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Madrasa Education: Modern Myths, Locked Mind

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Abstract:

In every society, socialization plays an important role to creating individual personality and to promote cultural values among members of the society. And this socialization is possible by providing a fair education. From this point of view, madrasa educational institutions have been providing formal and informal education to the muslim community for a long time. Nevertheless, the madrasa education system was seen as a conservative Islamic institution. It is believed that there is the teaching of separatism, besides the education of isolation, to build an intolerant class.

Key words: Madrasa Education, Myths, Our Culture- Our Society

Introduction

In every religion education is considered as a most powerful medium for preserving and transferring the ideas, ethics and values among the members of its future citizen. For this purpose every religion has developed its own education system. In Islam madrasa education system generally caters the need of education of their future citizens. It is undoughtful that madrasas has been appeasement its duty during long time and become a functional unit of society. But colonial threat (Western Ideological Hegemony) has been making unfamiliar condition to madrasa system not only India but also worldwide. And gradually madrasa system is convicted as conservative ideological structure to the non-Muslim community. Nevertheless it has taken into consideration that madrasa remain important non-state providers of basic education in most Muslim countries. In country like India, around 3.72 percent students are enrolled in madrasa education out of 14.27 percent of total population (as per 2011 census report).

Conceptualize the idea of Madrasa

Before discussion about origin and development of madrasa education, we should have knowledge regarding meaning of madrasa. Madrasa is an Arabic word, which literally means place of dars i.c teaching. In Islamic countries public school and institutions of learning are known as Madrasa.Leiden and E.J Brill (1965) in Encyclopedia of Islam, define madrasa as, ‘an institution of learning where Islamic sciences including literary and philosophical ones are taught.’’Initially, Madrasas were distinguished as institutions of learning that taught only the Quran. But later on, madrasa has been used as a catchall by many western observers to denote any school.Primary, secondary or advanced that promotes an Islamic based curricular. In India, Pakisthan and Bangladesh, madrasa commonly refers to Islamic religious schools. According to Peter and Panday (2006) madrasa vary from country to country or even from town to town. They can be a day or boarding school with a general curriculum, or a purely religious school attached

to a mosque. It is an essential and important part of the Islamic culture and the education they impart is undeniably, unique. Generally, members charge no fees to their students and provide free boarding and lodging (Soni: 2010).

Various scholars talking of or writing on madrasa education often work with a conceptual framework which confuses between several branches or divisions of learning which are all named madrasas. The madrasa system of education is divided into several types of institutions. They are:

(a) Maktab: Maktabs (or makatib) are a form of elementary school.Therein a child is expected to be admitted at the age of 4 years and continue his/her education till the age of 8 years. However, generally children admitted in maktabs are older. Generally maktabs teach recitation of a few fundamental verses of the Quran, reading (and perhaps writing) of Arabic Alphabets (Arabi Quaida), as well as those of Urdu (Noorani Quaida). Students are taught some fundamental tenets of Islam orally. Above all, they are taught the correct rituals for performing wuzu (washing before namaz), and the various rituals and verses of the Quran required for performing the namaz.The maktabs also generally teach basic arithmetic,Urdu and sometimes regionals language.All these subjects,however,are entirely voluntary and the standard and content of teaching varies from maktab to maktab.

These institutions take both boys and girls; often the number of girls is larger than that of boys. Maktabs are almost always affiliated to the local mosque. The Imam of the mosque generally is also the teacher (maulana) of the maktab. He teaches all the subjects to all the students belonging to different age groups, many of whom would already have learnt the subject or ritual being taught. It is noted that the atmosphere is disciplined and congenial.

(b) Darul Quran or Hafiz madrasas: These are institutions which especially train boys hifz or complete memorization of the Quran and tajweed (tajweez) or the correct manner of reciting the Holy Text. There is no fixed duration for the memorization of the Quran. It depends on the personal ability of students; generally it takes between 2 to 4 years. Most Hafiz madrasas do not teach anything else,not even the meaning of the verse being memorized. It is argued that trying to understand the meaning would divert the students' minds from the task of modernization. Most madrasa, other than those exclusively dedicated to Hifz, also have Hifz sections. Nazira (correct reading of the Quran) is also taught in most madrasa. It is remember that while the other madrasas mostly teach in mornings, the Hifz children practice memorization from early morning to late night.

(c) Madrasa: These are the typical institutions of Islamic learning. Under the madrasa education there are Varity of forms existed in all over the country. It is important to know that madrasa education may be run by government and non-government organization and both of institutions have power to employ its own curriculum system to learn their students. After completed maktab education students can take admission in junior madrasas. But if someone would like to admission in senior madrasas then he/she should be admission in primary level because senior madrasas are impart their education from class 1 to 8. There are also two different forms of madrasa existed like Alim(from 9 to 10 class) and Fazil(from 11 to 12 class). However, usually the teaching or explanations are in Urdu. In the state of Bengal, Asam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the local language is frequently employed for explaining the Arabic text.

Not all madrasas are up to Arabic eight class, rather they have provision for teaching up to class 3 or class 4. After that either the boys drop out, or they go to other madrasas for continuing education. A few of them even join modern schools. Many of these madrasas also have elementary sections, thus providing education from the beginning. However, these primary sections are mostly independent of the main madrasa.

(d) Jamia: There are some madrasa which provide specialization in a certain fields and are called Darul-Uloom or even Jamia. Thus madrasas may be ones which teach up to 3rd or 4th Arabi classes, and ones which teach up to Arabi eighth class, equivalent to graduation; and ones which are actually Jamias. The later teach specialization in various Islamic subjects such as Hadiths, Fiqh and soon after which one gets a post graduate degree.

(e) Madrasas for girls: Most of empirical studies show that Muslim girls are not expected to study in common madrasas after they finish their maktab studies, by which time they are expected to have reached puberty. Hence after, they are expected to remain in seclusion. Therefore some girls madrasas have been established which definitely are not sufficient if all Muslim girls are to be educated in them. Many Muslim writers claim that girls' education is equally taken care of, while the fact is that either the girls are taught in maktabs alone, or in madrasas up to a very elementary level; or they are expected to study in girls' madrasa which are very few in number.

As earlier as mention that madrasa education is not a unique in nature. It is vary from place to place. Therefore conceptual framework is very important to study madrasa education.

History of Madrasa Education in India

It is very important to know about historicity of madrasa education in India and South Asia. The establishment of a formal madrasa education system in the muslim world is attributed to Nizam-ul-muluk, a seljik wajir,who established madrasa Nizami in Baghdad in the eleventh century (Hefner and Zanman 2007).In the Indian sub-continent the madrasa 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 maktabs which taught Quran recitation and Islamic rituals.From the 13th to 19th centuries,the Muslim rulers of India built maktabs or madrasas alongside mosques to teach both religion and science (Nizami : 1983).Consequently as Muslim rule consolidated madrasa became the principal institutions in the education system. The establishment of British colonial rule however, dramatically transformed the role of madrasa education in South Asia: by introducing Western educational institution and replacing Persian with English as the official language, colonial rule made madrasa education irrelevant to the needs of the state and economy. This period led to major shifts within madrasa, where the focus of the curriculum shifted from "This worldly" to entirely "other worldly emphasis". This period send the rise of Dar-ul-uloom Deoband,a Madrasa established in the nineteenth century, whose ulama(Islamic scholars) consciously responded to the changing context of Indian society under colonial rule by focusing primarily on inculcating personal piety among Muslim (Metcalf:1978).Today this school of thought has the largest number of madrasa in South Asia.

Madrasa education in Post-independence India

Deliberations on madrasa reforms were initiated soon after the creation of the newly independent states of India and Pakistan. The political leaders of these newly independent states were keen to follow the western model of development and wanted the religious establishment to meet the demands of modernity. However, much older madrasa reform programmes were already in place in some states of India (Nair: 2009).The state of west Bengal had a Madrasa board-West Bengal for Madrasa education in place as early as 1927 to manage state supported madrasa. It should remember that while the seats of religious authority, namely the leading madrasa such as Dar-ul-loom and Nadwa-tui-ulama remain at a distance from the modernization programme in most states.

At present there are a large number of madrasas 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 madrasa education in India. Also there are various estimates about their number. Estimates range from a figure of eight thousand to forty thousand madrasa institutions in the country. Khan, Saqib and Anjum (2003) has given the reference of Indian Home Ministry Sources and quoted that, there are 721 catering to over 1,20,000 children in Assam,1825 madrasas catering to over 1,20,000 children in Gujarat,961 madrasas catering to 84,864 children in Karnataka,9975 catering to 7,38,000 children in kerala,6000 madrasas catering to over 4,00,000 children in Madhya Pradesh and 1,780 madrasas catering to over 25,000 children in Rajasthan. In Uttar Pradesh, the number of maktabs is more than 15,000 and the number of madrasa 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 5, 11 madrasa affiliated to the West Bengal Madrsa Board in which about 200,000 boys and girls study. However, according to Chouhan (2011), as a conservative estimate the total number of madrasas are nearly 35000 mainly concentrated in the state of Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Modern Myths, Locked Mind: A critical assessment

Education is one of the most powerful factors for the political, social, economic or spiritual development of individuals and communities. It helps individuals to acquire the confidence and capability to match the levels of those who are in the mainstream in society. For Empowering a community, it is required that access to quality education be ensured for the community. Nowadays marginalized muslim communities are increasingly demanding more quality education from their madrasas.

It is often believed that a large proportion of muslim children study in madrasas mostly to get acquainted with the religious discourse and ensure the continuation of Islamic culture and social life. A persistent belief nurtured, in the absence of statistical data and evidence is that muslim parents have a preference for religious education leading to dependence on madrasas. It is also argued that education in madrasas often encourages religious fundamentalism and creates a sense of alienation from the mainstream. Most Writers, Justify the system remaining within the Islamic famework. They are constantly refers to ‘our society’, ‘our culture’, ‘our people’; this ‘our’ consciously excludes the rest of Indian population.

PMHLC (Prime Minister's High Level Committee) found that in actuality the number of madrasa attending students is much less than commonly believed. For instance, in west Bengal, where muslims form 25% of the population, the number of madrasa students at 3.41 lakhs is only about 4% of the 7-19 age group. But it seems that madrasas are often the last recourse of muslims especially those who lack the economic recourses to bear the costs of schooling or households locate in areas where mainstream educational institution are inaccessible. The solution is such cases is not only to modernize madrasas, but also to provide good quality, subsidized mainstream education and create an adequate infrastructure for education. Therefore, the state must also fulfill its obligation to provide affordable high quality school education to the masses through the formal education system.

Apart from the role madrasa have played in providing religious education one needs to recognize their contribution towards the education of muslims in the country. Very often one finds that madrasa have indeed provided schooling to muslim children where the state has failed them. Many children go to madrasas and thereby acquire some level of literacy/education when there is no school in the neighborhood. This effort needs to be recognized. This could be done by establishing 'equivalence' to madras certificates for subsequent admission into government schools and universities. For this purpose, equivalence between the two systems of education will need to be established at different levels. Many madrasas provide education that is similar to that provided in mainstream schools. This needs to be understood in a transparent manner. Many madrasas have shown an interest in the modernization scheme of the government and are keen to incorporate science, mathematics and other modern/regular subjects in their curriculum and introduce modern method of pedagogy.

It is also important to recognize that madrasas although primarily and usually intended for producing human resources for manning the mosques and the madrasa themselves are also expected to produce ulema who are looked upon by muslims for guiding them in matters of importance in daily life and social and political discourse. The modernization scheme is designed also to make them aware of what is considered the domain of secular learning and enable them to participate in inter-faith dialogues.

Conclusion

Some relevant research finding tell us that since independence Indian Muslims have been subjected as a underprivileged group compare to others.In every sphere of life (like education,occupation,political inclusion and social contact) they have suffered from discrimination and inequality (Sachar 2006).However, there are several thousand Islamic schools spread all across India today.

Scholarship on Madrasa education has asserted that Muslim marginal sections are familiar to this education system because of Madrasas has been provided basic education with free of cost as well as use to Urdu and local languages. Since independence government of India had failure to provide basic facilities among Muslims and gradually increased the polarization in the society on the basis of caste, class, religion, region so on. Even Muslim leaders could be realized that their development would possible in the democracy only through the quality of education. Indeed they could not rely on state for their mobilization and have been trying to acquire the quality of education through their own investment. Afterward, as I believe that if we properly run madrasa education with modern outlook then so many people who associated with madrasa and Islamic

education would be benefit. Dr. Sen argued that inclusion is a continuous process that should be increase involvement of people in socio-economic and political arena. Why do we not consider madrasa education is an inclusive approach still now? Whereas madrasas are fulfil educational goal for the state. As like students enrolments, decrease dropout rate, free elementary education, women education so on.

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