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PIVOTAL CENTERS OF MUSLIM EDUCATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Mohammedans, on their arrival in India, established their colonies in different parts. These establishments eventually developed into larger towns. In course of time, these towns became the important centers of Islamic Primary education was imparted in the Maktabs attached to mosques. The mosques were usually situated in most of the towns, villages and Mohallahs. Nearly in all parts of the country, the mosques had been constructed. Higher education was conducted in the Madarsas. The Madarsas or colleges were established in towns, where the Muslim population was in majority and where some Muslim administrators would reside. Generally every town had one or more Madarsas. These towns were grown into famous educational centers by virtue of being the capital seat of some Muslim ruler, or the native town of some subedar or chief of religion (being Dargah or Khankah etc.,) Thus Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Delhi, Janupur, Lahore, Ajmer, Bihar, Lucknow, Firozabad, Jullunder, Multan and Bijapur etc. became important centers of Muslim Education and culture. Among them Agra, Delhi, Jaunpur and Bidar occupied a very important place.

KEYWORDS: colonies, Muslim educational centre, Madarsas, jagirs.

INTRODUCTION

The Mohammedans, on their arrival in India, established their colonies in different parts. These establishments eventually developed into larger towns. In course of time, these towns became the important centers of Islamic Primary education was imparted in the Maktabs attached to mosques. The mosques were usually situated in most of the towns, villages and Mohallahs. Nearly in all parts of the country, the mosques had been constructed. Higher education was conducted in the Madarsas. The Madarsas or colleges were established in towns, where the Muslim population was in majority and where

some Muslim administrators would reside. Generally every town had one or more Madarsas. These towns were grown into famous educational centers by virtue of being the capital seat of some Muslim ruler, or the native town of some subedar or chief of religion (being Dargah or Khankah etc.,) Thus Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Delhi, Janupur, Lahore, Ajmer, Bihar, Lucknow, Firozabad, Jullunder, Multan and Bijapur etc. became important centers of Muslim Education and culture. Among them Agra, Delhi, Jaunpur and Bidar occupied a very important place.

1. AGRA

Sikandar Lodi ruled Agra. Later it became an important place of India. The city was launched upon a career, which was characterized by a rich efflorescence of learning. It became a radiant center of Islamic culture and civilization. Sikander Lodi developed it into a famous educational centre and established hundreds of Madarsas. Men of learning from Arabia, Persia and Bokhara came to India, who were known for their munificence. The result was that in course of time Agra grew where people flocked from far and wide for higher education to Agra. After Sikander Lodi, Babar too established some Madarsas at Agra. Agra became an important center of Islamic education and culture as well as arts and crafts during the reign of Akbar. Several scholars, philosophers, poets and artists came to Agra from different parts of the country and settled there. The emperor himself participated in learned disputations with the scholars and philosophers.

Akbar also established many Madarsas at Fatehpur Sikri, Sikri is a town founded by the emperor Akbar himself at a distance of few miles away from Agra. In these Madarsas, higher education was imparted and the subjects such as Literature, Arithmetic, Philosophy, Medicine, Agriculture, Astronomy and Commerce were taught. There was proper arrangement for the lodging and boarding of students coming from Central Asia for the sake of education. The period of Akbar's reign can aptly be called the 'golden age' of the progress of Agra. After Akbar, his son Jahangir and grandson Emperor Shahjahan also established some Madarsas. Aurangzeb too gave much encouragement for the promotion of primary and religious education. With the downfall of the Moghal Empire, the glory of Agra began to fade away. In modern times too some of the Maktabs were dragging on their miserable existence in some mosques.

2. DELHI

Delhi has remained important center of the Islamic system of education from the very beginning. In fact, it continued to be the metropolis of Sultans. Moghal Emperors too contributed much to its glory and magnificence. Nasiruddin had established Narsira Madarsa under the leadership of Minjai Shiraj. Afterwards, Delhi remained as an important center of culture and education during the reign of other rulers. During the period of Allauddin Khilji Delhi became the rendezvous of many a scholars and philosophers. According to Farishta, at that time 43 eminent religious preachers who were profound scholarship in religion and law, taught in the Madarsas.

The importance of Delhi as educational center increased during the reign of Firozshah Tuglaq. He founded 30 new colleges and got older ones upgraded. He made provision for the education

of his slaves also. After that, Delhi reached the climax of its progress during Moghal reign and became prominent educational centre in northern India. Humayun had founded a college for the purpose of conducting education in astronomy and geography.

Jahangir made repaired to older Madarsas. Shahjahan, had founded a college near Jumma Masjid, Aurangzeb too continued his educational efforts. After him, Ghazi-ub-Din established a Madarsa. With the collapse of the Moghal Empire, and invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali the glory of Delhi faded away. With the destruction of other educational centre of northern India, importance of Delhi as Muslim educational centre dwindled. Even though Delhi continued to enjoy the status of an eminent educational centre disseminating Islamic culture throughout the country.

3. JAUNPUR

Jaunpur was a very important center of Muslim education, where many schools and colleges sprang up during the period of Firozshah's reign. Jaunpur had grown in fame and importance from the viewpoint of arts, literature and learning of highest order. It was called 'Shiraj-i-Hind.' Sharki kings founded many colleges at Jaunpur. During the fifteenth century Ibrahim Sharki has made contributions to the growth of education. He had attached Jagirs to these institutions and encouraged capable students by awarding jagirs and appointing them to higher ranks in the state courts. Shersshah Suri was a student of this place.

Jaunpur was an important education centre of history, philosophy, politics and military training. It continued to enjoy fame for its rich handicrafts and architecture for centuries, and remained as an important educational centre till the last days of Moghal Empire. The University town of Janpur lost much of its glory due to political chaos that followed by the downfall of Moghal Empire. The Subedar or Governor of Jaunpur could not maintain and patronize the magnificent system of Education. Like many other educational centers the glory of this seat of learning also faded away.

4. BIDAR

Mahmud Gavan had established a big Madarsa with vast and rich library well stocked with thousands of books in Bidar. Before Mahmud, Allauddin Ahmed had founded many Maktabs and Madarsas there. Owing to the development of Bidar into an important educational centre the standard of education in Bahmani Empire had risen considerably. Here the students learn Arabic and Persian in the rural Elementary schools. These schools were attached to mosques. Land grants were given by the State for their maintenance. There was not even a single hamlet which did not have at least a Maktab in the state of Bidar. The educational system followed in these institutions was uniform. The aim of the

Education was the propagation of religious doctrines and principles of Mohammedan rulers. Its remnants are visible even today. Besides these important seats of learning, Bijapur, Golconda, Malwa, Khandesh, Multan, Gujarat, Lucknow, Sialkot and Bengal were other centers of Educational importance.

Muslims settled in India over a period of time and now are the largest Minority in India. The new challenges of the 21st century cannot be encountered without considering the problems of Muslim Education in India. Muslim community of this nation comprises 14.23 percent of its population. Muslim population is in two digit numbers ranging from 96.58 (Lakshadweep) to 11.54 (Maharashtra) in 12 states/union territories of India. Jammu and Kashmir constitutes 68.31 per cent. India is close to 11 per cent of total Muslims Population of World. It has third highest Muslim Population after Indonesia and Pakistan. It is the largest minority community in India having the literacy rate lower (67.6 per cent) than the national level of (74.04 per cent).

The present status of Muslim education is of great concern. Undoubtedly, it is an important dimension in the realm of Muslim education in India which requires urgent attention. The new challenges of the 21st century cannot be encountered without considering the problems of Muslim education in India because Muslims belong to a minority community of this nation comprising 14.23 per cent of its population.

The Muslim rulers has given utmost importance to the Education as per the need and encouraged the society to get Education. The present

need is to encourage the Muslim society to have Education in all levels i.e. academic and professional areas.

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