

Key-note Address

By

Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam

*Chairman, Institute of Objective Studies,
New Delhi*

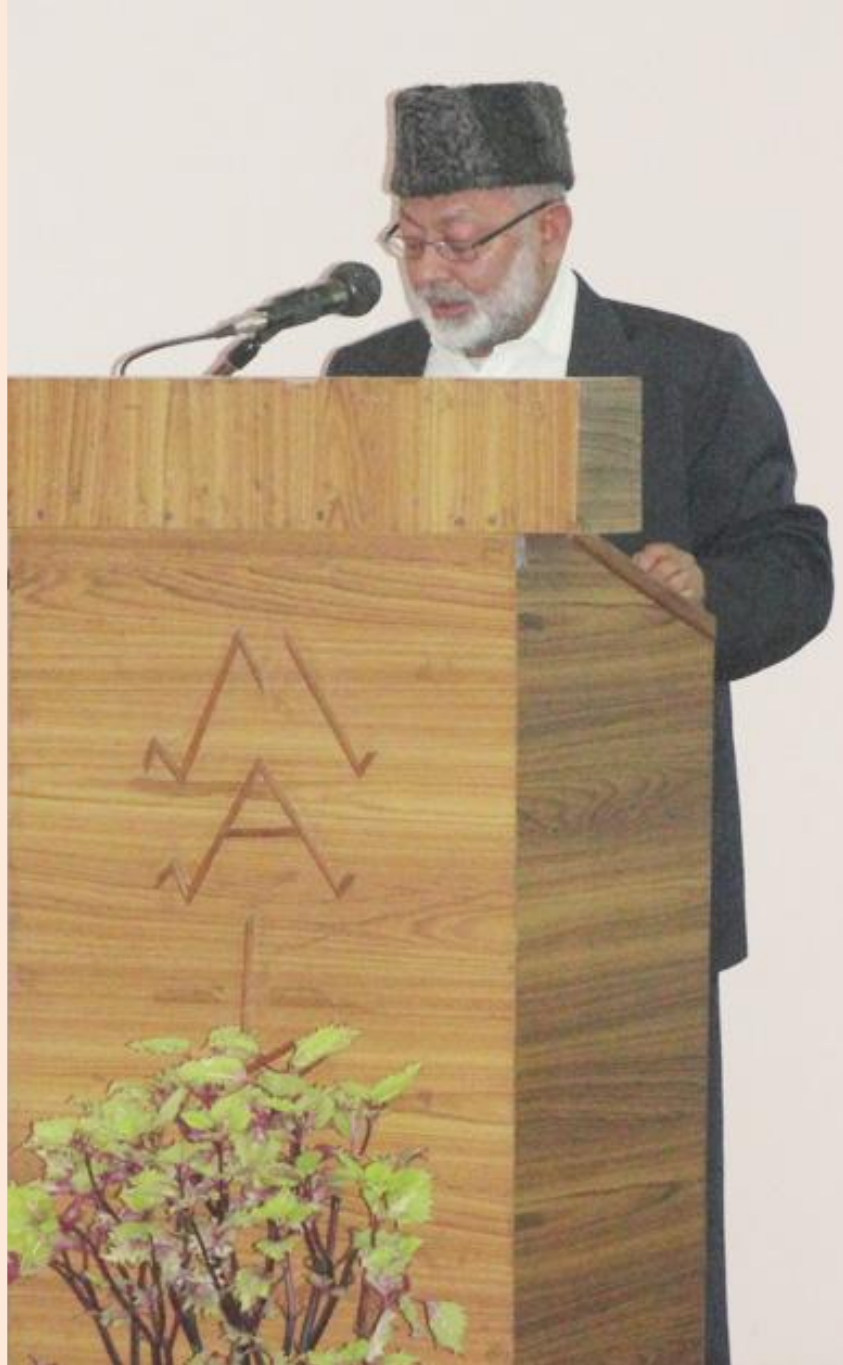
for the

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**“Traditional Versus Modern
Education: Vision and Planning of
Muslim Institutions”**

on

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Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh



I wish to thank Prof Shamim A. Ansari, Director for having brought us all together to discuss the subject of "Traditional Versus Modern Education: Vision and Planning of Muslim Institutions" being organised by the Centre for Promotion of Educational and Cultural Advancement of Muslims of India (CEPECAMI), Aligarh Muslim University.

This subject is supremely important: there can be no denying its importance.

From the Islamic perspective, from the global, national and regional perspectives, education remains the key which can unlock the benefits of modernity.

Without education, any community or nation would be rootless and completely left behind in the 21st century.

We all know the value of education, the question today is: How do we ensure that the Muslim Ummah gets the benefit of modern education?

At the start, let me assure the august audience that the Institute of Objective Studies, over the last 26 years, has been conducting seminars and conferences, publishing surveys, reports and books that have influenced policy decisions - at the Centre and in the States – regarding Muslim educational and economic uplift.



IOS has brought academicians and experts from all over the world - the US, UK, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Malaysia, Indonesia - to add value and share their experiences in the context of India and Indian Muslims, especially in the field of education with the collaboration of education experts as well as those well-versed in education management and administration. We also published a series of books on education and empowerment of Muslims in various fields, including empowerment of Muslims through education.

I am sure this seminar will throw up new ideas and thoughts on this subject. We welcome this churning of thoughts¹.

But I consider it my duty to ensure that our focus should remain on the Sachar Committee Report.

The Report has provided us with all the evidence, policy frameworks and recommendations on Education.

We do not need reinvent the wheel now.

Let me begin with the questions the Report raised, especially in the context of education:

- Does the Muslim community have adequate access to education & health services, municipal infrastructure, bank credit, & other services provided by Government/ public sector entities?
- How does this compare to access enjoyed by other socio-religious categories in various States?
- What is the level of social infrastructure (schools, health centers, Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) centers etc.) located in areas of Muslim concentration in comparison to the general level of such infrastructure in various States?

*** In the context of Madarsa Education, it was stated:**

- Madaras have become a symbol of Muslim identity in India. Labeling of Madaras as a den for terrorists is extremely worrisome for the Muslim community.
- Madaras serve as an important instrument of identity maintenance for the Community. Many a time Madaras are the only educational option available to Muslim children, especially in areas where no schools have reached the Muslim masses.
- Madaras, where they operate are rendering useful service as far as literacy is concerned. However, there is an urgent need to recognize that a very small percentage of Muslim children actually attend Madarsa education.

* A need to work out a mechanism whereby Dini Madaris can be linked with a higher secondary board so that students wanting to shift to regular/mainstream education can do so even after having passed from a Madarsa is increasingly being stressed upon². The provision of 'equivalence' to Madarsa certificates/degrees for subsequent admissions has been emphasized.

I wish to question this audience: have you or your organization been able to address these issues?

If yes, please share your experiences; if not, then we need to re-focus and reorient our efforts in these directions.

Modernizing Madaras by the government has been a very contentious issue with many differing viewpoints amongst the Community, the Sachar Report commented³.

- Madaras modernization scheme of the government have not really provided much relief to the community as far as quality education is concerned. However, Madarsa 'modernisation' does not mean only having science/mathematics teachers and installing computers.

- There is a segment of the Muslim population that is against the modernization programme. This is primarily due to an underlying fear that in the name of modernization executed through state intervention, Madarsa autonomy will be compromised. Cumbersome forms and a higher registration fee have also been an obstacle and kept many away from getting registered with the Madarsa Board wherever it exists.

In brief, I also want to underscore the key observations from the Report, which has great meaning for all of us who have gathered here:

- The relative deprivation in education of Muslims vis-à-vis other socio-religious communities calls for a significant shift in the policy of the State, along with **the creation of effective partnership with private and voluntary sectors.**
- Given the vastness of the population to be served and the limited resources available with policy makers, the emphasis on provisioning of a minimum level of school education by the State seems justified. That does not mean, however, that the State can withdraw from participation in higher levels of education.
- **With regard to school education, the condition of Muslims is one of grave concern.**

The data clearly indicates that while the overall levels of education in India, measured through various indicators, is still below universally acceptable standards, the educational status of the Muslim community in particular is a matter of great concern.

- When alternative indicators of educational achievement, more representative of the progress made in education, are considered, a significant disparity between the status of Muslims and that of other socio-religious categories (except SCs/STs) can be noted. For example, both the Mean Years of Schooling (MYS) and attendance levels of Muslims are low in absolute terms and in contrast to all socio-religious categories except in some cases SCs/STs.

In fact, in several context, SCs/STs are found to have overtaken Muslims.

- Analysis of time trends indicate that, despite overall improvement in educational status, the rate of progress has been the slowest for Muslims.

In other words, while educational attainments of Muslims have improved over the years, it has done so at a more gradual pace than other socio-religious categories, so that the expected convergence has not occurred.

Instead, the gap between Muslims and advantaged sections has actually widened since Independence, and particularly since the 1980s.

In fact, a steady divergence in the level of achievements has seen traditionally under-privileged SCs/STs catching up and overtaking Muslims in several contexts.

- Attainments at the **graduation level and in technical education** are low for all: Even at these low levels Muslims lag behind in both areas.

That the share of Muslims is poorest in streams having brightest employment prospects is of special concern.

This has serious long-term implications for the economic empowerment of the Community and consequently for economic development of the country.

The Sachar Report has also dispelled several myths regarding the Muslim community. I feel it needs to be highlighted today:

- There is also a common belief that Muslim parents feel that education is not important for girls and that it may instill a wrong set of values. Even if girls are enrolled, they are withdrawn at an early age to marry them off. This leads to a higher drop-out rate among Muslim girls.

Our interactions indicate that the problem may lie in non-availability of schools within easy reach for girls at lower levels of education, absence of girl's hostels, absence of female teachers and availability of scholarships as they move up the education ladder.

- The changes in educational patterns across socio-religious communities suggest that SCs and STs have reaped at least some advantages of targeted government and private action supporting their educational progress.

This reflects the importance of affirmative action.

While the nature of affirmative action that is required needs to be assessed, a sharper focus on school education combined with more opportunities in higher education for Muslims seems desirable.

In a paper titled Post-Sachar Evaluation of the Condition of Education of Muslims in India Reshmi Sengupta, makes the following points⁴:

* **In terms of literacy levels**, results show that Muslims have lower levels of literacy as compared to other socio-religious categories, except for that of Hindu SCs/STs.

Comparing results from the NSSO 68th (2011-12) and 62nd (2005-06) rounds show that literacy levels among Muslims in the urban and the rural areas have increased from 2005-06 to 2011-12.

All the socio-religious categories experience an increase in the levels of literacy from 2005-06 to 2011-12, and Muslim OBC males and females experience the highest increase in the levels of literacy as compared to any other SRCs.

Gap in the levels of literacy among Muslims in the urban and the rural areas still exists in 2011-12 when compared to their respective national averages.

However, the overall gap in the levels of literacy among Muslims is slightly decreased in 2011-12 from 2005-06.

Gender gap in literacy is still prominent in 2011-12 with Muslim males having higher levels of literacy than Muslim females.

* With respect to the current rate of **attendance in an educational institution**, the results show that the current rate of attendance is lower among Muslims as compared to other socio-religious categories, with Muslim OBCs having the lowest attendance rate.

From 2005-06 to 2011-12, increase in the rate of attendance of children age 6 to 14 years is highest among Muslim OBC children as compared to children from other socio-religious categories.

However, the overall rate of attendance is lower for Muslims (especially, for Muslim OBC children) in comparison to other socio-religious categories.

* As compared to other socio-religious categories, **Muslims have the highest percentage of individuals who have never attended any educational institution**, although the percentage of individuals who are currently not attending any educational institution is almost similar across the socio-religious categories.

For children age 6 to 14 years among Muslims, specifically Muslim OBCs, have the highest percentage of children never attended any school.

Moreover, the percentage of children not currently attending any school is highest among all the categories of Muslims (including, Muslim general and Muslim OBCs). Interestingly, between 2005-06 and 2011-12, the decrease in the percentage of children who have never attended any school is also highest among Muslim OBCs.

A decrease in the percentage of children who are currently not attending any educational institution is evident among Muslims children, particularly among Muslim OBC children.

* With regard to the **status of educational attainment**, an increase in the percentage of Muslims completing any specified levels of education is found from the analysis. In comparison to all the other SRCs, except Hindu SCs/STs, and for all the levels of education, Muslim OBCs have the lowest rate of completion.

Muslims still perform poorly with respect to higher levels of educational attainment. A slight increase in the rate of completion for Muslims is evident for diploma and certificate courses.

Dear friends, while there is evidence of some improvements, we can see that we have a long, long way to go.

We need to mobilize our resources and create groups which can share these objectives for the educational development of the Muslim Ummah.

This is a task which will take many decades and many generations to accomplish; we will need to work, train and mentor the new generation to also understand these challenges.

It will require us to provide the synergy between the Islamic perspective, the global and national perspective, and the regional needs.

The IOS has created platforms on which we can build together.

We hope we can work together for a better tomorrow without losing our faith, our vision and our focus.

Recommendations/Suggestions

1. Developing of an autonomous educational corporation by the government of India for providing financial assistance to Madrasas for modern education and promoting women education.
2. Opening a chain of coaching and guidance centres for Muslim students all over India for admission to professional and vocational courses and competitive exams, besides helping madrasa graduates transition into modern education.
3. Orientation of madrasa teachers at madadris by experts on contemporary subjects.

4. Promotion of Qur'anic research methodology/alternative research methodology on issues related to humanities – both at university and madrasa level.
5. Affirmative action for Muslims in educational sectors in view of their backwardness as per the findings of Sachar Committee/Rangnath Mishra Commission Report in line with SCs and STs.

Thank you, Prof Shamim A. Ansari for this opportunity to here and sharing my thoughts and concerns.

Notes and References

¹ For a thorough conceptual discourse and analysis of basic issues involved, see: “Integrating and Expanding all Kinds of Knowledge”, Dr. Mohammad Manzoor Alam at www.iosworld.org

² For a detailed discussion on of these issues, see: *Empowerment of Muslims Through Education*, Prof. M. Akhtar Siddiqui, Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, 2004

³ See “Findings of Access to Urban Basic Services in the Muslim Localities of Delhi: A Research Study”, Dr. Tarique Ashraf, Civil Society Network submitted to Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi at www.iosworld.org

⁴ Reshmi Sengupta’s note on Post Sachar Evaluation of the Condition of Education of Muslims in India prepared for Post Sachar Evaluation Committee