Quality Enhancement in Madrasa Education

Quality Enhancement in Madrasa Education:

An Exploratory Study

By

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Cambridge
Scholars
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To my beloved mom, Maimoonath Kunhimoideen Moulavi,
And for all those who encouraged me to fly towards my dreams …

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIU	Association of Indian Universities
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BMEB	Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CCE	Continuous and comprehensive evaluation
CEPET	Centre for Public Education and Training
CIER	Council for Islamic Education and Research
DEO	District Education Officer
DHIU	Darul Huda Islamic University
DIET	District Institute for Educational Training
DKIMVB	Dakshina Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabhyasa Board
EFA	Education for All
FCRA	Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
GER	Gross enrolment ratio
ICT	Information and communication technology
IDMI	Scheme for Infrastructure Development in Minority Institutes
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
JNV	Jawahar Navodya Vidyalya
KNM	Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen Vidhyabhyasa Board
MCD	Minority concentrated districts
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MMC	Madrasa Management Committee
MOM	Modernization of Madrasa Scheme
MTC	Muallim Training Centre
MTI	Majlissu Ta-aleemul Islami
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCMEI	National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions
NCRLM	National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities
NGO	Non-governmental organization

NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
NKC	National Knowledge Commission
NMC	National Minorities Commission
NMCME	National Monitoring Committee for Minorities Education
NMDFC	National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation
NPE	National Policy on Education
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration (formerly NIEPA – National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration)
OBE	Open Basic Education
ODL	Open and distance learning
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RUSA	Rashtriya Uchathar Shiksha Abhiyan
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SIEMAT	State Institute of Educational Management and Technology
SKIEB	Samasthana Kerala Islamic Education Board
SKIMVB	Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabhyasa Board
SKJM	Samastha Kerala Jamʿiyyat al-Muʿallimīn
SKJMCC	Samastha Kerala Jamʿiyyat al-Muʿallimīn Central Council
SKJU	Samastha Kerala Jamʿiyyat al-ʿUlamāʾ
SKSVB	Samastha Kerala Sunni Vidhyabhyasa Board
SPQEM	Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasas
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
THADREEB	Teachers' Hour to Assure Da'wa and Range Empowerment to Ensure Boosting
TLM	Teaching and learning materials
TQM	Total quality management
UEE	Universalisation of Elementary Education
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USE	Universalization of Secondary Education

PROLOGUE

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The Madrasa system of Kerala has rarely attracted scholarly attention in the existing studies. Its unique characteristics, differing from many other Madrasa models in the Muslim world, deserve extensive exploration, but unfortunately not many scholars have studied it thoroughly.

Dr. Basheer's *Quality Enhancement in Madrasa Education* makes an attempt to demonstrate some remarkable aspects of how the system presented a unique way to combine traditional and modern approaches to Islamic education. He fills many gaps in the literature by explaining various nuances that led to its successful trajectory through several decades. With critical engagement, he also suggests the ways in which the system can improve itself in future.

The book presents many insights for both the scholarly and the managerial communities of Kerala's Madrasas, and it will be one of the most significant stepping stones for any future studies in the field.

FOREWORD

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Madrasa education in India has a long and rich past. The history of its inception in this country coincides with the arrival of Muslims on Indian soil and the gradual establishment of their rule across different regions. The development of this traditional system of education in the country has been closely conditioned by the socio-political and economic conditions that were obtained at any point in history. However, as a common thread running through all periods and dynasties of Muslim rule here, Madrasas enjoyed highly decentralized organization and management. During those periods, and later too, they never operated under a monolithic national system of education. Their development, structure, organization and content varied from one region to another, one period to another and even, in many cases, one institution to another, which underscores a strong feature of the high degree of autonomy that these educational institutions have always enjoyed. Independently formulated curricula and many books, particularly on religious sciences, would be common in many of these institutions. This suggests that the state did not always have a collective and complete responsibility for all the institutions of learning, except the prominent ones. How much direct or indirect support these institutions would receive from the state depended on the educational interests of the individual rulers as much as on the reputation enjoyed by the institutions and the learned scholars teaching in the institutions. As a matter of common practice, it was the landed aristocracy of an area, in cases of bigger institutions of higher learning, and the local community, in cases of smaller ones, which extended their support to these institutions on a voluntary basis. Throughout Muslim rule, Madrasas not only catered to the socio-cultural development needs of the community but were also able to meet all kinds of needs of the people in the civic, administrative, business and scientific studies spheres.

For more than seven centuries after the establishment of the Madrasa system in the country, knowledge imparted in these institutions was not

bifurcated and was not distinctively classified into religious and secular knowledge, which was perhaps a healthy trend and was in tune with the original concept of knowledge inculcated in Islam. With the onset of colonial rule in the country, the Madrasa education system received massive waves of shocks, not only due to the substitution of political power but also due to the destruction of a particular way of life and a particular culture. The changing way of life as inculcated through the Western education system implanted by the colonial rulers rendered the Madrasas, which were until then a basic source of empowerment of the community in social, economic, cultural and emotional domains, almost redundant. Voluntary efforts of committed religious leaders of the community could only salvage the system, though in its narrowed-down form. Such voluntary attempts to support and sustain the Madrasa system continued even after India gained independence. In the process, various models of organizing Madrasa education were evolved.

However, the model developed in the southern parts of the country was unique and distinct in the sense that it tried to strike a chord between religious and modern education needs of the community, and offered them the opportunity to address both of these types of need without any compromise. In this region, Kerala presents one of the best examples of this mixed and complementary model of Madrasa education being enforced through a network of thousands of such institutions which are systematically organized and run under the aegis of a few nodal voluntary organizations and boards. After independence, Madrasas in most parts of the country underwent two contrary processes: their numbers increased and their standards declined. But in this part of the country, with expansion, standards do not seem to have been so much affected as is the case elsewhere.

Dr. Basheer has attempted to systematically analyze the contribution of Madrasas in promoting quality education in the state through his exploratory research as reported in the present volume. Quality enhancement in education has been always an ongoing process. In this book Basheer makes several research-based suggestions to further strengthen Madrasas and enhance their contribution in imparting quality education at different levels. I believe that, besides providing an authentic guide to Madrasa managements in the state, this work will prove to be of immense value to all those engaged in organizing Madrasas elsewhere and will provide them with a reliable basis from which to undertake a quality soul-search and valuable cues to refurbish their institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A. M. Abdul Quadir (Professor Emeritus, University of Calicut), Prof. S. M. I. A. Zaidi (Head, NUEPA, New Delhi), Prof. Kumar Suresh (NUEPA, New Delhi), Prof. N. Hasnain (Dept. of Psychology, JMI), Prof. Najma Akthar (NUEPA, New Delhi), Prof. U. N. Rao (Andhra University), Dr. Ahmad Arshad Ikram (DES, Jamia Millia Islamia), Dr. J. D. Sharma (NCERT, New Delhi) *et al.* for their valuable comments and suggestions that helped me a lot.

I sincerely acknowledge commendable help and timely assistance from the officials of various Madrasa boards, office bearers of management committees, heads, teachers, parents and students of the Madrasas where the study was conducted. I thank all those educationists who participated generously in the study. I particularly thank the librarians and other staff members of the Library of the Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, Dr. Zakir Hussain Library, Jamia Millia Islamia, NCERT, NUEPA, ICSSR, AIU, JNU, CIE, University of Delhi, Moulana Azad Library, AMU Aligarh and CHMK Library, University of Calicut, for not only granting me permission to utilize their library facilities but also providing their full cooperation and help.

Further, I thank Director and all the faculty and staff members of Aligarh Muslim University Centre, Malappuram, Kerala for their continuous encouragement and motivation to publish this work.I am especially grateful to my friends, Syed Ashraf Bahassan (Grace Association), Dr. M. Sameer Babu, Dr. M. Noushad Ali, Dr. T. Shafeek, Sajid Hudawi, Adv. C. K. Faizal, C. K. Noufal Wafi *et al*., for their constant encouragement and inspiration.

I express my deep sense of respect to my beloved mother Maimoonath and to my late father Kunhimoideen Moulavi, who remained a constant source of inspiration in my life. I shall fail in my duties if I do not thank my beloved and caring wife Najmu and my pretty daughters Jumana, Amana, Rumana, Hadhiya and Aysha Afreen; my supportive brothers Dr. Mahmood Kooria (Leiden University, The Netherlands), Mohammed Ali, Muhammed Haneef, Muhammed Shafi, Muhammed Rafeek (CUSAT, Cochin), Muhammed Sadik and Muhammed Ashraf; and my sisters Jameela Abdurahiman and Raihanath Sharafudheen Fayḍī for their prayers and encouragement.

I would like to thank the Cambridge Scholars Publishing team, Victoria Carruthers (Author Liaison), Amanda Millar (Typesetting Manager), Courtney Blades (Designer) and Luke Finley (Proof Reader) for their constant attention and constructive suggestions during the publishing process.

Finally, I express my gratitude to all those who have directly or indirectly helped and inspired me to pursue this work in all its true spirit and seriousness. I thank all of them.

K. Mohammed Basheer
22/08/2016

Note on Transliteration

In transliterating Arabic words, I have followed the system of the International Journal of Middle East studies (IJMES).

CHAPTER ONE

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN MADRASA EDUCATION

AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens; the quality of its citizens depends more than any other features upon the quality of education. As the world has transformed from the industrial revolution to the knowledge revolution, the cognitive explosion is the benchmark of the modern era. Knowledge-makers are the key players of the time. The purpose of education must be to empower knowledge-makers. Youth, in the form of intellectual capital, is becoming the richest intangible asset, and the human development index has become the indicator of a nation's progress. India has a majority of young people in its population. If the potentials of youth are utilized, the destiny of the nation will surely change. Mainstreaming of marginalized sections has a pivotal role to play in the prosperity of the nation. Education is a liberating and secularizing force. In this context, this study has tried to analyse the quality enhancement process in the Madrasa education system, one of the largest non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country.

1.2 Rationale for Madrasa education

India is the museum of all the world religions, a country where all the major religions are present. It is a land of diversity; a mosaic of many castes, communities, languages, religions and cultures. In exercise of its freedom, it has chosen to be a socialist, secular, democratic republic. The essence of secularism is the recognition and preservation of different groups of people with diverse languages and beliefs, and their integratation into a whole and united India. The Constitution reflects the

pluralistic essence of Indian society and the right of each segment to self-development, but as an integral part of a nation in the making. Unity in diversity or plurality is the key concept which leads India to set an ideal of peaceful co-existence of diverse groups. Significantly, all the religions have contributed in forming the culture, heritage and traditions of the nation.

The pace of a convoy of vehicles depends upon the speed of the slowest vehicle within it. The strength of a chain depends upon the strength of the weakest ring in the chain. In this way, the strength of the nation mainly depends upon the strength of the weaker sections of society. The essence of development lies in the inclusion of these weaker sections. These sections include most of the minority communities, people belonging to less-developed castes and regions, etc. The University Grants Commission, the highest governance body in higher education, in its document on the 12th Plan, talks about inclusion in detail. In addition to that, the National Knowledge Commission and Planning Commission of India put well-deserved stress, in their policy documents, on inclusion of weaker sections of society in the development process. The Prime Minister's High Level Committee, known as the Sachar Committee, and the Justice Misra Commission on Linguistic Minorities also talk about the empowerment of minorities, especially Muslims.

The contribution of Muslims, like that of any other community, to the culture and history of the nation is undeniable.

> Next to Indonesia, India is home to the largest number of Muslims in any single country in the world. But the significance of the Muslim community in the Indian context is not merely a matter of statistics. The contributions that Muslims have made to the art and architecture, history and culture, politics and polemics of India are so integral that it inspired Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation to declare that Hindus and Muslim are like his two eyes. To see the wider picture, we need to see how they live in tandem. We cannot afford to be a one-eyed nation! The educational empowerment of a sizeable community, like the Muslims, heirs to one of the most intellectually vibrant cultures in history, is an issue of crucial significance, hence, for the country as a whole. Thanks to a confluence of geopolitical and cultural sensitivities, Madrasa education is today a major international and national concern. (National Commission For Minority Educational Institutions Report 2005, p. 3)

The Madrasa education system introduced by the Muslims has emerged as one of the largest non-formal education systems prevailing in the country. Even though Madrasa education is very much a formal system of education in many states, government documents consider it a non-

formal system of education. Now, it is one of the largest networks of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in the country. Madrasa education in India, which originated several centuries ago in a different political and social context, continues to address, though in part, the educational needs of a large section of the Muslim population.

1.3 Overview and brief history of Madrasa education

Islam places utmost importance on the study and transmission of knowledge. It is the heart of Islamic civilization. Muslims around the world have founded a variety of teaching and learning centres, both at the primary and the higher levels, to educate everybody in the community about the basic tenets of the religion and to produce religious scholars respectively. It is worth mentioning that the word knowledge – ʿIlm in Arabic language – is the second most repeated word in the Qurʾān. The word "Qurʾān" originated from the word "Qara-a", meaning "to read". In numerous verses, the Qurʾān attaches great importance to the pursuit of knowledge. The very first revelation of the book is about the importance and source of knowledge. In this revelation, Prophet Muhammad was given a command to read and write. In a number of sayings, Prophet Muhammad emphasizes the need to seek knowledge from cradle to grave and to regard it as a sacred duty. The Prophet's sayings cover such modern ideas as compulsory education of both sexes, adult and continuing education, and exchanges in the field of education and learning (Ahmed 1990). According to Islam, education is the most powerful tool to bring about positive social change and to put an end to ignorance and superstitions. The arrival of Islam created a revolution in the world and laid the foundation of a glorious civilization and culture.

The avowed aim of Madrasa education is to inculcate the belief and practice of Islam among its followers and guide them to follow the Qurʾān and the traditions of the Prophet. The foundation of Madrasa education, therefore, basically stands on the two pillars of Qurʾān and Sunna (tradition of Prophet Mohammad). Even though the structural form of Madrasa that we see today did not exist in the period of Prophet Muhammad, a strong system of learning and teaching was there. The learning and teaching process was stressed from the very moment the first revelation came upon Prophet Muhammad.

The origin of the Madrasa goes back to the time at which the Prophet of Islam established the first such Madrasa in his mosque, Masjid al Nabawi in Madina, with dedicated learners called Asḥāb al- ṣuffah. There he would teach them the tenets of Islam and explain to them the contents

of the revelation which he had received. Starting from Masjid al Nabawi of Madina Al Munawwara, the Madrasa steadily developed through Nizamia; Zaituna, Tunisia (732); Baithul Hikma, Iraq (830), founded by Caliph al-Mamun; Al Qaraviyin, Morrocco (859); Al Azhar, Cairo (972), founded by Caliph al-Muizz; Madrasa Nizamia, Baghdad (1067), founded by Nizam ul-Mulk Hassan Bin al-Tusi; Grenada and Qurtaba (Cardova); and Jami 'ul-Andulus of Andulus, Spain, before spreading all over the world (Anzar 2003). The establishment of Madrasas as organized institutions took place much later. The first formal Madrasa was established in Neshapur in Khurasan and the second was Madrasa Nizamia in Baghdad, both founded in the 11th century by Nizam-Ul-Mulk Tusi (1018–1092 AD), who is considered to be the father of the Islamic public education system (Haqqani 2002). The first two institutions which achieved everlasting fame were Madrasa Nizamia and Madrasa Mustansariyyah in Baghdad. There are about 100,000 small and big Madrasas in India, 40,000 in Pakistan, 37,000 in Bangladesh and 36,532 in Indonesia (Ahmed 2002). Afghanistan, Malaysia and Nigeria also have a large number of Madrasas of varying levels and sizes.

1.3.1 Indian scenario

The Madrasa education system in India is very old and unique. It was started with the advent of Muslim rule during the medieval period, when Madrasas were the most prominent centres of learning. During every Muslim regime in India, a separate group of scholars was appointed to look after Islamic educational institutions. The rulers generously spent large amounts of money on these institutions and built big Madrasas to educate the people. These Madrasas were engaged in promoting education among Muslim families living in those areas. They were provided with free education, scholarship, food and lodging without any distinction between the "haves and the have-nots". Madrasas have generally provided traditional education in India. They have helped in promoting literacy and education among Muslims. Over the centuries, they have produced distinguished academics and administrators such as Sher Shah Suri, Abul Fazal, Faizi, Todar Mal and Fathullah Shirazi, among a host of others. Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the Hindu reformer and founder of the Brahma Samaj, was educated in a Madrasa (Khan 2003).

The history of Madrasa education in India begins with the reign of first Turkish Sultan, Qutubuddin Aibek. He established hundreds of mosques, which were centres of both religious ritual and learning. Ilthumish was the next King who showed concern for education, establishing Nasiriya

College at Delhi and Al Firoza Madrasa in Multan. The Khilji rulers also established Madrasas along similar lines. The Tuglaqs, who followed the Khiljis, merit special mention for their efforts towards the development of Islamic education. Sultan Sikandar Lodhi transferred his capital from Delhi to Agra, which soon became an important centre of learning. In the course of time, Agra grew into a great educational centre with several Maktabs and Madrasas. Giyasuddin Awwal, who ruled Bengal between 1212 and 1227 AD, is said to have been one of the distinguished rulers; he established Madrasas and provided the students with scholarships. In Gujarat, Sultan Ahmad Shah (1411 to 1441), the founder of Ahmadabad city, established many Maktabs and Madrasas. The southern part of India too did not lag behind in education. As a matter of fact, it was a step ahead of the north in some fields of education.

The Mughal rulers Sultan Zaheeruddin Babar (1483–1531), Naseeruddin Humayun (1508–1556) and Akbar (1542–1605) took a comparatively greater interest in the education of their subjects. About Babar's educational contribution, it is reported that he not only exhorted people to learn, but also established various colleges and Madrasas. Sher Shah Suri (1486–1545) did the same. Among the institutions set up by him, Sher Shah Madrasa in Narnol district, Patiala, became very famous for scholarship. There was a big Madrasa, to which Akbar had invited a scholar from Sheeraz – Mir Fathullah Shirazi – to educate the students. Under imperial patronage, ʿUlamāʾ such as Fathullah Shirazi (*c*. 1582), Hakim Abdul Fatah Gilani (1556–1605), Abul Fazal (1551–1602), Faizi (1545–1595), Saiyid Nurullah Shushtari (1549–1610) and others laid the foundation of a new education policy and revised the syllabi of the Madrasas. Numerous Madrasas were established in Fatehpur Sikri near Agra, which was inhabited by Akbar. Akbar was far ahead of his age with regard to changes in the mode of study, curriculum and methods of teaching. He introduced morality, arithmetic, accounts, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, geography, economics, the art of governance, physics, logic, natural philosophy, divinity and history in Madrasas. The Hindus studied Nyaya, Vendanta and Patanjali in these institutions. Everyone studied according to their own requirements and circumstances. Mughal rulers, mainly Jehangir, Shah Jehan and Aurangazeb Aalamgeer, played a very significant role in establishing mosques and Arabic Madrasas. In 1678, Aurangazeb Aalamgeer (1618–1707) rebuilt many Maktabs and Madrasas in Gujarat and appointed experienced teachers to educate students. During the Mughal period, Delhi was thronged with Arabic Madrasas and great scholars. The most famous among them were Madrasa Rahimiyah, the Madrasa of Bazr Khanam, and Madrasa

Ghaziuddin at Ajmeri Gate. This period witnessed a wide expansion of Maktabs and Madrasas and would be remembered for another curriculum reform which was introduced in the Madrasa system of education and which for centuries has remained almost unchanged and static. The man responsible for the reshaping of this curriculum was Mulla Nizamudin of Sihali. Aurangzeb granted Mulla Nizamuddin an old mansion owned by a French trader, the Firangi Mahal, in Lucknow, where he set up a Madrasa which soon emerged as the leading centre of Islamic studies in north India. Mulla Nizamuddin prepared a fresh curriculum for Firangi Mahal Madrasa, which came to be known after him as the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī* or the 'Nizami Curriculum'. The focus of the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī* was on what was called the 'rational sciences' (*manqūlāt*) or subjects, such as law, philosophy and grammar, that would befit prospective bureaucrats. Three centuries later, the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī* continues to be the syllabus of most Madrasas in South Asia today, although an increasing number of books on the 'revealed sciences' (*maʿqūlāt*), such as theology and the traditions of the Prophet (*Ḥadīth*), have been added.

During British rule, the entire system of education was changed. The closing down of most of the Maktabs and Madrasas was the result of British antipathy towards such institutions. This gave a serious jolt to the traditional educational set-up, as institutions were deprived of their endowments in the form of free land and were left to depend on their own resources. The establishment of modern schools also contributed to the decline of many of the Maktabs and Madrasas. The establishment of Madrasa-i-Aliya, Calcutta, was the first step by the British rulers to provide for the traditional education of Muslims. In 1781, Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madrasa College for Muhammedans for the study of "Mohammedan law and such other sciences as was taught in Mohammedan schools". The Aligarh movement headed by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, started later, was another attempt to improve the educational institutions of Muslims. The last two decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century witnessed various commissions appointed by the British rulers to study the state of education in the country, and it is to be noted that some of these also studied the reasons for the poor average level of educational attainment of Muslims in India. The Madrasa System came under serious scrutiny in these studies.

After the Revolt of 1857, Muslims became conscious of preserving their culture. Among the famous Madrasas established after the 1857 Revolt were Madrasa Darul Uloom of Deoband (1866), Madrasa Mazhahirul Uloom of Saharanpur (1866), Nadwatul ʿUlamāʾ of Lucknow (1894) and several Madrasas in Delhi. Nadwatul ʿUlamāʾ introduced

rational sciences and working knowledge of English in its courses of study, while emphasizing Arabic literature and Islamic history. The replacement of Persian by English in 1837 as the language of the courts was another blow to the Madrasa system.

The Mutiny of 1857 and the subsequent transfer of authority of governance of India from the East India Company to the British Crown had a very profound impact on Muslim education in India. Muslims had to face many formidable challenges in addition to the general animosity of the British rulers. They had to counter the proselytizing activities of the Christian missionaries. The ʿUlamāʾ and the masses rose to the occasion and started a series of Madrasas in the country. A large number of Madrasas were set up in the latter half of the 19th century (Khan 2003). Most important and famous among them were:

1. Darul Uloom, Deoband, 1866.
2. Mazahirul Uloom, Saharanpur, 1866.
3. Madrasa Baqyatu Salehat, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, 1883.
4. Jamia Mazharul Uloom, Benares, 1893.
5. Darul Uloom Nadwathul ʿUlamāʾ, Lucknow, 1894.
6. Madrasa Ameenia, Delhi, 1897.
7. Darul Uloom Khalilia Nizamia, Tonk, 1899.
8. Jamia Arabia Hayatul Uloom, Mubarakpur, 1899.
9. Madrasa ul-Islah, Sarai Mir, Azamgarh, 1909.
10. Jamia Darus Salam, Umnabad, 1924.

Partition of the country had a significant impact on the Madrasa education system of the country in terms of both quality and quantity. In the wake of Indian independence, most of the politically articulate and well-to-do Muslims migrated to Pakistan, whereas the weaker Muslim masses remained in India. Madrasas contributed to the national cause tremendously. The founders and graduates of Madrasas played leading roles in the country's freedom struggle, as well as in nation building. Moulana Ubaidullah Sindhi and Moulana Barakatullah Khan Bhopali were among the first to ask for complete freedom for India.

1.4 Present scenario of Madrasa education

At present, there are several thousand Islamic schools spread all over India. Institutions known as Madrasas may be divided into four categories:

1. Maktab (for primary education)

2. Madrasa (for secondary/senior secondary level of study)
3. Darul Qurʾān (for memorization of the Holy Qurʾān)
4. Jamia (for higher studies)

Each Muslim sect has its own chain of such institutions throughout the country. For many poor families, the Madrasa is the only source of education for their children, since they charge no fees and provide free boarding and lodging to their students. Maktabs provide basic religious education, while Madrasas provide religious education up to the secondary/senior secondary levels. Jamias are institutions of higher learning, providing instructions up to post-graduation and specialization levels. Every Madrasa follows its own pattern in the matter of study structure. There is no uniformity with regard to subjects, books or emphasis. Furthermore, there is no uniformity in the number of years it takes to prepare students for various degrees. The number of Madrasas in India is estimated to be 30,000 to 40,000 (Akhtar 2010), but as there have been no studies which have surveyed all the Madrasas in the country and collected the information, the exact number of Madrasas is shrouded in mystery. Another reason for controversy regarding the number of Madrasas is that there is no standard definition of what constitutes a Madrasa in India. They defy any particular pattern in terms of the education, infrastructure, number of intakes and funding, but in common all are called Madrasa. There are a large number of Madrasas in northern and western parts of the country. According to Home Ministry sources, there are 721 Madrasas catering to over 120,000 children in Assam; 1,825 Madrasas catering to over 120,000 children in Gujarat; 961 Madrasas catering to 84,864 children in Karnataka; 9,975 Madrasas catering to 738,000 children in Kerala; 6,000 Madrasas catering to over 400,000 children in Madhya Pradesh; and some 1,780 Madrasas catering to over 25,000 children in Rajasthan. In Uttar Pradesh, the number of Maktabs is greater than 15,000 and the number of Madrasas is above 10,000. 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 507 Madrasas affiliated to the West Bengal Madrasa Board, in which about 200,000 boys and girls study. Besides, there are many unregistered seminaries. States to be included after survey are Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Punjab, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chhattisgharh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Pondicherry and North Eastern States (excluding Assam) (MHRD 1991).

1.5 Constitutional provisions for education of minorities

The Indian Constitution has made various provisions for the education and harmonious development of minorities.

Chapter III of the Indian Constitution (Fundamental Rights): Articles 14 to 31 ensures equality and non-discrimination before the law, in matters of public employment, freedom of movement, expression, and faith and so on. Put together, both chapters should have already, after nearly six decades of independent and democratic functioning, ensured the eradication of illiteracy, basic and good quality education, and education which is free of race, caste, community-driven and gender bias.

Chapter IV (The Directive Principles of State Policy): One of the major issues in India concerning education relates to access to free primary and secondary education for all Indian children and young people regardless of caste, community and gender, and parity in quality of their education as mandated in the Constitution under the following Articles.

Article 14: Ensures equality before the law and equal protection by the law.

Article 15: Prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth.

Article 21: No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except through the procedure established by law.

Article 21 A: The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6 to 14 years.

Article 25: Ensures freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion.

Article 26: Ensures the right to manage religious institutions and religious affairs, subject to public order, morality and health.

Article 29: Protects minorities' right to conserve their language, script or culture.

Article 30: Provides for the protection of the interests of minorities by giving them a right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The State is directed not to discriminate against minority institutions in granting aid.

Article 45: The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they reach the age of six years.

Article 46: The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections.

Article 51 A (k) (Fundamental Duty): A parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child between the ages of 6 and 14 years.

Article 350 A: Directs the State to provide facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education.

However, despite the constitutional provisions for equality in educational opportunity, Muslims in India have not been able to obtain much benefit from these provisions, unlike the Dalits or other marginalized groups of the country, as the latter were favoured with measures of protective discrimination.

Although discussions about affirmative action policies for Muslims have taken place on many occasions in Indian history, Muslims have not received preferential treatment or reservations. Thus, a comparison of educational improvements for Muslims and Dalits/Adivasis respectively would help us distinguish between secular improvements in education for all marginalized groups and improvements for groups that are subject to affirmative action.

Various efforts have been made by the government to strengthen the Madrasa education system. The High Power Panel on Minorities (1980) and the Group on Minorities Education (1990) set up by the Department of Education advocated relevant changes in the curriculum. The National Policy on Education (1986), the Program of Action (1992) and the Prime Minister's 15 Point Program for Welfare of Minorities suggested modernization of traditional Madrasas, and the "Scheme of Modernization of Madrasas" was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme in 1994 suggesting the introduction of English, science, mathematics and Hindi as additional subjects on a voluntary basis.

In 2004, the Standing Committee of the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities was constituted. Its primary aim was to know the difficulties that were being faced by minorities in the field of education, and whether or not the schemes run/introduced by the central government for the educational elevation of minorities were being properly dealt with by provincial/local governments. In one of its recommendations, the committee suggested a way of introducing modern education in Madrasas without disturbing their regular affairs. Madrasa education has been formally linked with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). NIOS is an autonomous organization operating through an open and distance learning (ODL) mode of education. The Government of India has vested in NIOS the authority to examine and certify students from the elementary level to the secondary and the senior secondary level. It provides educational opportunities to various categories, especially to those who belong to deprived sections of society. With more than 2,500,000 students on the roll, delivering courses of study through the ODL mode with the help of more than 6,000 study centres in almost all