

## Muslim Educational System in the Sub-Continent

Sajjad Hussain

*PhD Scholar History, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur*

Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Abrar Awan

*PhD Islamic Studies, Sheikh Zayed Islamic Center, Punjab University, Lahore*

Dr Mian Saeed Ahmad

*Assistant Professor of Pakistan Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur*

### Abstract

When any nation conquers any country, the conquered nation gives up its national characteristics and traditions and follows the footsteps of conqueror. But sensible and perceptive Muslims of India released the danger of ruler of that time and advised the Muslims of Sub-Continent to get education to overcome the danger. The Muslim's thinking was based on foresightedness because after being deprived of political power there remained nothing except education. It was education through which they could protect their identity. The scholars of sub-continent focused their full attention to the teachings of traditional syllabus. For this purpose, Arabic Madaris/Institutes were established, through these Madaris. The Muslims paid attention for the development of Arabic language with Tafseer, Hadees, and Fiqh. The Muslims did not lose their own educational system instead of being enslaved. In Sub-Continent regular system of Madaris was established with the arrival of the Muslims in the sub-continent.

**Keywords:** Muslim Educational System, Characteristics, Sub-Continent

### **Introduction**

At the time of Muslims' arrival this region was surrounded by ignorance and illiteracy. After the arrival of Arya, the society of this region was divided into superior and inferior caste system. Brahman were considered superior on education. Other castes were not the part of educational system. Shudras were considered inferior by birth. Their job was only to serve the others. Educational doors were closed for them. Justice and equality have basic importance in Islamic education. Therefore, the Muslims wherever reach, the majority of local population embraced Islam due to Muslims high social values and love of knowledge. In that area Hindu society was also impressed by the Muslims high traditions and began to learn. The Muslim rulers, scholars and elite class of the Sub-Continent had well awareness about the universal concepts of Islamic education. Muslim rulers like Akbar and Al'a Ud deen Khilji were not scholar, but they took interest in the development of education. They built the Masajid and Madaris for the development of education. Scholarships for students and teachers were awarded and provided possible educational facilities. Due to these initiatives taken by Muslim rulers, education became universal.<sup>1</sup>

### **Distinctive Aspects of Educational System in the Sub-Continent**

The English historian and authorities confess and appreciate that education was free and universal at the time of Muslim rule in the Sub-Continent. The standard of education was high and educational facilities were abundant. Sir Thomas Munro presented an important report on June 25, 1822 in which he confesses that there was a school in a population of 500 people. One third of the total population had the facilities of schools. About the vastness of education in Bumbay, R.V. Proleker is of the opinion that: "The ratio of educated persons in Sub-Continent is as much as in European countries."

A detailed report about educational system of Bengal and Behar was prepared by a Christian preacher William Adam. According to that report there were one Lac schools for the age of five to ten years children in the province Bengal and Behar at the beginning of British rule. In that system of education, basic education of reading, writing and mathematics was provided. About

Punjab Mr. Arnold wrote in his report in the following words: "Education is common here"<sup>2</sup>

Muslim, Hindus and Sikhs all get education. Anyhow all teachers are Muslims. Most of the teachers provide free education. Madaris are running from the income of Auqaf. There are separate schools for girls. About the Muslims of Sub-Continent, Sir William Hunter has said:

"Before our occupation on Sub-Continent, Muslims were in power not only in politics but also in education as well. Their educational system provided the mental and ethical development of high rank. This educational system i.e. religious education was much better than other educational system of Sub-Continent."<sup>3</sup>

From the above mentioned reports it is not difficult to guess that when British occupied Sub-Continent, Muslim system of education was at peak. Every village had its own Madarsa. This Muslim's educational system left everlasting impacts on the whole Muslim world.<sup>4</sup>

The Muslims took initiatives in their reign for the dispensation of education in Sub-Continent have everlasting impacts on political and social life of the people of Sub-Continent. It was bad to be literate and uneducated in Muslims. There were many Madaris in Big villages and towns for the development of religious education. The revelation of supervision of religious education of Muslim rulers continued till the occupation of the British rule in the Sub-Continent. After the cooperation of Hindustan, the English destroyed a lot to the system of Muslim education. The educational system of ancient Hindustan was independent. Scholars and teachers of these institutions were free and independent in the matter of discipline. There was no concept of centralization in the matter of discipline.<sup>5</sup> There are no terms and conditions for admission in Madaris. There was no limit of age for getting education. Admissions were usually taken in the month of shawwal in these Madaris. There was no regular schedule and time table in these madaris. Although there was not a mutual cooperation in these Madaris, yet there was symmetry in curriculum teaching methods and timing. There was no specific tenure for different level of education. After completion of one labor student

to the next level students had great respect for their teachers.<sup>6</sup> Students felt great pleasure in doing teachers personal matters. If we make comparison of discipline between ancient Institutions and the discipline of present Institution. It will reveal that the discipline of ancient and institution was ideal. The greatest cause of this ideal discipline was that the students of that time had great respect for their teachers.<sup>7</sup> Before the arrival of the English in subcontinent, the few characteristics of Muslim systems of education were,

1. Every Masjid was used for basic education.
2. Educational Facilities were free and universal.
3. Scholarships were awarded to students.<sup>8</sup>

The education system in the reign of Muslims was independent. A lot of money was spent on the development of education. Rulers of that time did not meddle in educational administration. But with the arrival of British government single educational system was introduced and it gave rise to western thoughts. In the reign of British Govt.<sup>9</sup> English was adopted as medium of instruction instead of Urdu and Persian. Co-education was introduced. Due to those reasons literacy rate among Muslims decreased from 50% to 20%. Due to the lack of education Pakistan has reached to a low level in the world despite of numerous natural resources. To achieve economic and social betterment of the country, free and universal education is essential.<sup>10</sup>

### **Types of Educational Institutions in Sub-Continent**

Following were the types of educational institutions (Madaris) in Sub-Continent:

1. Madaris established by Government Madaris
2. Madaris adjacent with Khanqahs
3. Madaris in Masajid
4. Individually established Madaris by scholars
5. Educational centers affiliated with shrines.

Muhammad Hussain Khan Zaidi writes in his book “History of Education and Development”.<sup>11</sup>

“There was no custom of establishing buildings besides Madaris in this reign. Usually Masajid were used for teachings. Besides Masajid monasteries were also used for teaching. The intellectual of this age were not only the scholars but also were the teacher of Shariya.<sup>12</sup> Students came and sought education in monasteries in specific time that was fixed by Govt. In addition Madaris were established alongside tombs of great sultans. The income earned from these tombs was spent on students. Besides the residencies of great scholars were also used for teaching. Government had lab rated the scholars from economic problems. Students came there and quenched their educational thirst.<sup>13</sup>

### **Levels of Education**

Like today following were the levels of education in that age:

1. Elementary education
2. Secondary education
3. Higher education
4. Vocational education<sup>14</sup>

#### **1. Elementary Education**

Religious Madaris were not only the source of elementary education. But it was also given in homes/ houses. Girls were taught elementary education in homes. After that according to ancient Islamic traditions, Masajid had been the greatest source of education. At the age of 6 or 7 a child entered in a madrassa adjacent to a masjid where he was taught Holy Quran first. First of all education of Nazra Quran was given then oral Quran was taught. The main purpose of the pupil was that he must learn Quran accurately and then learn orally. Syllabus had to be learnt orally from the beginning to the end.<sup>15</sup> In the most of the madaris Quran Majeed had to be learnt orally in the period of 3 years. In elementary education syllabus was not only consist of reciting Holy Quran and learning it orally but it also included syntax, grammar, arithmetic and Arabic language. In addition the pious life history of Holy Prophet (PBUH) was also included in elementary education.<sup>16</sup>

#### **2. Secondary Education**

In the beginning, like elementary education, secondary education was also given in Masajid. The syllabus of these madaris (Educational institutions) was consisted of study of Quran and Hadees. Besides education of Arabic language and literature was also given in these centers. Later on, elementary, secondary and higher educational institutions were separated.<sup>17</sup> Elementary institutions were the part of Masajid. But secondary institutions were separated from Masajid and separate building was established for secondary institution.<sup>18</sup> This grand task was done by Slah ud Deen Ayyubi and Noor ud Deen Muhammad Zangi.

Gradually oratory, logic, philosophy, maths, gramme and linguistics etc. were also included in secondary education. Book palaces had not only the place of library but they were considered the important center of higher education.<sup>19</sup> Although religious education was the center of whole system but worldly need cannot be ignored in any age. The system of commerce/industrial education was there.<sup>20</sup> But this type of education was provided in industry. Skilled workers gave education to their pupils there. Social schools were also there for commercial education.<sup>21</sup> Mualana Manazir Ahsan Gillani has reported: "In the reign of sultan Muhammad Taghluq, there were one thousand Islamic madaris in Delhi. Salaries of teachers were paid from imperial treasury. Education was so common that even maid servants were hafiz and scholars. Education of maths and logic was also given along with religious education in these madaris."<sup>22</sup>

About madrassa Ferozshahi, a famous historian Zia ud Deen Barni writes: "This madrassa is unique in its splendor, beatification, good governance and quality of education".<sup>23</sup>

### **3. Higher Education**

About higher education Syed Salman Nadvi is of the opinion:

"Those who were fond of higher education got the services of famous teachers of big cities and completed their remaining education included the higher education of Persian and Arabic language and literature."<sup>24</sup>

### **4. vocational/technical and industrial education:**

There were no specific schools for technical and industrial education. Printer, sculptor and architect had pupil in their houses or shops. The shop or house of a teacher was used as teaching place.<sup>25</sup> Students were taught under the supervision of teachers.<sup>26</sup>

**Characteristics of Islamic Educational system in India are as under:**

1. Whole educational system revolved around religious education and religious themes. Education was considered a sacred action.
2. Masajid were the center of educational system. Every masjid was used for elementary education. And masjid was the part of madrassa.
3. Industrial and commerce education was also provided along with common education.
4. The main characteristic of this educational system was that the center of whole system. There was great harmony between teacher and student.
5. Main focus was spiritual purification, teacher was not only a teacher but also a preacher and role model.
6. To protect Quran, Sunnah, Arabic and other Islamic knowledge and maintain relationship with Muslim society.
7. To maintain the system of Masajid and Madaris and provide teachers and scholars.
8. To protect Islamic way of living and beliefs in view of European and cultural onrush.
9. To protect Muslims from religious and theological differences.<sup>27</sup>

**Conclusion**

To conclude we may say that education was common, free and of high standard in Sub-Continent in the reign of Muslim rulers. Muslims had prominent place in political, social, economic and educational field. The English, who came into Hindustan as trader, then became the ruler of whole Sub-Continent till freedom fight of 1857. The purpose of British educational system was to develop Christianity. Muslims became backward in education due to non-adoption of British Govt. These circumstances gave rise to educational movements in the Sub-Continent.

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