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Islamic Education System in Barak Valley – Its Problems and Remedies

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Abstract

Islamic education system in Barak Valley is a unique and supplementary system of education which produces scholars in Islamic religious as well as secular field. These scholars are contributing in the socio economic development of Barak Valley. However, the system of Islamic education running in Barak Valley has some institutional as well as non-institutional problems. The author of this present article has identified these problems and suggested remedial measures to solve those problems. This article has been prepared on the basis of the field visit and the relevant documentary analysis.

Key Words:

Islamic Education : *The education system running in the Maktab and Madrassas based on Islamic theology.*

Maktab : *Primary islamic educational institutions.*

Madrassa : *Secondary as well as higher educational islamic institutions.*

Zakat : *The legal poor tax in Islam, one of the five pillars of Islam.*

Fitra : *Charitable donation in islam on the occasion of Idd-ul-Fitre.*

Introduction: Barak Valley of Assam comprises of the three southern districts: namely Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. The population of Barak Valley is mainly Bengali speaking and among them 48.1% (2011 Census) of population are Muslims. This Muslim population of a Barak valley has a good history of Islamic education. There are some well known and popular Govt. as well as Non-Govt. Islamic educational institutions existing in Barak Valley. Although, the system of Maktab education was very old but the formal Madrassa education was started in 1842 AD with the establishment of Kanakpur Faiz-E-Aam Madrassa in Karimganj district. Later on some other Madrassas were established and the system was running very well. After the independence in 1947 the Muslim participation

in politics increased gradually and this resulted in the spread of Islamic education in the Valley. Now, Islamic education system in Barak Valley is a strong and supplementary system of education.

There are mainly two types of Islamic educational institutions running in Barak Valley. They are govt. provincialized and Non-Govt. institutions. The govt. provincialised Madrassa includes Pre-Senior Madrassa, Senior Madrassa and Title Madrassa. The non-govt. Madrassa include Maktab, Hafizia Madrassa and Title Madrassa (Dawra-e-Hadith. These institutions produce Islamic scholars like Hafiz, Quari, Mufti and Maulanas who are engaged in different fields. But the system faces so many institutional and non-institutional problems. Some of these common problems faced by both govt. provincialised as well as non-govt. institutions are given bellow:

- a) Deviation from actual aims and objectives: Islamic education system aims at producing perfect man who are able to adjust in all the worldly affairs and life thereafter. It helps to know the Allah and His creations. It also aims at producing professionals and scholars in all fields. So that the mankind irrespective of cast and religious identity get served as the creation of Allah. But if we look at the practical production of Islamic education system we don't find many Islamic educated people who fulfilled the actual aims and objectives of Islamic education system.
- b) Lack of proper infrastructure: The Islamic educational institutions in Barak Valley are suffering from poor infrastructure facilities. Both the govt. as well as non-govt. institutions do not have sufficient land, building, furniture, electricity facilities, playground, library facilities etc. Due to this poor infrastructure facilities Islamic education system in Barak Valley is not able to impart education as it is expected from them. The infrastructure facilities are below standard.
- c) Over burdened & out dated curriculum: The curriculum followed in Islamic education system is fully over burdened and out dated. There are so many subjects included in the curriculum which may not be possible for every learner to learn properly. At the elementary and the secondary level all the important religious as well as secular subjects are included in the curriculum. At the pre-senior level there are as many as eleven subjects which are very difficult for a child of 11 or 12 years old to study them. Again, the curriculum is not revised regularly. In the non-govt. Madrassas the curriculum is fully traditional. No kind of innovations are made in the curriculum to make it modernized or innovative.
- d) System is purely exam oriented: The students of Islamic education system have to study a vast curriculum in a stipulated time period. Hence, they only go through the important contents which are supposed to come in the examination. So, they cannot study the whole syllabus of different subjects comprehensively. They just pass the examination without fulfilling the actual aims of education.
- e) Lack of finance: Islamic education system cannot get adequate finance to run it smoothly. In the non-govt. institutions, there is no financial support from the govt. directly or indirectly. They run fully by the public donations. The poor students are

admitted in those institutions and even no tuition fee or any other fees are collected from them. The teachers are paid less and the authority is unable to purchase the required materials etc. regularly. In the govt. institutions also only the teachers are paid by the govt. but there are other problems like poor library facilities and lack of other materials which cannot be minimized due to poor financial support.

- f) **Improper methods and techniques of Teaching & Evaluation:** The methods and techniques of teaching followed in the Islamic education system are purely traditional. The teachers teach the different subjects following the age old methods and techniques of teaching. There is very less use of modern teaching and evaluation methods in teaching and evaluation.
- g) **Less importance on co-curricular activities:** We know co-curricular activities are very important for all-round development of the learners. But in Islamic education system co-curricular activities are given very less importance. There is very little scope of sports and games in the Islamic education system. Sometime the Islamic cultural programmes and activities are arranged in the institutions and the students take part.
- h) **Lack of teacher education:** In Islamic education system, most of the teachers are untrained. About 25% of the teachers of secular subjects of the govt. provincialised institutions have teacher education degrees of diplomas and the rest of them are untrained. There is no scope for the teachers of Islamic subjects to undergo training or orientation. Even the head of the institutions do not have any kind of teacher education degrees and diplomas.
- i) **Lack of vocational courses:** In Islamic education system there is no kind of vocational courses. Only three or four professional courses are taught and most of the students complete general Islamic education. The experts in the Islamic professional fields like Quari, Hafiz, Mufti, Adib etc. do not have sufficient scope for better appointment.
- j) **Less importance on girls' education:** We know half of the populations in this world are women. If they are not educated, the society cannot be developed properly. But in Islamic education system only 10% of the girls are enrolled after primary Maktab education. In Barak Valley, only one govt. provincialised girls senior Madrassa and only two or three non-govt. girls Madrassas are existing. At higher education level there is no scope for female education in Islamic education system.

Besides these ten major common problems there are some specific problems in govt. as well as non-govt. Islamic education system. They are given bellow:

Specific problems related to Govt. Provincialised Institutions:

1. **Improper control of the govt. agency:** The academic affairs of the govt. Madrassas are controlled by the state Madrassa education board of Assam. This board some time formulates the syllabus violating the basic ideology of the Islamic education system. The present govt. institutions have become just like govt. schools or colleges. The teachers think themselves just as govt. employees forgetting their actual status as Ulema. Hence, the system has been deviating from the actual aims and objectives.

2. **Shortage of teachers:** In the govt. Islamic institutions in Barak Valley there is shortage of teachers. Nearly 30% of the Senior Madrassas of Barak Valley are having sufficient teachers and the rest 70% do not have full teaching staff. Among these 30% all the Madrassas are newly provincialised. Again, in case of Title Madrassa 40% are having sufficient teaching staff. Rest 60% i.e. 3 out of five Title Madrassas do not have full teaching staff. In case of pre-senior Madrassas 10% of them suffering from shortage of staff. For the last many years no kind of formal appointment has been done by the govt. in the Islamic educational institutions of Barak Valley.
3. **Lack of hostel facilities:** In govt. Islamic educational institutions of the Barak Valley there is no hostel facility. The student from out sides cannot study properly due to this. The outsiders some time get the lodging facility in the nearby villages but for that they have to do some specific duties and in return to their lodging facilities which kills their valuable time of the study. Moreover, there is no staff quarter for the staff from outside.
4. **Problems related to the curriculum:** The curriculum of Govt. Islamic educational institutions is just a composition of many trades. The curriculum includes so many subjects from religious as well as secular field that cannot be comprehended by the students properly. The students become jack of many trades but master of none. The students study many language subjects including both Arabic and Urdu. But after completing higher studies in this system, they are even unable to speak Arabic or Urdu fluently. Moreover, the curriculum is not revised time to time.

Specific problems related to Non-Govt. Institutions:

1. **Management problem:** There is management problem in the non-govt. Islamic educational institutions. The managing committees of non-govt institutions are constituted with the persons having no relationship with education. The village politician or property owners are found to be attached with the managing committees. It is mainly because of money as the non-govt. institutions are run by the public donations. So those uneducated people are mostly having narrow outlook. Hence, they do not feel the necessity of innovations and academic development of those institutions.
2. **Below standard teaching and learning:** The standards of teaching and learning mainly depend on the curriculum and quality of teachers. But in the non-govt. institutions the curriculum and methods of teaching are below standard. The relevant board selects the contents on the basis of the religious need. They don't consider the present social demand while choosing the content. The most negative future of the non-govt. institutions of Assam is the absence of teacher education system. Neither the authorities nor the teachers feel the necessity of undergoing training. Hence, these institutions fully run on traditional and unscientific manner.
3. **Problem of non-recognition of degrees of non-govt. institutions:** The degrees or the certificates obtained by the students from the non-govt. institutions are not recognized by the state as well as central govt. every year hundreds of students complete their

studies from those institutions but their degrees are not valid for any govt. jobs. Hence, those students have to seek for either imamat or teaching in these types of institutions and earned very less.

4. Lack of uniformity among the different boards: We have seen that there are five Boards of non-govt. Islamic educational institutions. These boards have different curriculums and academic calendar. Even the number of years for studying a particulars course in different boards are not same. Hence, the students are confused to study under which boards and the pass out student of one board is not accepted by another board.
5. Financial Problem: The Non-Govt. Islamic educational institutions totally depend on public donation, Zakat, Fitra etc. Hence, their source of earning is not regular and fixed. So, they cannot provide the salary of the staff regularly. Moreover, students are also taught fully free. Only admission fee and exam fee are collected from the students. This amount of money is not sufficient to manage the contingency of those institutions.
6. Medium of instructions: The language of Islamic subjects is mainly Arabic. But the medium of instructions used by the teachers is either Urdu or Bengali. Hence, quality development is ignored. Again, when Bengali is used, the teachers mostly use the local dialects. So, development of language cannot take place properly. The teachers of those institutions teach in an unscientific and traditional way.

Suggestions to solve the various problems: Where there is problem, there is a way of solving the problem. The Islamic education system in Assam has many problems. Due to these problems the system is not able to reach its desired goal. Hence, the problems must be solved. The following suggestions may be put forward to solve the problems for the smooth functioning of the system as a whole.

1. To develop the Islamic educations system in Assam the govt. should form a public committee including govt. officials and experts from all system of education to develop the curriculum and co-curricular activities of Islamic education system of Assam. The curriculum should not be over burdened. The contents should be selected on the basis of the modern needs of the students and the society. The relevant subject should be included in the curriculum and some cultural programmes and activities must be included on a compulsory basis. So that no one can avoid those activities.
2. The teachers in Islamic education system are untrained. Hence, there must be scope for teacher education and orientation for the teachers working in the Islamic educational institutions. The teachers must be trained to innovate new methods and techniques of teaching and evaluations. The teachers should be allowed to use new scientific methods and techniques of teaching and evaluation.
3. The teachers working in the Islamic educational institutions are appointed on the basis of only Islamic degrees. The teacher recruitment system should be changed and teacher should be appointed considering both general as well as Islamic degrees.

Moreover, there must be provision for pre-service training and orientation. Without training no teacher should be appointed in any type of educational institutions.

4. The study reveals that only 10 % of the students of Islamic education system are girls. Hence, importance should be given to increase the enrolment of girls in the Islamic education system. At the higher education level there is no female students which should be changed otherwise Islamic education system cannot give fruitful result. Again, female teachers also should be recruited at the both primary as well as higher education level in Islamic education system.
5. As we have seen the Islamic educational institutions suffer from poor infrastructure. Hence, development of infrastructure is needed for the smooth functioning of those institutions. The building condition, furniture, library, playground etc. should be developed. For that purpose the govt. should come forward with proper goodwill to provide financial support for the development of infrastructure of the Islamic educational institutions of Barak Valley.

Specific suggestions for Development of Govt. Provsionalised Institutions:

1. The govt. Islamic educational institutions are suffering from shortage of teachers. All the earlier provsionalised institutions of Barak Valley don't have required teachers. For the last many years no formal teacher recruitment has been done. The Title Madrassas are running with one or two teachers where as they need at least 7 teachers. More than 50% of the teaching posts of senior Madrassas are lying vacant. Hence, the govt. should come forward to appoint eligible teachers for these vacant posts.
2. The govt. Islamic institutions in Barak Valley do not have full-fledged head of the intuitions. Only the in charge head of the institutions are managing the institutions somehow. Most of them do not have more general education. Hence, it is difficult for them to run the institutions smoothly. All the teachers are recruited from Muslim community. Teachers from other communities may be appointed in the general posts of teaching.
3. In any kind of educational institutions community participation is needed. But the govt. Islamic educational institutions are lacking from community participations. Only two of the guardians and one or two more people are included in the managing committee and the rest of the community people are ignored. Hence, step must be taken to utilize the human as well as the material resources of the community for the better functioning of those institutions.
4. The govt. Islamic educational institutions in Barak Valley are not supervised by govt. regularly. The Inspector of schools of the respective districts handle the financial matters but the authority does not take any step for regular inspection and supervision of those institutions. The inspectors of schools remain busy with the secular schools only and the Islamic educational institutions are neglected.
5. In some govt. institutions there is less students' enrolment. Numbers of students are less in comparison to the physibility of those institutions. Again, there is no hostel facility for the students. The students from distance places cannot study in those

institutions only because of staying problem. So, to raise the students' enrolments hostel should be started for the students and quarter for the teachers. At the higher education level hostel and staff quarter is very much needed.

Specific suggestions for the Non-Govt. Institutions: The non-govt. Islamic educational institutions have some specific problems that to be solved. For that purpose the following suggestions may be put forward.

1. We know there is lack of goodwill on the part of the govt. for the non-govt. institutions. The certificates and degrees are not recognized by the govt. There is no kind of financial support, provided by the govt. to the non-govt. institutions. Hence, the govt. should develop a positive attitude towards those institutions. The degrees and certificates offered by the non-govt. institutions should be recognized by the govt. so that the product of those institutions can get better employment opportunities. Govt. should provide financial support so that at least the teachers can be given a little more money as salary for their service and the infrastructure may be developed.
2. The study reveals that there is no retirement system in the non-govt. Islamic educational institutions. Nearly 30% of the teachers are over aged. They are continuing their service as they are physically fit. Again, there are less qualified teachers also working in those institutions against a minimum salary. No kind of orientation or training is given to the teachers. Hence, there should be specific eligibility criteria for the teachers to work in those institutions and more aged teachers should be replaced by the new young, energetic and skilled teachers.
3. The non-govt. Institutions do not have good number of library books and other teaching aids due to poor financial conditions. It is mainly because they are run by the private body. In the management system also the persons are selected on the basis of money. So, these financial problems should be solved and educated persons should be included in the managing committee to raise the management system of those institutions.
4. We know there is lack of uniformity and co-ordination among the different boards of non-govt. Islamic educational institutions. Even the duration of curriculum transactions is different in various boards. This is harmful for the smooth functioning of Islamic education system. The curriculum duration should be same in all the boards. There must be co-operation and co-ordination among the different boards. The institutions which are run individually also should have similarities with the different boards. There must be similarities in the contents, methods and techniques of teaching, evaluation system etc. among the different institutions and Boards.
5. In non-govt. Islamic educational institutions there is very less importance given on co-curricular activities. So, all round developments of the individual may not be possible. Hence, various types of co-curricular activities like sports games etc. must be included on a compulsory basis for attaining the actual aims and objectives of education.

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