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## Islamic Education System in Assam Especially In Barak Valley- Its Strength and Weaknesses

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### Abstract

Islamic education system in Assam is a parallel system of education that contributes to a great extent in the socio economic development of Assam by imparting education to a community which constitutes 34.2% of the total population of Assam. However, the system of Islamic education running in Assam has many advantages and limitations. These advantages and limitations are termed as strength and weaknesses. These are analyzed by the author in this article. The present article is prepared on the basis of the field visit and the relevant documentary analysis.

**Key words:** Islamic Education : The education system running in the Maktabas and Madrassas based on Islamic theology.  
Maktab : Primary islamic educational institutions.  
Madrassa : Secondary as well as higher educational islamic institutions.  
Quran : Islamic Holy Book.  
Hadith : Sayings or reported actions of Prophet Mohammed (SWS)

**Introduction:** The acquisition of knowledge and learning in Islam is considered as an act of religious merit. Islam attaches great importance to education as there are Quranic injunction and Prophetic tradition. The injunction of Allah in the Holy Quran and the importance laid by Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SAW) went a long way in urging the early Muslims and the succeeding generations to search for knowledge of various kinds. Hence, teaching and learning were considered meritorious duties which attract divine rewards. The very first verse of the Holy Quran revealed to the Prophet (SAW) on the night of 27<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan in 611 AD was 'Read'. In this way, there are many verses of Holy Quran that give importance on acquiring knowledge. The prophet (SAW) also gave education the highest place when he says "Who so goes forth in search of knowledge, engages himself in cause of Allah until he returns home". Again he says, "Search for knowledge is must for both Muslim man and women". He suggests the human beings by saying "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the

grave” In this way there are many verses in Holy Quran and hundreds of Hadiths where Prophet Mohammad (SAW) gave importance to peruse education.

Islamic Education System started during the time of Prophet Hazrat Mohammed (SWS). At first it was imparted generally in the Mosques. Later on Maktabas and Madrassas were built around the Mosques and Education was imparted in those institutions. As the time progresses, system of Islamic Education was gradually developed and spreaded everywhere in the world. With the advent of Islam in India during the last decade of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Muslims started imparting lessons on Islam. During that time the Mosques occupied the central position in spreading the knowledge of Islam. With the expansion of Islam in India more Mosques were built up and Islamic Education was spreading everywhere. In the Mosques the daily prayers were offered and the lessons of Islam were taught. Islamic Educational institutions i.e. Maktabas and Madrassas of the present type had not been there. Later on the concepts of Maktabas and Madrassas came, these institutions were built up and traditional Islamic subjects were taught. Slowly and steadily the Islamic education system passed through various ages and stages of ups and downs. Now, it is a supplementary system of education running successfully in India.

The Islamic education system in Assam started in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD when the Muslims started to settle in Assam. Along with their settlement, they managed to build up Mosques and Madrassas. Gradually, the population increased and spreaded to all over the state. With the increase in population, they felt the need of educating their children which resulted in the establishment of Madrassas everywhere. Although, these institutions were started in an unsystematic manner, gradually the process of rectifying the system started to gain importance. In 1934 AD these Madrassas were brought up under single umbrella with the establishment of ‘State Madrassa Education Board of Assam’ and ‘All Assam Tanzeem Madaris-E-Quamia’ in 1955 AD at Hojai district of Assam. The Govt. recognized and provincialised Madrassas are run and managed by state Madrassa Education Board of Assam and the non Govt. Madrassas are run and managed by ‘All Assam Tanzeem Madaris-E-Quamia’ and four more later established boards of Madrassas.

Barak Valley of Assam comprises of the three southern districts: namely Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. The population of Barak Valley is mainly Bengali speaking and among them 48.1% (2011 Census) of population are Muslims. This Muslim population of a Barak valley has a good history of Islamic education. There are some well known and popular Govt. as well as Non-Govt. Islamic educational institutions existing in Barak Valley. Although, the system of Maktab education was very old but the formal Madrassa education was started in 1842 AD with the establishment of Kanakpur Faiz-E Aam Madrassa in Karimganj district. Later on some other Madrassas were established and the system was running very well. After the independence in 1947 the Muslim participation in politics increased gradually and this resulted in the spread of Islamic education in the Valley. Now, Islamic education system in Barak Valley is a strong and supplementary system of education.

The Islamic education in Barak Valley is imparted in Maktabas and Madrassas. Basically there are two types of Islamic educational institutions run in Barak Valley. They are Govt. Madrassas and Non Govt. Madrassas. The Govt. Madrassas include – Pre-Senior Madrassa, Senior Madrassa and Title Madrassa. The Pre-Senior Madrassas are the feeder institutions for senior Madrassas; the Senior Madrassas are the feeder institutions of Title Madrassas. These types of Islamic educational institutions are run under State Madrassa Education Board of Assam.

The Pre-Senior Madrassas are three classes institutions equivalent to the Middle English Institutions of secular education. Pre-Senior 1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Year are same as Class VI, VII, and VIII. of the secular schools. The curriculum includes Holy Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, Tarikhul Islam, Arabic, Sarf, Noho, Urdu etc. besides the general subjects like English, Bengali, General Mathematics, General Science, Social Science etc.

The Senior Madrassas are secondary level Islamic institutions offer education for ten years duration including Pre-Senior curriculum. The subjects include, Holy Quran, Hadith, Fiqha, Tafsir, Islamic Philosophy, Islamic History, Islamic Laws etc. besides the general subjects like English, Bengali, Social Science, General Science and General Mathematics etc. At the end of four years of study, one public examination is conducted by the State Madrassa Education Board of Assam and the successful students are awarded Intermediate Passed Certificate. Again, after another three years of study the students are awarded with the Fazil–E-Maa’rif (F.M) Degree by the State Madrassa education Board of Assam.

The Title Madrassas are those institutions which offer two years of Higher education in Islamic theology. The curriculum includes, Quran, Hadith, Tafsir, Islamic, Laws, Islamic Philosophy etc. There is no general subject taught in the Title Madrassas. At the end of two years of study one public examination is conducted by the state Madrassa Education Board of Assam. The successful students are awarded with the Momtazul Muhaddithin (M.M.) Degree.

The Arabic colleges are composite educational institutions which offer Pre-Senior, Senior, and Title Madrassa curriculum of all total 12 years duration (3+7+2). The course curriculums etc. are same and the evaluation system is also same as the other three types of Institutions. However, there is no Arabic College existing in Barak Valley.

In the Non-Govt. Islamic Educational institutions we find Maktabas, Alia Madrassas, Title Madrassas and Hafizia Madrassas. The Maktabas impart primary level of education which includes basic Islamic laws and principles, Quran and Hadith. These institutions are established near to the Mosques and they are mostly run by the local bodies.

The Hafizia Madrassas are those institutions where mainly memorization of Holy Quran is taught. In some Hafizia Madrassas Quariana Course is also taught where importance is given on proper pronunciation of Holy Quranic verses.

The Alia Madrassas are the upper primary and secondary level of institutions where ten years of Islamic education are conducted. The total time period is different under the

different broads of Assam. The curriculum of Alia Madrassa includes English, Bengali, Hindi, Persian, Arabic, Science and Mathematics up to upper primary level and Quran, Hadiths, Fiqha, Aquaid, Islamic History, Islamic Laws, Islamic Philosophy etc. are included in the both upper primary as well as secondary levels curriculum. They are also run by the private body. The examination system is managed by the affiliating boards like “All Assam Tanzem Madaris-E-Qaumia”, “All Assam Deeni Tarakki Board” ,“Idaraye Madaris-E-Islamia” etc. of which the Madrassa is affiliated to. The students are provided with free lodging, fooding, text books etc. some of these institutions are: Kanakpur Faiz-e-Aam Alia Madrassa (1842), Karimganj, Cheragia Qaumia Alia Madrassa (1882), Karimganj, Mainul Uloom Alia Madrassa (1942), Hailakandi etc.

The Title Madrassas are mostly composite Non-Govt. Islamic Educational Institutions where Maktabs, Alia Madrassas and Hafizia Madrassa curriculum all are taught. Generally the Title Madrassa course is meant for two years and it is named as Dawra-e-Hadith. The education is free and boarding, lodging, fooding; everything is free for the students. The curriculum for Title Madrassa includes only the Islamic subjects like mainly books on Hadiths, Tafsair, Islamic Philosophy, Islamic Jurisprudence etc. Some of these institutions are : Darul Uloom Banskandi, Cachar (1894), Madinatul Uloom Bagbari, Karimganj (1873), Ashraful Uloom Ratanpur Madrassa, Hailakandi (1856) etc.

The above mentioned eight types of Madrassas are imparting Islamic education in Assam. The Non-Govt. institutions mainly offer Islamic religious education with very less importance on secular subjects. Whereas, Govt. institutions follow modernized course patterns having equal importance on both religious and secular subjects. The Non-Govt. institutions follow the guidelines provided by any of the five Non-Govt. boards of Islamic education. While the Govt. institutions follow the guidelines provided by the State Madrassa Education of Assam.

Every system has its strengths and weaknesses. Likewise Islamic education system in Assam particularly in Barak Valley has also different strong points and weak point which may be discussed under two headings that are (i) Strength of the system and (ii) Weaknesses of the system.

The following points in respect to Islamic education are its strengths.

- Islamic Basic Education is must for every Muslim boys and girls. Without learning the basic Islamic education, no one can perform Islamic religious duties. Hence, naturally every Muslim boys and girls goes to Maktab for Islamic primary education. So, Islamic education is natural and automatic.
- Islamic educational institutions especially the Maktabs are available in every village. They are established near to every Mosque. Hence, the children of every village can have the easy access to those Maktabs. So, Islamic education is easily accessible.

- Islamic education is always low cost. Even some time free fooding and lodging as well as other facilities are provided to the learners. Hence, it is very easy for the poor people to go for Islamic education.
- In the non-govt. Islamic education system, there are hostel facilities for every learner. Hence, the learners can avail free hostel facilities and get education fully free.
- The govt. of India has been trying to implement universal free and compulsory primary education to all. For that purpose crores of rupees are expended in advertisement. But in Islamic education there is no need for advertisement. This system is automatically universal, free and compulsory.
- The students of Islamic education system have better chance of further education as they can shift to general education at any time. Many great Muslim educated people are found from Islamic education back ground. They started their education in the Madrassas and then shifted to the secular institutions. The example of that is Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first education Minister of India.
- In the non-govt. Islamic education system, there are hostel facilities for every learner. Hence, the learners from far away can stay in the hostel and get education fully free. Most of the Madrassas offer 24 hours service to the learners. So, the guardians feel free to send their children in those Madrassas.
- The students of Islamic education system have a better scope of knowing various languages because in the Madrassas many languages are taught i.e. English, Mother tongue, Hindi, Assamese, Arabic, Urdu, and Persian. If they study the languages properly they will be benefitted in their future life.
- Islamic educated people don't have to think for Job opportunity. They can get job easily by employing themselves as IMAM in the Mosques or teacher of the Maktabs and Madrassas. Although the earning is minimum but at least they can manage their bread and butter easily.
- In the govt. Islamic educational institutions or even in the non-govt. institutions, the students get the opportunity of studying both religious and secular subjects. Hence, there is more scope for learning and acquiring knowledge available in Islamic education system.
- The students from Hafizia Madrassa have fast brain and strong memory power because they memorized the Holy Quran. So, when they take admission in higher classes, they can learn the subjects easily and perform better in their examination.
- The govt. tried its best to start uniformity of dresses of the students in the educational institutions. Till now, there are many educational institutions having lack of uniform of the students. But an Islamic education system the uniformity of dresses is automatic. All Islamic educated people use common dress as they used in their study life.

Despite having many strong points in favour of Islamic education system, it has some weaknesses also. A few of them are as follows:

- Islamic education system is almost free for the students and the teachers are also paid less especially in the non-govt. institutions. Hence, it is low cost and there is every opportunity of poor quality product from those institutions.
- In the present Islamic education system there is very less opportunity for female education. This present study reveals that only 10% girls are enrolled in the Madrassas after Maktab education. Hence, equal importance is not laid on both boys and girls education.
- In Islamic education system there is very less opportunity for using science and technology in the teaching learning process. No kind of researches are conducted or no innovations are done in this field. So, the traditional methods and techniques of teaching and evaluations are mostly employed.
- Although there is enough scope of knowing many languages in Islamic education system. But it is clearly evident that the Madrassa educated people cannot learn the languages properly. Even most of the Islamic educated people cannot speak Arabic or Urdu.
- There is very less opportunity for the teachers of the Islamic education to undergo training and orientation. Only the teachers of the general subjects some time take B.Ed. or any other professional training. But the teachers of Islamic Subjects do not have any scope for training. Almost all the Head of the institutions are also untrained.
- There is very little scope of female teachers in Islamic education system. Only in the pre-senior Madrassas one post is reserved for the female. Other than that there is no female teacher in the Islamic education system. Moreover, there are some religious obligations and poor opportunities etc. are responsible for that.
- In the Islamic education system both religious and secular subjects are taught up to a specific level. But at the highest level there is no secular subject included in the syllabus. In non govt. Madrassas secular subjects are taught only up to 6<sup>th</sup> standard.
- There is very less scope of specializations in the field of Islamic education. Although some Hafiz, Quarries, Mufties etc. are produced but the scope for specialization is not there at the secondary level. Those who take higher education in this field they sometime take specializations in some areas.

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