



THE ROLE OF MADARASA-E-MIHRAJUL ULOOM, DHARMAPURI IN ISLAMIC LEARNING

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Abstract

Islam attaches much importance to education. In the Holy Book of Muslims Al-Quran the first revealed verses emphasize on the importance of learning. The first five verses revealed to the holy Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) deal with the importance of learning. Prophet Muhammed, though was an illiterate insisted on his followers that they should acquire knowledge even if it be in China. In Islam, Ilam or Knowledge mainly comprises Al-Quran and the Hadith.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the contributions of the Madarasa-e-Mihrajul Uloom, Dharmapuri to the development of Islamic education. In India the first Madarasa was Firozshahi Madrasa. It was established in 1352 by Firoz Sha Tughlaq. The Darul Uloom Deoband was started in 1866 by Moulan Qasim Nanutvi. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu was not lagging behind in establishing centres of religious education. As the result of the Deoband message to the Muslim population of India stressed the need of providing religious education to the community for its fulfilment. Education alone would help the muslim community to come out of its lethargy and despondency. In response to the message Madarasa-e- Baqiathus Salihat and Darul Uloom Latheefiya of Vellore sprang up in Tamil Nadu. Similarly, Madarasa-e-Mazahirul Uloom was started in 1957 consistent to this tradition; Madrasa-e-Mihrajul Uloom was established in Dharmapuri in 1965.

INTRODUCTION

The ancient name of Dharmapuri was Tagdur Nadu. People lived in this region even since the Pre Historic Age. Recent excavations have established the fact that human inhabitant existed in this region from the Paleolithic Age, Tagadur Nadu was a political entity in the Sangam period which status it enjoyed during the Chola period as well. But it had always been a centre of conflict. Surrounded by powerful Kingdoms on all sides, Tagadur Nadu had to face frequent political ups and downs. As a result, the chieftains of Tagadur were never allowed to become very powerful. As a patron of the famous poetess Avvaiyar and an ally of the Thondiaman of Kanchi, Adiyaman Neduman Anji become very popular and strong. He promptly attracted the attention of the Chera king who defeated Adiyaman and established his superiority over Tagadur Nadu. Thereafter there is no reference to Tagadur Nadu as an independent political unit.

Tagadur Nadu had always been a battleground, either for territory or for personal glory. Its location made it an ideal battleground for the neighbouring States. This area formed part of **Nigarili Chola Mandalam**. The title "Lord Takata" of Tagadur is mentioned in the "Tirumalai" Inscription (near Polur) relating to the ' Twentieth ' year of Kulothunga- III (C. 1198 A. D.)

After the Cholas, most of Tagadur Nadu was ruled by the Hoysalas who seem to have Kundani as their headquarters. However, after the decline of Vijaya Nagar Empire, many chieftains emerged and number of Palayams like Denkanikottai, Ratnagiri and Alampadi rose to prominence.

During the modern period Dharmapuri was the cockpit of South India. Many battles were fought in this region between the English and Mysore armies. Krishnagiri, Royakotta, Denkanikotta, Thoppur, Karimangalam and Kaveripattinam had been the battles grounds during this period . In 1792 The British gained strength and the entire area of **Baramahal** and Salem passed on to their hands. In 1799, the Hosur Taluk also came under the British rule.

Very soon after Baramahal and Salem were conquered. Captain Alexander Read was appointed first collector of Salem. Munro, who was one of his assistants had Dharmapuri as his headquarters.

After Independence, Dharmapuri was a part of Salem District till 2 Oct 1965. Thiru M. Bakhtavatchalm the Chief Minister proposed for the bifurcation of the district and Thiru G. Thirumal I.A.S. was appointed as Special Officer. The division was made on the basis of the natural boundaries mainly the Thoppur River and Western Ghats. Accordingly, the Dharmapuri District came in to existence on 2 October 1965 and it consisted of Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri and Hosur Taluks.

Dharmapuri district like any other district of Tamil Nadu has plural society comprising people of different faiths and cultures. The major religious communities are Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

The Muslim population was next to Hindus. However, it is not clearly known when the Muslims migrated to Dharmapuri and settled here. It could have been as early as the invasion of Malik **Kafur**. It is recorded that when the Turkish army marched through Krishnagiri and Denkanikotta, Malik Kafur witnessed some pious Muslims in this region and surprised note that they were able to recite to Al Quran and perform the basic duties of a Muslim particularly saying prayers five times a day. **Ibn-e - Batuta** has mentioned his in his accounts the migration of Muslims to Dharmapuri was substantial when **Azad Khan** one the Palakhat from Jagadevaraya.

The victories of **Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan** and the establishment of Mysore rule in this region paved the way migration of the Muslims in large number in Dharmapuri district. The Muslim formed a separate well knit community in religious and social matters. They arranged for imparting religious education to the children. To start with, they had Maktabs attached to the Mosques where the basics of Islam and Urdu and Arabic languages were taught. Therefore, the Muslim children were acquainted with Islamic teachings at the basic level but, there was no Madarasa till the middle of 20th century to pursue higher religious education the Muslim students of Dharmapuri who were interested to become **Alim** or **Hafis** had to go either to North Arcot or Salem districts. Therefore, there was a long pending need of a Madarasa in Dharmapuri district and it was fulfilled by the establishment of Madarasa- e- Mihrajul Uloom.

The Founding of Madarasa – E – Mherajul Uloom, Dharmapuri.

Madarasa - e – Mherajul Uloom is one of the famous Madaris of Dharmapuri. It was established in 1965 with a view to imparting Islamic Religious Education to the Muslim children of Dharmapuri. The support extended by the people of Dharmapuri was very helpful. It was registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on the 17th April 1972.

On 19th October 1934, Mr. Rajagopal Gownder the then President of the Panchayat Board, decided to give land to all the communities at a low and affordable cost for the development of the community. For the benefit of the Muslim community, He allotted 3, 55,675 sq. feet of land and the land was purchased for sum of Rupees seventy five by the Muslims and was registered in the name of five Muslim namely;

1. D. Syed Ibraheem s/o Baba Sahib
2. K. Ahmad Basha s/o Kareem Mohideen
3. D.A. Basha s/o Abdul Azeez
4. D.A. Sabdar Shariff s/o Abdullah Khan
5. M.Muhammed Yusuf s/o Muhammed Yunus

These are five prominent leaders of the Muslim community who decided to donate the land to the Wakf Board in 1965 so as to enable the Muslims of Dharmapuri to make use of the land for carrying out their social welfare activities.

To begin with this land which is adjacent to the Bus Stand was used as a play ground. Sometimes the political parties organised public meetings and conferences. It is noted that during Khilafat Agitation of the freedom struggle Ali Brothers namely Moulana Muhammed Ali and Moulana Showkanth Ali addressed a big gathering of Patriots in this ground. Therefore, in memory of Ali Brothers, this land was named as Muhammed Ali Memorial Club Wakf. It is worthy of mention that the people of Dharmapuri town irrespective cast, creed or colour belonging to different religious communities play together several games and sports in this ground and encourage Communal Harmony and peace.

In course of time, the Muslim leaders felt the necessity of starting an educational institution to teach The Holy Quran and the Sunnah. Thus it led to the origin of Maktab in this region.

As a result of continuous and serious effort taken by the Muslim a Maktab was established with one teacher two students. The dedication commitment and continuous effort taken by the Muslim leaders resulted in the development of Maktab (primary school) into Madarasa (a school with many standards) on 17th April 1972, and also this Madarasa has been governed by Islamiah Educational Society. Popularly known as Islamiah Kalvi sangam.

In 1972 the strength of the Students had increased to 40 and that of the teachers to four. It is to be noted that the Madarasa which was started with one teacher and two students in 1965 has developed into a full fledge Madarasa in 2015, as the strength of the students has gone up to 140 and the strength of the teachers to 9. It is a residential Madarasa catering to the educational needs of the people of Dharmapuri. It imparts Islamic theology, Jurisprudence, Fiqh apart from Kitabullah and Sunnat-e-Rasoolullah i.e. the Book of Allah and the Traditions of Prophet (PBUH).

Eligibility Criteria For Admission

A student who seeks in admission in the Madarasa should have completed 10 years of age and he should be able to read Arabic language especially Al Quran. This is minimum eligibility condition of the students to get admission in the Madarasa.

The qualification for appointment of the teachers in the Madarasa is clearly prescribed. Teachers should have passed Afzalul Ulama, the Oriented Title examination and he should have got by heart entire the Quran and got title of Hafeez. Therefore, the learned scholar of theology only could become the teacher of the Madarasa he might be a Alim (learned man) or Mufthi (scholar of Islamic jurisprudence)

Curriculum of the Madarasa

It is noted that in all the Madarasa of India . the curriculum followed is called **Darse Nizami** this syllabus was framed during the time of **Aurangzeb . Mulla Nizammuddin** of Sihali in U.P.was responsible for preparing this new syllabus for higher religious education . He lived in Sihali a town 28 miles away from Lucknow this syllabus represent the most comprehensive form of orthodox education. It laid greater emphasis on logic and philosophy. “The most notable change in this syllabus writes Mujeeb.”

Appear to be a greater emphasis on the literary and cultural aspects of education, fiqh being taught less as jurisprudence and more for the performance of ritualistic and ceremonial duties.

This syllabus has been appreciated for including works of Indian Muslim scholars for the first time and also for having so organised its courses that a young man could graduate at the age of sixteen or seventeen. The scholars are trained and intellectually equipped for further study of any subject Dars- e- Nizami aimed at creating the width of vision among the students. It was followed in the institutions established by the distinguished gradates of Firangi Mahal in different parts of India .

The Muslim educationist, generally stressed on “Graded teaching.” This means that the subjects at the primary level were to be taught in outline. At the secondary stage in detail and at the higher level proficiency and

mastery should be acquired. To quote Shah Waliullah.

The method of imparting education which has been proved through experience is that first of all three to four small treatises on syntax and grammar should be taught depending upon the intelligence of the pupil. After that, he should be taught a book on history or moral precepts in Arabic. He should be simultaneously made to learn to refer to the lexicographical books in Arabic. Once he acquire proficiency in Arabic, he should be simultaneously, taught **Muvatta** of **Imam Malick** and this should never be overlooked as it forms the very basis of the science of Traditon. After this he should be made to read the Quran and learn its meaning but not it exegesis, and should be able understand and discuss such portion as may be difficult grammatically or regards to the circumstances of revelation. After attaining proficiency therein, he may start Tafsir Jalalain (Exegesis of the Quran) and subsequently he may pursue, at one time, books on Tradition like **Siha Sitta** (The Right Six) and on theology, Islamic Law, Mysticism etc. and at the other, books of learning like Sharh - i -Mullah Jami, outhi and the like and if possible, he may study **Mishkath** one day and on the following day, read the relevant portion of the commentary “Sharb-i- Tayyibi.

Darse- E- Nizami was criticised later for having included the most difficult books , or books that presented subject in a very condensed form, for having over emphasized the study of logic and philosophy and by comparison selected Hadith and literature so this sort of out dated syllabus was reviewed in the context of modern requirements and development so as to make Alim-e- Deen (the Religious Scholars) free from the clutches of narrow exclusive and capable of understanding Islam in its correct perspective with a knowledge of the problems of the day.

The curriculum in Madarasa-e- Mihrajul Uloom is divided in to three stages namely

a) Nazira

It is the first stage of study. The students are taught to recite Al Quran with proper phonetics and procedure. Apart from this, Urdu, English, and Tamil languages are taught. It is a two-year course of study. An intensive coaching is given to teach the basics of the languages and to recite the Holy Quran of Muslims without any difficulty.

b) Hafiz

This course was actually started in 1972. It is the second stage Study of the Madarasa. The students are trained in the art of memorizing the Holy Quran which was revealed to Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) through the Angle Gabriela by Allah. The first revelation began in 610 A.D in cave at Hira. The students of the Madarasa are able to get by heart the complete text of 114 chapters of the Holy Quran within period of three years. Those who could memorise and reproduce The Quran without any mistake are given the title called Hafiz. The students of second stage are well versed in the art of recitation of the Quran they are taught different techniques of recitation besides this they are give adequate knowledge of the Traditions of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) popularly known as Sunnah.

c) Alim

It is a five years course. The students from other centres of Islamic learning could seek admission in this course in the second or third year of study depending upon the knowledge they have acquired. Admission to such students is done after conducting a test to assess his knowledge. Alim means a learned scholar in Islamic theology and jurisprudence. During the course of five years they have to study different texts and subjects.

Examinations

Evaluation of Knowledge is an essential component to test the skills and knowledge of the students. It also helps to assess their process. Every academic year, three central examinations are conducted namely quarterly, half yearly and annually. Students assessed in seven subjects 100 marks are maximum, for each subject. Those who have secured 55% and above will be declared to have qualified.

Convocation or Dastar Bandi

Every year, the authorities of the Madarasa arrange convocation function which is popularly known as Taqseem-e-Asnad-o-Dastar Bandi. All the students of Hafiz section who successfully complete the course are awarded degrees on the occasion. Eminent Educationist on Islamic literature and theology are invited to deliver the convocation address the students who successfully completed the course and pass the final examinations are given diplomas by the Chief Guest. The scholarly speeches delivered by eminent educationist are very inspiring and enlightening. For the past 48 years, convocation functions have been held regularly and systematically.

Madarasa-e- Aiysha- e- Niswan

There was a great need to impart religious instruction to Muslims of girls Dharmapuri town. For a long time there was no formal arrangement effort to fulfil this need. The people belonging to affluent society made their own Private arrangements to teach the reading of the Quran and understanding the basic tenets of Islam to their daughters by employing private tuitions which were mostly conducted in the houses of the students. The teacher had to go to the house of students in the morning after Fajar prayer and in the evening after Maqrib Prayer to teach them. Therefore, the children of the poor and marginalised section were left uncared for as far as the learning of the basic education of Islam. So Dharmapuri "Islamiah Kalvich Sangam" which runs Madarasa- e- Mihrajool Uloom Arabic College realised the need and started a Madarasa for girls in A.R.M. Yacoob Sahib Building located in Abdul Kareem Sahib Street in Dekispet Dharmapuri. It is a rented building. The monthly rent given is at present Rs 2,500. This Madarasa actually started long back but, it was formally brought under the control of Islamiah Kalvich Sangam in 1979.

Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) rightly emphasised that acquiring knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim boy and girl. Besides this in the changing environment, a community which does not provide an opportunity for learning to the girls would be relegated to the back ground. It could not progress so Islamiah Kalvi Sangam decided to establish a Madarasa exclusively for girls who are under purdha. The outcome of their sincere effort is Madarasa- e- Ayesha Niswan.

To begin with there were only two girls and one lady teacher in this Madarasa but now the students strength some at to 35 and 6 lady teachers are working in this Madarasa. It is named as Madarasa-e- Aysha-e- Niswan.

It is in fact a small Maktab where in Naira- e- Quran i.e. recitation of Quran, essential duties of Muslim ladies and the rights given to the ladies in Islam are taught. After completion of the course the girl's students of their Madarasa go to other centres of Islamic for higher education especially, to become Hafiz, Aalimah and Qari.

It is a non-residential Madarasa. Therefore, it provides education only to the local Muslim girls. Actually the beneficiaries are only for the four Muhallas of Dharmapuri so there is no arrangement for the girls-students from other towns to persuade Islamic education. It is only at the primary level catering to the local needs. The medium of instruction is Urdu because mother tongue also is Urdu.

However, it is a good opportunity for the local girls to seek basic knowledge of Islam in the morning and evening. During the day time they go to secular schools to acquire secular education. As a result of arrangement the Muslim girl from Dharmapuri acquire both religious and secular Knowledge.

Shariat Court

The Madarasa's Shariat Court, giving financial assistance to the marriages of poor and needy is very important. The Shariat Court of the Madarasa has been functioning successfully. It is resolving the civil and criminal issues of the Muslims of the region. The Principal of this Madarasa Moulana Fazle Kameem elected as the District Qazi. The Shariat Court has settled more than 100 cases under the Qazi.

Conclusion

Madarasa-e- Mihrajul Uloom, Dharmapuri was a small Madarasa Established in 1965 in response to the Deoband Message of Moulana Qasim Nanotvi with a view to providing religious educational facilities to the Muslims of this most backward district of Tamil Nadu. Curiously enough, it developed into a very strong and powerful centre of Islamic learning. It is providing free education with boarding and lodging facilities to 140 students regularly is not a very simple task. The management is able to tackle both financial and academic issues in an excellent manner.

Another point worthy of observation is that though the Madarasa was established with the prime object of catering to the educational needs of Dharmapuri Muslims, it is found that Majority of the students of the Madarasa hail from other states such as Karnataka, Andhara Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, U.P., Delhi etc.

The curriculum of the Madarasa is a modified version of traditional curriculum of Dars-e-Niazmi. The very fact that this modified syllabus followed in this Madarasa is appreciated by the Ulema (Islamic Scholars) all over India speaks volumes of the expertise of the committee which took up the responsibility framing the curriculum. The text book prescribed. The reference books utilised and the instructions imparted in the Madarasa are of High quality. This has been openly acknowledged by the prominent Ulema of Tamil Nadu.

The evaluation mentioned is very objective. Students are allowed to move to the next class only on the successful completion of the course prescribed. Convocation functions are arranged every year to distribute Sanads or certificates to the graduates.

Thus, a small maktab started in 1965 has made rapid strides and developed into a full-fledged residential Madarasa which caters to the educational needs of Muslims of Dharmapuri and other areas. The products of the Madarasa serve the society as ambassadors of peace, humanism, harmony and brotherhood. In fine, it is a model for emulation by other Madarasa.

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