



## A Discourse on Madrasa Education in Hyderabad

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### Abstract:

*The present paper is an attempt to highlight the debate within the scholarship of Islam and Ulama on the modernization of Madarsa and streamlining this system with modern education system with reference to the Madrasa Modernization Scheme (MMS) of Telangana State of India and how the Government in the present scenario making efforts of madrasas for inclusion of modern subjects. It tries to understand the politics of defining the terms “madrasa” in a narrow sense today both by ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’. This paper is also an attempt to explore how madrasas are understood by most of the Muslims that it’s only meant for the poor Muslims with traditional syllabus in Hyderabad. The paper tries to reflect that how the madrasas are an option for a social upward mobility for poor Muslims through modern and religious education and will explore their role in to include Muslims in the mainstream modern education and serves to fulfill right to education. The paper will make a trial to understand the present situation of madrasa education and their syllabus in the present modern era. The paper will also explore the present standing of madrasas between modern and religious subjects and its effects on madrasa graduates in particular and Muslim community in general.*

### Key Words and Terms:

*Madrasa, Education, Objectives, Modernization, Islamic-epistemology, Ulama, Identity, Diversity, Jamaths, Muslim, Illiteracy, Hyderabad.*

### Introduction:

The term “*madrasa*” has been used to describe an educational institution for centuries, but it is only recently that it has acquired the narrow meaning of “Islamic seminary”. *Madrasa* can be labeled as any educational institution which imparts any sort of education. The term is not restricted to only religious educational institutions. In the past, certainly *madrasas* have been the institutions of different disciplines like engineering, *unani* medicine, social sciences and literature, besides Islamic sciences. *Madrasas* were the institutions to impart the most modern technologies and sciences to students. The transformations and shifts in the objectives of *madrasas* and Madrasa Education System are not new. The shifts from traditional to modern ideas and the adoption of current technologies and disciplines have been ongoing since their inception. However the present *madrasas* are stuck up instead of moving ahead by accommodating new disciplines. Nowadays most of the *madrasas* have confined their disciplines to Islamic sciences and a few subjects like *Khadim Unani Falsafa*

(Ancient Greek Philosophy) and *Khadim Arabi Adab* (Ancient Arabic Literature) which do not have much relevance in the present, whereas the previous *madrasas* have given equal importance to all kinds of knowledge and education.

At present it is seen that most of the *ulama* and *madrasas* have classified *Ilm* (knowledge / education) in both religious and rational categories. Though; Islam does not classify education or knowledge as religious and worldly or modern. The flipside of the diversion of *Ilm* into religious and modern are few people who do not have much knowledge of Islamic epistemology. But most of the Muslim's also started following their views about the division of education in the afore mentioned two types even a few of the *ulama* were found using terms like *dini-ilm* and *duniyawi ilm* in today's times.

Renowned Islamic personalities also classified *ilm* in different disciplines, which does not degrade any sort of *ilm* but it gives more exposure to every sort of knowledge or education. However, the present division of *ilm* into two parts has narrowed down the approaches to education. This separates modern education or worldly education from religious education, which can be seen as a demise of progress, research and invention in the *Madrassa* Education System.

Hazrath Ali, the fourth Caliph (656 - 661) of Islam has classified *Ilm* into five categories to draw a clear line among the branches of education; the education for religion and faith is "*Fiqh*" (Islamic Jurisprudence), for medical knowledge is "*Tib*" for building or constructions is "*Mahinsa*" (Engineering) for language is "*Nahu*" (Syntax) and to know time is "*Nujuom*" (Astronomy). The Islamic scholars like Al-Farebi (870-950) and Al Gazali (1058-1111) have categorized *Ilm* based on utility that certain branches of knowledge or subjects are permitted and not prohibited in Islam. The disciplines which would be useful for humanity are named as *ilm-e-nafeh* and harmful for humanity as *ilm-e-zaar*.

The latest narrow classification of *Ilm* into 'modern' and 'religious' is considered illogical and un-Islamic by the renowned *ulama*, at the same time using the terms like *dini-ilm* and *duniyawi-ilm* have become common among Muslims, which has narrowed the sense of *Ilm* and educational philosophy among Muslims. In this sense it is also responsible for stagnation in *Madrassa* Education System and it prevents Muslims from exploring different ideologies, inventions and new areas of *ilm*. Present seminaries associated themselves with traditional *dars-e-nizami* syllabus designed by Mulla Nizamuddin (1677-1748) during the Mughal period and failed to incorporate their glorious past of invention and research. In the present day any alteration to *dars-e-nizami* is considered a threat to the *Madrassa* Education System. Thus, keeping *dars-e-nizami* as it is, the *ulama* have introduced few modern subjects in *madrasas*. Consequently, the present scenario, being both Islamic and social institutional *madrasas* could neither confine themselves with outdated subjects, nor go for totally modern subjects by ignoring their primary objectives of Islamic education. But with a mixed and liberal approach towards education as the previous *Madrassa* Education System did, they could be a solution to the existing disparities like the *madrasas* during the advent of Islam, Caliphs' period, and during Muslim' rule in India.

The present *madrasas*, instead of trying to face challenges of the present day and set plans for the future, have stuck with the previous syllabus, methodology and administrative pattern. In fact the *madrasas* centuries ago were more modern than present *madrasas* in objectives, syllabus and fulfilling the demands of contemporary era. Though majority of *madrasas* of Hyderabad are imparting modern subjects but their nature and standard is lower than state primary school syllabus. But, if it is compared to *madrasas* of north Indian states with south Indian *madrasas*, *madrasas* of Hyderabad are better towards inclusion of modern subjects in their syllabus. *Madrasas* of Hyderabad are forefront in introducing computer education as part of syllabus. One of the main reasons of it is that *madrasas* of Utter Pradesh and Bihar headed by only *dars-e-nizami* educated *ulama*. The condition of *madrasas* of Hyderabad is quite better because of a bit modern trained *ulama* and good number of donors in Muslim localities of old city, thus making sure some arrangement of modern education takes place in *madrasas*.

#### **Discourse on Madrasa Modernization:**

The issue of *madrasa* modernization is not new, different states of India have been initiating it for years. The most modern *madrasas* of India are in the states of West Bengal, Kerala and Telangana. Utter Pradesh and Bihar have large number of *madrasas* but they have restricted themselves with local languages and religious education. Today almost every state government is showing keen interest to introduce modern education in *madrasas* or modify *madrasa* education. In this regards there are different arguments from different *ulama*. To understand their argument the present *madrasas* can be understood in the light of their aims and objectives they were established for. If it is looked at from their perspective of objectives, present *madrasas*; it is found that there are many differences in the objectives of *madrasas* of centuries or even decades back. At inception there were two sorts of *madrasas*; private *madrasas* were established by *sufis*, scholars and individuals. Whereas the state *madrasas* to produce bureaucrats, engineers, doctors, judges to serve the state. State *madrasas* had objectives of producing intellectuals to assist in state administration, at the same time private *madrasas* of scholars and *khankhas* of *sufis* were for religious and rational sciences. Though private *madrasas* aided with endowments and donations by the rulers, *Nawabs* and *Jagirdars* but they were autonomous in their nature. Thus the founders of *madrasas* and *khankhas* did not compromise with the autonomy and objectives. The struggle of *ulama* from British to present period is also an attempt to maintain the autonomy of the seminaries; in this course they found shunning away from state aid to maintain autonomy and objectives as the best way to move ahead.

The major shift in objectives of private *madrasas* in India took turn when thousands of *ulama* were massacred and *madrasas* were demolished after the failed of first war of freedom 1857. The British wanted to eliminate *madrasas* from India because of their active role in the first freedom struggle. Thus, till India's independence in 1947, *madrasas* had the objectives of freeing India from British. But after independent,

Indian *madrasas* were targeted by communal political parties and organizations to sideline them from main stream of politics, to break their unity, to make them weak and finish their political rule in independent India. Therefore, *madrasas* unconsciously got trapped and they not only confined themselves with religious sciences but also restricted themselves from current politics. Few *ulama* even have the notion that *deen* (religion) does not have any association with politics. From the historical review of *madrasa* education it is observed that the *madrasas* have played a vital role in all key socio-economic, educational and political movements. In fact without *ulama* and *madrasas*, freedom of India was not possible.

In independent India, *madrasas* have isolated themselves from basic politics of rights and today's *madrasas* do not have any affiliation with current politics and movements. They are more serious about religious issues than Muslims' socio-economic, education and political rights. *Ulama* have views that affiliation with politics and introduction of modern subjects in *madrasas* will affect their objectives. In addition, students' burden would increase, as syllabus *dars-e-nizami* is already vast. At the same time there is another argument from the side of students, few *ulama*, and parents i.e., few outdated subjects like *Khadim Unani Falsafa* and *Khadim Arabi Adab* which do not have any direct relevance with Islam can be replaced with higher level modern subjects. On the ground of subjects' standard the certificates of *madrasas* can be recognized by the state as equal to SSC, Intermediate and Graduation so that *madrasa* graduates can also go for modern higher education in colleges and universities which would help and open many fields of employment to them. This can be the best initiative to bring *madrasa* students in mainstream education instead of depriving them from contemporary education. Thus today *madrasas* need to reorient their aims and objectives towards education according to the demand of modern era.

#### **An Overview of Madrasas in Hyderabad:**

Rulers of Hyderabad are well known for their liberal attitude towards their populace and granting donations equally to all communities for even religious education. Thus a large number of *mats*, *temples*, *ashurkhanas*, mosques, *maktabs*, *madrasas*, and *khankhas* got funds from the rulers to establish and function. One can see a large number of these institutions in Hyderabad; it is because of two main reasons. The founder and rulers of Hyderabad were Muslims who had established these institutions, and Muslim individual also showed keen interest in imparting religious education. Even the construction of the city Hyderabad started with 'Charminar' which has a mosque and a *madrasa* on its second floor, it shows the interest of Quli Qutub Sha (1565 -1612) towards education.

The Muslims' seminaries mosques, *maktabs* and *madrasas* were the only selection for formal education of Muslim wards besides *khankhas*, *halkahs* and *mahfils* as informal institutions of schooling in Hyderabad. These institutions have been opening for all from their inception, even in many states low caste Hindus (*dalits*) also were imparted education in *maktabs* and *madrasas* based on egalitarian Islamic epistemology. Thus, one of the main reasons of high speed mushrooming of *Madrasa* Education System in

Hyderabad and India has been its Islamic convention of imparting education to all human beings without any sort of discrimination of caste, religion, gender and creed. Like other states, the rulers of Hyderabad also demonstrated keen interest in education and arts; encouraged private *maktabs*, *madrasas*, *maths* and *patashalas* besides establishing state educational institutions and allotted them colossal annual funds and endowments. Thus from the foundation, Hyderabad city never faced scarcity of intellectuals and artists.

#### **Establishing Madrasas:**

Most of the *madrasas* in Hyderabad are positioned in thickly Muslim populated localities. The tendencies among *ulama* to establish *madrasas* in such areas have multiple rationales, grounded on Islamic doctrine and social circumstances. Since Islam compels *Ahle-Ilm* (Educated people) to impart free education to everyone. Accordingly, it is an attempt of *ulama* to educate economically and educationally backward Muslim families who do not have cultural asset of education and competency of educating their wards in expensive private schools. In this situation where government schools' presence falls short in few Muslim populated areas, in such areas *madrasas* are educating deprived Muslim sections. In the present epoch, explosion of knowledge and demand for professional and technical subjects has diverted pupils' attention from spiritual to materialist education. According to the trend Muslim community also shifted educational interest from traditional *dars-e-nizami* and *madrasas* to international syllabus and modern schools. Thus, the objectives of protection and promotion of religious practices, culture and oriental languages motivate *ulama* to establish *madrasas* even in remote areas to educate basics of Islam to every Muslims and produce expertise like *hafiz*, *aalim* and *fazil*. The issues like donors' availability, sufficient enrolment, availability of land, school of thoughts and security of Muslims' religious places (*masjid*, *madrasa*) also force Muslims to settle and establish their institutions in such areas where Muslims are in sizable number or feel secure themselves from communal goons.

#### **Estimation of Present Madrasas:**

Hyderabad accommodates *madrasas* of different schools of thought and sects, mostly found in thickly Muslim populated pockets, slums, underdeveloped and remote areas. Though there is no scientific study to trace the accurate number of *madrasas*, students' enrolment and teachers, it is estimated that there are more than 2500 *madrasas* in Hyderabad. At the same time Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has recorded 195 *madrasas*, which were availing SSA support for introducing modern subjects in *madrasas*, and were allocated funds close to 920.0117 lakhs. Each *madrasa* has one SSA-teachers and total of 29547 (Boys: 14257 and girls: 15290) students enrolled in different courses in 2014-15.

#### **Madrasas and Diversity:**

The *madrasas* from all major schools of thought exist in Hyderabad with their diversified ideology. The *madrasas* are growing with high speed to preach their unique ideologies besides teaching Islam. Majority of *madrasas* in Hyderabad have affiliation with *Ahlesunatul Jamath*, which have established long back while few are

new. Next *Devobandi* or *Tablighi madrasas* network is growing very fast and is foremost in the establishment of new *madrasas* in Hyderabad, and *Nadwatul Ulama*, *Jamath-Islami* and *Ahle-hadis* respectively. The *madrasas* of *Ahlesunatul Jamath*, *Nadwatul Ulama* and *Jamath-Islami* are moderate to adopt new trends and subjects than others schools of thought. Where *Ahle-hadis* have introduced a sort of high-breed institutions, *madrasa* cum school generally named as “Islamic School” which impart both religious and state syllabus. Slowly other schools of thought are found following this trend in these days.

*Ulama* and founders of *madrasas* disagree that nowadays *madrasas* are established on the ground of schools of thought diversity besides teaching Islam as common objective. The conflicts of schools of thought most of the times damage to the unity and common objectives of the community. Lack of tolerance among schools of thought for other schools and grabbing the *masjids* of other schools of thought by muscle power has created restlessness among Muslims in Hyderabad recently, in which the graduates of *madrasas* or *ulama* play key role. Even the *madrasas* and *ulama* do not recognize the books, certificates of *madrasas* and scholarship of *ulama* of other schools of thought. *Madrasas* are forming ideological, cultural and educational diversity or plurality among Muslims, at the same time in the process of preaching schools of thought ideology they are eliminating illiteracy from the community also.

**Localities and Background of Students:**

The students of *madrasas* are mostly from first generation families, school dropouts, and orphans, differently able and socio-economically backward Muslim families. For such families *madrasas* are an alternative to schools where their children get free education with food, accommodation, scholarship, stationary and medical care. As it is important to mention that there are few specific Mandals of Hyderabad, which have aforesaid qualities in terms of Muslims’ sizable population, availability of the students, space, lack of government schools, availability of Muslim donors and suitable environment for seminaries with safety. The areas like *Bandlaguda*, *Bahadurpura*, *Amberpet*, *Asifnagar* top in number of *madrasas* consequently in Hyderabad. The absence of government schools is filled by *madrasas* in such localities otherwise children of economically backward families in these localities could have remained illiterate or could have become child labourer. The following table gives the details of only SSA supported *madrasas* in localities of Hyderabad, which is not more than 5 percent of total existing *madrasas* of Hyderabad according to the estimation.

**Table No: 1**  
**Localities Wise SSA Supported Madrasas in Hyderabad**

Name of Mandals	During 2014-15	During 2015-16
	Madrasas	Madrasas
Amberpet	12	6
Bahadurpura	63	47
Golconda	3	1

Meredpalle	-	-
Saidabad	8	5
Tirumalagiri	-	-
Ameerpet	-	-
Bandlaguda	68	45
Himayathnagar	-	-
Musheerabad	4	3
Secunderabad	2	-
Asifnagar	10	6
Charminar	8	7
Khiratabad	9	7
Nampally	-	-
Shaikpet	8	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>132</b>

Source: Information through RTI.

### Objectives of Madrasa in Hyderabad:

The *ulama* believe that the primary objective of *madrasa* education is to produce Islamic scholars like *Hafiz*, *Aalim*, *Faizil* and *Muftis* to protect Muslims' religion and faith. In this regard, *madrasas* impart specific skills, to them of explaining the Quran and the *Hadis* to Muslim populace with the expectation that they will protect and propagate Islamic education in the coming generations. About the objectives of *madrasas*, Moulana Habeebur Rahman has shared his views that every *madrasa* has few important objectives besides its few specific ones:

*“Madrasa education is for making Muslims to seek the grace of Allah and Prophet Mohammed by learning the Quran and Islamic practices as well as implementing them in lives. The second objective is to propagate Islamic traditions and guiding Muslims to lead an Islamic life”.*

The following views of the respondents about objectives can be explored that there are different objectives of *madrasa* education. According to the study conducted on *madrasa* education in Hyderabad, it is considered that one of the important objectives of *madrasa* is religious education which is marked the highest by the respondents. Whereas 13 percent respondents believe that propagation of Islam is also the second most important objective after religious education. At the same time 12 percent respondents marked protection of Muslims' beliefs and 11 percent the teaching of *Sirath* (The Life Style of Prophet Mohammed) as important objectives of *madrasa* education.

**Table No: 2**

### Aims and Objectives of Madrasa Education in Hyderabad

Responses	Percentage
Propagation of Islam	13
Protection of Muslims' Belief	12

Making life Hereafter ( <i>Akhirath</i> )	7
Propagation of Prophet's Teachings and Practices	11
Religious Education	14
Religious & Modern Education	6
Islamic Awareness and Unity among Muslims	7
Protection of Islamic Culture	9
Inculcating Character among Muslims	9
Guidance to Muslim Community	4
Promoting Peace and Harmony in Society	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Field study.

### Present Circumstances and Madrasas:

Field study shows that Muslims have felt threat to their religion, culture and Identity and the situation is becoming worse day by day. In some places they are found in a state of panic and considered as secondary citizens. At the same time increased communal factors are also trying to distract Muslims from every side. Thus the main aim of *madrasas* has become to protect and strengthen Muslims' faith by educating them accordingly. The same fear of *ulama* made them and their *madrasas* to work or establish branches of *madrasas* in nearby rural areas of city and Telangana State, especially where Muslims are in very less in numbers and do not have any political or economic influence in society, also where majoritarian group have political, economic, numerical, and religious influence in the society and sometimes Muslim are forced or offered money to be converted into Hinduism, which has been termed as "*Tsunami of Ghar Wapasi*". In such situations and areas *ulama* are trying to be in touch with local Muslims and their education also is taken seriously. In this kind of situation, the *madrasas* and *ulama* are working in remote villages to build a bridge between Muslims of city, town and remote villages to build confidence in the community to face the challenges and keep themselves protected from any sort of un-Islamic practices by strengthening the faith. Under these circumstances few *ulama* are aiming to produce Lawyers, Politicians, Doctors, Engineers, and teachers along with religious scholars, who can be more useful for the community. Regarding multiple aims and motives of *madrasas* Maulana Mahboob Alam Ashrafi shared his views that:

*"Madrasas do not only want to produce Imam and Mozan of masjids, we motivate the brilliant students to take admission in modern institutions and become journalists, lawyers, professors, doctors and engineers"*.

The graduate students of *madrasas* join colleges and universities particularly in humanities and social sciences streams and it is asserted by few modernist *ulama* that their performance is not less than students from other background institution students. Thus few *ulama* view *madrasa* education as foundation for modern education among the madrasa students. Thus according to them *madrasas* have become institutions of

multiple objectives, which try to cope up with traditional and modern objectives. Besides educating *deen*, *madrasas* are trying to terminate illiteracy from Muslims, at the same time motivate them towards modern education.

#### **SSA and Madrasa Modernization:**

It is found that only a limited number of *madrasas* are accepting SSA assistance and majority of them execute their plan of modern education on their own. The fear of state interference and losing the autonomy of seminaries are found among *ulama*, confining them to not accept state assistance for *madrasa* modernization. It is claimed by *ulama* that state's *Madrasa* Modernization Scheme (MMS) is a trap to divert *madrasas* from their religious objectives or discontinuing the objectives of spreading the Islamic spirit. There is no doubt that SSA and MMS have loopholes. Like the state machinery is not executing the plans properly, *madrasa* funds are miss-used and not monitored or released a bit only. The lack of government primary schools and state's discriminative attitude towards Urdu medium schools are the main reasons that *madrasas* are successfully attracting economical and educational backward families. Daily wages labour parents who are unable to pay the education fee for their children, find *madrasas* as an alternative of school where their children get free education with food, accommodation, scholarship, stationary and medical care. The gap of government schools is being filled by *madrasas* in such localities otherwise children of these localities could have remained illiterate or have become child labourers.

#### **Conclusion:**

The history of *madrasa* education in Hyderabad is as old as the city; in fact the foundation building of the city itself is a *masjid* cum *madrasa*. The tradition of *madrasa* education in the city is not new and it can't be separated from the rule, culture, sects and schools of thought of Muslims. Different sorts of *madrasa* have been functioning in the Hyderabad from the foundation of city. It is the trend of establishing *madrasas* that the place should have all the facilities and sufficient environment for education. The *madrasas* continue to be established with the idea that the place should have all the facilities and sufficient environment for education. *Madrasas* in Hyderabad found in educationally backward and remote Muslim localities, where majority of the students are from same localities and a part from Telangana, Bihar and Utter Pradesh. The study found that almost all the *madrasas* of Hyderabad are imparting some sort of modern education; the modern education subjects include Computer Education, Science, English, Mathematics, Social Sciences among others. But the standard of subjects is lower compare to state government schools. At the same time government schools lack basic facilities particularly in Muslim areas or Urdu medium schools. The lack of inclusive policies from the side of state like reservation is mainly responsible for educational backwardness and illiteracy among the Muslim community. In such condition *madrasas* are trying to impart free education and eliminate illiteracy from the community without any assistant of government. Of course, *madrasas* lack quality modern education but the recent trend of Islamic school is trying to fill these gaps. The progressive *ulama* have started a trend of modern cum religious educational institutions, which are named as

“Islamic Schools” instead of *madrasas* where both state and *madrasa* syllabi are given equal time and importance and the results of such schools are also excellent from both religious and state syllabus point of view. Recently Government of Telangana has started a good number of residential schools for the quality education of minorities but it would be too early to judge or predict scholastic achievements of such schools. Finally it is felt that there is need to relook at the aims and objectives of *madrasa* education according to the demands of modern era.

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Note: Throughout the study the term madrasa has been used in the present understanding of the term as an Islamic seminary or educational institution.