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AN OVERVIEW ON MADARSA EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In every religion education is considered as a most powerful medium for preserving and transferring the ideas, ethics and values among the member of its future citizens. For this purpose every religion has developed its own education system. In Islam Madarsa education system generally cater the need of education of their future citizens. The history of the arrival of Islam in India and its contributions in the field of knowledge and culture, are well documented, which enrich its cultural and religious multiplicity, for which India is well known in the world. In a real sense it was the Madarsa education on the land of India which opposed the right of education for only elite section of the society, and opens the doors of education for deprived section of the society too. But unfortunately after some unfavourable events, recently at global level the Madarsa in the whole world get a question mark related to their aims and objectives. This has been increased interest of every intellectual to know the real fact behind the superfluous facts. In present scenario the biggest challenge facing Islam throughout the world today is the negative and distorted images of its educational institutions ie, Madarsa. It is of course very complex issue which needs proper discussion and analysis. The present paper is an attempt to have an overview on the Madarsas Education in India with various angles.

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INTRODUCTION

MEANING OF MADARSA

Madarsa is an Arabic word, which literally means place of dars i.e. teaching. In Islamic countries public school and institutions of learning are known as Madarsa. Leiden E. J. Brill (1965) in Encyclopaedia of Islam, defined Madarsa as, 'an institution of learning, where Islamic sciences including literary and philosophical ones are taught'. Initially, Madarsas were distinguished as institutions of learning that taught only the Quran. But later on, Madarsa has been used as a catchall by many western observers to denote any school, primary, secondary, or advanced, that promotes an Islamic based curriculum. In many countries, including Egypt and Lebanon, Madarsa refers to any educational institution. In India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Madarsa commonly refers to Islamic religious schools. According to Peter and Pandey (2006), Madarsas vary from country to country or even from town to town. They can be a day or boarding school, a school with a general curriculum, or a purely religious school attached to a mosque. Historically Madarsa has been centres of learning in the Muslim world and continues to be so today (Ellis, 2007). It is an essential and intimate part of the Islamic culture and the education they impart is undeniably, unique. Generally,

Madrasas charge no fees to their students and provide free boarding and lodging (Soni, 2010).

MADARSAS IN INDIA

In the Indian sub-continent the Madarsa system was conceived with the introduction of Islam preached by Muslim Sufis and saints, and the advent of muslim rule. Madrasas were originally places for spiritual worship or Khanqas that later developed into maktabas which taught Quran recitation and Islamic rituals. From the 13th to 19th centuries, the Muslim rulers of India built maktabas or madrasas alongside mosques to teach both religion and science. Consequently, as Muslim rule consolidated, madrasas became the principal institutions in the education system (Ellis, 2007).

At present there are a large number of Madarsas in India, which are providing free education to the specially deprived section of the Muslim society. Taking advantage of Indian constitution (Article-30) providing the minorities special privilege for establishing their educational institutions, there was a spurt in expansion of Madarsa education in India. Also there are various estimates about their number. Estimates range from a figure of eight thousand to forty thousand Madarsa institutions in the country. Khan, Saqib and Anjum,(2003) have given the reference of Indian Home Ministry sources, and quoted that, there are 721 Madarsas

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catering to over 1,20,000 children in Assam, 1,825 Madarsas catering to over 1,20,000 children in Gujarat, 961 Madarsas catering to 84,864 children in Karnataka, 9,975 Madarsas 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 Madarsas catering to over 25,000 children in Rajasthan. In Uttar Pradesh, the number of maktabas is more than 15000 and the number of Madarsas is above 10000. There are over 3,500 Madarsas 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 Madarsas affiliated to the West Bengal Madarsa Board in which about 200,000 boys and girls study. However, according to, Chauhan (2011), as a conservative estimate, the total number of Madarsas is nearly 35000 mainly concentrated in the state of Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. There are in fact many madrasas in India that would like to prepare muslim children to be good muslims and responsible, engaged, and productive members of society (Anzar and Carter, 2006). These are based on various schools of thought that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which are, Deobandi, Barelwi, Ahl-i Hadith, etc.. In the context of India, generally Urdu is medium of educational instruction in these Madarsas.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF MADARSA EDUCATION

The objective of Madarsa education is simple to teach the essentials of the Islamic faith. In keeping with this objective, the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), recitation of the Quran are the focal points. So the aim of Madarsa education is to train students, with a view that they may become competent in following the path laid out by Quran and Shariah and to spread the knowledge and message of God to humankind for their physical, intellectual, and spiritual wellbeing (Khan 2002). However, Hasan (2008) argues that, the main aim of the Madarsa education is to produce graduates like those from modern style schools, but is distinguished by its having a better understanding of Islam.

THE CURRICULUM OF MADARSA EDUCATION

The development of Madarsa curriculum in India started around the 12th century A.D. During the periods of Ghayasuddin Balban and Allauddin Khilji, Delhi became the centre of Islamic education. Initially in the curriculum of Madarsa education there was a great emphasis on language and literature, logic, and Hadith. Later on emphasis was given on study of the tradition of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and more emphasis on the study of the Hadith. Gradually in late 16th to early 17th century subjects like physiology, physics, mathematics received greater attention. But in late 17th century the development of the Madarsa curriculum in India take a new aspect. Signs of change emerged, when the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir commissioned a team of Ulama to prepare a compendium of Islamic law, named after him as the Fatwa-e-Alamgiri. Aurangzeb granted one of the Ulama associated with this project, Mullah Nizamuddin Muhammad Sihalwi (1677-1748) from Firangi Mahal, Lucknow. He prepared a fresh curriculum for Madarsa, which came to be known after him as the Dars-e-Nizami or the 'Syllabus of Nizami'. Since then most of the Madarsa are

following the Dars-e-Nizami syllabus with suitable modification. At the present moment, it is very difficult to make any generalized statement about the Madarsa curriculum in India. Every Madarsa follows its own pattern in the matter of curriculum. There is no uniformity with regard to subjects and books. Also, there is no uniformity in the number of years for preparing students for various degrees of Madarsa. The review on related issue put light on the magnitude of flexibility that Madarsas get in terms of what they teach despite all claiming to teach the same course. On the same lines, an exploration of Madarsa curriculum shows the great diversity not only in courses taught but time taken for the same courses. Ideologies (Masliks) and regional factors are great influences on the intricate details of smaller madrasas in the same area. For example, the Bihar State Madarsa Education Board teaches the Dars-e-Alia, a completely new course that includes intensive subject training in the natural sciences and also covers practical examinations.

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS OF MADARSA

Most of Madarsa students generally come from poor families, because for such families, Madarsas are the only source of education, since they charge no fees and provide free boarding and lodging to their students. So, Madarsas have thus been playing an important role in promoting literacy among the deprived muslims community in India. Some writers, including many Ulama themselves, today recognise that employment is indeed a fundamental concern for Madrasas students, because most of them come from poor families, and are sent to the madras as by their parents in the hope that after completing their education they will be able to earn a livelihood as Imams in Mosques or as teachers in maktabas and other madras as (Sikand, 2008).

Unfortunately, most of the Madarsa teachers are untrained and there is no provision of training, pre-service or in-service. Therefore, Madarsa teachers are unaware of the techniques of teaching. Recently, many Madarsa management and other concern authorities comes to recognise these realities, and with a view to overcome from this limitation, they have organised in-service teacher training programme, orientation programme and refresher courses for Madarsa teachers for a short period of three days to one month and more. In such types of programmes a properly designed contents, based on philosophy of education, psychology of education, methodology of teaching and various managerial aspects of teaching and learning are included to professionally trained the Madarsa teachers, which are now being held every year. On the other hand, with a view to Madarsa students only a few get admission in universities for higher studies such as M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Islamic Studies etc., some of them go in for professional courses such as Bachelor in Unani Medicine and Surgery (BUMS), Arabic-Urdu translations, etc. However, some of them go in teaching profession in other maktabas and Madarsas.

A VIEW ON FINANCE OF MADARSA IN INDIA

For the thousands of Madarsas that function in India, with a view to spread the message of Allah for the humanity, generally there are two kinds of funding sources available to them, which are

1. Charity (Sadqat, Zakat and Fitra)
2. Government Grants

All Madarsas are charitable institutions, and almost all of them depend on the support of charity. Most Madarsas have their charity collectors, generally known as 'Safeels' who go door to door to the Muslim masses to collect money. Sometimes, some individual chooses to give a Madarsa a big grant in terms of Sadqat. Some people pay their zakat and fitra to these institutions. During Id-ul-Azha, muslims often donate the charm-e-qurbani (the skin of the slaughtered animal) to the Madarsas. However, some Madarsas have permanent sources of income, such as land, buildings and other property that produce regular returns (Khan, Saqib and Anjum, 2003).

In some states, such as Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, U.P. and West Bengal, there are Madarsa boards, just like the school boards. The government in these states allocates some funds to those Madarsas that are registered with the Madarsa board. The number of such Madarsas, however, is very few. Most of Madarsas choose to function without government grants because of two basic reasons, first, they feel government funding would lead to governmental intervention in their work, jeopardizing their independence, and second, the teachers of such government supported Madarsas will start to behaving like government employees ie, having the assurance that whether they work sincerely or not, they will get their salaries.

Conclusion

Educational backwardness of any community is a curse for nation. In fact a large number of muslims in India are poor and illiterate, and madrasas are catering both religious and social needs of education to this community, which is necessary part of life. In a real sense it the Madarsa that have played a vital role in spreading literacy especially among the muslim community. Generally these Madarsas are considered as the centre of instructions and literacy activities. Being the lifeline of muslim society Madarsa is the real foundation of Muslim education in India. Madarsa education is, hence, an emotive issue of deep resonance for muslims. They are found even in the remotest rural areas, where often no other educational facilities exist. The contribution of these Madarsas has been so important that one cannot strategize the educational development of muslim community by neglecting or overlooking their services to the community. Needless to add here that, as of today, only the poor segment of muslim community is resigned to sending their children to Madarsas which not only offer them free education but also free boarding and lodging.

Seeking knowledge has been an integral part of the Islam, and for achieving this objective muslims have developed the system of Madarsa education. It is clear that, the objectives of Madarsa education are simply to teach the basics of Islamic philosophy. Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, on New York towers, the madrasas in the whole world have been of increasing interest of every intellectual. With the result of this the biggest challenge facing Muslims throughout the

world today are the negative and distorted images of their educational institutions that is Madrasas. It is of course very complex issue which needs discussion and proper analysis. It is needless to say that, there is no religion which encourages hate, anger and revenge. Most of the views about madrasas were expressed by those who hardly had any firsthand knowledge of Madarsa system or what is taught in these madrasas. Studies on Madarsa education are very few, and it is the need of the hour to have a rich study on Madarsa education, especially about their obstacles and challenges. The outcomes of these researches will put light on the various issues related to them.

On the other hand to remove the present misconception about the various issues related to Madarsa, these Madarsas need to encourage community outreach programmes, such as sports competitions, essay writing competitions, quizzes etc, in which students from both madrasas and modern educational institutions can jointly participate. Madrasas can also invite the staff of modern educational institutions to visit their campuses and have dialogue with their students and teachers. This can go a long way in helping to minimise the many misunderstandings that they might have about Madarsas.

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