

Development of Western Education among Muslims in Bengal from 1871-1947

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Abstract

The changed political condition in India allowed the indigenous institutions to decay. The changed pattern of governance under the British authority discouraged the indigenous system of learning both for Hindu and Muslim communities. This resulted in the decaying of the position of general masses in socio, economic and political front. The late eightieth and early part of the nineteenth centuries witnessed the degeneration of the Muslims of India in general and Bengal in particular in socio, economic and political front. The situation had undergone some changes with the initiative taken by Lord Mayo and recommendation of Indian Education Commission by Lord Duffrin which brought changes in the position of education. Muslims of India started giving impetus to western and scientific education during the early quarter of 20th century. The reformed Madrasah scheme and initiative taken by Shikha group to promote idea of liberalism within Muslim Community provided the platform for the development of secular and scientific education among Muslims of Bengal.

Key Words: Muslims of India, Indian Education Commission, reformed Madrasah scheme, liberalism, secular and scientific education

Introduction

The revolt of 1857 had brought tremendous changes in the minds of Indian people.(Ahmed, 1983;p.1). After the revolt of 1857 some of the Muslims of Bengal felt strongly the need of the acceptance of Western Education in order to get rid of the changed socio-economic and political conditions during the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of the facts revealed out of the statistics of 1856 regarding the state of education brought the scenario of the decline of education system of

the Muslims during the period of study. It was also revealed that there was some natural dislikeness among the Muslims to accept Modern Education. The report of 1856 also revealed that out of 34 government Schools and Colleges in Bengal, the number of Hindu students were 6338 and while the Muslims were 731 (G.R.P.I;1855-56). During this period of time few Muslim leaders and intellectuals brought the idea of promotion and the development of modern and scientific education in order to uplift the Muslims of Bengal in socio-economic and political fields. Among those the most important were Nawab Abdul Latif, Syed Amir Ali and Syed Amir Hossain etc. (Ahmed, 1983;p.106).Nawab Abdul Latif established Muhammadan Literary Society in 1863 (Firdous,2014;p.11). Abdul Latif used Muhammadan Literary Society as a powerful tool in spreading and reforming education among Muslims. The Society's endeavors in this respect included: (i) introducing and spreading the western education among the Muslims, (ii) reforming the old Madrasah education system and (iii) persuading the government to introduce school and college education keeping in view particular requirements of the Muslims(Firdous,2014;p.17). The problem of the Muslims specially in educational field was also been highlighted by W.W. Hunter in his famous book 'The Indian Musalmans'. The writings of W.W. Hunter brought some great changes in the minds of some of the educated elites, who in turn also started giving importance to the need of modern and scientific education among the minds of the Bengal Muslims. The Muhammadan Literary Society of Nawab Abdul Latif had added a new dimension to the thought and the feelings of the Muslims. It had endeavored for the welfare of the Muslims by attracting the government towards the needs and complains of the Muslim society in matters of education, law etc. More than 5000 persons from various corners of the country have joined the society as a member during this period(Rahim,2012;p.129). The Muhammedan Literary Society had taken a pioneering role in the establishment of several other organizations in Bengal and in India at large. On the lines of Muhammadan Literary Society, Calcutta Madrasah Society, Mednapore Literary Society, Kohinoor Literary Society of Faridpur, BangiyaMusalmanSahityaSamityetc were established(Firdous,2014;p.18).

On the lines of Muhammedan Literary Society, Central National Muhammedan Association was established by Syed Amir Ali in order to promote modern education among Muslims in Bengal(Rashid,n.d., p.2). Syed Amir Ali propogated his ideas about Modern Education in 1880 through a propogated which was known as a pamphlet on Mohomeden Education in Bengal(Khandekar,1397;p.40).Syed Amir Ali presented a memorial to his Excellency the most

Honourable the Marquis of Ripon, Viceroy and Governor General of India on 6th Feb 1882 where he has expressed the concern for the promotion of modern education among Muslims in Bengal. It is also expressed that Amir Ali was not a favor of promotion of oriental education.(Seal,1968;p.312). It was also expressed that he was not in favour of the promotion of Perso-Arabic system of education, which he expressed to Hunter Commission. It was stated that, “A dead weight, however, seems still to press down the Moslem Community. The mistake which was committed in 1872 was not to make English Compulsory for all students who sought middle class and high education the consequence is that the only kind of education which is necessary to enable them to retrieve the ground they had lost within the last 50(fifty) years which was in a most unsatisfactory condition.I think it has been satisfactorily proved the scheme devised by George Champbell in 1872 to promote a purely oriental education among the Moslems has proved a practical failure.”(Ali,1985;p.141).

The initiative taken by some of individuals speciallyFaizunnisha and Rokeya proved to be successful as they took active stapes for the promotion of education among Muslims women. As far as women education in Bengal concern NawabFaizunnishaChoudhurani took initiative for the promotion of education. She established Muslim Girls School in Comilla in 1873(Begum,1933;p.37). This was consider to be the first women girls school in the area concerned(Begum,1933;p.38).In Calcutta some of the English educated Muslim elites established few girl schools for the propagation of western education. Suhrawardiya Girls School established by KhujistaAkhtarBano. Sakhawat Memorial Girls School established by RokeyaSakhawatHossain, Muslim Girls School by Begum ShamshiFirdousMahal contributed in a big way for development of Western Education among Muslim Girls in Calcutta.

Rokeya wrote several articles on the condition of Muslim women in Bengal. She prepared an educational Programme for her school which she believed would produce better wives and mothers. Another great exponent of women movement was ShamsunnaharMahmood. Though the individuals like Begum Rokeya and Mahmood took great initiative but the development of education among Muslim women was not satisfactory.

According to the General Report of Public Instruction of 1874-75, Muslims comprised of 48.8 percent population of Bengal where the percentage of Muslim students who attended schools was 29percent. Where the Hindus were numerically 51.1 percent in terms of population while

70.1percent of them attended schools. It is also revealed from a Report of Public instruction which was otherwise known as GRPI report of 1875-76 only 5.4 present Muslims studied in colleges in Bengal Presidency.

The census of India for the year 1891 provides the information about the number of educated and literates including the English educated literates for both Muslim and Hindu community for North Bengal, East Bengal and West Bengal(Census,1891;p.229).

Table number-1

Name of the area	Muslims			Hindus		
	Educated and Literates	English Educated	Percentage of English Educated Literates against total educated	Educated and Literates	English Educated	Percentage of English Educated Literates against total educated
North Bengal	172868	1209	.069	136747	4650	3.40
East Bengal	359675	3313	.092	565509	17438	3.08
West Bengal	146698	5689	3.89	885711	47912	5.40
Total	679241	10211	1.50	1587967	70000	4.40

It is revealed from the above table that the English educated, literates and educated Hindus were near about three times than their Muslim compatriots. The percentage representations of English educated literates were proportionality higher than the Muslims of North Bengal and the Eastern part of Bengal. Mr. DelwarHossain Ahmed was the first Muslim graduate of Calcutta University(1861)(Ali,1974;p.74).Syed Amir Ali passed M.A. examination from HooglyCollege in 1868(Ali,1974;p.74). The first Muslim who received Ph.D. from Calcutta University was Abdullah-Al-MamoonSuhrawardy who was a honours graduate in English and passed M.A in Arabic(Ali,1974;p.74).

Table number-2

The numerical strength of the Muslims students who represented in Primary schools and Secondary Schools and in Arts Colleges in East Bengal during 1906-1911(R.P.E.E.B.1907-11;P.18).

Public Institution	Year (1906-07)	Year (1911-12)
Arts Colleges	71	360
Secondary Schools	22,978	59,480
Primary Schools	312,699	451,157

The report of the progress of education on East Bengal from 1907-08 to 1911-12 reveals that the number of Muslims students grew more than five times in Arts Colleges from 1906-11 similarly the growth of the Muslims in the Secondary Schools was near about 2.58 times from 1906-11. The representation of the Muslims in Primary Schools grew by 0.4427 times from 1906-11.

There has been growth of education for Muslims in different Schools and Colleges because of the introduction of some of the special facilities specially the construction of hostels, increase of the number of scholarship and stipends for Muslims Students. The report on Mohammedan Education in Bengal provides the information about the total number of Muslims Students in different Government Colleges in Bengal in 1916(R.M.E.B,1916).

Table number-3

Name of the College	Total number of the students
Presidency College	124
Central College	3
Scottish Church College	1
Ripon College	89
Bangabasi College	27
City College	127
C.M.S College	4
St Xavier's College	117

L.M.S College	18
Total	510

The representation of the Muslims Students in Central College, Scottish Church College and C.M.S College were numerically much inferior then other Government Colleges. The Muslims legislators over the representation of the Muslims Students in the Government Colleges in Bengal. With the passing of the time the representation of the Muslims grew a large number then the previous time period.

In the year 1914 a recommendation was made by Mohammedan Education Committee for the promotion of education among Muslims in Medical, Engineering and in Legal education among Muslims in Bengal. The following table provides information about the promotion of education in the fields of Medicine, Engineering and Law(S.P.E.B., 1912,1916;PP.70-71).

Table number-4

Year	Number of Institutions	Total Students	Hindu Students	Muslim Students	Hindu Percentage	Muslim Percentage
1912	14	2,226	1,964	94	87.4	4.2
1917	16	4,412	3,855	303	87.4	6.8
1919	17	5,024	4,473	403	89.9	8.0
1921-22	*	4,653	*	440	*	9.4

The facts reveals out of the table the Muslims representation in the Engineering, Medical and Law Colleges started gaining impetus after 1914. In the year 1912 the Muslims were 4.2 percent in all forms of professional Colleges and it rose to 9.4 percent during 1922. The growth was shiningly encouraging but it was not satisfactory.

The following table provides information about the number of students in both communities in different colleges of Bengal on 31th March 1930(R.M.E.A.C.,1934).

Table number-5

Name of the Colleges	Total number of the students on 31March 1930	Hindus	Muslims	Others
Sanskrit College	187(100 in English dept. and 87 in other dept.)	187	Nil	Nil
Krishnagar College	249	232	16	01
Rajshahi College	759	598	161	Nil
Islamia College	343	Nil	343	Nil
Hoogly College	302	283	19	Nil
Chittagong College	455	330	104	21

After 1920 the Muslims of Bengal started showing some interest in higher education. During 1940 the Muslims of Bengal specially the Eastern part of Bengal started showing interest towards Western and Scientific education with the initiative of the some liberal educated elites.

The Census of India of Bengal prepared by R.A. Dutch provides an insight about the total population of Bengal and the distribution of population on the basis of religious community the total number of population in Bengal as it stood in 1941 were 60306525 out of which Hindus were 25059024 and Muslims were 33005434(Census,1941). It means there were 41.52% were Hindus and 54.72 were Muslims. The Census report of 1941 also provides us with this information that there were 9832077 people who were literates out of the total population of 60306525(Census,1941). Meaning there by 16.30% was returned as literates. It is also revealed from the same report that out of 25059024 Hindus 5756890 was returned as literates which means 22.97% of the Hindus were literates. Similarly out of the total population of 33005434 Muslims, 3887184 were returned as literates which mean 11.77% of the Muslims were literates.

The period 1871 to 1947 experienced the slow growth of education within the Muslim community. The Educational Report of 1921 shows that Muslims of Bengal were only 12.8% in

Arts Colleges though they represented near about half of the population of Bengal. The lack of progressive attitude, liberal ideas and inability to accept western education allowed them to move back ward in educational front. It is only just before independent some progress has been experienced in the field of education.

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