



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**History**

**MUSLIM EDUCATION STARTED IN TAMILNADU - (1902 - 1935)**

**KEY WORDS:**

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Education is the key to progress the gateway to knowledge the means to perfection and culture.

Islam attaches immense importance to the acquisition and extension of 'illm' or knowledge, which has been a part of the Quran the Ahaadith and other sciences. Surah-Iqra, the first revealed version of this HolyBook, opens with an injunction addressed to the prophet to "read". The place assigned to education in Islam can best be appreciated in the light of importance attached to Ink, pen, and paper the three indispensable instruments of acquiring and extending knowledge<sup>1</sup>.

In Tamilnadu, there were nearly eight lakhs of Muslims at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>2</sup>. They outnumbered people of other religions and formed the biggest minority group. This feeling that theirs was a minority religion always lingered in their minds and this is reflected through their action and policies including education.

During the British rule, Persian language was replaced by English. Persian had been the main medium of instruction and a traditional language of the Muslim community. Soon after the replacement of Persian, the orthodox Muslim community hated the new western education and did not send their children to learn the heathen education. The Muslim community as a whole was against the introduction of western education system. Meanwhile other communities especially the Christians took advantage of all the facilities available.

Under such a circumstance was born the Muslim reform movement under the name of Aligrah Movement. Sir syed Ahmed Khan founded "The Muhammadan Anglo oriental College" at Aligarh in 1877. In South India matters still continued in the same old fashion until when, "Muhammadan Educational Association of South India" was founded in 1902 at Madras<sup>3</sup>. Together with this, The Muhammadan Educational Society, Trichy, Muslim Educational Society, Melvisharam<sup>4</sup> gave strength to the movement for the growth of education among Muslim educational activities. The propaganda made by these associations, aroused interest in education among Muslims Added to these Justice Abdul Rahim, Nawab C.Abdul Hakeem, Jamal Mohideen, Hamid Hassan, M.A.Azeem rendered yeoman service to the community in spreading education.

The educational attainments of Muslims may be classified into Elementary Education, Secondary Education, Higher Education, Teahcnical Education and Women's Education.

**Elementary Education:**

In many schools, Teaching was through Tamil medium where the Muslim children went for elementary education. But at Vellore, Vaniyambadi, Melvisharam, Madras, Trichy, Salem, Urdu was the medium of instruction. The Government started elementary schools whoever the Muslim population was more than a thousand. To extend elementary education an attempt was made by the curriculum of English Schools, where hitherto only Quran was taught<sup>5</sup>. But Government efforts met with little success because of the Khilafat Movement had already begun and Muslims blindly disliked government measures.

Tamil, being the mother tongue for many Muslims in Southern Tamilnadu, language was not a problem to them. But the Muslims

of North Arcot and Madras city were the main sufferers, who knew only Urdu. Though there were also few schools which taught through Urdu medium they were not sufficient. By 1924 there came a sudden increase in the number of pupils taking to elementary education because the Khilafat Movement was no more. It was also due to the introduction of compulsory education in some of the selected centers of the State. Private organisation like Melvisharam Muslim Educational also founded schools to educate the Muslims.

**Secondary Education:**

The Secondary schools which were founded in Madras, Trichy, Salam,, Arcot and Ranipet did not attract Muslim pupils of the state. There were separate schools for Muslim boys and girls, Government School for boys functioned at Madras, Vellore, Arcot, Ranipet and Salem. Whereas there were only two schools Government Hobert Secondary and Training Schools, Royapettah found in 1873<sup>6</sup> and Government School for Muhammadan women, Trichirapally<sup>7</sup>. District Education Board for each district was proposed by Government in January 1923, to look after the administration of these schools and it was formed in 1928<sup>8</sup>.

In the District Education Board, non- Muslims were appointed to look after the education of Muslims. But in the separate advisory boards, the Muslim members were appointed to administer each secondary school. There were such boards for Islamia Secondary School, Trichirapally<sup>9</sup>.

To increase the Muslim pupils strength, the curriculum was centered around Arabic, Persian and Urdu and students were provided with school uniforms and mid-day meals with the help of some philanthropists. In spite of all these, the Muslim community showed no interest in it, the strength in those schools was decreasing.

**Higher Education**

There were a few who could not take higher education, due to their poor financial condition. Government Muthammadan College, Madras and Islamiah college, Vaniyambadi<sup>10</sup>. Some Muslim students also studied in Presidency College, Madras Christian College, Law College and Medical College in Madras.

When the Khilafat leaders made a call to the students to abandon their studies, there was spontaneous response from the students of Islamiah College<sup>11</sup>. But after 1923, politics did not attract Muslims students as it was secular in nature and so they did not respond well to the Salt Satyagraha and the Civil Dis-obedience Movement<sup>12</sup>.

The Muslims of North Arcot and Madras city had better opportunities to get higher education than the Tamil speaking Muslims of Southern districts of TamilNadu. There was steady increase in the strength of Muslim students from 1922-1928; it was due to the distribution of scholarships both by Government also ensure that no classes were held during Friday prayer (Jummah) hours. Where ever necessary, it also recommended loan of services of educated Muslims and even foreign scholarship facilities were provided to the deserving students. In spite of all these measures there was no marked improvement in higher education among the Muslims. They seem to have taken it lightly and did not realize its importance. They realized the need of education only recently and hence their progress in education was slow.

**Technical Education:**

For the improvement of the Muslims, technical education on the widest possible scale was the remedy. Very few technical institutions were available in the state. Besides the few government technical institutes at Madras and Coimbatore, especially for Muslims, an industrial School was started by 'Anjuman-e- mufid-e-Ahl-e-Islam" (Society of Madras) in 1885.It was started by Mirza Feroze Hussain, the agent of the Nawab of Carnatic with a donation of Rs.1200/-. Because of the hard work of the Ajuman it emerged as a well known institution all over the state<sup>14</sup>.

Among the Muslims very few took to medical and law courses. In 1925, a School of Indian medicine was opened at Madras. Aryurveda, Siddha and Unani systems of medicine were taught in Urdu, Tamil and Telegu. Great Muslim Unani doctors like Haji Hakeem Syed Maqdom Ashraf Sahib served in that institution<sup>15</sup>. 'Eastern Medical Association of South India' started in 1912, but in 1926 it was closed, as a Government College was opened. Similarly, the Muslims also had interest in legal and professional studies. In 1922-23, there were fourteen Muslims students in the Law College, Madras. Sports education had very little attraction to Muslims. Teaching too received little attention. Thus technical education had the least attraction for the Muslims.

**Women Education**

Women education under the British was far from satisfactory. The orthodox section of the Muslims held the view that offering English education to their women was an unIslamic act. According to 1921 census of the total literate Muslims, females were 7.9% . In 1931 literate females were 8.1% and those knowing English were 6.7%.<sup>16</sup> It shows that the nonavailability of educational facilities to women and their interest in education.

At Madras there was a Government Hobart Secondary and Training School for women where Arabic, Persian and Urdu were taught to gether with Islamic way of life. In mofussil areas there were separate schools for Muslim girls at Tirukkoilur, Panruti, Chidambaram, Coimbatore and Erode, managed by taluk boards<sup>17</sup>. Where as in southern district there were no separate schools for Muslim girls.

The Measures of the Government educate Muslim women were not sufficient. Some of the Schools specially intended for them were closed in 1930's because of fall in strength and non-availability of suitable staff. It checked the progress of women education.

Inspire of the measures of the Government and private bodies, the progress of Muslim education was slow. According to the Census Report of 1921, the total Muslim population was 8, 85, 731, in which male literates were 15.8% and female literates were 92.1%. In 1931, of the total population (10, 13, 818) literates were 1,76,833 (17.4%), in which males were 1,62,934 (91.1 %) of the literates, those knowing English were 10.9% of which males were 94.9% and the rest were females<sup>18</sup>. In 1931, the literate population decreased to 82.5%. This was because, with the exception of the few in city, the Muslims never felt the need of education. They remained backward in education because they were late in taking to education.

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