people to learn but also established various colleges and Madrasas. Sher Sah Suri (1486-1545) also did the same. Among the institution set up by him Sher Shah Madrasa in Narnol district of Patiala became very famous for scholarship. There was a big Madrasa for which Akbar had invited a scholar from Sheeraz -Mir Fathullah Shirazi- to educate the students in that Madrasa. Under the imperial patronage Ulama like Fathullah Shirazi (c. 1582), Hakim Abdul Fatah Gilani (1556-1605), Abul Fazl(1551-1602) , Faizi(1545-1595), Saiyid Nurullah Shushtari (1549-1610) and others laid the foundation of a new education policy and revised the syllabi of the Madrasas. Numerous Madrasas were established in Fatehpur Sikri near Agra, which was inhabited by Akbar. Akbar was far ahead of his age with regard to changes in the mode of study, curriculum and methods of teaching. Akbar introduced morality, arithmetic, accounts, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, geography, economics, the art of governance, physics, logic, natural philosophy, divinity and history in Madrasas. The Hindus studied Nyaya, Vendanta and Patanjali in these institutions. Every one studied according to one's requirements and circumstances. Mughal rulers mainly Jehangir, Shah Jehan, Aurangzeb Aalamgeer played a very significant role in establishing Mosques and Arabic Madrasas. In 1678 AD, Aurangzeb Alamgir (1618-1707) rebuilt many Maktabas and Madrasas in Gujarat and appointed experienced teachers to educate the students. During Mughal period, Delhi was thronged with Arabic Madrasas and great scholars. The most famous among them were Madrasa Rahimiyah, Madrasa of Bazr Khanam and Madrasa Ghaziuddin at Ajmeri Gate. This period witnessed a wide expansion of Maktabas and Madrasas and would be remembered for another curriculum reform, which was introduced in the Madrasa system of education and which for centuries has remained almost unchanged and static. The man responsible for reshaping of this curriculum; was Mulla Nizamuddin of Sihali, and this was why this modified system came to be known as Dars-i-Nizami. Aurangzeb granted one of the 'ulama associated with this project, Mulla Nizamuddin, an old mansion owned by a French trader, the Firangi Mahal, in Lucknow, where he set up a Madrasa, which soon emerged as the leading center of Islamic studies in north India. Mulla Nizamuddin prepared a fresh curriculum for Firangi Mahal Madrasa, which came to be known after him as the *Dars-i-Nizami* or the 'Nizami Curriculum'. The focus of the *Dars-i-Nizami* was on what were called the 'rational

sciences' (*ma'qulat*) or subjects such as law, philosophy and grammar that would benefit prospective bureaucrats. Three centuries later, the Dars-i-Nizami continues to be the syllabus of most Madrasas in South Asia today, although an increasing number of books on the 'revealed sciences' (*manqulat*), such as theology and the traditions of the Prophet (*hadith*) have been added.

During the British rule, the entire system of education was changed. Closing down of most of the Maktabas and Madrasas was the result of British apathy towards such institutions. It gave a serious jolt to the traditional educational set up as they were deprived of their endowments in the form of free land and were left to depend on their own resources. The establishment of modern schools was also the cause of the decline of many of the Maktabas and Madrasas. The establishment of Madrasa-i-Aliya, Calcutta was the first step by British rulers to provide for traditional education of Muslims. In 1781, Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madrasa College for Muhammedans for the study of "Muhammedan law and such other sciences as were taught in Muhammedan schools". Aligarh movement headed by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan started later, was another attempt to improve educational institution of Muslims. The last two decades of 19th century and the first half of 20th century witnessed various commissions appointed by British rulers for studying the educational scenario of the country and it is to be noted that, some of these also studied the reasons of the educational backwardness of Muslims of India. Madrasa System came under serious scrutiny in these studies.

After the Revolt of 1857 Muslims became conscious of preserving their culture. Among the famous Madrasas established after 1857 revolt are Madrasa Darul Uloom of Deoband (1866), Madrasa Mazhahirul Uloom of Saharanpur (1866), Nadwathul Ulama of Lucknow (1894) and several Madrasas in Delhi. Nadwathul Ulama introduced rational sciences and working knowledge of English in its courses of study while emphasizing Arabic literature and Islamic History. Replacement of Persian by English in 1837 as the language of the courts was another blow to the Madrasa system. The Mutiny of 1857 and the subsequent transfer of authority of governance of India from the East India Company to the British Crown had a very profound impact on Muslim education in India. The Muslims had to face many formidable challenges along with general animosity of the British rulers. They had to counter the proselytizing activities of the Christian missionaries. The ulama and the masses rose to the occasion and started a series of Madrasas in the country. A large number of Madrasas were set up in the latter half of the 19th century (Khan 2003). Most important and famous among them were:

- (1) Darul Uloom, Deoband, 1866.
- (2) Mazaheral Uloom, Shaharanpur, 1866.
- (3) Madrasa Baqyatu Salehat, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, 1883.
- (4) Jamia Mazharul Uloom, Benares, 1893.
- (5) Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, 1894.
- (6) Madrasa Ameeniah, Delhi, 1897.
- (7) Darul Uloom Khalilia Nizamia, Tonk, 1899.
- (8) Jamia Arabia Hayatul Uloom, Mubarakpur, 1899.
- (9) Madrasa-ulIslah, Sarai Mir, Azamgarh, 1909.
- (10) Jamia Darus Salam, Umnabad, 1924.

Partition of the country made a significant impact on the Madrasa system of the country in terms of both; quality and quantity. In the wake of Indian independence, most of the politically articulate and well to do Muslims migrated to Pakistan, whereas the weak Muslim masses remained in India. Madrasas have contributed to the national cause tremendously. The founders and graduates of Madrasas have played leading role in the country's freedom struggle as well as in nation building. Moulana Ubaidullah Sindhi and Moulana Barakatullah Khan Bhopali were among the first to ask complete freedom for India.

MADRASA EDUCATION AT PRESENT

At present, there are several thousand Islamic schools spread all over India . Institutions known as Madrasa may be divided into four categories:

1. Maktab (For Primary education)
2. Madrasa(For Secondary/Senior Secondary level of study)
3. Darul Quran (For Memorization of Holy Qur'an)
4. Jamia (For Higher Studies)

Each Muslim sect has its own chain of such institutions throughout the country. For many poor families, Madrasa is the only source of education for their children, since they charge no fees and provide free boarding and lodging to their students. Maktabas are providing basic religious education while Madrasas are providing religious education upto Secondary/ Senior Secondary levels. Jamias are institutions of higher learning providing instructions up to post-graduation and specialization levels. Every Madrasa follows its own pattern in the matter of study structure. There is no uniformity with regard to subjects, books or emphasis. Furthermore, there is no uniformity in the number of years for preparing students for various degrees. The number of Madrasas in India is

estimated to be 30,000 to 40,000 (Akhtar 2010). As none have surveyed all the Madrasas of the country and collected the information; the exact number of Madrasas in India is shrouded in mystery. Another reason for the controversy regarding the number of the Madrasas is that there is no standard definition of Madrasas in India. They defy any particular pattern in terms of the education, infrastructure, number of intakes and funding but in common all are called Madrasa. There are a large number of Madrasas in northern and western parts of the country. According to Home Ministry sources, there are 721 Madrasas catering to over 1,20,000 children in Assam, 1,825 Madrasas catering to over 1,20,000 children in Gujarat, 961 Madrasas catering to 84,864 children in Karnataka, 9,975 Madrasas catering to 7,38,000 children in Kerala, 6,000 Madrasas catering to over 4,00,000 children in Madhya Pradesh and some 1,780 Madrasas catering to over 25,000 children in Rajasthan. In Uttar Pradesh, the number of maktabas is more than 15000 and the number of Madrasas is above 10000. There are over 3,500 Madrasas in Bihar, including 1,111 under government control where the Bihar government pays the salary of the teaching and non-teaching staff. There are 507 Madrasas affiliated to the West Bengal Madrasa Board in which about 200,000 boys and girls study. Besides, there are many unregistered seminaries. States to be included after survey are Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Punjab, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Pondicherry and North Eastern States (excluding Assam) (MHRD 1991).

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR EDUCATION OF MINORITIES

Indian Constitution has made various provisions for the education and harmonious development of the Minorities.

Chapter III of Indian Constitution (Fundamental Rights): Articles 14 to 31: Ensures equality and non-discrimination before the law, in matters of public employment, freedom of movement, expression, and faith and so on. Put together, both chapters should have already, after nearly six decades of Independent and Democratic functioning ensured the eradication of illiteracy, basic and good quality education, and education which is free of race, caste, community-driven or gender bias.

Chapter IV, (The Directive Principles of State Policy): One of the major issues in India concerning education relates to access to free primary and secondary education for all Indian children and young people regardless of caste, community and gender, and parity in quality of their education as mandated in the Constitution under following mentioned Articles.

Article 14: Ensures equality before the law and equal protection by the law.

Article 15: Prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth.

Article 21: No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except through the procedure established by law.

Article 21 A: The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6 to 14 years.

Article 25: Ensures freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion.

Article 26: Ensures right to manage religious institutions, religious affairs, subject to public order, morality and health.

Article 29: Protects minorities' right to conserve their language, script or culture.

Article 30: Provides for the protection of the interests of minorities by giving them a right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The State is directed not to discriminate against minorities' institutions in granting aid.

Article 45: The State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

Article 46: The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections.

Article 51 A (k): Fundamental Duty: Who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child between age of six and fourteen years.

Article 350A: Directs the State to provide facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education.

However, despite the constitutional provisions for equality in educational opportunity, Muslims in India could not yield much benefit from these provisions, unlike the Dalits or other marginalized groups of the country as the latter were favored with measures of protective discriminations.

Although discussions about affirmative action policies for Muslims took place on many occasions in Indian history, Muslims have not received preferential treatment or reservations. Thus, a comparison of educational improvements for Muslims and dalits/adivasis would help us distinguish between secular improvements in education for

all marginalized groups vis-à-vis improvements for groups that are subject to affirmative action.

Various efforts have been made by the government to strengthen the Madrasa education system. The High Power Panel on Minorities (1980) and the Group on Minorities Education (1990) set up by the Department of Education advocates relevant changes in the curriculum. The National Policy on Education (1986) , Programme of Action (1992) and the Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme for Welfare of Minorities suggested the modernization of traditional Madrasas, and the 'Scheme of Modernization of Madrasa' was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme in 1994 suggesting introduction of English, Science, Mathematics and Hindi as additional subjects on a voluntary basis.

In 2004, the Standing Committee of the 'National Monitoring Committee for Minorities' was constituted. Its primary aim was to know the difficulties that were being faced by the minorities in the field of education, and whether or not the schemes run/introduced by the central government for the educational elevation of the minorities were being properly dealt with by the provincial/local government. In one of its recommendations, the committee suggested a way of introducing modern education in Madrasas without disturbing their regular affairs. The Madrasa education has been formally linked with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). NIOS is a government-funded examining body which provides distance mode education to children missing out at elementary and secondary level and has nationwide coverage. NIOS, in selected states, now conducts examinations in modern subjects introduced to Madrasa students and awards certificates to the students. NIOS also gives course ware and certification to good quality need-based vocational courses, for example the "Hunar" Vocational Project for Muslim girls in the State of Bihar.

The Sachar Committee Report (2006) mentioned in detail the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India. The Report found that Muslim parents are not averse to modern or mainstream education and in sending their children to the affordable regular schools. They do not want to send their children only to Madrasas if other schools are accessible and affordable . A section of Muslims prefers education through English as the language of instruction, whilst some others prefer Urdu. It also reflects the same feeling that parents feel about educating the girl child. Even if girls are enrolled, they are withdrawn at an early age to marry them off. This leads to a higher dropout rate among Muslim girls. Indicators show that the problem may lie in the non-

availability of schools within easy reach for girls at lower levels of education, absence of female teachers and non-availability of scholarships as they move up the education ladder.

THE MADRASA MODERNIZATION SCHEME

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, launched the scheme of modernization of Madrasas in 1993-94 after having a series of meetings with representatives of the Madrasas discussing the desirability of their modernization and clarifying that it would not entail either compulsion or interference by government. The main features of the scheme are as follows:

1. The objective of the scheme is to encourage traditional institutions like maktabas and Madrasas to introduce teaching of science, maths, social studies, Hindi and English in order to provide opportunities to students to acquire education comparable to the national system of education.
2. The process of modernization is entirely voluntary.
3. In the first phase, primary classes of middle and secondary level Madrasas were to be covered. In the second phase (during the 9th Plan), the coverage was extended to institutions providing education equivalent to secondary stage.

The major feed back for the programme was as follows. 1. Although the Modernisation scheme was introduced without proper ground work and detailed guidelines were sought, uniformity in standards were not assured, and the performance under the scheme was on the whole fairly satisfactory. Since the take-off stage has been reached now the provision for the Tenth Five Year Plan should be radically augmented.

2. One teacher is much too insufficient for teaching four or five modern subjects to students for whom the subjects and modern method of teaching have virtually been unknown. Two teachers should be sanctioned for each Madrasa under the Scheme.
3. The time-table of Madrasas which choose to include modern subjects has got to be reviewed centrally in consultation not only with the representatives of Madrasas but also with the experts of the education methodology.
4. The Scheme should provide a liberal book grant. (Hamdard , 2003)

SCHEME FOR PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION IN MADRASAS (SPQEM)

During the XI plan after taking into consideration the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities Education (NMCME) recommendations on 'Scheme of Modernization of Madrasas' , the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, re launched the scheme with some modifications in its frames and approach . The

revised scheme was retitled as 'Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasas' (SPQEM).

Objectives of the Scheme:

(i) The objective of the Scheme is to encourage traditional institutions like Madrasas and Maktabas by giving financial assistance to introduce Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Hindi and English in their curriculum so that academic proficiency for classes 1-XII is attainable for children studying in these institutions. However, the process of modernization of traditional Madrasas and Maktabas will be voluntary.

(ii) The scheme will provide opportunities to students of these institutions to acquire education comparable to the National Education System especially for secondary and senior secondary levels. This will enable children studying in these institutions to progress to higher levels of learning and also open up better job opportunities for them. Maktab /Madrasas /Dar-ul-Uloom can opt to become accredited study centers with the National Institutions of Open Schooling (NIOS) for primary and middle levels of education or/and for secondary and senior secondary levels as well. Assistance would be given to Maktabas, Madrasas and Dar-ul-Uloom for activities, which contribute to these objectives.

(iii) The scheme also will seek to provide opportunities for vocational training for children studying in Madrasas opting for assistance above 14 years of age, to enhance their opportunities for entering the job market and encourage entrepreneurship.

(iv) The scheme will also strengthen State Madrasa Boards opting for assistance, by enabling them to monitor the Madrasa modernization programme and enhance awareness about education among the Muslim community.

(v) The scheme will address in-service training of teachers appointed under the scheme, for teaching modern subjects of , Mathematics, Social Studies, Hindi and English, to improve their pedagogical skills.

The SPQEM is a demand driven scheme. The Scheme was plan to cover a total of 4,500-6,000 Madrasas and provided honorarium to about 13,500-18,000 teachers in Madrasas all over the country during the 11th Plan period. This will include Madrasas for which recurring grant will be given in continuation and the new Madrasas covered. It is expected that a total of about 7 lakh students of Madrasas will pursue modern education in addition to their traditional education. In the 12th plan 500 crores has been allotted for effective implementation of SPQEM (MHRD, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The Madrasa education system introduced by Muslims has emerged as one of the largest non-formal education systems prevailing in the country. Eventhough Madrasa education is very much a formal system of education in many states, the government documents consider it as a non-formal system of education. Now it is one of the largest network of NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) in the country. Madrasa education in India, which originated several centuries ago in a different political and social context, continues to address though in part, the educational needs of a large section of Muslim population.

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