

# ***Historical Evolution of Educational System in the Pre-Partition Indian Subcontinent***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This article aims at analyzing the historical background of the education system in the Indian subcontinent and tries to find out if there has been any concept of religious education before partition which continued in Pakistan after independence. In the wake of 9/11 attacks, Pakistan took take a strong posture towards religious (Islamic) ideology and the education syllabus in the country. Historically, the government of Pakistan had mostly used Islamic ideology as the symbolism in its education syllabus in order to promote a community that practices and follows the laws of Islam, based on Quran and Sunnah. Even the overall culture of Pakistan provides a glimpse of Islamic traditions and values than of its diverse history.*

## **Introduction**

The arrival of education in the Indian subcontinent dates back to the traditional element of various religions in the continent. Every religion had its own way of teaching however the proper form of education such as writing on the

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paper started in 751 A.D.<sup>1</sup> Early education in the continent originated under the supervision of *Guru*,<sup>2</sup> which means a teacher.

The Muslim education in the subcontinent seemed to be on the go after the arrival of various Muslim emperors during Islamic preaching by Arabs. These Arabs came here with purpose of trade and later, settled in eastern and western coastline of the subcontinent. *Walid Ibn-e-Abdul Malik* (705-715) is considered to be the first Caliph who conquered Sindh in 711.<sup>3</sup> Later, commanders of Mahmud Ghauri, who ruled the western regions of India, started establishing *Madrasahs* (Urdu: Islamic Education Schools) in many parts of the subcontinent. Mehmood Ghaznavi, who also made several attempts to India, from 999 to 1026, promoted the Islamic education and established many institutions.<sup>4</sup>

The educational institutes of India were rich in learning. Various renowned institutes produced a number of intellectuals and scholars. In some areas of subcontinent, especially at the western side, Aryan culture was dominant while Varanasi was considered as the cultural center at the time of Upanishads. However, it lost its importance during the modern times.

### Varanasi

Varanasi had become an epic center of learning at the time of Buddha. Varanasi was rich in its culture of education as the teachers of area were quite famous across India for their better teaching skills and deep knowledge. It had distinction among the other institutes of the subcontinent because it was the place where Buddha started to preach his religion.

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1 Tiwari, Lalit, *History of Paper Technology in India*, [http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/t\\_es/t\\_es\\_tiwari\\_paper\\_frameset.htm](http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/t_es/t_es_tiwari_paper_frameset.htm) (accessed on Feb. 9, 2016).

2 The word Guru is a Hindi word, which means a male teacher. Guru, as professional, was highly respected by his students, be that a dance Guru or religious Guru.

3 S. A. A. Rizvi, *The Wonder That Was India, Vol. II* (New Delhi, 1993), 126.

4 S. M. Edwards and H. L. O. Garrett, *Mughal Rule in India* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1974), 187.

## Taxila

Located in the modern-day Pakistan, Taxila was considered as an epicenter of culture of the subcontinent. The region had the advantage of having country's oldest universities. For Indian scholars, Taxila was colonized by Bharath in the name of his son 'Taksh' in *Ramayana* (the Hindu holy book). Taxila had the institutes that were famous for Brahmanical education. Thousands of students got their education from the universities of this area. This is how Taxila had become an education city of ancient times. History witnesses that the students from different parts of the subcontinent were gathered at this hub of education. Gradually students from Iran started migrating towards Taxila to study culture and other general subjects of that time. Kautilya, Panini and Chandragupta Maurya were among those intellectuals and scholars who also taught in the universities of Taxila.<sup>5</sup>

The geographical location of Taxila attracted the invaders and resultantly, the region had to undergo many political changes that left impacts on its system of education too. The political changes had some positive effects as construction of new roads took place in Taxila. Fortunately, it maintained its individuality as a hub of education despite numerous attempts by invaders like Parsis and Kushans. On the other hand, the influence of Persian language started eliminating the use of Brahmi language in Taxila. Consequently, the use of Grecian languages as a medium of instruction started increasing in the universities of Taxila.

## Nalanda

India was famous for its educational institutes in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century during *Gupta* age. In Nalanda University, Buddhism was considered to be the main subject. Many students migrated during that period to study Mahayana in Nalanda.<sup>6</sup> The students' training in Nalanda was free of cost. The Nalanda University had numerous employers who served

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5 A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (Delhi: Rupa and Co. 1995), 165

6 Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*.

more than 10,000 students, while the total number of teachers in the institute was almost 1500.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Mughal era in the subcontinent may be called the golden period of the region as it made great progress in geometry, mathematics, philosophy, astronomy and linguistics but in 1857, the fall of Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah Zafar became a reason behind the collapse of Mughal reign in India.

After Aurangzeb reign Marathas had become a political strength while Jats and Sikhs had also started to gain military power<sup>8</sup>. Marathas wanted to establish their rule in the country. They started learning statecrafts too. All their efforts to establish rule remained unsuccessful. Shivaji's father, Shanhji, was one of them. Gradually, the hold of Mughal emperors in Punjab and Bengal started weakened. Also small states of subcontinent started their affiliations with comparatively larger Indian states. These states were not strong enough to defend themselves against any military occupation. Therefore, in some cases they asked the British for help to fight against their rivals.

### **Al-Bairuni and his Contribution in Education in India**

Abbu Rayhan Mohammad ibn-e-Ahmaed- al-Khwarizmi (Al-Bairuni) appeared as a famous scholar of India, Pakistan and Central Asia as well. He was also a creative writer whose writings covered various parts of philosophy, history, astronomy, society, geography, mathematics and many others. The available literature does not clearly indicates as when and where Al-Bairuni was born or even no record of his burial place is shown anywhere in the existing research material on his profile.<sup>9</sup> However, some of the history scholars argue that, Al-Bairuni was born in 973 A.D. in Khawarizm, which was near the modern Khiva in

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7 Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, 166

8 James Grant Duff, *History of the Marathas* (New Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1990), 213.

9 M. D. Hadi, Ahsanul, *Biruni's Contribution to the Comparative Study of Religion*, VFAST Transactions on Islamic Research, 2015, <file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/276-936-1-PB.pdf> (accessed on February 13, 2016)

Uzbekistan. Some scholars believe that he died in 1048 A.D.<sup>10</sup>

History contends that Abu Rehan al-Bairuni was the first Muslim scientist who learned Sanskrit language and became proficient in it. He was the first scholar of India who defined the subcontinent's social, cultural and religious history in his book *Kitab fi Tahqiq ma li'l-Hind* (Researches on India) which was earlier limited to the political or military history only. The military invasions of King Mahmud of Ghazna in the subcontinent had made the overall living situation unfavorable for the Hindu scholars but Al Bairuni, even then, described and explained the principles of Hindu religion without any biases. He brought forward the similarities between the Hindu and Greek civilizations. He concluded that Hinduism and its basic theories were in a state of confusion (*Kitab al-Hind*). He translated *Samkhya* and *Patanjali* in Arabic language and introduced *Gita* for study purpose to the Muslim world. The doctrines of Hindu astronomy and mathematics were highlighted and explained by him. He wrote more than 1000 pages long book *Qánún Mas'údi* that elaborated geometry, astronomy and mathematics.

### **Education System during Delhi Sultanate<sup>11</sup>**

The famous education centers in the subcontinent for higher education; like, those in Nalanda, Taxila, Bhagalpur, North Bengal, Kathiawar near old Karachi and many others, had vanished long ago however, the Islamic education flourished in this continent under the benefaction of Muslim potentates and lords.<sup>12</sup>

The Islamic education system was introduced in subcontinent just after the establishment of Dehli Sultanate

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10 Hadi, "Biruni's Contribution to the Comparative Study of Religion,".

11 The word *Sultanate* is an Urdu word, which means Empire.

12 Education in India, *Indian Culture and Heritage Secondary Course*, <http://www.nios.ac.in/media/documents/secichcour/english/ch.18.pdf> (accessed on January 13, 2016).

under Medieval Period<sup>13</sup>. The main feature of the Islamic educational system was mostly divided into two categories: *Manqulat* (Traditional) and *Maqulat* (Rational) sciences. The tradition, history, law and literature came under the traditional sciences however; philosophy, logic, medicine, astronomy and mathematics came under rational sciences.<sup>14</sup>

Delhi Sultans<sup>15</sup> performed a remarkable role in the overall system of education in India. This is the reason that a special attention to the culture of education in the sub-continent proved to be a mainstay for the Muslim education in the region. Madrassas became one of the main sources of higher education and knowledge under Delhi Sultans. Hadith, mysticism, grammar especially *fiqh* were interpreted and discussed among the students during their higher education.<sup>16</sup> The migrated students from the different Islamic countries especially from Central Asia resulted in a positive change in the overall curriculum of higher education of the region.

Madrassas, educational institutes having religious bases, were established during the 11<sup>th</sup> Century in the subcontinent. In these madrassas all the main subjects were taught in Arabic language, which was quite difficult to understand without a scholar or *Alama*. As higher education, the madrassas were offering the following subjects;

1. *Tafsir* (Quranic Exegesis)
2. *Hadith* (Traditions of Prophet Mohammad)
3. *Fiqh* (Islamic Law)
4. *Usul-i-Fiqh* (Principles of Islamic Law)
5. *Ilm-e-Nahf* (Grammar)
6. *Adab* (Literature)
7. *Mantaq* (Logic)

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13 Education in India, *Indian Culture and Heritage Secondary Course*.

14 Education in India, *Indian Culture and Heritage Secondary Course*.

15 Sultans means Emperors.

16 Anilla Mobasher, "System of Higher Education under the Delhi Sultans," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 34, no. 1 (2014):121-129.

8. *Tasawuf* (Mysticism)
9. *Ilm-ul-Kalam* (Scholasticism)<sup>17</sup>

Sultan Sikandar Lodhi was the first Delhi Sultan who made some additions in the curriculum of higher education. His regime added eight commentary books in the curriculum. Subjects like Logic, Philosophy and completely new subject Rhetoric were made a part of the curriculum of higher education.<sup>18</sup>

### **Sanskrit during Delhi Sultanate**

Sanskrit language was another main instrument for communication and the medium of literature, used during the Delhi sultanate period. The academic work on Sanskrit language has proved to be a remarkable work that leads many groups from various walks of life to learn the Sanskrit language. The literature during Delhi Sultanate commenced with the rise of Persians. It was evident that the Persian language should have been given more priority in order to spread it throughout the continent but Sanskrit language remained an important tool of the time despite huge influence of the Persians.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, Syed Sulaiman Nadvi while giving a historical background of Sanskrit language, contends that Sanskrit book *Sind-Hind* was approached by the Arabs through the Indian scholars before Ptolemy's *al-Majiste* and was quite well known amongst the Muslims of that time.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the ancient Arabs changed the title of the actual book with *Al Sindh-Wal-Hind* [Persian: Sindh and Hind], which was later republished and presented by Braham

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17 Mobasher, "System of Higher Education under the Delhi Sultans,".

18 G. M. D. Sufi, *Al-Minhaj: Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions of Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1981), 32.

19 Syed Abdul Latif, *An Outline of the Cultural History of India* (Hyderabad: Institute of Indo-Middle East Cultural Studies, 1958), 334.

20 Allam Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, *The Education of Hindus Under Muslim Rule* (Karachi: Academy of Educational Research, All Pakistan Education Conference: Zavar Printing Press, 1963), 9.

Gupta to Raja Dayaghar in 638 A.D.<sup>21</sup>. Add concluding lines, mere description is not sufficient

### **Education System under Mughal Empire**

The history of subcontinent indicates that the education remained a high priority under the Mughal regime. Jalal-ud-din Akbar, the famous Emperor of Mughal dynasty from 1526-1605, had not only established number of schools and colleges but he also remained well focused in establishing various public libraries in order to maintain the historical archive of the previous dynasties. Various published materials on the Mughal Empire contend that Akbar promoted interfaith harmony among Muslims and Hindus through education system that enabled both the communities to sit on the same desk under one roof. One of the writers on educational system in Pakistan, Ismat Riaz argues that according to *Ain-i-Akbari* [Persian: The Constitution of Akbar]<sup>22</sup> there were almost fifty two universities close to Thatta, situated in Sindh during Jahangir period. Similarly, the Mughal emperors like Babar and then Jahangir wrote their own biographies, commonly known as *Tuzk-i-Barbari* [Persian: Autobiography of Babar] and *Tuzk-i-Jahangiri* [Persian: Autobiography of Jahangir]. Even in 1641, a library in *Agra* (currently in India) contained almost twenty four volumes of books.<sup>23</sup> This development during the Mughal period indicates their personal interest towards the formal and informal education system in the continent. Similarly, in 1693, a madrasa of *Farangi Mahall* was established in Lucknow (currently in India) to teach various subjects like; *Sarf* [Persian: Governance], *Hikamat* [Persian: Medicine], *Blagha* [Arabic: Communication], *Hisab* (Persian: Mathematics), *Kalam* (Persian: Music), *Fiqh* [Urdu:

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21 Nadvi, *The Education of Hindus Under Muslim Rule*.

22 The *Ain-i-Akbari* means the Constitution of Akbar; a document which was published in the 16th Century. The document, later, was published in a book shape that records a detailed explanation of Akbar's reign.

23 Ismat Riaz, "The Mughal Legacy," *Dawn*, Feb. 27, 2011.



Interpretation of Islamic Law] and *Hadith* [Arabic: Sayings of Prophet Mohammad].<sup>24</sup>

The education system under the Mughals consisted of basic or primary education and secondary level. Most of the schools and colleges were maintained by the Mughals themselves however a large number of the institutions depended upon different charities by the Hindus and Muslims. The primary schools were generally known as *Maktab* [Persian: School] which were attached to the local mosques for reading, writing along with *Tafseer-e-Quran* or Islamic education whereas the *Madarsa* was labelled as college or school for secondary education.<sup>25</sup> What was the arrangement for non-Muslim students? Schools for primary and secondary education were built in every village or town under Akbar's rule. The Muslim areas were installed with many colleges for the promotion of Islamic ideology, philosophy, astronomy and many other subjects however, the Hindu majority areas were taught their religious books along with learning Sanskrit, philosophy, astronomy, literature, and mathematic.<sup>26</sup> This sort of development under Akbar rule shows a remarkable revival towards the ancient learning and promotion of formal education in the subcontinent.

William Dalrymple, in his book *The Last Mughal*, establishes that 1850 period was highly regarded in the history as five intellectual and research based journals were being published along with more than nine newspaper in Persian and Urdu.<sup>27</sup> Among the other education centers in India, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century has also been highlighted in the history, when Delhi was titled as the *Madrassa Rahimiya*

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24 Dr. Shazia Ramzan, Ainee Rubab, *Madrasa Education in the Sub-Continent-Myths and Realities*, 2013, Islamabad, <http://www.szic.pk/journal/DEC2013/4.pdf> (accessed on January 25, 2016).

25 Mahendra Yadav, *Education in Mughal Period During Akbar Rule*, September 2013, <http://www.importantindia.com/5096/education-in-mughal-period-during-akbar-rule/>, (accessed on January 10, 2016).

26 Yadav, *Education in Mughal Period During Akbar Rule*.

27 Riaz, "The Mughal Lagacy,".

under the administration of Shah Waliullah, who was an educationist, favouring and balancing the science and Islamic scriptures.<sup>28</sup> During that time the institute approved five books on mysticism, two books on grammar, two books on logic, two books on astronomy and one book on philosophy.<sup>29</sup> A *Khanqah* [Persian: a place for gathering of a Sufi brotherhood] was also established as an institution of home training for *Sufis* which was normally attached with *Dargah* [Persian: Shrine] or *Masjid* [Urdu: Mosque]. The establishment of *Khanqah* also provided a place for spreading the highest level of education and knowledge which became the center of highest level of ethical trainings.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, the *Madrassas* were designed to prepare people for state employment in order to produce future religious scholars, commonly known as *Ulemas*. The *Firangi Mahal* Lucknow also formalized a *Dars-e-Nizami* curriculum which consisted on the following subjects:

Subjects	Details of lectures on the subject
<i>Balaghah</i>	<i>Mutauwal, Mukhtasi Maani</i>
<i>Fiqh</i>	<i>Hidayah, Sharh-i-Wiqayah</i>
<i>Hadith</i>	<i>Mishka al Masabih</i>
<i>Hisab</i>	<i>Euclid Book 1, Khulasat al-Hisab</i>
<i>Hikmah</i>	<i>Shams-i-Bazigah, Maybudhi, Mulla Sadra</i>
<i>Kalam</i>	<i>Mir Zahid, Aqaid-i-Nasafi, Shahrh Mawaqif, Aqaid-i-Jalait</i>
<i>Mantiq</i>	<i>Tahdhib, Kubra, Qutbi, Sughra</i>
<i>Nahw</i>	<i>Shahrah-i-Jami, Nahw-i-Mir, Kafiyah</i>
<i>Tafsir</i>	<i>Baydawi, Jalalayn</i>
<i>Usul al-Faqh</i>	<i>Musallam Al-Thubut, Nur-al-Anwar, Usul Shashi</i>

28 Deepak Kumar, "Science in Higher Education: A Study of Victorian India," *Indian Journal of History of Science* 19, no. 3 (1984): 254-256.

29 Kumar, "Science in Higher Education: A Study of Victorian India,".

30 Syed Hussein Nasr, *The Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1994).

The center also placed its emphasis on various other subjects like Philosophy, Logic, Mathematics and Linguistics.<sup>31</sup>

### **Shah Waliullah: A Reformer**

The Indian history has witnessed Shah Waliullah from 1702 to 1763; a great educationist who performed a pivotal role in bringing forward a new reform movement that was launched to maintain a balance between the modern Muslims and the rigid and conservative Muslims of India. The British rule had introduced English language as the medium of education in the educational institutes that was not acceptable by a large majority of Indian Muslims. So, they boycotted these institutes and consequently, were devoid of getting education and knowledge. Shah Waliullah, with his strenuous efforts, tried to convince the Muslims of India that Islam is a moderate religion that presents a complete code of life. Islam is neither rigid nor very modern. To study the languages other than Arabic and Persian in educational institutes is not un-Islamic.<sup>32</sup> His movements resulted in the establishment of new educational institutes of Islamic studies across the subcontinent like *Darul Uloom of Deoband*.

After the death of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, and the fall of Sirajud Dawla in the year 1757, the Muslim rule in the subcontinent had already come to an end. Similar was the case in some other countries of Asia and the African subcontinent where the Muslim rulers had lost their powers. Long before the start of French and Soviet revolutions, Shah Waliullah also highlighted the right to security and justice; but unfortunately he was never given his right place in history.

### **Education System under British Rule**

History as part of the syllabus in the educational classification of a state is vigorous in establishing an

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31 Dr. Shazia Ramzan and Ainee Rabab, "Madrassa Education in the Sub-Continent-Myth and Realities," *Al-Idah* 27 (Dec. 2013).

32 G. N. Gbani, *Teachings of Shah Waliullah* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhawan, 1988), 3.

understanding of its origins and identity for the masses as well as the pride in its history.<sup>33</sup> From the perspective of education and history of the subcontinent the revival of Islamic educational institutes possesses a significant importance during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The contemporary education organization in Pakistan is a heritage of the British education system in sub-continent. The British substituted the old education system of Mughal period with a new system of English language or western education system, which was made compulsory in all the educational institutions in order to enable the common people for getting government jobs.<sup>34</sup>

The British governed the Indian subcontinent for almost two hundred years. The first hundred years were manifested by the turmoil and crisis when they fought at many fronts to capture the territories of the continent, where the second hundred years may be seen as many educational and social development during their empire. The British introduced a sequence of educational, administrative and political progressions between 1858 and 1900 when English language was also introduced as an official language in every institution.

Most of the historians believe that the British remained as the most dominant power over India which did not steer India towards a better future.<sup>35</sup> The main evidence of this factor is the establishment of universities of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay on the model of University of London. These universities were established just after the Indian revolt of 1857.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the local history was also being taught at the primary school level in order to promote good governance and to ensure law and order.

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33 Riaz, *The Mughal Legacy*.

34 Ramzan and Rabab, "Madrasa Education in the Sub-Continent,".

35 Akbar Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997)

36 Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity*.

### **Rise of Education (First Phase) 1813 to 1835**

The growth of higher education that was once being given priority during the Mughal regime started declining after the Mughal period was over. Ultimately, the Buxar battle led to the empowerment of East India Company.

The Court of Directors of the East India Company did not show any interest in educating the people of India which resulted in the downfall of education in the subcontinent. But the East India Company was repeatedly forced by the British Parliament to pay some attention to the overall system of education in India at that time.

The period from 1813 to 1835, in the history of British Education system in the Indian subcontinent, possess great importance as the phase was called Charter Act 1813. The founder of the British Education Policy in South Asia, Charles Grant<sup>37</sup> presented this charter to promote the western education system in the subcontinent on the basis of his political and personal contacts.<sup>38</sup> After the successful efforts for almost twenty years by Charles Grant, the British Parliament approved his bill in 1813 and the Act was adopted officially in the British India.<sup>39</sup>

The British Parliament's obligations regarding the system of education in India proved to be successful when St. Mary's Charity School was established in 1715. Similarly, in 1781, Calcutta Madrassa to learn the Arabic language while in 1791, a Sanskrit College was established where the subjects of literature and Hindu Law were taught.

Gradually Christian priests started pressurizing the East India Company to initiate the promotion of English medium in the Indian education system as the earlier efforts to promote

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37 Charles Grant was an employee in the East India Company. Charles remained an important person for the British who successfully spread the English language across subcontinent.

38 Muhammad Asim and Syed Raheem Abaas Shah, "Educational System in British India and Its Socio-Political Impacts on Pakistani Society," *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies* 7, no. 1 (July 2014).

39 Asim and Shah, "Educational System in British India and Its Socio-Political Impacts on Pakistani Society,".

the medium of Arabic or Persian languages did not prove to be much successful.

To promote literature and knowledge among the Indian people, an amount of one lakh rupees was approved as annual budget by the British Parliament but by 1823, this amount was not provided to the East India Company. From 1823 to 1833, the main purpose of the educational system India had become the promotion of English language as the East India Company needed Indian clerks for its offices.

### **Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy**

English as a medium of education and a medium of instruction had become a controversy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Elphinstone and Charles Trevelyan were in favour of English as medium of education, while H.T. Princep and Dr. H.H. Wilson wanted Persian and Arabic languages to be the medium of the educational system of India. *Raja Ram Mohan* was the one who supported Elphinstone and Charles Trevelyan for the promotion of English as the medium of education. Lord Macaulay, the Chairman of the Committee of Public Instruction, gave his Minute in the favour of English and western education as medium of education in 1835.<sup>40</sup>

The Governor General of India, William Bentick gave approval to the Minute of Lord Macaulay on March 1835. He declared in his resolution that the British government is in the favour of promoting European literature and western education among the common Indians. Therefore, only English language as a medium of education can serve this purpose.

Macaulay had pointed out in his Minute that the British government would have to target the upper and middle class whom it can reform and reshape while using the medium of education. This was called the 'infiltration theory'. According to Macaulay, an educated common Indian would be of great use for the British government because he would not only be English in his opinions and morals but would also be helpful

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40 Ram Shakal Panday, *Indian Educational System* (New Delhi: Adhayan Publishers, 2005), 31.

in teaching the lower class of Indians the norms and culture of English people.

During the four years (1835-39), almost 23 schools were established while the Lieutenant Governor of North Western Provinces, James Thomason, initiated a new scheme from 1843-53 about the education in small villages. The scheme introduced the system of one percent tax on revenue which was being paid by a unit under a *zamindar* [Urdu: Landlord]. Every unit was a collection of small villages. In Calcutta a medical college was started by Bentick in 1835.

The educational system of India was reshaped due to the promotion of English as medium of education. The growth of English literature in the subcontinent started changing the academic life of a common Indian.

Western philosophy and concepts started imposing deep impacts upon the mindsets of the common Indians as the social and religious schools of thought gradually started developing into a different shape. Those Indians who got educated under these educational institutes started spreading the concepts of democracy, nationalism and economy in the subcontinent.

#### **Sir Charles Wood's Dispatch of 1854**

In 1854, Sir Charles Wood recommended to reorganize the overall education system of India. His recommendations are called the 'Wood's Dispatch of 1854' or the Magna Carta of education in medium of English in India. According to Magna Carta; the establishment of a University, Anglo-Vernacular schools, and government colleges were recommended in India.

The dispatch recommended the women education in India. Magna Carta not only encouraged the private investments in the field of education but also recommended the formation of Department of Public Instruction in all the provinces of the subcontinent. The Department of Public Instruction was established in all Indian provinces in 1855 followed by the universities that were established at Madras and Bombay. These universities awarded degrees after

conducting examinations while language schools were established in small towns and villages. With government's grant, schools for girls were also established but without any proper training of the teachers.

History witnesses that the last day of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century was in fact the day of beginning of the tragedies of Indo-Pak subcontinent because British established their East India Company for the purpose of trade. Various historians believe that the East India Company had no intentions of ruling this country and they just wanted to start free trade but gradually they realized that they can earn great benefits from this part of the world if they get its control politically and militarily.<sup>41</sup>

The East India Company started spreading its trade-related activities across the subcontinent. They opened new factories and deployed a large number of common Indians on good salaries and daily wages in these factories. In this way, they wanted to bring a change in the mind-sets of the poor Indians. Bit by bit, a big political change took place as the East India Company appointed Captain Hawkins to the Indian subcontinent.<sup>42</sup> The Company wanted to utilize all the resources of the subcontinent after establishing its political hold on this area. The Company showed least interest in educating the Indian people. They did not want the native people to be educated as they thought it would make them raise their voices against the British Raj.<sup>43</sup> The Christian missionaries pressurized the Company to promulgate the western education followed by the English as the medium of education in the subcontinent.<sup>44</sup>

The East India Company, sometimes, was forced to pay a little attention to the education sector in the subcontinent. As from 1600 to 1698; it was a period when the whole world

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41 Vaman Das Basu, *Ruin of Indian Trade and Industry* (Calcutta: R. Chatterjee, 1948), 48.

42 Basu, *Ruin of Indian Trade and Industry*, 56.

43 Vaman Das Basu, *History of Education in India under the Rule of the East India Company* (Calcutta: 1935), 139.

44 Basu, *History of Education in India under the Rule of the East India Company*, 118.



was undergoing an economic war. To strengthen their territories, most of the countries of the world had started strengthening their trade links. Keeping this thing in view, the East India Company, in the first phase, also took some essential steps and started paying a little attention to the education of the common Indians.<sup>45</sup>

To earn the loyalties of the native people, the East India Company started deploying common Indians who were skilled with sword. They were at first assigned to search for new markets from 1698 to the year 1764. This is called the second phase or a period of gestation when the Christian missionaries started educating the children of the employees of East India Company. They started teaching the western concepts with English as the medium of education. The East India Company knew that the only way to keep its political hold at the region was to demolish the cultural values of this country.

The East India Company, in the next phase from 1835 to 1854, started educating some common Indians to use them as its clerical staff. Due to the English language as the medium of education, most of the Muslims were reluctant to get education. The British Parliament also allocated special funds for the promotion of education in the subcontinent.

The East India Company conducted some surveys about the educational institutes of Bombay and Bengal. They started some schools for the Christian communities that were run by the charity.<sup>46</sup> Gradually, the British started establishing the educational institutions of high quality that were open to the common Indians. During that period many schools, universities and colleges were established.

The British hold on the Bengal province was established in 1765 while the East India Company got hold of the South India in 1799. The Company had established its colonies at almost all the areas of India till the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

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45 D. Dayal, *The Development of Modern Indian Education* (Bombay: 1955), 2.

46 P. Spear, *Oxford History of India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 106.

The Company had become such a great power that it crushed the rule of the local administration everywhere.

Till that time, the Muslims did not have any institution where the Arabic language should have been the medium of education. The Governor General, Warren Hasting, at the appeal of various Muslim intellectuals, established a Madarasah in the year 1781 in Calcutta. In this Madarasah Arabic and Persian languages were used as the medium of education while the Muhammadan Law was also taught there. This Madarasah was named as 'Mohamadan College'.

For the building of this college, Warren Hastings provided Rupees 57745, while some lands worth Rupees 29000 per annum were allocated for the college by the Government of Bengal. The main purpose behind establishing this college was to produce officers for the Courts.<sup>47</sup>

The Christian missionaries' main focus was to propagate their own religion. They supported western concepts and western way of education in the newly established schools and colleges for which special funds were allocated by the British Parliament. Muslims severely opposed the missionaries' way of thinking and the western way of education in these institutes.

The British started paying attention to the education of Hindus. A Hindu Sansikrat college was established in Banaras where English was also taught. This was the result of conspiracies of Hindu scholars. The Company established many Committees of Public Instruction. The main purpose behind establishing these committees was to motivate the common Indians for education and knowledge in newly established institutes in Bombay and Calcutta.

The Muslims across the country strongly opposed the Minutes of Macaulay as they thought the English education was against their religious values. The Muslim scholars and *Ulemas* emphasized that this way of education would devoid

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47 Syed Mahmood, *A History of English Education in India (1781-1893)* (Aligarh: M. A. O College, 1895), 18.

the Muslim community of the education because this was an effort to undermine their religion. Resultantly, William Bentinck's policy about the religious doctrines gave some support and relief to the Muslim community.

### **Muslims' Response towards British Education System**

During the time of British, the Muslims of subcontinent strongly opposed the western concepts and the modern education. They felt that the use of English language as a medium of education was a conspiracy by the British and Hindus to undermine their religion and moral values. Consequently, they decided to boycott the modern education as a protest. This boycott led them towards the deprivation of well-paid official jobs under the British. Ultimately, the Indian Muslims were left with no option except adopting the profession of trade to earn their bread and butter.

The rigid and inflexible behaviour of Muslims left them far behind other communities of India especially Hindus in education. At that time the Indian Muslims were divided in two schools of thought. Those who belonged to the Southern part of India were in the favour of modern Education and the western sciences but the Muslims of northern India strongly opposed the western way of education and learning.

### **Establishment of Muslim Educational Institutes post-1857 Revolution**

The promotion of education has always been the most remarkable feature of the Muslim rulers in the subcontinent. The educational institutes like Jamia Rahmaniya Aligarh, Darul Ulyoom Deoband, Darussalalm Omerabad, Islamiya College Malappuram, Madrasa Baquiyathu Salihath, A.M.U, Jamia Nizamiya, Hyderabad, U.P, Madaras Aliya Arabic College Rauzathul Uloom Arabic College, Mongheer in the East, Nadvathul Ulama Lucknow, Jamia Millia Isamia, Calcutta Madarasa, in Calcutta, Madarasa Islamiya Shamsul Huda and many others demonstrate the Muslim emperors' interest in spreading education across the Indian Subcontinent.

After the battle against British in 1857; another Madrasah was established at Deoband by Maulana Qasim Nanautavi. The main purpose behind the establishment of Darul Ulum Deoband was to spread the teachings of Islam in the subcontinent in its true spirit. The British, after curtailing all the economic aid to all the old Madrasahs of the subcontinent had already demolished them. Therefore, the establishment of Darul Ulum Deoband proved to be a new ray of hope for the Muslim community across the Indian subcontinent.

The *Darul Ulum Deoband* was a remarkable Islamic institute of its times. The promotion of Islamic knowledge and education attracted a large number of students not only from the subcontinent but also from the other parts of the world like China, Yemen, Iraq, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Burma.

The Madrasah, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, was established in Lucknow. It proved to be an epic center for the study of Islamic doctrines and teachings. The Madrasah was, in fact, the result of an annual meeting of Nadwatul Ulama Association.

Madrasah Darul 'Uloom was said and believed to be the most outstanding institute of Islamic studies across the Indian subcontinent. Under the supervision of Moulana Sibli Nomani, the Madrasah acquired that fame not only in the subcontinent but also among other Muslim countries that was unbelievable. The Madrasah had become a center of research and intellectualism. The merit scholarships were granted to intelligent and deserving students. When Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi took the charge of this prestigious institute he made all efforts to attain the objectives this institute was established for. His work for the development of this Madrasah marks the history.

The Aligarh institute developed by leaps and bounds turned out to be a new inspiration for the Muslims of Indian Subcontinent. It was an unparalleled mixture of the modern and classical education. It helped in eradicating the inferiority complex the Muslim community was suffering from after

boycotting the English schools. The Aligarh school produced numerous renowned Muslim leaders and scholars.

Jamia Milia Islamia was an outcome of two major movements in the subcontinent. These movements were the anti-colonial Islamic activism and the independence movements inspired by the Indian National Congress respectively. The independence movement was started for the independence of the subcontinent from the British rule while the anti-colonial Islamic activism took its inspiration from the Khilafat.

Jamia Milia Islamia lost hundreds of books worth seven lakh rupees during partition. Even during that period of chaos and destruction, Jamia did not lose its distinction as one of the best institutes. According to Gandhi, during the time of partition, the campus of Jamia Milia Islamia maintained its individuality as “an oasis of peace in the Sahara.”<sup>48</sup>

Madrasah Nadwa, Deoband and Jamia Milia Islamia were those educational institutes of Islamic and modern studies in the subcontinent that promoted the Islamic literature without being biased in India.

The establishment of the Madarasa Baqiyath al Salihathu in southern India was also the result of the strenuous efforts of Moulana Shah Abdul Wahab. This institute produced many intellectuals and religious scholars who promoted Islam and its teachings after spreading in various part of the Southern Indian subcontinent.<sup>49</sup>

The strenuous efforts of the religious scholars in Southern Indian subcontinent to promote Islamic teachings proved to be fruitful when numerous Arabic colleges were established in Kerala. During British rule, the establishment of such a large number of Islamic educational institutes shows that the Muslims had realized that if they wanted to

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<sup>48</sup> Nizami, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*.

<sup>49</sup> J.B.P.: 1997

get rid of the British political hold from the subcontinent, they would have to be well-educated.

### **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Contribution in the Education**

History witnesses Sir Syed Ahmad Khan as one of the great educationist of his times from 1871 to 1898 in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He was aware of the fact that if Muslims of India would keep on boycotting the modern education, Hindus and other communities will leave them far behind on the way of education and development.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded Anglo Muhammedan Oriental College that was a beautiful blend of modern and classical education. The college was termed as the best educational institute of its times. The main purpose behind the establishment of this college was to bring the rigid and conservative Muslims towards modern education.

Till the end of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, even the rigid and inflexible Muslim scholars of the Indian subcontinent started giving green signals in the favour of western education and concepts. The towering names like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Syed Ahmad Khan and Mirza Abu Talib Landani mark a history. They portrayed Islam and its teachings in such a beautiful manner that those Indian Muslims, who had boycotted the modern education, started getting admission in modern educational institutes.

Khwajah Farid's grandson, Ahmad Khan's socio-economic activities cannot be overlooked. His writings in the favor of Islam and its teachings helped at least two generations of Muslims in maintaining a balance between the modern and classical ways of education.<sup>50</sup>

Ahmad Khan was strongly criticized by some rigid Muslim scholars as he was of the view that the Muslims in subcontinent would be deprived of development and education if they would continue the boycott of modern education. According to many *Ulemas* of that time, 'English

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50 The Aligarh College was established in 1881 and got the status university in 1920. This College remained an important institution for the Muslims in the Indian subcontinent.

was the language of hell and western education was a passport to hell.'

Abd ur-Rahim Dahri was another Muslim scholar who wrote down a booklet in favour of western education and learning. He emphasized that learning English language had become the need of that time.<sup>51</sup>

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, during 1857 revolt, saved the families and lives of numerous British families. In this way, he won the trust of these Europeans in the subcontinent. He founded a Madrasah after launching an educational movement with the help of British rulers in the Indian subcontinent. His pamphlet during this period also emphasized the need to learn English language. His role in promoting western education in India cannot be ignored. He conveyed his thoughts in such a beautiful manner that even the rigid Muslim scholars started showing flexibility towards the modern education. During the year 1864, a meeting of the Scientific Society was held. The following objectives were the outcome of this meeting:

- To make the foreign languages understandable to the common Indian Muslims by translating them.
- To publish that research work of Oriental college that would be comprehensible and logical.
- To make the illustration and interpretation of scientific subjects a part of the meetings of Scientific Society.<sup>52</sup>

Sir Ahmad Khan desired to establish a language university in Punjab but the Hindu community strongly opposed this idea and wanted to run this university in Hindi language. During the last decade of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, he decided to establish a political organization named the Aligarh British Indian Association but this organization failed to achieve its goals. Sir Ahmad Khan decided to go to England in 1868 when the British government approved the financial assistance to those Indians who wanted to visit Europe for

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51 Abd ur-Rabnlan Parwez Ralabi, 1975.

52 K. A Nizami, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1980), 19.

educational purposes. Some rigid Muslims completely boycotted the British government in the subcontinent when this financial aid was approved. They felt if they would avail these funds, it would be dishonesty to their religion.

Sir Ahmad Khan during his stay in England observed the educational system of England thoroughly after visiting the Cambridge and Oxford universities. On his way back to India in October 1870, he had decided to bring some new developments in the educational system of his own Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College. He established Aligarh Muslim University in 1920, when he got retirement in 1876 from the judicial service. The University had great impact in the history of education.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan wrote *Tafsir* in 1892 but was highly criticized by the *Ulema* and muftis as they strongly pointed out shortcomings in his work. According to the *Ulema* of his time, he should not have had started such an effort because he did not have the sufficient knowledge about it.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan died in 1898. He was highly admired by those Muslims of the subcontinent who were encouraged to get educated under the modern educational institutes. Despite showing his interest as a great promoter of modern education, he could not achieve all his objectives as an educationist.

### **Conclusion**

Renowned scholar K. K. Aziz believes that since its beginning, religion has always been an important nexus between an individual and group.<sup>53</sup> He copes with the fact that all civilizations throughout the history of the world have been impressed by different religions. Thus, the Muslim emperors in the Indian subcontinent had also used this [religion] as their main tools for having supervision across the continent, either by spreading their religion through a non-formal education or by establishing Madrassas for

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53 K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism* (London: Chatoo and Windus Ltd., 1967), 96.



formal education in order to promote self-styled and interpreted Islam all over. The major part of the educational curriculum was not Islamic but the modern subjects like mathematics, astrology, linguistics and most of all, sciences at large. After the establishment of Mughal Empire in the region, much focus was given to the religious side instead of promoting other modern subjects. This shift in the educational system under the Mughals was [somehow] challenged when the British tried to introduce their way of education, however majority of the Muslims were reluctant to accept the British-styled education and opted for religious education at Mosques, Madrassas and even at home. This factor can also be seen as the first encounter in the Indian subcontinent where Muslims preferred Islamic education system on English system. Even they [Muslims] promoted Arabic and Persian as the medium of their instructions. Most of the scholars contend that the Muslims perceived English culture as an attack on Islam. Therefore, we can observe this religious shift in the education system even before the creation of Pakistan.