

Madrasa Education System: A Need for Reformation

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Abstract

Education is the process of man-making which is considered the most powerful tool in every religion to inherit values and ethics among coming generations. It is regarded as the utmost necessity of life in Islam. The Quran has laid great emphasis on gaining and spreading knowledge for the sake of humanity. Education in Islam is based on the Quran and the teachings and traditions of Islam. To impart Islamic education, there are madrasas and maktabas which are exclusively meant for imparting knowledge of Islam and basic tenets of Islam. Although these institutions provide an opportunity for backward Muslims to get an education and are catering to the educational needs of those who cannot afford education, there are certain drawbacks of this system of education that need to be rectified to make it sustainable and productive. This paper is an attempt to highlight the basic concept of the madrasa system of education, the drawbacks in the present system of madrasa education, and ways to overcome these drawbacks.

Keywords: Madrasa, Education, Reformation

Introduction

Importance of Education in Islam

Education is considered one of the most powerful tools in every religion to preserve and inherit values and ethics among the coming generations. Islam has given much importance to education. The noble book Quran has laid much emphasis on gaining knowledge and spreading it to others. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), himself said that he was sent down as a teacher. He mentioned education is incumbent for each individual and taught people to do right and stay away from wrong. Islam has regarded education as the utmost necessity of life.

To impart education, every religion has established its system of education. Similarly, in Islam, there is a madrasa system of education to serve the purpose.

Meaning of Madrasa

Madrasa is an Arabic word that means a place where teaching and learning take place. It means a place of 'dars' i.e. teaching.

“Madrasa is an institution of learning, where Islamic sciences including literary and philosophical ones are taught.”

-Leiden E.J. Brill (in the encyclopedia of Islam)

In early times, madrasas were seen as a place for learning Quran only but now many subjects are being taught in madrasas and are distinguished as maktabas (primary education institutions) and madrasas (secondary and advanced education institutions).

There are two types of madrasas existing in India presently-

The ones which are being run by the money given by people as a charity (Zakat, sadqat, and fitra) and the ones which are government aided and receive allocated funds from the government.

Aims of Madrasa Education

The main aims and objectives of madrasa education are to give knowledge of Islam and teach basic tenets of the Islamic faith. Thus, the focus is on reciting and understanding the Quran and following sunnah -the teachings and traditions of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in everyday life. The education system of Islam trains students to learn the Quran by heart and follow its lessons to make life and hereafter easy and successful. It is aimed at a better understanding of Islam and sunnah.

Curriculum of Madrasas

The development of the curriculum for madrasas was started in the 12th century. But in the 17th century, a turning point came in the curricular aspect of madrasas when Mullah Nizamuddin Muhammad Sihlwi prepared a fresh curriculum which is known by his name as *Dars-e-Nizami* (syllabus of Nizami). Most of the madrasas have been following dars-e-Nizami since then with required modifications. In the present scenario of the madrasa system of education, it is difficult to generalize the curricular framework as every madrasa is following its curriculum, there is a lack of uniformity in subjects and books being taught in madrasas.

Teachers and Students of the Madrasa

Madrasas are catering to the educational needs of Muslim children. Most of the students in madrasa come from poor families because they can not afford to pay the education and boarding fees of their children. This is when madrasa seems to be the only hope for them. So they send their ward to madrasa to study and stay there.

The teachers in madrasas are usually themselves a madrasa product. Most of them are unfortunately professionally untrained because there is no such provision of training and internship for them. They are unaware of the techniques being used in the teaching process and have no access to the modern methodologies of teaching and learning. They are not even paid well.

Problems in the Madrasa System of Education

Education is not just gaining knowledge and a source of earning rather it is a process of man-making. It makes an individual self-reliant and confident. Education is something that gives meaning to the life of an individual, it is the purpose of life. The educational backwardness of any community is a curse to that community and the nation as a whole.

In India, the majority of poor children are enrolled in the madrasa and no doubt madrasas are playing an important role in uplifting backward Muslim communities but there are certain limitations of this system of education. First of all, most of the madrasas are run by a charity and it is usually not a constant source of funds and therefore sometimes what happens, the fund is not enough to run the madrasa successfully. Apart from this, some madrasas are government aided and the government provides allocated funds to the registered madrasas to run them but again these funds are not released at the required time and hinder the proper functioning of madrasas.

The education in madrasas has remained to be religion-centric. The subjects related to the philosophy of Islam have been dominating and emphasized more. There is a lack of uniformity in the curricular framework of the madrasa system of education, every madrasa follows its pattern.

The teachers in madrasas are untrained and therefore they have no awareness about the latest techniques and methodologies of teaching. They follow an old, outdated dictation type of method of teaching. Madrasa teachers do not have access to pre-service and in-service teaching practices. Also, there is no proper system of examination and evaluation in some madrasas.

One of the biggest debates in recent times is related to whether science as a subject should be introduced in madrasas or not. Some are in favour of teaching science and some are not. Those who are not agreeing with this addition are because certain concepts are unbelievable for Muslims e.g. evolution of man.

Another problem with the madrasas is that there is a lack of coordination between maktabas and madrasas. And this is because of poor management, planning, and administration in both institutions.

Madrassa teachers do not receive a handsome amount of salary. They get much less as compared to what a teacher should get. This affects their lifestyle and their status and as a result, they do not get the recognition that they deserve just like other teachers.

Madrasas in India lack the most basic facilities like potable drinking water, proper school building, a sufficient number of classrooms, furniture, blackboard, etc. As it is clear that madrasas are indeed backward in the necessities that is why it is really hard to think about the introduction of ICT in madrasas.

People want to educate their ward to get a good job and become self-dependent, one of the most important drawbacks of the madrasa system of education is that they fail to produce economically productive students, their products hardly get any job opportunities in fields other than maktabas and madrasas.

How can we improve the Present Madrasa System of Education in India?

Frank Islam, a U.S.-based Muslim philanthropist said madrasas and education imparted in these institutions should be modernized to make it sustainable because such education cannot provide jobs. The Madrasa system indeed requires a reformation to make its education productive and fruitful, only then the madrasa students can get the opportunity of having well-paid and deserving jobs. Certain changes can be made to reform the present system of madrasas. Although it would take years to reform the system, it has to change to meet the present-day challenges.

- Proper and timely funding to madrasas will be of great help and will remove any hindrance to their smooth functioning.
- The teachers in the madrasas should be paid well so that it could attract more teachers and become respectable jobs.
- Science as a subject can be introduced in madrasa with certain deletions, topics related to the evolution of man or related to it can be skipped and other important topics can be taught like- basic organ systems in the human body and their functioning, environment and its related topic, hygiene, food, balanced diet, etc. and basic physics and chemistry.
- There should be pre-service and in-service training for madrasa teachers so that they stay updated about the modern techniques and methodologies of teaching. Apart from this, there will be better coordination between maktabas and madrasas when the internship is introduced as a part of the course.
- All madrasas in India should follow a uniform prescribed syllabus rather than following multiple patterns. Just like NCF, there should be a common and uniform pattern of the syllabus that every madrasa in India has to follow.
- Madrasas are meant for religious education but if they introduce more modern subjects and those subjects which are necessary and are being taught in every school, the output would be very productive.

The government should launch schemes for the welfare of these institutions, e.g. government launched a scheme “*Scheme for providing Quality Education in Madrasa (SPQEM)*” for providing qualitative formal education through madrasas and maktabas. Another scheme that the government launched was the ‘*Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers*’. This scheme is aimed at training and re-training teachers through orientation courses and refresher courses, madrasa teachers are also being trained under this scheme. These are great steps towards the reformation of the madrasa system of education.

Conclusion

Madrasas and maktabas in India are providing an opportunity for poor Muslims to educate their wards with the least expenses. This is aiding in the upliftment of Indian Muslims and is imperative for our country’s growth. The most important aim of education is to become financially independent and self-reliant. This major aim is somewhat not accomplished by madrasa education. There are many problems in the madrasa education system which need to be rectified to make madrasa students financially independent because a country’s future depends upon the future of its students. The government should take charge to make the present conditions better so that madrasas can work efficiently and smoothly. Many changes can be made at an individual level to make these institutions better. Shaheen Group of institutions is one such example where people at the individual level are doing great efforts for modernizing madrasas by

nurturing the innate potential in every child to shape a generation next that is successful, socially responsible and reveres the noble tenets of Islam to imbibe the true concepts of wholesome living.

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