



An Estimate of Muslim Education in Colonial India

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ABSTRACT

The study of history revealed that there always be a complex relationship between colonizer and the colonized people. Both relate to each other in a relationship of power. Imperial power or the hegemony of the colonizer always made deep impact on every aspect of life of the colonized people. Sub-continent or India was the largest colony of the Great Britain with respect to area/land and population. The concept of Muslim education was revolutionized during the British rule because of the interior conditions, dominance of British imperialism and the start of identity politics in the Muslims of the sub-continent.

Keyword:

Muslim Education, Colonial India, Colonial Education Policies, British Rule

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1. Introduction

The policies of the British Government forced Muslims to rethink about the outcomes and future of their traditional education system. The change of production modes in colonial India created unemployment. For example, when English Government replaced traditional charkha with mechanical power looms which causes unemployment for those who earn from their skill of using charkha but English Government did not take any precautions for the rehabilitation of those who was affected by the power looms. Then those people either changed their profession for earning or they became beggars. (Marx & Engels, 2002, pp.216-225) Such situation highlighted the importance of modern education to get a suitable job. Similarly, same was happened in the case when English government changed the official language of the colonial India. When it was announced that only those who were qualified from the modern educational institutes would only be eligible to get government jobs; this official announcement suddenly ceased the importance of traditional education. (Farooq, M. Anwar & Hussain, Mazher, 2003, pp.13-17) In such situation, Muslims were forced to think about their social, financial and political future in the absence of traditional education. The question of identity was raised especially for Muslims because the Government policies forced them to reconcile with the situation. There was no other option for Muslims other than such the reconciliation.

In sixteenth and seventeenth century, European Monarchs started chartered companies. The objective of the company shareholders was to increase their business and profit and the objective of the European Monarchs was to extend their imperial rule. East India Company (EIC) was such an example because this company was created to rule the India with its private army of 2.6 million which was the twice of the British army of that time. (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2003, pp.13-15)

East India Company (EIC) got political power in Bengal in 1765 and it was the start of the British rule in India. It was the beginning of the colonization of India. After Aurangzeb, the political and military power of Mughal Government was very weak and it was unable to protect India from the political dominance of East India Company (EIC). At very start East India Company (EIC) got permission only for trade in sub-continent. It kept its interface as a simple trading company. At start the company kept itself away from every interior matter of the Mughal Empire. But as the East Indian Company gained business and when it earned deep relationships with the local elite then its policies were changed which results as a gradual increase in its political power. East India Company (EIC) executed its political power first in Bengal and took over its complete control in 1765 which was happened after the victory of battle of Plassey in 1757. (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p.53) After this first successful venture the future goal of the company was settled to take over whole India.

East India Company (EIC) kept himself away from the educational matters of the natives. At the start of its political power the company did not interfere in the educational policies and did not disturb the indigenous system of vernacular education. After the Charter Act of 1813, East India Company (EIC) was made bound to spend minimum

an amount of hundred thousand rupees annually for the revival and improvement of literature, for the encouragement of well learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of sciences among the natives of India. (Nurullah & Naik, 2000, pp.1-3) 1813 was a landmark in the history of education in colonial India because it provided a justification for the direct involvement of East India Company (EIC) in the affairs of education. But the company's officials kept the company away from the curriculum making job and made a policy to consume the fund for the vernacular education. There were so many institutes already working and were providing education in different native languages. At start company, did not implement any English medium curriculum. Company did not replace oriental languages with English but it included English language as a compulsory subject in already existing curriculums.

2. Role of Missionaries

Missionaries were the pioneers of Modern education in India especially for women and they were also participating in the paradigm of education before the Charter Act 1813. Missionaries came to India for the first time in 1542. The first missionary school was established in Calcutta in 1702. The early missionaries focused the poor and middle class Muslim women for their education and for their conversion to Christianity. They were attracting those Muslim women by providing free primary education and health facilities. (Hijazi, 1995, pp.28-43) These missionaries' schools trained many Muslim women for teaching different subjects. It created an opportunity for such educated women. These trained Muslim women started their own informal learning centers at their homes from where many other Muslim girls got education in an informal way. (Shabbir, 2012, p.9)

When the political grip of East India Company (EIC) became strong in Bengal then Robert Clive invited a missionary activist from Madras to Calcutta and gave him a proposal to open a missionary school in Calcutta. The school rapidly became popular in local elites and within a year its number of students increased three times as the number of students at its start. (Riaz, 2010, p.77) But officially East India Company (EIC) bound the missionaries for their activism in the company's given space. Missionaries were working in India before the consolidation of company's Raj and they wanted to convert natives to Christianity. The management of East India Company (EIC) did not want to give free hand to missionaries for their activism because of the threat of reaction from local community while on other hand missionaries wanted authority for their activism regarding conversion of natives to Christianity and they wanted to achieve the objective through education in missionary's schools. It was necessary for missionaries to get permission from company officials before any activity and company officials commonly discouraged them by using various delaying tactics (Kumar & Oesterheld, n.d., pp.27-43). The agitation between missionaries and company officials remained alive for many years.

3. Educational Policy of the East India Company (EIC)

As described above that East India Company (EIC) was isolated itself from the matters of education of natives but the company was established Calcutta Madrasah in 1780 in Calcutta. Calcutta Madrasah was established only to educate the Muslims. It was not an official requirement for the company to establish the madrasah but it was the need of time to appease the local Muslim community. It was an effort to mend the Muslim mind in favor of the company's rule over Bengal. It was an effort to minimize the threat of resistance from the natives against the company. At the time of opening of madrasah, the Governor General Warren Hasting was justified the need of madrasah for Muslims in words given below:

"The madrasah was established to conciliate the Muhammandans of Calcutta and to qualify the sons of Muhammadan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative offices in the state, and to produce competent officers for Courts of Justice to which students of the madrasah on the production of certificates of qualification were to be drafted as vacancies occurred." (Nurullah & Naik, 2000, p.30)

At start Dars-e-Nizami was selected as the curriculum of Calcutta madrasah but it was changed after ten years .

As described above, according to the Charter Act of 1813, the education of the masses was made the responsibility of East India Company (EIC). The company decided to add English as a course in already existing curriculum with other oriental languages. At that time, English was not considered as a replacement of other oriental languages. (Moir & Zastoupil, 2013, pp.90-96) A report was published in 1793 which was based on the research conducted by Charles Grant. In the report, Charles Grant proposed the up gradation of present curriculum and argued that the medium of study must be English instead of Persian. He introduced the theory of downward filtration. He suggested that modern education must be provided to elites of society and then they will be able to pass this education to remaining commoners of the society. The management of the Company rejected the proposals given by Charles Grant especially the theory of downward filtration. Company took decision to offer English courses in Calcutta madrasah in 1824 which was implemented in 1826. (Sharma & Sharma, 1996, pp.75-76) Another landmark in the history of education of Muslims of sub-continent was the Delhi College. It was considered as the key factor in the renaissance of Delhi. In Delhi, it was such a place where two cultures met with each other; one was British Culture and the other was oriental culture. The specialty of Delhi College was its medium of study which was Urdu. All modern courses were taught there in Urdu. (Pemau, 2006, pp.7-9) To teach modern rational courses like geography, modern history and natural sciences in Urdu, it requires translation of content from English to Urdu. So, in Delhi college huge modern educational content was translated into Urdu for educational purposes which started a strong culture of translation. (Minault, 1999, p.126) The process of translation also enhanced the capability of Urdu language.

In 1820, Delhi Committee of Public Instructions (DCPI) recommended to financially support the Madrassa of Ghazi-u-Din Khan which was declining due to lack of funds. Government accepted the proposal and allocated a suitable amount for the madrasah. In 1927, Government increased the funding for the institution with a condition to start classes of English, Astronomy and Mathematics. After this

the madrasah became popular as Delhi College as described above. At start, there were two sections of the college; one was called oriental section and other was called Anglo-vernacular section. Arabic, Persian, Urdu and literature were taught in oriental section and modern western subjects were taught in Anglo-vernacular section. Delhi College promote Urdu language which became the language of literature in future. (Minault, 1999, pp.122-123)

After the Charter Act of 1813 a debate was started about the mode of education between two groups of company officials. One group was convinced to promote education in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit instead of English. But the other group was in favor of such education mechanism in which medium of study must be English. They were the supporters of the replacement of native languages with English in the process of education. (Sharma & Sharma, 1996, pp.79-80) Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay came to India in 1834 as the law member of the Council of Governor General. He was a well learned person of his time and he concluded the debate of education in his famous minute. After the minutes the debate between the choices of local or western system of education was concluded. In his popular minute lord Macaulay supported the western education system in which medium of study was English. He presented his arguments in such a way that the decision-making authorities accepted his proposals about education system. In his minute, he clearly described the goals and objectives of English education system. (Sharma & Sharma, 1996, p.80)

"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions who we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect. To that class, we may leave it to redefine the vernacular dialects in the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of Science borrowed from western nomenclature and to render them by degree fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population." (Laurie, 1999, p.183)

From the above quoted text, the Lord Macaulay proposed the reconstruction of native mind in the favor of English government. It was difficult task for the Company to manage huge population with small number of English officers. In his minute, Lord Macaulay's suggested that the English government must stop its support for Muslim Madrassahs. The Governor General William Bentinck approved the Minute and discontinued the government support to Madrassahs and other indigenous institutions. Another most significant change was that the language of higher courts changed from Persian to English in 1835 which caused unemployment for those people who had no English language skill. In 1844, the Governor General Henry Hardinge made English language skill mandatory for the government job. It meant that only those people would be able to get government jobs who had got their education from English schools. (Jayapalan, 2005, p.60) This announcement made the employment of Madrasah educated student impossible because in Madrassahs the medium of study was Persian or Arabic. After this action the education system of Muslims became incompatible with modern situation which increased an attraction of English education in all communities of colonial India .

Wood's Dispatch was a huge landmark in the history of Indian education and considered as Magna Karta of English

education in India. (Tarique, n.d., p.46) The royal court of England considered that the education of the Indian subjects was purely the responsibility of government. Because the only way to control masses without direct conflict was the reconstruction of their mind according to the requirement of the English government and it was only possible through modern education. So, the royal court of England put education of the natives at high priority. At that time the basic theme of the educational system was the downward filtration. Commonly the Muslim elite class had the opportunity to get English education. The downward filtration was not successful in the process to educate the Indian masses. Wood's Dispatch was basically the evaluation of the existing education system in colonial India. This dispatch was prepared under the supervision of Charles Wood who was the president of the Board of Control for India in 1854. Charles Wood declared that:

...“the education which we desire to see extended in India is that which was for its object the diffusion of the improved arts, science, philosophy and literature of Europe, in short of European knowledge in India”. (Tarique, n.d., p.46)

In the dispatch, Charles Wood expressed his dissatisfaction of ineffective English education of Indian subjects and gave his recommendations to discontinue downward filtration policy of education. He suggested that the education is the responsibility of the government and it was necessary to implement an effective policy for the wide spread of the education among huge masses in colonial India. He suggested that a separate education department was required and it must be functional in each province. It was required to establish new universities and teacher training institutions. It was the need of time to establish new middle schools and technical colleges. Most of the suggestions were accepted and implemented which were made in Wood's Dispatch. It provided an opportunity to missionaries and the natives to open new schools. The implementation of the suggestions which were made in Wood's Dispatch made it possible to get modern education for those who belonged to middle or lower middle classes of society.

After Wood's Dispatch, per new educational policy government issued funds to establish new schools. In early years, the major share of such funds was provided to missionaries who resulted as an increase in missionary schools. It appeared as another type of threat for madrassahs and madrasah education. Wood's Dispatch also provided a space for the Muslim reformers to open new schools. The start of the identity politics in Muslim community motivated many Muslim reformers to take practical steps for the improvement of the situation of Muslims of colonial India. Sir Syed was one of such Muslim reformers who created a magnificent opportunity of modern education for Muslims in the form of Muhammadan Anglo Oriental (M.A.O) College, Aligarh. The main objective of the institution was to motivate the Muslim community in favor of modern education, so that they would be able to protect their identity in the politics of colonial India as well as to get government jobs. He was not only convinced the Muslims that the basic cause of their backwardness was the lack of modern education, but also practically addressed the problems. He consumed his energies to remove the mistrust between English government and the Muslims. In his speeches and

writings, he always tried to convince the Muslims about the importance of modern scientific education. (Waseem, 2014, p.139)

Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan founded a scientific society in 1864 and a modern Urdu language journal in 1870. He made these efforts to convince the Muslim elite class that western science was compatible with the teachings of Islam. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan started Muhammadan Anglo Oriental (M.A.O) College at the place of Aligarh in Northern India in 1875 which became Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. It was the first Muslim English School in colonial India. (Walsh, 2011, pp.149-151) He already prepared himself for the task and got experience by establishing schools in Muradabad (in 1859) and in Ghazi Pur (in 1864). Sir Syed Ahmad Khan learned about the core issues of education from these experiments. In M.A.O College the medium of study for modern courses was English and curriculum contained the western as well as Islamic subjects. The youth of Muslim elite class was attracted towards Aligarh College due to its magnificent environment for learning. Afterward, the students of Aligarh were played an extraordinary role in the identity politics of Muslim in colonial India which resulted as a demand for separate country for the Muslims.

M.A.O College was a center of learning but soon it got the status of a symbol of a friendship, cooperation and national identity of the Muslims of colonial India. It got central position in political, cultural and literary activities of the Muslim of colonial India. (Thorpe, 1965) It performed a vital role in regeneration of Muslims of colonial India in moral, cultural and educational paradigm. In 1867, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan conceived a plan for national and vernacular university and started a dialogue with the English government. He tried to convince the government officials in favor of his plan but his proposals were bitterly rejected. The core theme of his plan was the Urdu as medium of instructions for scientific education but government officials stressed that English medium education is necessary for scientific education and without English it was not possible and they argue that Urdu language had not achieved such level of language which is necessary to explain the epistemological, ontological knowledge and scientific discussions.

After 1857, the traditional education system of the Muslims was lost its importance. In such traditional system, the medium of study was Arabic, Persian or Urdu. There was a need to create new opportunities of education for Muslim community on modern grounds. Many Muslim reformers and the elites from the ruling class of different princely states took the responsibility and open new schools to serve the purpose. Hakim Syed Ahmed Hussain Sufi started a school in 1870 which was purely for the education of Muslim girls. He himself wrote many books and translated the Holy Quran. (Zubairi, 1961, pp.52-54) His efforts for the education of Muslim girls were remarkable.

In 1865, a school was founded for boys with the funding of Bhopal state in Sehore Cantonment. This school was for boys. It was providing education at primary and secondary levels. There was also a hostel for the accommodation of boys. In 1866, A Girls Vernacular School was also established in Sehore which hired female teachers from Indian Christian and Hindu community. The girls' school

was educating Muslim girls in strict purdah environment. These schools were in the patronage of Princess of Bhopal Nawab Sultan Jahan Begam. (Lambert-Hurley, 2007, p.81) Similarly in 1873, Faizunnessa Girls School was founded by the Nawab Faizunnessa Rupjalal in Bengal. (Lambert-Hurley, 2007, p.86) This school was established for the education of Muslim girls of the area.

The English government support for English education created two different paradigms of education; one is called secular education and other is called religious education. The accepted utility of secular education in modern circumstances pushed the religion in private sphere (Sikand, 2005, p.65) and the outcomes was appeared as a strong bifurcation of Deen (religious education) and Duniya (secular education). (Riaz, 2010, p.79) Muslim Ulamas continuously tried to attract Muslim youth toward religious education and they posed it as a resistance against the colonial rule. They thought that the educational policies of the colonial rule were reconstructing the minds of the Muslims through education and it had polluted their inner self and would turn them into such slaves who would be happy with their slavery. The marginalization of religious education and the stance of Ulamas created a new space for religio-political activism. Many religious movements were started. These were the outcomes of such religio-political activism.

In colonial India, the British policies of education created a unique opportunity of interaction between Muslim scholars and the British system of education. Muslim scholars adopted many parameters from British education system even for their Madrasah. But the main focus of such madrasahs was on the promotion of Islamic teachings and practices. There was a similarity if the management structure of the Madrasahs, which were established in colonial period compared with the management structure of modern British schools of that time.

A Madrasah was established in Deoband by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi and Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi in 1866. This madrasah became popular with the name of Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband and registered itself in history as a response of orthodox ulamas to contemporaneous politics. Dar-ul-uloom Deoband was different in its management structure from other traditional or conventional madrasahs. It had a well-defined and strict management structure which had resemblance with the management structure of modern English schools. (Rehman, 2004) A revised curriculum of Dars-e-Nizami was implemented which had a focus on the education regarding manqulat (religious knowledge) and completely ignoring maqulat (rational knowledge, sciences). (Sikand, 2005, p.74) The ulama of Deoband considered the efforts of Muslim reformers to promote western education, especially for Muslim girls and women, a non-religious activity and announced it as a threat to Muslim identity in colonial India. The Dar-ul-Uloom was established for the education of poor class and it was successful by attracting large number of students. While on other hand the M.A.O College focused on the education of Muslim elite Class (Ashraafia). (Khan, 1990, p.128) M.A.O College was the promoter of Modern English education among Muslims of sub-continent and Dar-ul-Uloom was the representative of traditional education among Muslims. These are two extremes; one was on modern grounds and other was pure orthodox.

Many ulamas made efforts for reconciliation between these two extremes. The remarkable effort was made by Mulana Muhammad Ali Mungari. He established a council of Ulama named as Nadwa-tul-Ulamain 1893. But the association was not successful in serving its purpose and it had to face a strong criticism. Afterwards the members of the council decided to start an institute to set a practical example of such reconciliation between modern and orthodox schools of thoughts. This initiative was taken by Deputy Collector Maulvi Abdul Ghafoor. So, Dar-ul-Uloom Nadwa-tul-Ulma was came into being in 1896. The most notable point was that all of the fourteen founding members of the Nadwa-tul-Ulama were educated from Dar-ul-Uloom Deobandi. (Qasmi, 2005, pp.55-59)

The curriculum of the institution was consisted of traditional as well as modern courses. Many new courses were included in the curriculum like modern history, spoken Arabic etc. More attention was given to enhance the creative ability of the student instead of memorization. It was a beautiful combination of orthodox and modern traditions. (Reetz, 2006, pp.275-276) A popular Muslim scholar Maulana Shibli Naumani joined the institution in 1905. Due to his efforts, Nadwa-tul-Ulama progressed leaps and bounds. The specialty of Nadwa-tul-Ulama was the teaching of Arabic and it was successful in serving the purpose and it got suitable attraction from the Muslim students for the learning of Arabic not only from colonial India but other Muslim countries as well. The efforts which were made for the success of Dar-ul-Uloom Nadwa-tul-Ulama conveyed an emphasis on the tradition of Islamic knowledge more than on activism. (Riaz, 2010, p.83)

The differentiation between secular and religious education was outspoken. The orthodox religious schools of thought were the bitter opponents of the secular education especially for Muslim women but on the other hand the modern educated reformers of the Muslim elite class were in support of women education. This group of educated people started their activism to promote modern education among Muslims by establishing the Muhammadan Educational Conference (MEC) in 1886 which became the voice of Muslim reformers in the field of modern education. A resolution was passed in a session of the Conference about the promotion of modern education among Muslim women. (Naheed, 1993, p.273) It was decided that a strong reaction would be given to those fundamentalists who were resisting the education of women. Similarly, All India Ladies Conference (AILC) was held in 1915 and all the debates in the session were about the women education. (Ajmal & Zafar, 1977, p.9)

British government policies and the spread of modern education among Muslim males created a space for the education of Muslim women. During British period, large number of institutions were established which were purely for the education of Muslim girls. Many national level associations were established to spread awareness about women education among Muslims. These associations were established by the enlightened Muslim ashraafia. Many elite Muslim women were also joined the activism for the education of Muslim women. Such struggle by Muslim women made the women education socially acceptable. (Shabbir, 2012, p.11) The opportunities which were created for the women education in British period were remarkable.

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