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Abstract

Contribution of Madrasa in Historical Perspective

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In Islamic history Madrasas have played a vital role in building and shaping the fate of Muslim ummah from the very inception of the Islam. These Madrasas have a great contribution to religious education, which helps Muslims to know deeply about Islam. Madrasas not only fulfill religious needs of Muslims providing a great contribution to the field of knowledge and art ; but also try to make them complete human beings from every angle. Madrasas were among the first institutions onto the path of generalization of modern education. The service rendered by Madrasas is an established fact. In India these Madrasas have played an important role in protecting human, Islamic and social values. These institutions have also played an important role in the survival of Islamic practices, publication and dissemination of Islamic literature, protection of Islamic faith and development of culture and civilization besides contributing to the development of the country. These invaluable services rendered by Madrasas can't be ignored and forgotten. In this brief research paper, efforts will be made to highlight the contribution of Madrasas on the basis of historical stand point.

Concept of Madrasa Education: The dictionary meaning of the word Madrasa is school. The word is derived from Arabic word 'darasa' which means to impart lessons. To this word 'darasa' the syllable *ma* is added as a prefix; and as per the Arabic grammar with this addition the word Madrasa implies the place at which the act (of imparting lessons) is performed. In other words, Madrasa means the place of imparting knowledge. In common language, educational institutions like pre-primary and secondary schools and even part time centers of Quranic education attached to mosques and fulltime residential institutions of Islamic education are all called Madrasas. But technically the term Madrasa is used for institutions of Islamic education which are generally full time residential schools which imparts education of Islamic theology & law.

The contribution of Islam and Muslims to the development of education and learning in India both in theory and practice is indeed

worthy of special mention. The impact of the descendents of Islam with their own language and culture on India was also felt on the Indian language. Persian and Arabic forged their healthy influence on Hindi, Gujrati, Punjabi, Bengali, Kashmiri and Marathi. Islam and Muslim also contributed a great deal to various branches of modern civilization i.e. architecture, calligraphy, painting, mathematics, commerce, land and revenue management and natural sciences.

The Madrasa education system itself was complete enough to serve the change in political and socio-economic needs of India for centuries together. Its curriculum was sufficiently liberal in that it covered the fields of traditional or religions sciences together with rational and social science and language and literature. With this curriculum the Madrasa education system catered to the educational needs of the ruling

Class and upper strata of the society and at the same time successfully cared for the educational needs and aspirations of the Slaves and weaker sections of the society in a large portion. So it was through this well-built Madrasa education system only that people were empowered socially and economically and were enabled to adjust themselves in all spheres of human activity. If the Madrasa education system and its methods were faulty, as was rightly questioned by Maulana Abul Klam Azad, (the first Education Minister of free India) how could their products bring about such revolutions and hold the positions of highest officials under the King?

The history of Madrasa education in India began in the 10th century C.E. with the establishment of *Maktabs* and Madrasas in the towns of Sind, Debal, Mansura and Multan through Arab traders and settlers.

Madrasa education also flourished under various provincial kingdoms which had cropped up due to gradual disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate from the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq and Firoz Shah Tughlaq and even during the reign of Lodhis. The founder of Mughal Empire Zahir Uddin Muhammad Babar himself was a man of letters and an erudite poet and writer. During the reign of Babar, the Public Work Department was also entrusted with the task of construction of *Maktabs* and Madrasas, besides its other duties.

During the reign of Humayun; new Madrasas were established in Delhi, Agra and other places. The Humayun's Tomb itself was once used as an important place of instruction. His successor Akbar, though not considered a man of letters, showed remarkable interest in educational and literary activities during his reign. Aurangzeb (1658-1707 C.E.) the last of the great Mughals who himself was a learned scholar, caused establishment of a large number of Madrasas across the country and spread handsome funds for this purpose.

After the fall of the Mughal Empire, it was Shah Waliullah of Delhi who spearheaded the first movement among *Ulema* and launched a powerful campaign to recapture the glory of Islam and regain political power. He established

a Madrasa in Delhi which focused on religious disciplines. Another centre of Muslim learning at Delhi headed by Maulana Khairabadi, which syllabus included secular subjects as well. Luck now was yet another centre of higher education. In the presidencies of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa created by the East India Company; Arabic and Persian schools continued to function as before. With the gradual disintegration of Muslim rule particularly the Mughal empire and its steady replacement by British administration, the Madrasa education had begun to receive its first wave of shocks, as for it the transfer of power did not mean a mere substitution of one political power for another rather it meant the destruction of a particular way of life a particular culture a basic source of empowerment of the Muslim community in social, economic, cultural and emotional domains. The Madrasa education system in vogue at that time was preparing the people for the then prevailing way of life which was now changing and taking a new direction. Madrasas were one of the first few social institutions which received the bitter taste of this change at that time.

The Freedom of India in 1947 initially brought new problems for the Madrasa education system. We know that prior to Independence Madrasas were entirely depending on the meager resources collected by them from the common members of the already economically weak community and so were not placed on sound economic footing by any reckoning. After Independence mass exodus of Muslim to Pakistan including a large number of those who were educationally and economically better off, abolition of Zamindari system, widespread unemployment among Muslims, etc. further crippled the economy of the Madrasas, particularly in the northern and western part of India.

The rigorous campaign for free and compulsory modern elementary education under the constitutional directive, replacement of Urdu as a medium of instruction in some states and similar other developments brought new challenges for Madrasa education system.

The persistent efforts of *Ulema* in the post-Independence period to resuscitate Madrasa

education system ultimately bore fruit to an extent and brought it back on the track and ever since, it is steadily progressive and refurbishing through in a way which can be reckoned as revival of the Madrasas education system which was once in vogue in medieval India until the 18th Century and was serving all the socio-economic needs of the society. On the one hand, the number of Madrasas and *Maktabs* now stands increasing considerably and on the other some new experiments in their curriculum and mode of instruction have been initiated.

It is difficult to provide any reliable figure of the actual number of Madrasas that now exist in India in spite of some surveys having been conducted by the renowned organizations like, Hamdard Education Foundation, Institute of Objective Studies, National Council for Educational Research and Training (N.C.E.R.T.) etc. still from the varying estimates on the number of Madrasas provided by these organizations. One can very easily deduce that during the British period and for some time after Independence the graph of growth of Madrasas in India has been steadily increased. For example, in the Directory of Madrasas in India, published by the Centre for Promotion of Science, established in 1985 at Aligarh Muslim University, a comprehensive list of 2890 Madrasas has been produced. Later in

1990; Manzoor Ahmed in his work 'Islamic Education, Redefinition of Aims and Methodology' presented a rough estimate of these Madrasas of around 30,000. But he has not mentioned as to how he has arrived at this figure. But it is clear that the number of Madrasas increasing day by day.

Thus, it may be concluded by saying that Madrasas can play much greater role in the socio-economic and cultural empowerment of the Muslim community than what a majority of them is doing at present by adopting a more flexible, broad based and dynamic approach towards its curriculum and matters related with the transaction of this curriculum and by favourable considering the demand for a careful synthesis between religious and secular education system. In the opinion of *Allama Yusuf Qardhawi*, Muslims are not backward in modern education due to the reason that they are dedicatedly engaged in religious education and that they are shining in that area of learning. The fact, according to him, is that even in religious education they have faced decadence and ever since they have ignored education in modern or scientific disciplines they have declined in the religious education also.

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