

Renaissance of the Masjid-Madrasah, need of the hour

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1. Introduction of Madrasah institution:

The word Madrasah is an Arabi word, which has its origin from the word Mudarris, and this comes from the root word of Daras, which means to enlighten or to teach. Therefore, Madrasah is a place of learning, with a similar meaning to that of school. Particularly it is similar to the Church missionary school.

In both these places education is given, and people go there for acquiring knowledge. The role of Madrasah in Muslim Society has been linked with the dawn of Islam. Till the medieval era of Islam, it was the Madaris, which produced a large number of scholars, in all branches of Knowledge, who bestowed inventions to the world in their respective fields. Prior to the beginning of the Crusades, the power of the Muslim intellect activities started declining due to the weakness of their educational system.

It was not revised to the requirement of their times or era, while the West completely transformed the Sciences of the East, especially from the Muslims. A great renaissance was experienced in the dark history of western civilization. With a limited approach, this spirit of the East continued in the Ottoman Empire, and in the Central Asian region, especially in Iran, but civil wars, differences, and military expeditions never allowed the progress of the Eastern institutions. Monarchs paid less attention towards the development of educational institutions, which weakened the internal system and ultimately declined the power and command.

In the Indian Subcontinent, the history of Muslim contribution is very limited. Monarchs spent their time in luxuries mostly. They built gardens like Shalamar and mausoleum of love, like Taj Mahal, but did not pay attention to building and reforming educational institutions like those of Al Azhar, Al Anwar, Al Aqmar, Jame Arwa (Zeejiblah-Yemen), Oxford, Cambridge, Sorbonne and Harvard. Perhaps, if they had paid a little attention to educational institutions; the history of Muslims would have been different. Lack of support of Muslim monarchs never allowed Madaris the opportunities of progress and standardization according to the need of the time. As a result, the unfortunate Muslim community has paid a very heavy penalty. Seizing this golden opportunity to control the power and command of the Muslim dominated areas, non Muslim colonial forces snatched the spirit of understanding, and drastically introduced Church missionary Schools, and created a vast gulf in between the School educated and Madrasah trained class.

2. Isolated Profession:

These colonial rulers closed the doors of professional activities on the Madrasah trained and confined their role within the boundaries of religious customs and activities. As per colonial designed policy these foreign foxes diminished the role of Madrasah trained class in the socio-cultural life of the Muslim dominated countries. They declared only those eligible for handling the affairs of the socio-economic system who were groomed from their nurseries.

Therefore, the controlling power reached the hands of the Westernized Muslim minds. It was the English master brains, like Macaulay, that injected the slow poison that the only job of the Madrasah class is to reinforce the orthodox practices of the Religion. Lord Macaulay's address to the British parliament 2nd February, 1835 is self explanatory. He says:

"I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief, such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and, therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than own, they will lose their self esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation".

British followed this advice as a policy, in their all colonies. To minimize Muslims socio-economical as well as political role, official media played a significant function. It is unfortunate that these Madaris did not up-date their curriculum according to the need of the time, and thus their area of operation shrank. It curtailed the role of Madrasah trained class and made them powerless, as well as helpless in professional fields. A huge gulf was created in between the class of Madaris trained and the School educated community.

I have observed fairly closely a Madrasah and its functional system. Round the year donations are campaigned by the clerics for Madaris. Due to non-accountability of funds, the management of the Madaris enjoys the donations more than the students. Their lavish life style is dependent on non-countable sources of donations. It is a dire need of the time to use rightly the public funds. It is the responsibility of the donation providers to keep a strict vigilant eye on the utilization of their funds.

It is also necessary to observe the teaching atmosphere by the media. Majority of the students of the Madaris are very fanatical. They never study Islam according to a scientific system or manner; but follow it blindly. Several research reports provide the conclusion of observation regarding the most favorite topic of Madrasah students. They largely discuss on Jih'ad more often than of any other practice of Islam for the benefit of humanity. I once asked, a 15-year-old Madrasah student, what the greatest deed of all was, "Killing Munafiqin", a term largely used for rivals and their associates, was the

reply. Similarly, when I questioned a Shaikh of the Madrasah, what is the great deed for a Muslim, he said: "To Donate a Substantial Amount for the Clergy for Religious Causes". These two remarks are enough to reflect the mentality of the Muslim Clerics at large. A few leading Madaris are responsible for the defamation of this institution due to their misuse of Madrasah as breeding farms of fanaticism. Another disease, which largely affects the minds of Madrasah trained, is their self-glorification. A malicious attitude has been found amongst the clergy, which is that they think themselves not less than "Hindu Sacred Cow". Islam does not allow any space for Hindu Mythology.

There is no "Sacred Class", nor is anyone above the law or accountability. It is the arch responsibility of the Muslim scholars to establish among the students an approach of understanding to fight against the evils prevailing in society. It is time that the attention of the students of the Madaris should be drawn to the fact that to kill your opponent is not a Jih'ad but a misdeed.

To kill their personal evil misdeeds is real Jih'ad. Equal stress should be paid on the other fundamentals of Islam, i.e. Muaml'at of their daily life. In fact, as long as the Muslims at large will not clear their role in Muaml'at of the daily life, an ideal Muslim society can not be established. Likewise, Madrasah graduates are taught how to put down other schools of thought, through an interesting expertise called 'Refutation', whenever chance permits. Rival sects do not target other religions, but at the various Muslim sects.

3. Quality of Education:

The quality of Education and manner of instruction in the Madaris today is not up to date. Definitely, Madrasah education is not serving its required goal. In the rural area especially, children from the masses have the only source of learning i.e., is a Madrasah. It is the need of the time to improve the quality of education by drastic changes. A strong, up-to-date curriculum is indispensable. Government should control the education policy and introduce a country-wide syllabus. Awareness with modern subjects like Mathematics, General Science, information Technology should be introduced.

If we examine the Church controlled schools, we find them well organized in all manners. Christian missionaries are trained through well known Trinity Academic Institutions, where they learn modern subjects and languages as well. Thus producing a seasoned person who can play the role of a bridge between the material and spiritual world. Not only the Pope and the Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church, but the head of the City mission are highly skilled in the Sacred Sciences; hold doctorate degrees from well known recognized institutions, which groom them into highly talented scholars. In the present day's world, preachers of all religion are highly skilled. Contrary to them, very unfortunately Islam is preached by characterless, shortsighted, and a corrupt clergy, who are not well versed with the language of Qur'an and Islam. As a dilemma, result is right before our eyes.

The Clergy of the Madaris should not try to teach technical, as well as professional subjects unless they have command, ability and qualification. Modern scholars are

strictly needed, but how do you draw the attention of the competent scholars to serve in Madaris? You can not enjoy the passion of driving a BMW in a price of a Suzuki. The curriculum in the Madaris needs serious "Reconstruction". So, what do we do? If any highly skilled faculty member approaches you and you ask him to leave a lucrative job and join the Madrasah service with lower remuneration along with no job security or attractive package, would any sensible one agree? Surely not, Management should offer high remuneration to faculty members. The Government, of course has to be dynamically involved. The responsibility of providing the required resources and finances for such operations descends primarily on the Government's shoulders. A modest increase in budget allocated annually to education can serve a grand purpose in this regard. A reform in education through announcement is not enough; practical changes are needed.

It is a high time to change the mode of education and provide country wide opportunity to students to leave the expensive schools, which are in fact money generating industries, by establishing Masjid Madrasah chain everywhere. It may be the last chance to rebuild the Muslim Community, across the global village, and to return towards lost glory. Bold steps must be taken; a portion of each large Masjid premises must now be earmarked for a modern Madrasah imparting knowledge to the student in both, the religious as well as scientific social and modern subjects. If these steps are not taken, the already decayed structure may be doomed, and recovering from it even is impossible.

The present educational system is the outcome of social injustice; it is anti progressive, and anti-social in nature as well as anti-Islam in spirit? The literate class is well aware of the faults of the current colonial educational system prevalent in the third world especially in Muslim countries, but none of them could muster enough moral and political courage, or enough integrity to Ban them. This is the best possible solution to clear the Madrasah from the hostiles. Masjid Madrasah students were never involved in terrorist activities in the past one hundred and fifty year's history.

4. Exploitation for Political purposes:

It was the CIA who used Madrasah for their nefarious political cause, to destroy Soviet Union. You will not find in any Madrasah curriculum, violence as subject. It is necessary to reform the mode of Madrasah and use it as the most modern tool to produce a society of welfare. Diversification of courses (instead of one masters degree called Shahadat or Dawrah, they can offer also courses in Economics, Business administration etc by adjustment of syllabus in the higher classes), replacing old system into most modern scientific study of Tafsir, Hadith and Fiqh. The only alternative to improve the standard of education through Madrasah similar to international institutions, syllabus should be revised under consultation of the highly skilled technocrats. Basic reform is needed in the present stream of education, which is basically now producing people without firm values, just like a robot, who knows only how to earn money, without having human values. We urge all to make a proper assessment of the Madrasah and not to be carried away by propaganda against Madrasah institution in the West.

It's completely ridiculous to treat Madrasah system less valuable than others. There is a difference of approach between a modern school system which are minting factories and Madrasah who are playing their role with the help of philanthropist nicely. Over the centuries, it was only the Madaris, which produced literate class of Muslims, at large, besides the home trained scholars. At present, there are several thousand Madaris spread in different countries, but very limited are eligible to provide Education according to the modern scientific standard. Most Madaris are attached with the Masajid, as per tradition, where children acquire education.

History provides us the extensive multipurpose role of Masjid as an ideal Madrasah. Masjid al Nabawi is a glorious example for coming generation to follow it as a role model. This Masjid served its significant role, as Madrasah, during Nabawi era prominently. Masjid al Kufah is famous for learning; Ali conducted series of Asb'aaq in this place. Likewise, Jame Jayushi, Jame Ibn Tuloon are the living testimonial seminaries of Al Qahera, which is attached with Masjid from its birth. See Jame Arwa, Zeejiblah, Yemen, which was the focal point of learning around 1000 years ago. In the mountainous region of Yemen, surrounded by rivers, this Masjid Madrasah had played a vital role to prepare a team of scholars of high calibre.

History can not ignore the shimmering fact that the mentor of the scholars was a lady, Syedah Arwa bint Ahmad, who conducted series of lectures behind the curtain. Scholars of Iran, Afghanistan, India, Qahera, and Hijaz attended her series of lectures, with profound devotion. Intellectuals of the time visited Yemen from far and near to acquire Knowledge. Yemen witnessed this glorious era from 440(A.H.) to 532(A.H). A poet of the Yaman described the status of Zijiblah in these words so nicely:

“Neither Qahera (of those days) nor Baghdad can be compared to the city, which lies there;

Surrounded by two rivers, with its mighty fortress, the high ‘Takar’, Yemen belongs to that city”

5. Need of the hour:

These Madaris were equipped with up to date scientific equipments, observatories, laboratories and more to all this vast collection of manuscripts, which recorded deep experience of the past generations, as source of further inventions. Forgotten institution of Masjid Madrasah alert our conscience and attention to take advantage fully again from it. Many large Masajid remain vacant round the year, and filled only during the month of Ramazan. If intellectuals consider taking blessing from this ignored institution, as our predecessors did in the past, they could frame and design the role of Masjid-Madrasah, according to the need of the present time.

Through such magnificent Masajid, education can be provided freely or on low fees bases. In each community and in each locality some spacious Masajid are available that can play a vital role in upgrading the rate of literacy. Traditionally, the goal of Madrasah

is to produce a team who can interpret Education of Islam in relation to the demands of the specific time. Through modernization of the Madrasah institution, we can provide an opportunity to our coming generation to survive in the modern world better. Rate of literacy can not improve by the hypocritical statements of our rulers. Nor reform is possible through seminars and conferences, in five or seven star hotels. Such junk-activities benefit only the filthy-character bureaucrats. For the Renaissance of the Masjid Madrasah, role of kindhearted philanthropist is indispensable.

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